THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

EDGAR SALTUS

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THE LORDS
OF THE GHOSTLAND

BY MR. SALTUS

HISTORIA AMORIS
IMPERIAL PURPLE
MARY MAGDALEN
THE POMPS OF SATAN
THE PERFUME OF EROS
VANITY SQUARE

THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

A History of the Ideal

By

EDGAR SALTUS

> "Errons, les doigts unis, dans
> l'Alhambra du songe."
>
> RENÉE VIVIEN

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THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

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THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

I

BRAHMA

THE ideal is the essence of poetry. In the virginal innocence of the world, poetry was a term that meant discourse of the gods. A world grown grey has learned to regard the gods as diseases of language. Conceived, it may be, in fevers of fancy, perhaps, originally, they were but deified words. Yet, it is as children of beauty and of dream that they remain.

"Mortal has made the immortal," the *Rig-Veda* explicitly declares. The making was surely slow. In tracing the genealogy of the divine, it has been found that its root was fear. The root, dispersed by light, ultimately dissolved. But, meanwhile, it founded religion, which, revealed in storm and panic, for prophets had ignorance and dread. The gods were not then. There were demons only, more exactly there were diabolized expressions invented to denominate natural phenomena and whatever else perturbed. It was in the evolution of the demoniac that the divine appeared. Through one of time's unmeasurable gaps there floated the idea that perhaps the phenomena that alarmed were but the unconscious agents of superior minds. At the suggestion, irresistibly a dramatization of nature began in which the gods were born, swarms of them, nebulous, wayward, uncertain, that, through further gaps, became concrete, became occasionally reducible to two great divinities, earth and sky, whose union was imagined — a hymen which the rain suggested — and from which broader conceptions proceeded and grander gods emerged.

The most poetic of these are perhaps the Hindu. At the heraldings of newer gods, the lords of other ghostlands have, after battling violently, swooned utterly away. But though many a fresher faith has been brandished at them, apathetically, in serene indifference, the princes of the Aryan sky endure.

It is their poetry that has preserved them. To their creators poetry was abundantly dispensed. To no other people have myths been as frankly transparent. To none other, save only their cousins the Persians, have fancies more luminous occurred. The Persians so polished their dreams that they entranced the world that was. Poets can do no more. The Hindus too were poets. They were children as well. Their first lisp, the first recorded stammer of Indo-European speech, is audible still in the *Rig-Veda*, a bundle of hymns tied together, four thousand years ago, for the greater glory of Fire. The worship of the latter led to that of the Sun and ignited the antique altars. It flamed in Persia, lit perhaps the shrine of Vesta, afterward dazzled the Incas, igniting, meanwhile, not altars merely, but purgatory itself.

In Persia, where it illuminated the face of Ormuzd, its beneficence is told in the *Avesta*, a work of such holiness that it was polluted if seen. In the *Rig-Veda*, there are verses which were subsequently accounted so sacred that if a soudra overheard them the ignominy of his caste was effaced.

The verses, the work of shepherds who were singers, are invocations to the dawn, to the first flushes of the morning, to the skies' heightening hues, and the vermillion moment when the devouring Asiatic sun appears. There are other themes, minor melodies, but the chief inspiration is light.

To primitive shepherds the approach of darkness was the coming of death. The dawn, which they were never wholly sure would reappear, was resurrection. They welcomed it with cries which the *Veda* preserves, which the *Avesta* retains and the *Eddas* repeat. The potent forces that produced night, the powers potenter still that routed it, they regarded as beings whose moods genuflexions could affect. In perhaps the same spirit that Frenchmen assisted at a *lever du roi*, and Englishmen attend a prince's levee, the Aryan breakfasted on song and sacrifice. It was an homage to the rising sun.

The sun was *deva.* The Sanskrit root *div*, from which the word is derived, produced deus, devi, divinities — numberless, accursed, adored, or forgot. The common term applied to all abstractions that are and have been worshipped, means *That which shines* and the name which, in the early Orient, signified a star, designates the Deity in the Occident to-day.

Apologetically, Tertullian, a Christian Father, remarked: "Some think our God is the Sun." There were excuses perhaps for those that did. Adonai, a Hebrew term for the Almighty, is a plural. It means lords. But the lords indicated were Baalim who were Lords of the Sun. Moreover, when the early Christians prayed, they turned to the East. Their holy day was, as the holy day of

Christendom still is, Sunday, day of the Sun, an expression that comes from the Norse, on whom also shone the light of the Aryan deva.

To shepherds who, in seeking pasture for their flocks, were seeking also pasture for their souls, the deva became Indra. They had other gods. There was Agni, fire; Varuna, the sky; Maruts, the tempest. There was Mitra, day, and Yama, death. There were still others, infantile, undulant, fluid, not infrequently ridiculous also. But it was Indra for whom the dew and honey of the morning hymns were spread. It was Indra who, emerging from darkness, made the earth after his image, decorated the sky with constellations and wrapped the universe in space. It was he who poured indifferently on just and unjust the triple torrent of splendour, light, and life.

✓ Indra was triple. Triple Indra, the *Veda* says. In that description is the preface to a theogony of which Hesiod wrote the final page. It was the germ of sacred dynasties that ruled the Aryan and the Occidental skies. From it came the grandiose gods of Greece and Rome. From it also came the paler deities of the Norse. Meanwhile ages fled. Life nomad and patriarchal ceased. From forest and plain, temples arose; from hymns, interpretations; from prayer, metaphysics; for always man has tried to analyze the divine, always too, at some halt in life, he has looked back and found it absent.

In meditation it was discerned that Indra was an effect, not the cause. It was discerned also that that cause was not predicable of the gods who, in their undulance and fluidity, suggested ceaseless transformations and consequently something that is transformed.

The idea, patiently elaborated, resulted in a drainage of the fluid myths and the exteriorisation of a being entirely abstract. Designated first as Brahmanaspati, Lord of Prayer, afterward more simply as Brahma, he was assumed to have been asleep in the secret places of the sky, from which, on awakening, he created what is.

The conception, ideal itself, was not, however, ideal enough. The labour of creating was construed as a blemish on the splendour of the Supreme. It was held that the Soul of Things could but loll, majestic and inert, on a lotos of azure. Then, above Brahma, was lifted Brahm, a god neuter and indeclinable; neuter as having no part in life, indeclinable because unique.

There was the apex of the world's most poetic creed, one distinguished over all others in having no founder, unless a heavenly inspiration be so regarded. But the apex required a climax. Inspiration provided it.

The forms of matter and of man, the glittering apsaras of the vermillion dawns, Indra himself, these and all things else were construed into a bubble that Brahm had blown. The semblance of reality in which men occur and, with them, the days of their temporal breath, was attributed not to the actual but to Mâyâ—the magic of a high god's longing for something other than himself, something that should contrast with his eternal solitude and fill the voids of his infinite ennui. From that longing came the bubble, a phantom universe, the mirage of a god's desire. Earth; sea and sky; all that in them is, all that has been and shall be, are but the changing convolutions of a dream.

In that dream there descended a scale of beings, above whom were set three great lords, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer, collectively the Tri-murti, the Hindu trinity expressed in the mystically ineffable syllable Om. Between the trinity and man came other gods, a whole host, powers of light and powers of darkness, the divine and the demoniac fused in a hierarchy surprising but not everlasting. Eventually the dream shall cease, the bubble break, the universe collapse, the heavens be folded like a tent, the Tri-murti dissolved, and in space will rest but the Soul of Things, at whose will atoms shall reassemble and forms unite, disunite and reappear, depart and return, endlessly, in recurring cycles.

That conception, the basis perhaps of the theory of cosmological days, is perhaps also itself but a dream, yet one that, however defective, has a beauty which must have been too fair. Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, originally regarded as emanations of the ideal, became concrete. Consorts were found for them. From infinity they were lodged in idols. A worship sensuous when not grotesque ensued, from which the ideal took flight.

That was the work of the clergy. Brahmanism is also. The archaic conflict between light and darkness, the triumph of the former over the latter, diminished, at their hands, into the figurative. That is only reasonable. It was only reasonable also that they should claim the triumph as their own. Without them the gods could do nothing. They would not even be. In the *Rig-Veda* and the *Vedas* generally they are transparent. The subsequent evolution of the Paramâtmâ, the Tri-murti and the hierarchy, had, for culmination, the apotheosis of a priesthood that had invented them and who, for the invention, deserved the apotheosis which they claimed and got. They were priests that were poets, and poets that were seers. But they were not sorcerers. They could not provide successors equal to themselves. It was the later clergy that pulled poetry from the infinite, stuffed it into idols and prostituted it to nameless shames.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita* it is written: "Nothing is greater than I. In scriptures I am prayer. I am perfume in flowers, brilliance in light. I am life and its source. I am the soul of creation. I am the beginning and the end. I am the Divine."

That is Brahm. Ormuzd has faded. Zeus has passed. Jupiter has gone. With them the divinities of Egypt and the lords of the Chaldean sky have been reabsorbed and forgot. Brahm still is. The cohorts of Cyrus might pray Ormuzd to peer where he glowed. There, the phalanxes of Alexander might raise altars to Zeus. Parthians and Tatars might dispute the land and the god. Muhammadans could bring their Allah and Christians their creed. Indifferently Brahm has dreamed, knowing that he has all time as these all have their day.

The conception of that apathy, grandiose in itself and marvellous in its persistence, was due to unknown poets that had in them the true *souffle* of the real ideal. But that also demanded a climax. They produced it in the theory that the afflictions of this life are due to transgressions in another.

From afflictions death, they taught, is not a release, for the reason that there is no death. There is but absorption in Brahm. Yet that consummation cannot occur until all transgressions, past and present, have been expiated and the soul, lifted from the eddies of migration, becomes Brahm himself.

To be absorbed, to be Brahm, to be God, is an ambition, certainly vertiginous yet as surely divine. But to succeed, consciousness of success must be lost. A mortal cannot attain divinity until annihilation is complete. To become God nothing must be left of man. To loose, then, every bond, to be freed from every tie, to retire from finite things, to mount to and sink in the immutable, to see Death die, was and is the Hindu ideal.

✓ Of the elect, that is. Of the higher castes, of the priest, of the prince. But not of the people. The ideal was not for them, salvation either. It was idle even to think about it. Set in hell, they had to return here until in some one of the twenty-four lakhs of birth which the chain of migrations comports, and which to saint and soudra were alike dispensed, they arrived here in the purple. Then only was the opportunity theirs to rescale a sky that was reserved for prelates and rajahs.

Suddenly, to the pariah, to the hopeless, to those who outcast in hell were outcast from heaven, an erect and facile ladder to that sky was brought. The Buddha furnished it. If he did not, a college of dissidents assumed that he had, and in his name indicated a stairway which, set among the people, all might mount and at whose summit gods actually materialized.

To those who believe in the Dalai Lama — there are millions that have believed, there are millions that do — he is not a vicar of the divine, he is himself divine, a god in a tenement of flesh who, as such, though he die, immediately is reincarnated; a god therefore always present among his people, whose history is a continuous gospel. In contemporaneous Italy, a peasant may aspire to the papacy. In the uplands of Asia, men have loftier ambitions. There they may become Buddha, who perhaps never was, except in legend.

In the *Lalita Vistâra* the legend unfolds. In the strophes of the poem one may asist at the Buddha's birth, an event which is said to have occurred at Kapilavastu. Oriental geography is unacquainted with the place. With the thing even Occidental philosophy is familiar. Kapilavastu means the substance of Kapila. The substance is atheism.

History has its hesitancies. Often it stammers uncertainly. But its earliest pages agree in representing Kapila as the initial religious rebel. Kapila was the first to declare the divine a human and invalid conjecture. The announcement, with its prefaces and deductions, is contained in the *Sankhya Karika,* a system of rationalism, still read in India, where it is known as the godless tract.

✓ In the Orient, existence is usually a sordid nightmare when it does not happen to be a golden dream. Kapila taught that it was a prison from which release could be had only through intellectual development. That is Kapilavastu, the substance of Kapila, where the Buddha was born. In the *Lalita Vistâra* it is fairyland.

There, Gotama the Buddha is the Prince Charming of a sovereign house. But a prince who developed into a nihilist prior to re-becoming the god that anteriorly he had been. It was while in heaven that he selected Mâyâ, a ranee, to be his mother. It was surrounded by the heavenly that he appeared. The fields foamed with flowers. The skies flamed with faces. In the air apsaras floated, fanning themselves with peacocks' tails. The galleries of the palace festooned themselves with pearls. On the terraces a rain of perfume fell. In the parterres Mâyâ strolled. A tree bent and bowed to her. Touching a branch with her hand she looked up and yawned. Painlessly from her immaculate breast Gotama issued. An immense lotos sprouted to receive him. To cover him a parasol dropped from above. He, however, already occupied, was contemplating space, the myriad worlds, the myriad lives, and announced himself their saviour. At once a deluge of roses descended. The effulgence of a hundred thousand colours shone. A spasm of delight pulsated. Sorrow and anger, envy and fear, fled and fainted. From the zenith came a murmur of voices, the sound of dancing, the kiss of timbril and of lute.

That is Oriental poetry. Oriental philosophy is less ornate. From the former the Buddha could not have come. From the latter he probably did, if not in flesh at least in spirit. To that spirit antiquity was indebted, as modernity is equally, for the doctrines of a teacher known variously as Gotama the Enlightened and Sakya the Sage. Whether or not the teacher himself existed is, therefore, unimportant. The existence of the Christ has been doubted. But the doctrines of both survive. They do more, they enchant. Occasionally they seem to combine. The Gospels have obviously nothing in common with the *Lalita Vistâra*, which is an apocryphal novel of uncertain date. The resemblance that is reflected comes from the *Tripitaka*, the Three Baskets that constitute the evangels of the Buddhist faith.

In an appendix to the *Mahavâggo*, it is stated that disciples of Gotama, who knew his sermons and his parables by heart, determined the canon "after his death." The expression might mean anything. But a ponderable antiquity is otherwise shown. Asoko, a Hindu emperor, sent an embassy to Ptolemy Philadelphos. The circumstance was set forth bilingually on various heights. In another inscription Asoko recommended the study of the *Tripitaka* and mentioned titles of the books. Ptolemy Philadelphos reigned at Alexandria in the early part of the third century B.C. The *Tripitaka* must therefore have existed then. But the thirty-seventh year of Asoko's reign was, in a third inscription, counted as the two hundred and fifty-seventh from the Buddha's death, a reckoning which makes them much older. Their existence, however, as a fourth inscription shows, was oral. Transmitted for hundreds of years by trained schools of reciters, it was during a synod that occurred in the first quarter of the first century before Christ that, finally, they were written.

✓ ✓ In them it is recited that Mâyâ, the mother of Gotama, was immaculate. According to St. Matthew, Maria, the mother of Jesus, was also. Previously, in each instance, the coming of a Messiah had been foretold. The infant Jesus was visited by magi. The infant Buddha was visited by kings. Afterward, neither Jesus or Gotama wrote. But both preached charity, chastity, poverty, humility, and abnegation of self. Both fasted in a wilderness. Both were tempted by a devil. Both announced a second advent. Both were transfigured. Both died in the open air. At the death of each there was an earthquake. Both healed the sick. Both were the light of a world which both said would cease to be.

According to *Luke*, a courtesan visited Jesus and had her sins remitted. According to the *Mahâvaggo*, Gotama was visited by a harlot whom he instructed in things divine.[1] In *Matthew*, Jesus is depicted as a glutton and a wine-bibber. In the *Mahâvaggo*, the picture of Gotama is the same.[1] In *Matthew* it is written; "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth consume and where thieves break through and steal." The *Khuddakapatho* says: "Righteousness is a treasure which no man can steal. It is a treasure that abideth alway."[2] In *Luke* it is written: "As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." The *Dhammaphada* say: "Put yourself in the place of others, do as you would be done by."[3]

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[1] Luke vii. 37–50. Sacred Books of the East, xi. 30.

The miracle of walking on the water, that of the money-bearing fish, the story of the Woman at the Well, the proclamation of an unpardonable sin, even the mediæval myth of the Wandering Jew, may have originated in Buddhist legend.[1]

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[1] Matthew xi, 19. S. B. E. xiii. 92.
[2] Matthew vi. 19. S. B. E. x. 191.
[3] Luke vi. 31. S. B. E. x. 36.

Pious minds have been disturbed by these similitudes. The resemblance between Mâyâ and Maria has perplexed. The perhaps uncertain likeness of Gotama to Jesus has occasioned irreverent doubts. But the parallelisms may be fortuitous. Probably they are. Even otherwise they but enhance the sororal beauties of faiths which if cognate are quite distinct. Then too the penetrating charm of the parables and sermons of the Buddha fades before the perfection of the sermons and parables of the Christ. The birth, ministry, transfiguration, and passing of Gotama are marvels which, however exquisite, the wholly spiritual apparitions of the Lord efface.

Other similarities, such as they are, may without impropriety, perhaps, be attributed to the ideals progressus. Hindu and Chaldean beliefs constitute the two primal inspirational faiths. From the one, Buddhism and Zoroasterism developed. From the other the creed of Israel and possibly that of Egypt came. Religions that followed were afterthoughts of the divine. They were revelations sometimes more intelligible, in one instance inexpressibly more luminous, yet invariably reminiscent of an anterior light.

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[1] *Cf.* Edmunds: Buddhist and Christian Gospels.

The light of contemporaneous Buddhism is that of Catholicism—heaven deducted, a heaven, that is, of ceaseless Magnificats. The latter conception is Christian. But it was Persian first. Otherwise, in common with the Church, Buddhism has saints, censers, litanies, tonsures, holy water, fasts, and confession. Barring confession, the extreme antiquity of which has been attested, the other rites and ceremonies are, it may be, borrowed, but not the high morality, the altruism, the renunciation and effacement of self, which Buddhists no longer very scrupulously observe, perhaps, but which their religion was the first to instil.

Buddhism originally had neither rites nor ritual. It was merely a mendicant order in which one tried to do what is right, with, for reward, the hope of Pratscha-Parâmita, the peace that is beyond all knowledge and which Nirvana provides. That peace is — or was — the complete absence of anything, extinction utter and everlasting, a state of absolute non-existence which no whim of Brahm may disturb.

Buddhism denied Brahm and every tenet of Brahmanism, save only that which concerned the immedicable misery of life. Of final deliverance there was in Brahmanism no known mode. None at least that was exoteric. Brahmanism rolled man ceaselessly through all forms of existence, from the elementary to the divine, and even from the latter, even when he was absorbed in Brahm, flung him out and back into a fresh circle of unavoidable births.

The theory is horrible. In the horrible occasionally is the sublime. To Gotama it was merely absurd. He blew on it. Abruptly, the categories of the infinite, the infant gods, shapes divine and demoniac, the entire phantasmagoria of metempsychosis, seemed really absorbed and Brahm himself ablated. For a moment the skies, sterilized by a breath, seemingly were vacant. Actually they were never more peopled. Behind the pall, tossed on an antique faith, new gods were crouching and waiting. Buddhistic atheism had resulted but in the production of an earlier New Testament. From the depths of the ideal, swarms of bedecked and bejewelled divinities escorted Brahm back to a lotos of azure. Coincidentally Gotama, enthroned in the zenith, contemplated clusters of gods that dangled through twenty-eight abodes of bliss which other poets created.

In demonstrable triumph the Buddha was then, as he has been since, even if previously his existence had been omitted. But though he never were, there nevertheless occurred a social revolution of which he was the nominal originator and which, had it not been diverted into other realms, might have resulted in Brahm's entire extinction.

Wolves do not devour each other. Ideals should not either. The Oriental heavens were wide enough to serve as fastnesses for two sets of hostile, germane, and ineffably poetic aberrations. There was room even for more. There always should be. Of the divine one can have never enough.

The gospel according to Sakya the Eremite is divine. It is divine in its limitless compassion, and though compassion, when analyzed, becomes but egotism in an etherialized form, yet the gospel had other attractions. In demonstrating that life is evil, that rebirth is evil too, that to be born even a god is evil still,—in demonstrating these things, while insisting that all else, Buddhism included, is but vanity, it fractured the charm of error in which man had been confined. ✓ Sakya saw men born and reborn in hell. He saw them ignorant, as humanity has always been, unaware of their abjection as men are to-day, and over the gulfs of existence, through the torrents of rebirth, he offered to ferry them. But in the ferrying they had to aid. The aid consisted in the rigorous observance of every virtue that Christianity afterward professed. Therein is the beauty of Buddhism. Its profundity resided in a revelation that everything human perishes except actions and the consequences that ensue. To orthodox India its tenets were as heretical as those of Christianity were to the Jews. Nonetheless the doctrine became popular. But doctrines once popularized lose their nobility. The degeneracy of Buddhism is due to Cathay.

To the Hindu life was an incident between two eternities, an episode in the string of deaths and rebirths. To Mongolians it was a unique experience. They had no knowledge of the supersensible, no suspicion of the ideal. Among them Buddhism operated a conversion. It stimulated a thirst for the divine.

The thirst is unquenchable. Buddhism, in its simple severity, could not even attempt to slake it. But on its simplicity a priesthood shook parures. Its severity was cloaked with mantles of gold. The founder, an atheist who had denied the gods, was transformed into one. About him a host of divinities was strung. The most violently nihilistic of doctrines was fanned into an idolatry puerile and meek. Nirvana became Elysium, and a religion which began as a heresy culminated in a superstition. That is the history of creeds.

II

ORMUZD

THE purest of thoughts is that which concerns the beginning of things." So Ormuzd instructed Zarathrustra.

"And what was there at the beginning?" the prophet asked.

"There was light and the living Word."[1] Long later the statement was repeated in the Gospel attributed to John. Originally it occurred in the course of a conversation that the *Avesta* reports. In a similar manner *Exodus* provides a revelation which Moses received. There Jehovah said: *'ehyèh 'ăsher 'ehyèh.* In the *Avesta* Ormuzd said: *ahmi yad*

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[1] Avesta (Anquetil-Duperron), i. 393.

ahmi.[1] Word for word the declarations are identical. Each means *I am that I am.*[2]

The conformity of the pronouncements may be fortuitous. Their relative priority uncertain chronology obscures. The date that orthodoxy has assigned to Moses is about 1500 B.C. Plutarch said that Zarathrustra lived five thousand years before the fall of Troy. Both dates are perhaps questionable. But a possible hypothesis philology provides. The term Jehovah is a seventeenth-century expansion of the Hebrew יהוה or Jhvh, now usually written Jahveh and commonly translated: *He who causes to be.* The original rendering of Ormuzd is Ahuramazda. Ahura means *living* and mazdaô *creator.* The period when *Exodus* was written is probably post-exilic. The period when the *Avesta* was completed is assumed to be pre-Cyrian. It was at the junction of the two epochs that Iran and Israel met.

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[1] Avesta, Hormazd Yasht.
[2] Exodus iii. 14.

But, however the pronouncements may conform, however also they may confuse, the one reported in *Exodus* is alone exact. In subsequent metamorphoses the name might fade, the deity remained. Whereas, save to diminishing Parsis, Ormuzd, once omnipotent throughout the Persian sky, has gone. A time, though, there was, when from his throne in the ideal he menaced the apathy of Brahm, the majesty of Zeus, when even from the death of deaths he might have ejected Buddha and, supreme in the Orient, ruled also in the West. Salamis prevented that. But one may wonder whether the conquest had not already been effected, whether for that matter the results are not apparent still. Brahma, Ormuzd, Zeus, Jupiter, are but different conceptions of a primal idea. They are four great gods diversely represented yet originally identical, and whose attributes Jahveh, in his ascensions, perhaps absorbed.

Ormuzd represented purity and light. For his worship no temple was necessary, barely a shrine, never an image. In his celestial court were parikas, the glittering bayaderes of love that a later faith called peris, but his sole consorts were Prayers. About him and them gathered amshaspands and izeds, angels and seraphs, the winged host of loveliness that in Babylon enthralled the Jews who returned from captivity escorted by them. The allurement of their charm, enchanting then, enchants the world to-day. There has been little that is more poetic, except perhaps Ormuzd himself, who symbolized whatever is blinding in beauty, particularly the sun's effulgence, the radiance of light.

The light endures, though the god has gone. Yet at the time, aloof in clear ether and aloft, he resplended in a sovereignty that only Ahriman disputed.

Ahriman has been more steadfast than Ormuzd. He too captivated the captive Hebrews. The latter adopted him and called him Satan, as they also adopted one of his minor legates, Ashmodai — transformed by the Vulgate into Asmodeus — a little jealous devil who, in the apocryphal *Tobit,* strangled husbands on their bridal nights. Ahriman, his master, represented everything that was the opposite of Ormuzd. Ahriman dwelt in darkness, Ormuzd in light. Ormuzd was primate of purity; Ahriman, prince of whatever is base. One had angels and archangels for aids, the other fiends and demons. Between their forces war was constant. Each strove for the soul of man. But after death, when, in the balance, the deeds of the defunct were weighed, there appeared a golden-eyed redeemer, Mithra, who so closely resembled the Christ that the world hesitated, for a moment, between them.

It was because of these conceptions that Persia dreamed of conquering the West. At Marathon and at Salamis that illusion was looted. History tells of the cohorts that descended there. It relates further what they did. But of what they thought there is no record. It was, perhaps, too obvious. Ormuzd, god of light and, in the Orient, god of the day, was, in the darker and duller Occident, menaced there also by Ahriman. Politically the expedition is not very explicable.

Considered from a religous standpoint the motive is clear. But though the Persian forces could not uphold their light in Greece, higher forces projected it far beyond, to the remote north, to a south that was still remoter.

Originally the light was Vedic. It was identical with that of Agni, of Indra and of Varuna. But while these, without subsidence, passed, absorbed by Brahm, the light of Iran, deflecting, persisted, and so potently that it lit the Teutonic sky, glows still in Christendom, after refracting perhaps in Inca temples. Its revelation is due to Zarathrustra.

Zarathrustra, commonly written Zoroaster, is a name translatable into "star of gold" and also into "keeper of old camels." Probably it was first employed to designate an imaginary prophet, and then a series of spiritual though actual successors by whom, in the course of centuries, the *Avesta* was evolved. Otherwise Zarathrustra and Gotama are brothers in Brahmanaspati. Both had virgin mothers. In the lives of both miracles are common. The advent of Zarathrustra was accounted the ruin of demons. When he was born he laughed aloud. As a child he slept in flames. As a man he walked on water. Before prodigies such as these fiends fell like autumn leaves. Hence, on the part of the devil, an attempt to seduce him from the divine. Mairya, the demon of death, offered him, as Mara offered Gotama, as Satan offered Jesus, the empire of the earth. Zarathrustra rebuked the devil first with stones, then with pious words. From him, as from the Buddha and the Christ, abashed the tempter retreated.[1]

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[1] Darmestetter: Ormazd et Ahriman.

That victory over evil, the Parsis today regard as the capital event in the history of the world. It was the immediate prelude to the revelation of the Law which Ormuzd vouchsafed to his prophet.

The revelation occurred on a mountain, in the course of conversations, during which Zarathrustra questioned and Ormuzd, in the voice of heaven, replied. So was the Law proclaimed in India. There Mitra and Varuna sang it through the sky.[1] The expression is notable, for the song of the sky is thunder and the theophany that of Sinai. There is another *rapprochement* in Babylonian lore and a third in the *Eddas*, where it is related that to Sigurd the secret of the runes was sung.

Meanwhile, the revelation completed and proclaimed, Zarathrustra died as miraculously as he was born, foretelling, as he went, the coming of a messiah, his own son, Coshyos — the delayed fruit of an immaculate hymen that is not to be fecund until the end of time — but who, at the consummation of the ages, will rejuvenate the world, affranchise it from death, vanquish Ahriman, terminate the struggle between good and evil, purify hell and fill it full with glory. Then the dead shall rise and immortality be universal.[1]

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[1] Rig-Veda, i. 151.

Zoroaster is obviously mythical. The Buddha is also. But precisely as the Buddhist scriptures exist, so also do the Zoroastrian. They do more. Frequently they enlighten, occasionally they exalt. Written in gold on perfumed leather, the original edition, limited to two copies, was so sacred that it was sullied if seen.

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[1] Zamyad Yasht. xix. 89 *sq.*

Burned with the palace of Persepolis — which Alexander, the Great Sinner, in a drunken orgy, destroyed — only fragments of the fargards remain. These tell of creation, effected in six epochs, and of a *pairi-daêza.*

Delitzsch voluminously asked: *Wo lag das Paradies?* There it is. There is the primal paradise. In it Ormuzd put Mashya, the first man, and Mashyana, the first woman, whom Ahriman, in the form of a serpent, seduced. Thereafter ensued the struggle in which all have or will participate, one that, extending beyond the limits of the visible world, arrays seasons and spirits and the senses of man in a conflict of good and evil that can end only when, from the depths of the dawn, radiant in the vermillion sky, Coshyos, hero of the resurrection, triumphantly appears.

The parallel between this romance and subsequent poetry is curious. In Chaldea, before the fargards were, the story of Creation, of Eden, and of the fall had been told. In Egypt, before the *Avesta* was written, the resurrection and the life were known. Similar legends and prospects may or may not represent an autonomous development of Iranian thought. The successors of the problematic Zarathrustra, the line of magi who wrote and taught in his name, may have gathered the tales and theories elsewhere. In the creed which they instituted there is a trinity. India had one, Egypt another, Babylonia a third. Babylonia had even three of them. But in Mithra, Iran had a redeemer that no other creed possessed. In Coshyos was a saviour, virgin born, who nowhere else was imagined. In Mara, Buddhism had a Satan.

The Persian Ahriman is Satan himself. Babylon had angels and cherubs. In Iran there were guardian angels, there were archangels with flaming swords, there were fairies, there were goblins, the celestial, the poetic, the demoniac combined. Zoroasterism may or may not have had a past, it is perhaps evident that it had a future.

An inscription chiselled in the red granite of Ekbatana describes Ormuzd as creator of heaven and earth. In the *Veda* the description of Indra is identical.[1] It was applied equally to Jahveh in Judea. But above Jahveh, Kabbalists discerned En Soph. Above Indra metaphysicians discovered Brahma. Similarly the Persian magi found that Ormuzd, however perfect, was not perfect enough and, from the depths of the ideal, they disclosed

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[1] R. V. x. 3. "Indra created heaven and earth."

Zervan Akerene, the Eternal, from whom all things come and to whom all return.

That conception is not reached in the *Avesta.* It is in the *Bundahish,* a work which, while much later, is based on earlier traditions, memories it may be, of antediluvian legends brought from the summits of upper Asia by Djemschid, the fabulous Abraham of the Persians of whom Zarathrustra was the Moses. But in default of the Eternal, the Avesta contains pictures of enduring charm

Among these is a highly poetic pastel that displays the soul of man surprised in the first post-mortem ambuscades. There a figure, beautiful or revolting, cries at him: "I am thyself, the image of thine earthly life."

If that life has been beautiful, the soul of man, led by itself, is conducted to heaven. Otherwise, led still by itself, it descended to Drûjô-demâna, the House of Destruction, where, fed on insults and offal, it waited till its sins were destroyed. The waiting might be long. It was not everlasting. There was Mithra to intercede. Besides, evil was regarded but as a shadow on the surface of things. In the seventh epoch of creation, a period yet to be, the age which Coshyos is to usher, the shadow will fade. The wicked, purified of their wickedness, will be received among the blessed. Even Ahriman is to be converted. In that definite triumph of light over darkness is the resurrection and the life, life in Garô-demâna, literally House of Hymns, a pre-Christian heaven, yet strictly Christian, where, to the trumpetings of angels, hosannahs are ceaselessly sung.[1]

John — or, more exactly, his homonym

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[1] Yasht. xxviii. 10, xxxiv. 2.

— was perhaps acquainted with that idea, as he may have been with other theories that the *Avesta* contains. But the possibility is a detail. It is the idea that counts. Behind it is the unique character of this doctrine which, in eliminating evil, converted even Satan.

Satan seldom gets his due. He was the first artist and has remained the greatest. In creating evil he fashioned what is a luxury and a necessity combined. Evil is the counterpart of excellence. Both have their roots in nature. One could not be destroyed without the other. For every form of evil there is a corresponding form of good. Virtue would be meaningless were it not for vice. Honour would have no nobility were it not for shame. If ever evil be banished from the scheme of things, life could have no savour and joy no delight.

Happiness and unhappiness would be synonymous terms.

It is for this reason that scoffers have mocked at heaven. Heaven may be very different from what has been fancied. But the theory of it, however unphilosophic, which Zoroasterism supplied, carried with it a creed not of tears but of smiles, a religion of lofty tolerance, one in which the demonology barely alarmed, for redemption was assured, and so fully that on earth melancholy was accounted a folly.

Though tolerant, it could be austere. Meanness, thanklessness, loquaciousness, jealousy, an unbecoming attire, evil thoughts, whatever is sensual, whatever is coarse, any promenade in mud actual or metaphorical, severely it condemned. Particularly was avarice censured. "There are many who do not like to give," Ormuzd, in the *Vendidad*, confided to Zarathrustra. The high god added: "Ahriman awaits them."

Ahriman awaited also the harlot who, elsewhere, at that period, was holy. Yet in lapses, confession and repentance sufficed for remission, provided that in praying for forgiveness the sinner forgave those that had sinned against him. If he lacked the time, were he dying, a priest might yet save him with words whispered in the ear. That was the extreme unction, hardly administrable, however, in case of wilful omission of the *darûn*, which was communion.

This sacrament, the most mystic of the Church, was observed by the Incas, who also confessed, also atoned, who, like the Buddhists, were baptized, but who, like the Persians, worshipped the sun and, with perhaps a finer instinct of what the beautiful truly is, worshipped too the rainbow.[1]

Huraken, the winged and feathered serpent-god of the Toltecs, was adored in temples that upheld a cross. The Incas lacked that symbol. But they had a Satan. They had also the expectation of a saviour, belief in whom could alone have consoled for the advent of Pizarro. Over what highways of sea or sky, the living Word, which Ormuzd spoke, reached them, there has been no somnambulist of history to divine. But in the splendour that Cuzco was, in the golden temples of the town of gold, along the scarlet lanes where sacred peacocks strolled and girls more sacred still — vestals whom Pizarro's soldiers raped — in that City of the Sun, the Word re-echoed. The mystery of it, reported back to the Holy Office, was declared an artifice of the devil.

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[1] Garcilasso: Commentarios reales.

Less mysteriously, through the obvious vehicle of cognate speech, it reached the Norse, stirred the scalds, who repeated it in the Eddic sagas. Loki and his ininferior fiends are, as there represented, quite as black as Ahriman and his cohorts. The conflict of good and evil is almost as fully dire. But Odin is a colourless reflection of Ormuzd. The æsir, the angels of the Scandinavian sky, are paler than the izeds. The figure of Baldr, the redeemer, faints beside that of Mithra. Valhalla, though perhaps less fatiguing than Garô-demâna, was more trite in its wassails than the latter in its hymns.

What these abstractions lacked was not the Logos but the light. However brilliantly the Iranian sun might glow, in the sullen north its rays were lost. The mists, obscuring it, made Valhalla dim and set the gods in twilight. It stirred the scalds to runes but not to inspiration. There is none in the *Eddas*. Nor was there any in the *Nibelungen*, until the light, almost extinct, burst suddenly in the flaming scores of Wagner.

Transformed by ages and by man, yet lifted at last from their secular slumber, the Persian myths achieved there their Occidental apotheosis, and, it may be, on steps of song, mounted to the ideal where Zervan Akerene muses.

III

AMON-RÂ

"I AM all that is, has been and shall be. No mortal has lifted my veil."

That pronouncement, graven on the statue of Isis, confounded Egypt, condemning her mysteriously for some sin, anterior and unknown, to ignorance of the divine, leaving her, in default of revelation, to worship what she would, jackals, hyenas, cats, hawks, the ibis; beasts and birds. Yet to the people, whose minds were as naked as their bodies, and who, in addition, were slaves, there must have been something very superior in the lords of the desert and the air. Obviously they were wise. Among them were some that knew in advance the change of the seasons. Others, indifferent to man and independent of him, migrated over highways known but to them. The senses of all were keyed to vibrations. They heard the inaudible, saw the invisible, and, though they had a language of their own, when questioned never replied. To slaves, clearly they were gods.

Not to the priests, however. They knew better. They but affected belief in divinities that had perhaps emigrated from the enigmas of geography and who were polychrome as the skies they had crossed. Fashioned in stone, these gods were dog-headed or longly beaked. Some, though, were alive. In temples were saurians on purple carpets, bulls draped with spangled shawls, hawks on shimmering perches, that little gold chains detained. Among gods of this character, the Sphinx, in its role of eternal spectre, must have seemed the ideal. Others were nearly sublime. Particularly there was Ausar.

Ausar, called commonly Osiris, died for man. In an attempt to preserve harmony, in a struggle with the real spirit of actual evil which discord is, Osiris was slain. Being a god he arose from the dead. The latter thereafter he judged.

The people knew little, if anything, concerning him. They knew little if anything at all. They had a menagerie and a full consciousness of their own insignificance. That sufficed. In all of carnal Africa, the priest alone possessed what then was truth and of which a part is theology now.

Egypt, in which the evangels began, millennia before they were written, knew no genesis. Her history, sculptured in hieroglyphics, was cut on pages of stone. It awoke in the falling of cataracts. It ended with simoons in sand. The books that tell of it are pyramids, obelisks, necropoles; constructions colossal and enigmatic; the granite epitaphs of finite things. To-day, in the shattered temples, from which all other gods are gone, one divinity still lingers. It is Silence.

In Iran sorrow was a folly. In Egypt speech was a sin. Apis could bellow, Anubis bark; man might not even stutter. It was in the submission of dumb obedience that the palpable eternities of the pyramids were piled. Yet in that darkness was light, in silence was the Word. But to behold and to hear was possible only in sanctuaries reserved to the elect. The gods too had their castes. The lowest only were fellahin fit to worship. On the lips of the others the priests held always a finger. Crocodiles were less distant, hyenas more approachable, and the Egyptian, barred from the divine, found it on earth. He prayed to scorpions, sang hymns to scarabs, coaxed the jackal with psalms; with dances he placated the ibis. It was ridiculous but human. He too would have a part, however insensate, in the dreams of all mankind.

Yet, had he looked not down but up, he would have lifted at least a fringe of the Isian veil. The sun, taken as a symbol only, the symbol of life, death, and resurrection — phases which its rising, setting, and return suggest — was the deity, the one really existing god. Nominally, figuratively, even concretely, there were others; a whole host, a hierarchy vaster than the Aryans knew; a great crowd of divinities less grandiose than gaudy, that swarmed in space, strolled through the dawns and dusk, thronged the temples, eyed the quick, confronted the dead. They were but appearances, mere masks, expressions, hypostases, eidolons of Râ.

Râ was the celestial pharaoh. But not originally. Originally he was part of a triad which itself was part of a triple trinity. Râ then was but one divinity among many gods. These ultimately lost themselves in him so indistinguishably that there are litanies in which the names of seventy-five of them are used in addressing him. Regarded as the unbegotten begetter of the first beginning, he succeeded in achieving the incomprehensible. He became triune and remained unique. He was Osiris, he was Isis, he was Horus. At once father, mother, and son, he fecundated, conceived, produced, and was.

From him gods and goddesses emanated in siderial fireworks that illuminated the heavens, dazzled the earth, then melted into each other, faded away or, occasionally, flared afresh in a glare dispelling and persistent. Among these latter was Amon. Glimmering primarily in provincial obscurity at Thebes, the thin fire of his shrine mounted spirally to Râ, fused its flames with his, expanding and uniting so inseparably with them, that the two became one. Amon means *hidden;* Amon-Râ, *the hidden light.*

In the infinite, time is not. In heaven there is no chronology. The date of any god's accession to supremacy there is, consequently, apart from mortal ken. None the less that of Amon-Râ is known. At the beginning of the earthly reign of Amonhoteph III., an edict, scrupulously executed throughout Egypt, determined, on monument and wall, the substitution of Amon-Râ's name for that of previously superior gods.

The pharaohnate of Amonhoteph began about 1500 B.C. It is from that period, therefore, that dates the divinity's accession to the pharaohnate of the skies. There is, or should be, a reason for all things. There is one for that. Amonhoteph regarded himself as Amon's son. It was one of the traits of the pharaohs, as it was also of the Incas, to believe, or at least to assert, that their fathers, therefore themselves, were divine. As a consequence of the idea they prayed to their own images and likened their palaces to inns.

Originally foreigners, invaders from Akkad or Sumer, the pharaohs first conquered, then surprised. It was they that embanked the Nile, turned morasses into meadows and piled the pyramids. More exactly, it was by their commands that these miracles were contrived. To the neolithic people whom they subjugated their divinity was clear. So elsewhere was that of the kings of Akkad. Like them, like the Incas, the pharaohs were of the solar race and so remained from the first dynasty to the Greek conquest, when Alexander, to legitimatize his sovereignty, had himself acknowledged as Amon's son.

The ceremony had its precedents. An inscription in eulogy of the great Rameses states that Amon, when possessing the pharaohs august mother, engendered him as a god. On a wall of the Temple of Luxor an earlier inscription sets forth that the god of Thebes, incarnating himself in the person of Thotmes IV., appeared in his divine form to the pharaoh's queen, who, at sight of his beauty, conceived.

It was therefore not in the beast alone, but in man, that divinity revealed itself in Egpyt. That in Judea a similar revelation should have been withheld until after the Roman occupation is hardly explicable on the theory, general among scholars, that Moses is not a historical character, for an identical revelation had been received in Babylonia where Israel twice loitered. Moreover, a curious parallelism exists between post-Mosaic prophecy and Egyptian clairvoyance. In a papyrus of the Thotmes III. epoch — about 1600 B.C. — it is written: "The people of the age of the son of man shall rejoice and establish his name forever. They shall be removed from evil and the wicked shall humble their mouths." In commenting the passage an Egyptologist noted that the words *son of man* are a literal translation of the original *si-n-sa.*[1] But already in Akkad a similar prophecy had been uttered.[2] It may be, therefore, that it was in Babylon that Israel first heard it.

The doctrine of a trinity, common to almost all antique beliefs, was a blasphemy to the Jews. The belief in immortality, also prevalent, though less general, was to them an abomination. The miracle of divine descent they were perhaps too practical to accept. There was no room in their creed for the dogma of future rewards and punishments, and that, together with other articles of the Christian faith, Egypt's elect professed.

The slaves and mongrels that constituted the bulk of the population were not instructed in these things and would not have understood them if they had been. In Babylonia education was compulsory. In Egypt it was an art, a gift, mysterious in itself, reserved to the few. To the Egyptian, religion consisted in paraded symbols, in avenues of sphinxes, in forests of obelisks, in pharaohs seated colossally before the temple doors, in inscriptions that told indistinguishably of theomorphic men and anthropomorphic gods, and in a belief in the divinity of bulls and hawks.

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[1] Sayce: Guifford Lectures.
[2] Jastrow: The Dibbara Epic.

These latter had their uses. In transformations elsewhere effected, the sacred bull may have become a golden calf, the golden hawk a sacred dove. In Egypt they were otherwise serviceable. The worship of them, of other birds and beasts, of insects and vipers as well, ecclesiastically indorsed, hid the myth of metempsychosis.

Of that the people knew nothing. When they died they ceased to be. Even mummification, usually supposed to have been general, was not for them. Down to an epoch relatively late it was a privilege reserved to priests and princes. When the commonalty were embalmed it was with the opulent design that, in a future existence, they should serve their masters as they had in this. Embalming was a preparation for the Judgment Day. Of that the people knew nothing either. It was even unlawful that concerning it they should be apprised.

In the Louvre is a statue of Ptah-meh, high priest of Memphis. On it are the significant words: "Nothing was hidden from him." A passage of Zosimus states that what was hidden it was illicit to reveal, except, Jamblicus explained, to those whose discretion a long novitiate had assured. To such only was disclosed the secret that life is death in a land of darkness, and death is life in a land of light.

It was because of this that the pharaohs seated themselves colossally before the temple doors. It was because of it that their palaces were inns and their tombs were homes. It was because of it that their sepulchres were built for eternity and the tenements of their souls placed there embalmed. It was because of this that the triumphs of men were inscribed in the halls of the gods. Instead of seeking to be absorbed, it was their own inextinguishable individuality that they endeavoured to assert. Tombs, tenements, triumphs, these all were preparations for the Land of Light.

The land was Alu, the asphodel meadows of the celestial Nile that wound through the Milky Way. To reach it a passport, visé’d by Osiris, sufficed. The first draft of that passport was held to have been written on tablets of alabaster, in letters of lapis lazuli, by an eidolon of Râ, who, known in Egypt as Thoth, elsewhere was Hermes Thrice the Greatest. At Memphis, Hermes was regarded as representing the personification of divine wisdom, or, more exactly perhaps, the inventive power of the human mind. A little library of forty-two books — which a patricist saw, but not being initiate could not read — was attributed to him.[1] The books contained the entire hieratic belief. Fragments that are held to have survived in an extant Greek novel are obviously Egyptian, but as obviously Alexandrine and neo-platonic. In the *editio princeps* Pheidias is mentioned.

[1] Clemens Alexandrinos: Stromata vi.

Mention of Michel Angelo would have been less anachronistic. The original books are gone, all of them, forever, perhaps, save one, chapters of which are as old as the fourth dynasty and, it may be, are still older. Pyramid texts of the fifth dynasty show that there then existed what to-day is termed *The Book of the Dead*, a copy of which, put in a mummy's arms, was a talisman for the soul in the Court of Amenti, a passport thence to the Land of Light.

"There is no book like it, man hath not spoken it, earth hath not heard it" — very truthfully it recites of itself. One copy, known as the Louvre Papyrus, presents the *Divine Comedy*, as primarily conceived and illustrated by an archaic Doré. Text and vignettes display the tribunal where the souls of the dead are judged.

In the foreground is an altar. Adjacent is a figure, half griffon, half chimera, the Beast of Amenti, perhaps too of the Apocalypse. Beyond, an ape poises a pair of scales. For balance is an ostrich feather. Above are the spirits of fate. At the left Osiris is enthroned. From a balcony his assessors lean. At the right is the entrance. There the disembodied, ushered by Truth, appears and, in homages and genuflections, affirms negatively the decalogue; protesting before the Master of Eternity that there is no evil in him; praying the dwellers in Amenti that he may cross the dark way; declaring to each that he has not committed the particular sin over which they preside.

"O Eater of Spirits gone out of the windows of Alu! O Master of the Faces!" he variously calls. "O the One who associates the Splendours! O the

Glowing Feet gone out of the Night! I did not lie. I did not kill. I have not been anxious. I did not talk abundantly. I made no one weep. No heart have I harmed."

The assessors listen. "I have not been anxious. I made no one weep. No heart have I harmed." These abstentions, graces now, were virtues then, and so efficacious that they perhaps sufficed, as rightly they should, for absolution.

But while the assessors listen and Osiris looks gravely on, no one accuses. It is conscience in its nakedness, conscience exposed there where all may see it, where for the first time perhaps it truly sees itself, and seeing realizes what there is in it of evil and what of good, it is that which protests.

Still the assessors listen. Orthodoxy on the part of the respondent is to them a minor thing. What they require is that he shall have been merciful to his fellow creatures, true to himself. Only when it is proven that he has done his duty to man, is he permitted to show that he has done his duty to gods.

The appeal continues: "I fed the hungry, clothed the naked, I gave water to them that thirsted. O ye that dwell in Amenti! I am unpolluted, I am pure."

But is it true? The scales decide. The heart of the respondent is weighed. If heavy, out it is cast to pass with him again through life's infernal circles. But, if light as the feather in the balance and therefore equal with truth, it is restored to the body, which then resurrects and, in the bark of the Sun, sails the celestial Nile to Râ and the Land of Light.

That singer gone out of Amenti, actually, like Osiris, rose from the dead. The picture which a papyrus forty centuries old presents, is the dream of a vision that Michel Angelo displayed, a sketch for a papal fresco. Such indeed was the conformity between the underlying conceptions, that, at almost the first monition, Isis, whose veil no mortal had raised, lifted it from her black breast and suckled there the infant Jesus. Then, presently, in temples that had teemed, the silence of the desert brooded. The tide of life retreated, an entire theogony vanished, exorcised, both of them, by the sign of the cross.

At sight of the unimagined emblem, a priesthood who in secret sanctuaries had evolved nearly all but that, flung themselves into crypts beneath, pulled the walls down after them, burying unembalmed the arcana of a creed whose spirit still is immortal.

In Egypt, then, only tombs and necropoles survived. But it is legendary that, in the solitudes of the Thebaïd, dispossessed eidolons of Râ, appearing in the shape of chimeras, terrified anchorites, to whom, with vengeful eyes, they indicated their ruined altars.

IV

BEL-MARDUK

THE inscriptions of Assyrian kings have, many of them, the monotony of hell. Made of boasts and shrieks, they recite the capture and sack of cities; the torrents of blood with which, like wool, the streets were dyed; the flaming pyramids of prisoners; the groans of men impaled; the cries of ravished women.

The inscriptions are not all infernal. Those that relate to Assurbanipal — vulgarly, Sandanapallos, — are even ornate. But Assurbanipal, while probably fiendish and certainly crapulous, was clearly literary besides. From the spoil of sacked cities this bibliofilou took libraries, the myths and epics of creation, sacred texts from Eridu and Ur, volumes in the extinct tongues of Akkad and Sumer, first editions of the Book of God.

These, re-edited in cuneiform and kept conveniently on the second floor of his palace, fell with Nineveh, where, until recently recovered, for millennia they lay. Additionally, from shelves set up in the days of Khammurabi — the Amraphel of Genesis — Nippur has yielded ghostly tablets and Borsippa treasuries of Babylonian ken.

These, the eldest revelations of the divine, are the last that man has deciphered. The altars and people that heard them first, the marble temples, the ivory palaces, the murderous throngs, are dust. The entire civilization from which they came has vanished. Yet, traced with a wooden reed on squares of clay, are flights of little arrows, from which, magically, it all returns. Miraculously with these books a world revives. Fashioned, some of them, at an epoch that in biblical chronology is anterior to man, they tell of creation, of the serpent, the fall and the deluge. At the gates of paradise you see man dying, poisoned by the tree of life. Before Genesis was, already it had been written.

In the Chaldean Book of the Beginnings creation was effected in successive acts. According to the epic of it, humanity's primal home was a paradise where ten impressive persons—the models, it may be, of antediluvian patriarchs — reigned interminably, agreeably also, finally sinfully as well. In punishment a deluge swept them away. From the flood there escaped one man who separated a mythical from an heroic age. In the latter epoch, beings descended from demons built Nineveh and Babylon; organized human existence; invented arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and the calendar; counted the planets; numbered the days of the year, divided them into months and weeks; established the Sabbath; decorated the skies with the signs of the zodiac, instituting, in the interim, colleges of savants and priests. These speculated on the origin of things, attributed it to spontaneous generation, the descent of man to evolution, entertaining the vulgar meanwhile with tales of gods and ghosts.[1]

The cosmological texts now available were not written then. They are drawn from others that were. But there is a vignette that probably is of that age. It represents a man and a woman stretching their hands to a tree. Behind the woman writhes a snake. The tree, known as the holy cedar of Eridu, the fruit of which stimulated desire, is described in an epic that recites the adventures of Gilgames.

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[1] Lenormant: Les Origines. Schrader: Die Keilenschriften. Smith: Chaldean Genesis.

Gilgames was the national hero of Chaldea. The story of his loves with Ishtar is repeated in the Samson and Delilah myth. Ishtar, described in an Assyrian inscription as Our Lady of Girdles, was the original Venus, as Gilgames was perhaps the prototype of Hercules. The legend of his labours is represented on a seal of Sargon of Akkad, a king who ruled fifty-seven hundred years ago.

In the epic, Gilgames, betrayed by Ishtar, tried to find out how not to die. In trying he reached a garden, guarded by cherubim, where the holy cedar was. There he learned that one being only could teach him to be immortal, and that being, Adra-Khasis, had been translated to the Land of the Silver Sky. Adra-Khasis, was the Chaldean Noah. Gilgames sought him and the story of the deluge follows. But with a difference. On the seventh day, Adra-Khasis released from his ark a dove that returned, finally a raven that did not. Then he looked out, and looking, shrieked. Every one had perished.

Noah was less emotional, or, if equally compassionate, the fact is not recited. Apart from that detail and one other, the storyof the flood is common to all folklore. Even the Aztecs knew of it. Probably it originated in the matrix of nations which the table-land of Asia was. But only in Chaldean myth, and subsequently in Hebrew legend, was the flood ascribed to sin.

Gilgames' quest, meanwhile, could not have been wholly vain. In an archaic inscription it is stated that the city of Erech was built in olden times by the deified Gilgames.[1]

How old the olden times may have been is conjectural. Modern science has put the advent of man sixty million years ago. Chaldean chronology is less spacious. But its traditions stretched back a hundred thousand years. The traditions were probably imaginary. Even so, in the morning of the world, already there were ancient cities. There was Nippur, one of whose gods, El Lil, was lord of ghosts. There was Eridu, where Ea was lord of man. There was Ur, where Sin was lord of the moon. There were other divinities. There was Enmesara, lord of the land whence none return, and Makhir, god of dreams.

There were many more like the latter,

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[1] Proc. S. B. A. xvi. 13–15.

so many that their sanctuaries made the realm a holy land, but one which, administratively, was an aggregate of principalities that Sargon, nearly six thousand years ago, combined. Ultimately, from sheer age, the empire tottered. It would have fallen had not Khammurabi surged. What Sargon made, Khammurabi solidified. Between their colossal figures two millennia stretch. These giants are distinct. None the less, across the ages they seem to fuse, suggestively, not together, but into another person.

Sargon has descended through time clothed in a little of the poetry which garments nation builders. But the poetry is not a mantle for the imaginary. In the British Museum is a marble ball that he dedicated to a god. Paris has the seal of his librarian.[1] Copies of his annals are extant.[1] In these it is related that, when a child, his mother put him in a ✓ basket of rushes and set him adrift on the Euphrates. Presently he was rescued. Afterward he became a leader of men.

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[1] Collection de Clerq. pl. 5, no. 46.

Khammurabi was also a leader. He was a legislator as well. Sargon united principalities, Khammurabi their shrines. From one came the nation, from the other the god. It is in this way that they fuse. To the composite, if it be one, history added a heightening touch.

The Khammurabi legislation came from Bel, who, originally, was a local sun-god of Nippur. There he was regarded as the possessor of the Chaldean Urim and Thummin, the tablets of destiny with which he cast the fates of men. In the mythology of Babylonia these tablets were stolen by the god of storms, who kept them in his thunder fastness. Among the forked flames of the lightning there they were recovered by Bel, who revealed the law to Khammurabi.

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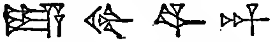
[1] Cuneiform Insc. W. A. iv. 34.

The theophany is perhaps similar to that of Sinai. But perhaps, too, it is better attested. A diorite block, found at Susa in 1902, has the law engraved on it. On the summit, a bas-relief displays the god disclosing the statutes to the king.

✓There are other analogies. Sinai was named after Sin, who, though but a moon-god, was previously held supreme for the reason that, in primitive Babylonia, the lunar year preceded the solar. The sanctuary of the moon-god was Ur, of which Abraham was emir. He was more, perhaps. Sarratu, from which Sarai comes, was the title of the moon-goddess. In *Genesis*, Sarai is Abraham's wife. Abraham is a derivative of

Aburamu, which was one of the moon's many names.[1]

Among these, one in particular has since been identified with Jahveh. In addition, a clay tablet of the age of Khammurabi, now in the British Museum, has on it:



That flight of arrows, being interpreted, means: *Jave ilu*, Jahveh is god.[2]

Other texts show that a title of Bel was Mâsu, a word that letter for letter is the same as the Hebrew Mosheh or Moses.[3]

It is in this way that Sargon and Khammurabi fuse. Meanwhile the title Mâsu, or hero, was not confined to Bel. It was given also to Marduk, the tutelary god of Babylon, from whom local monotheism proceeded.

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[1] Sayce: Guifford Lectures.
[2] Delitzch: Babel und Bibel.
[3] Records of the Past, i. 91.

That monotheism, in appearance relatively modern, actually was archaic. The Chaldean savants knew of but one really existing god. To them, all others were his emanations. The deus exsuperantissimus was represented by a single stroke of the reed, a sign that in its vagueness left him formless and incommunicable, therefore unworshipable, hence without a temple, unless Bab-ili, Babylon, the Gate of God, may be so construed.

The name of the deity, fastidiously concealed from the vulgar, was, in English, One. Not after, or beneath, or above, but before him, a trinity swung like a screen. From it, for pendant, another trinity dangled. From the latter fell a third. Below these glories were the coruscations of an entire nation of inferior gods. The latter, as well as the former, all of them, were but the fireworks of One. He alone was. The rest, like Makhir, were gods of dream. To the savants, that is; to the magi and seers. To the people the siderial triads and planetary divinities throned in the Silver Sky augustly real, equally august, and in that celestial equality remained, until Khammurabi gave precedence to Bel, who as Marduk, Bel or Baal Marduk, Lord Marduk, became supreme.

Before Bel, then, the other gods faded as the Elohim did before Jahveh, with the possible difference that there were more to fade — sixty-five thousand, Assurnatsipal, in an inscription, declared. Over that army Bel-Marduk acquired the title, perhaps significant, of Bel-Kissat, Lord of Hosts. Yet it was less as a usurper than as an absorber that the ascension was achieved. Bel but mounted above his former peers and from the superior height drew their attributes to himself. It was sacrilege none the less. As such it alienated the clergy and enraged the plebs. Begun under Khammurabi and completed under Nabonidos, it was the reason why, during the latter's reign, orthodox Babylon received Cyrus not as a foe but a friend.

From the spoliation, meanwhile, no nebulousness resulted. Bel was distinctly anthropomorphic. His earthly plaisance was the Home of the Height, a seven-floored mountain of masonry, a rainbow pyramid of enamelled brick. At the top was a dome. There, in a glittering chamber, on a dazzling couch, he appeared. Elsewhere, in the vermillion recesses of a neighbouring chapel, that winged bulls guarded and frescoed monsters adorned, once a year he also appeared, and, above the mercy seat, on an alabaster throne, sat, or was supposed to sit, contemplating the tablets of destiny, determining when men should die.

To the Greeks, the future lay in the lap of the gods. To the Babylonians the gods alone possessed it, as alone also they possessed the present and the past. They had all time as all men have their day. That day was here and it was brief. Death was a descent to Aralû, the land whence none return, a region of the underworld, called also Shualû, where the departed were nourished on dust. Dust they were and to dust they returned.

Extinction was not a punishment or even a reward, it was a law. Punishment was visited on the transgressor here, as here also the piety of the righteous was rewarded. When death came, just and unjust fared alike. The Aryan and Egyptian belief in immortality had no place in this creed, and consequently it had none either in Israel, where Sheol was a replica of Shualû. To the Semites of Babylonia and Kanaan, the gods alone were immortal, and immortal beings would be gods. Man could not become divine while his deities were still human.

Exceptionally, exceptional beings such as Gilgames and Adra-Khasis might be translated to the land of the Silver Sky, as Elijah was translated to heaven, but otherwise the only mortals that could reach it were kings, for a king, in becoming sovereign, became, *ipso facto*, celestial. As such, ages later, Alexander had himself worshipped, and it was in imitation of his apotheosis that the subsequent Cæsars declared themselves gods. Yet precisely as the latter were man-made deities, so the Babylonian Baalim were very similar to human kings.

For their hunger was cream, oil, dates, the flesh of ewe lambs. For their nostrils was the perfume of prayers and of psalms; for their passions the virginity of girls. Originally the first born of men were also given them, but while, with higher culture, that sacrifice was abolished, the sacred harlotry, over which Ishtar presided, remained. Judaism omitted to incorporate that, but in Kanaan, which Babylonia profoundly influenced, it was general and, though reviled by Israel, was tempting even, and perhaps particularly, to Solomon.[1]

The latter's temple was similar to Bel's, from which the Hebraic ritual, terms of the Law, the Torah itself, may have proceeded, as, it may be, the Sabbath did also. On a tablet recovered from the library of Assurbanipal it is written: "The seventh day is a fast day, a lucky day, a sabbatuv" — literally, a day of rest for the heart.[1]

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[1] 1 Kings xi. 5. "Solomon went after Ashtoreth."

In Aralû that day never ceased; the dead there, buried, Herodotos said, in honey, were unresurrectably dead, dead to the earth, dead to the Silver Sky. Yet though that was an article of faith, through a paradox profoundly poetic, there was a belief equally general, in ghosts, in hobgoblins, in men with the faces of ravens, in others with the bodies of scorpions, and in the post-mortem persistence of girls that died pure.

✓ These latter, in searching for someone whom they might seduce, must have afterward wandered into the presence of St. Anthony. Perhaps, too, it was they who, as succubi, emotionalized the dreams of monks. Yet, in view of Ishtar, they could not have been very numerous in Babylon where, however, they had a queen, Lilît, the Lilith of the *Talmud*, Adam's vampire wife, who conceived with him shapes of sin. In these also the Babylonians believed, and naïvely they represented them in forms so revolting that the sight of their own image alarmed them away.

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[1] Cuneiform Insc. W. A. ii. 32.

From these shapes or, more exactly, from sin itself, it was very properly held that all diseases came. Medicine consequently was a branch of religion. The physician was a priest. He asked the patient: Have you shed your neighbour's blood? Have you approached your neighbour's wife? Have you stolen your neighbour's garment? Or is it that you have failed to clothe the naked?

According to the responses he prescribed.[1]

But the priest who was a physician was also a wizard. He peeped and muttered, or, more subtly, provided enchanted philters in which simples had been dissolved. These devices failing, there was a series of incantations, the *Ritual of the Whispered Charm,* in which the most potent conjuration was the incommunicable name. To that all things yielded, even the gods.[2] But like the Shem of the Jews, it was probably never wholly uttered, because, save to the magi, not wholly known. In the formulæ of the necromancers it is omitted, though in practice it may have been pronounced.

Even that is doubtful. A knowledge of it conferred powers similar to those that have been attributed to the Christ, and which the Sadducees ascribed to his knowledge of the tetragrammation. A knowledge of the Babylonian Shem was as potent. It served not only men but gods. Ishtar, for purposes of her own, wanted to get into Aralû. In the recovered epic of her descent, imperiously she demanded entrance:

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[1] IV. R. 50–53. *Cf.* Delitzch: *op. cit.*

[2] Lenormant: La Magie chez les Chaldéens.

> Porter, open thy door.
> Open thy door that I may enter.
> If thou dost not open thy door,
> I will attack it, I will break down the bars,
> I will cause the dead to rise and devour the living.[1]

Ishtar was admitted. But Aralû was the land whence none return. Once in, she could not get out until, ultimately, the incommunicable name was uttered. The epic says that, in the interim, there was on earth neither love nor loving. In possible connection with which incantations have been found, deprecating "the consecrated harlots with rebellious hearts that have abandoned the holy places."[1]

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[1] Records of the Past.

In addition to the *Ritual of the Whispered Charm*, there was the *Illumination of Bel*, an encyclopædia of astrology in seventy-two volumes which the suburban library of Borsippa contained. During the captivity many Jews must have gone there. In the large light halls they were free to read whatever they liked, religion, history, science, the romance of all three. The books, catalogued and numbered, were ranged on shelves. One had but to ask. The service was gratis.

Babylon, then, prismatic and learned, was the most respectable place on earth. For ten thousand years man had there consulted the stars. But though respectable, it was also equivocal. During a period equally long — or brief — the girls of the city had loosed their girdles for Ishtar and yielded themselves to anyone, stranger or neighbour, that asked. In the service of the goddess their brothers occasionally feigned that they too were girls. Meanwhile, from the summit of a seven-floored pyramid, mortals contemplated the divine.

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[1] Lenormant; *op. cit.*

Beneath was cosmopolis, the golden cup that, in the words of Jeremiah, made the whole world drunk. Seated immensely on the twin banks of the Euphrates — banks that bridges above and tunnels beneath interjoined — Babylon more nearly resembled a walled nation than a fortified town. Within the gates, in an enclosure ample and noble, a space that exceeded a hundred square miles, an area sufficient for Paris quintupled, observatories and palaces rose above the roar of human tides that swept in waves through the wide boulevards, surged over the quays, flooded the gardens, eddied through the open-air lupanar, circled among statues of gods and bulls, poured out of the hundred gates, or broke against the polychrome walls and seethed back in the avenues, along which, to the high flourishes of military bands, passed armed hoplites, merchants in long robes, cloaked bedouins, Kelts in bearskins, priests in spangled dresses, tiara'd princes, burdened slaves, kings discrowned, furtive forms — prostitutes, pederasts, human wolves, vermin, sheep — the flux and reflux of the gigantic city.

In that ocean, the captive Jews, if captive they were, rolled, lost as a handful of salt spilt in the sea. Yet, from the depths, a few had swum up and, filtering adroitly, had reached the dignity of high place.

One was pontiff. Others were viceroys. In addition to being pontiff, Daniel was chancellor of the realm. Ezra was rector of the university. As pontiff of a college of wizards, Daniel may have known the future. As Minister of Wisdom, Ezra may have known, what is quite as difficult, the past. For the moment there was but the present. Over it ruled Belshazzar.

Yet, ruler though he was, there were powers potenter than his own: Baalim, outraged at the elevation of a parvenu god; a priesthood consequently disaffected; and, without, at the gates, the foe.

It would have been interesting to have assisted at the final festival when, beneath cyclopean arches, in the sunlight of clustered candelabra, amid the glitter of gold and white teeth, among the fair sultanas that were strewn like flowers through the throne-room of the imperial court, Belshazzar lay, smiling, amused rather than annoyed at the impudent menace of Cyrus.

Babylon was impregnable. He knew it. But the subtle Jews, the indignant gods, the alienated priests to whom the Persian was a redeemer, of these he did not think. Daniel had indeed warned him and, vaguely, he had promised something which he had since forgot.

Beyond, an orchestra was playing. Further yet, columns upheld a ceiling so lofty that it was lost. On the adjacent wall was a frieze of curious and chimerical beasts. Belshazzar was looking at them. In their dumb stupidity was a suggestion of the foe. The suggestion amused. Smiling still he raised a cup. Abruptly, before it could reach his lips, it fell with a clatter on the lapis lazuli of the floor beneath. Before him, on that wall, beneath those beasts, the necromancy of the priesthood had projected an armless, fluidic hand that mounted, descended, tracing with a forefinger the three luminous hierograms of his doom.

The story, a little drama, was, with the tale concerning Nebuchadnezzar, that of Daniel, and other novels quite as strange, evolved long later in the wide leisures of Jerusalem. The fluidic hand did not appear. Even had it zigzagged there was no Belshazzar to frighten.

Only the doom was real. Cyrus was clothed with it. To the trumpetings of heralds and the sheen of angels' wings, triumphantly he came. Then, presently, by royal decree, the Jews, manumitted and released, retraced their steps, burdened with spoil; with the lore of two distinct civilizations, which, fusing in the great square letters of the Pentateuch, was to become the poetry of all mankind.

Bayblon, ultimately, with her goblin gods and harlot goddess, sank into her own Aralû. Nourished there on dust, Lilît, with the sister vampires of eternal night, fed on her.

V

JEHOVAH

A CAMEL'S-HAIR tent set in the desert was the first cathedral, the earliest cloister of latest ideals. Set not in one desert merely but in two, in the infinite of time as well as in that of space, there was about it a limitlessness in which the past could sleep, the future awake, and into which all things, the human, the divine, gods and romance, could enter.

The human came first. Then the gods. Then romance. The divine was their triple expansion. It was an after growth, in other lands, that tears had watered. In the desert it was unimagined. Only the gods had been conceived.

The gods were many and yet but one. Though plural they were singular. The subjects of impersonal verbs, they represented the pronoun in such expressions as: it rains; it thunders. "It" was Elohim. Already among nomad Semites monotheism had begun. Yet with this distinction. Each tribe had separate sets of Its that guided, guarded, and scourged. Omnipresent but not omnipotent, any humiliation to the family that they had in charge humiliated them. It made them angry, therefore vindictive, consequently unjust. It may be that they were not very ethical. Perhaps the bedouins were not either. Man fashions his god in proportion to his intelligence. That of the nomad was slender. He lacked, what the Aryan shepherd possessed, the ability for mythological invention. The defect was due to his speech, which did not lend itself to the deification of epithets. Even had it done so, it is probable that his mode of life would have rendered the paraphernalia of polytheism impossible. People constantly moving from place to place could not be cumbered with idols. The Elohim were, therefore, a convenience for travellers and an unidolatrous monotheism a necessity which the absence of vehicles imposed. On the other hand, given every facility, it is presumable that the result would have been the same. Mythology is the mother of poetry. Idolatry is the father of art. Neither could appeal to a people to whom delicacy was an unknown god. Had it been known and a fetish, they could not have become the practical people that they are. Even then they were shrewd. Their Elohim might alarm but never delude. Israel was uncheatable even in dream.

Originally emigrants from Arabia, the nomads reached Syria, some directly, others circuitously, by way of Padan-Aram and across the Euphrates, whence perhaps their name of *Ibrim* or Hebrews — *Those from beyond.* In the journey Babel and Ur must have detained. These cities, with their culture relatively deep and their observatories equally high, became, in after days, a source of legend, of wonder, of hatred, perhaps of revelation as well.

At the time the nomads had no cosmogony or theories. The Chaldeans had both. There was a story of creation, another of antediluvian kings and of the punishment that overtook them. There was also a story of an emir of Ur, an old man who had benevolently killed an animal instead of his son. The story, like the others, must have impressed. In after years the old man became Abraham, a great person, who had conversed with the Elohim and whose descendants they were.

The story of creation also impressed. It was enlightening and comprehensible. The parallel theory of spontaneous generation and the progressive evolution of the species which the magi entertained, they probably never heard. Even otherwise it was too complex for minds as yet untutored. The fables alone appealed. Mentally compressed into portable shape, carried along, handed down, their origin afterward forgotten, they became the traditions of a nation, which, eminently conservative, preserved what it found, among other things the name, perhaps inharmonious, of Jhvh.[1]

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[1] Renan: Histoire du peuple d'Israël. Kuenen: De Godsdienst van Israël.

That name, since found on an inscription of Sargon, appears to have been the title of a local god of Sinai, whom the nomads may have identified with Elohim, particularly, perhaps, since he presided over thunder, the phenomenon that alarmed them most and which, in consequence, inspired the greatest awe. That awe they put into the name, the pronunciation of which, like the origin of their traditions, they afterward forgot. In subsequent rabbinical writings it became Shem, the Name; Shemhammephoresh, the Revealed Name, uttered but once a year, on the day of Atonement, by the high priest in the Holy of Holies. Mention of it by anyone else was deemed a capital offence, though, permissibly, it might be rendered El Shaddai, the Almighty. That term the Septuagint translated into ὁ Κύριος, a Greek form, in the singular, of the Aramaic plural Adonai, which means Baalim, or sun lords.

That form the Vulgate gave as Dominus and posterior theology as God. The latter term, common to all Teutonic tongues, has no known meaning. It designates that which, to the limited intelligence of man, has been, and must be, incomprehensible. But the original term Jhvh, which, in the seventeenth century, was developed into Jehovah, yet which, the vowels being wholly conjectural, might have been developed into anything else, clearly appealed to wayfarers to whom Chaldean science was a book that remained closed until Nebuchadnezzar blew their descendants back into the miraculous Babel of their youth.

Meanwhile, apart from the name — now generally written Jahveh — apart too from the fables and the enduring detestation which the colossal city inspired, probably but one other thing impressed, and that was the observance of the Sabbath. To a people whose public works were executed by forced labour, such a day was a necessity. To vagrants it was not, and, though the custom interested, it was not adopted by them until their existence from nomad had become fixed.

At this latter period they were in Kanaan. Whether in the interval a tribe, the Beni-Israel, went down into Egypt, is a subject on which Continental scholarship has its doubts. The early life of the tribe's leader and legislator is usually associated with Rameses II., a pharaoh of the XIX. dynasty. But it has been found that incidents connected with Moses must apparently have occurred, if they occurred at all, at a period not earlier than the XXVI. dynasty, which constitutes a minimum difference of seven hundred years. Yet, in view of the decalogue, with its curious analogy to the negative confession in the *Book of the Dead;* in view also of a practice surgical and possibly hygienic which, customary among the Egyptians, was adopted by the Jews; in view, further, of ceremonies and symbols peculiarly Egyptian that were also absorbed, a sojourn in Goshen there may have been.

The spoiling of the Egyptians, a roguery on which Israel afterward prided herself, is a trait perhaps too typical to be lightly dismissed. On the other hand, if Moses were, which is at least problematic, and if, in addition to being, he was both the nephew of a pharaoh and the son-in-law of a priest, as such one to whom, in either quality, the arcana of the creed would be revealed, it becomes curious that nowhere in the Pentateuch is there any doctrine of a future life. Of the entire story, it may be that only the journey into the Sinaiatic peninsula is true, and of that there probably remained but tradition, on which history was based much later, by writers who had only surmises concerning the time and circumstances in which it occurred.

Yet equally with the roguery, Moses may have been. Seen through modern criticism his figure fades though his name persists. To that name the Septuagint tried to give an Egyptian flavour. In their version it is always Μωυσής, a compound derived from the Egyptian *mô*, water, and *usês*, saved from, or Saved-from-the-water.[1] Per contra, the Hebrew form Mosheh is, as already indicated, the same as the Babylonian Masû, a term which means at once leader and littérateur, in addition to being the cognomen of a god.[1]

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[1] Josephus: Antiq. ii. 9.

✓ Moses is said to have led his people out of bondage. He was the writer to whom the Pentateuch has been ascribed. But he was also a prophet. In Babylon, the god of prophecy was Nebo. It was on Mount Nebo that Jahveh commanded the prophet of Israel to die. Moreover, the divinity that had Masû for cognomen was, as is shown by a Babylonian text, the primitive god of the sun at Nippur, but the sun at noon, at the period of its greatest effulgence, at the hour when it wars with whatever opposes, when it wars as Jahveh did, or as the latter may be assumed to have warred, since Isaiah represented him as a mighty man, roaring at his enemies, exciting the fury of the fight, marching personally to the conflict, and, in the Fourth Roll of the Law (Numbers), there is mention of a book entitled: *The Wars of Jahveh.*

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[1] Sayce: The Religion of the Babylonians.

Whether, then, Moses is but a composite of things Babylonian fused in an effort to show a link between a god and a people, is conjectural. But it is also immaterial. The one instructive fact is that, in a retrospect, the god, immediately after the exodus, became dictator.

Yet even in the later age, when the retrospect was effected, conceptions were evidently immature. On one occasion the god met Moses, tried to kill him, but finally let him go. The picture is that of a personal struggle.[1] Again, the spectacle of his back which he vouchsafed to Moses is construable only as an *arrière-*

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[1] Exodus iv. 24–26.

pensée, unless it be profound philosophy, unless it be taken that the face of God represents Providence, to see which would be to behold the future, whereas the back disclosed the past.

It is, however, hardly probable that that construction occurred to the editors of the Pentateuch, who, elsewhere, represented Jahveh as a butcher, insatiable, jealous, vindictive, treacherous, and vain, one that consigned all nations other than Israel to ruin and whom a poet represented trampling people in anger, making them drunk with his fury, and defiling his raiment with blood.[1]

✓ But in the period related in *Exodus*, Jahveh was but the tutelary god of an itinerant tribe that, in its gipsy lack of territorial possessions, was not even a nation. Like his people he too was a

[1] Isaiah lxiii. 1-6.

vagrant. Like them he had no home. Other gods had temples and altars. He lacked so much as a shrine. In prefigurement of the Wandering Jew, each day he moved on. The threats of a land that never smiled were reflected in his face. The sight of him was death. Certainly he was terrible.

This conception, corrected by later writers, was otherwise revised. In the interim Jahveh himself was transformed. He became El, the god; presently El Shaddai, God Almighty. In the ascension former traits disappeared. He developed into the deity of emphatic right. Morality, hitherto absent from religion, entered into it. Israel, who perhaps had been careless, who, like Solomon, had followed Ishtar, became austere. Thereafter, Judaism, of which Christianity and Muhammadanism were the after thoughts, was destined to represent almost the sum total of the human conscience.

But in Kanaan, during the rude beginnings, though Jahveh was jealous, Ishtar, known locally as Ashtoreth, allured. Conjointly with Baal, the indigenous term for Bel, circumadjacently she ruled. The propitiatory rites of these fair gods were debauchery and infanticide, the loosening of the girdles of girls, the thrusting of children into fires. It may be that these ceremonies at first amazed the Hebrews. But conscientiously they adopted them, less perhaps through zeal than politeness; because, in this curious epoch, on entering a country it was thought only civil to serve the divinities that were there, in accordance with the ritual that pleased them.

With the mere mortal inhabitants, Israel was less ceremonious. Commanded by Jahveh to kill, extermination was but an act of piety. It was then, perhaps, that the *Wars of Jahveh* were sung, a pæan that must have been resonant with cries, with the death-rattle of kingdoms, with the shouts of the invading host. From the breast-plates of the chosen, the terror of Sinai gleamed. Men could not see their faces and live. The moon was their servant. To aid them the sun stood still. They encroached, they slaughtered, they quelled. In the conquest a nation was born. From that bloody cradle the God of Humanity came. But around and about it was vacancy. In emerging from one solitude the Jews created another. They have never left it. The desert which they made destined them to be alone on this earth, as their god was to be solitary in heaven.

Meanwhile there had been no kings in

Israel. With the nation royalty came. David followed Saul. After him was Solomon. It is presumably at this period that traditions, orally transmitted from a past relatively remote, were first put in writing. Previously it is conjectural if the Jews could write. If they could, it is uncertain whether they made any use of the ability other than in the possible compilation of toledoth, such as the *Book of the Generations of Adam* and the *Wars of Jahveh*, works that, later, may have served as data for the Pentateuch. Even then, the compositions must have been crude, and such rolls as existed may have been lost when Nebuchadnezzar overturned Jerusalem.

Presumably, it was not until the post-exilic period that, under the editorship perhaps of Ezra, the definitive edition of the Torah was produced. This supposition existing texts support. In Genesis (xxxvii. 31) it is written: "These are the kings of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." The passage shows, if it shows anything, that there were, or had been, kings in Israel at the time when the passage itself was written. It is, therefore, at least post-Davidic. In Genesis another passage (xlix. 10) says: "The sceptre shall not pass from Judah until Shiloh come." Judah was the tribe that became preeminent in Israel after the captivity. The passage is therefore post-exilic, consequently so is Genesis, and obviously the rest of the Pentateuch as well. Or, if not obviously, perhaps demonstrably. In II Esdras xiv. 22-48 it is stated that the writer, a candle of understanding in his heart, and aided by five swift scribes, recomposed the Law, which, previously burned, was known to none.

The burning referred to is what may, perhaps, be termed religious fiction. Barring toledoth and related data that may have been lost, the Law had almost certainly not existed before, and this post-exilic romance concerning it was evolved in a laudable effort to show its Mosaic source. What is true of the Law is, in a measure, true of the Prophets. None of them anterior to Cyrus, all are later than Alexander. Spiritually very near to Christianity, chronologically they are neighbourly too. If not divinely inspired, they at least disclosed the ideal.

Previously the ideal had not perhaps been very apparent. Apart from secessions, rebellions, concussions, convulsions that deified Hatred until Jahveh, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, talked Assyrian, and then, in the person of Cyrus, talked Zend, the god of Israel, even in Israel, was not unique. He had a home, his first, the Temple, built gorgeously by Solomon, where invisibly, mysteriously, perhaps terribly, beneath the wings of cherubim that rose from the depths of the Holy of Holies, he dwelled. But the shrine, however ornate, was not the only one. There were other altars, other gods; the plentiful sanctuaries of Ashera, of Moloch and of Baal. On the adjacent hilltops the phallus stood. In the neighbouring groves the kisses of Ishtar consumed.

The Lady of Girdles was worshipped there not by men and women only, but by girls with girls; by others too, not in couples, but singly, girls who in their solitary devotions had instruments for aid.[1] Religion, as yet, had but the slightest connection with morality, a circumstance explicable perhaps by the fact that it resumed the ethnical conscience of a race. Between the altar of El Shaddai and the shrines of other gods there were many differences, of which geography was the least. Jahveh, from a tutelary god, had indeed become the national divinity of a chosen people. But the Moabites were the chosen people of Chemos; the Ammonites were the chosen people of Rimmon; the Babylonians were the chosen people of Bel. The title conferred no distinction. As a consequence, to differerentiate Jahveh from all other gods, and Israel from all other people, to make the one unique and the other pontiff and shepherd of the nations of the world, became the dream of anonymous poets, one that prophets, sometimes equally anonymous, proclaimed. It was the prophets that reviled the false gods, denounced the abominations of Ishtar, and purified the Israelite heart. While nothing discernible, or even imaginable, menaced, however slightly, the great empires of that day, the prophets were the first to realize that the Orient was dead. When the Christ announced that the end of the world was at hand, he but reiterated anterior predictions that presently were fulfilled. A world did end. That of antiquity ceased to be.

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[1] *Cf.* Deut. xxiii. 17, where *'alâmôth* (puellæ) is rendered in the Sapphist sense. Ezekiel xvi. 17. *Fecisti tibi imagines masculinas.*

It was the prophets that foretold it. Gloomy, fanatic, implacable and, it may be, mad, yet inspired at least by genius which itself, while madness, is a madness wholly divine, they heralded the future, they established the past. Abraham they drew from allegory, Moses from myth. They made them live, and so immortally that one survives in Islam, the other in words that are a law of grace for all.

If, in visions possibly ecstatic, they beheld heights that lost themselves in immensity, and saw there an ineffable name seared by forked flames on a tablet of stone; if that spectacle and the theophany of it were but poetry, the decalogue is a fact, one so solid that though ages have gone, though empires have crumbled, though the customs of man have altered, though the sky itself have changed, still is obeyed the commandment: Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

From Chemos in Moab, from Rimon among the Ammonites, no such edict had come. It felled them. Amon-Râ it tore from the celestial Nile, and Bel-Marduk from the Silver Sky. The Refaïm hid them in shadows as surely as they buried there the high and potent lords of Greece and Rome. These interments, completed by others, the prophets began. For it was they who, in addition to the command, revealed the commandant, creator of whatever is: the Being Absolute that abhorred evil, loved righteousness, punished the transgressor and rewarded the just; El Shaddai, then really Lord of Hosts.

It may be that already in Israel there had been some prescience of this. But it lacked the authority of inspired text. The omission was one that only seers could remedy. It was presumably in these circumstances that an agreement was imagined which, construed as a condition of a covenant, assumed to have been made with Abraham, was further assumed to have been renewed to Moses.

The resulting poetry was enveloped in a romance of which Continental scholarship has discovered two versions, woven together, perhaps by Ezra, into a single tale.

"In the beginning Elohim created the heaven and earth." That abrupt declaration, presented originally in but one of the versions, had already been pronounced of Indra and also of Ormuzd. The Hebraic announcement alone prevailed. It emptied the firmament of its monsters, dislodged the gods from the skies, and enthroned there a deity at first multiple but subsequently unique. Afterward seraphs and saints might replace the evaporated imaginings of other creeds; Satan might create a world of his own and people it with the damned; theology might evolve from elder faiths a newer trinity and set it like a diadem in space;

angels and archangels might refill the devastated heavens of the past; none the less, in the light of that austere pronouncement, for a moment Israel dwelled in contemplation of the Ideal.

At the time it is probable that the story of the love of the sons of Jahveh for the daughters of men, together with the pastel of Eden as it stands to-day, were not contained in existing accounts of that ideal. These legends, which regarded as legends are obviously false, but which, construed as allegories, may be profoundly true, were probably not diffused until after the captivity, when Israel was not more subtle, that is not possible, but, by reason of her contact with Persia, more wise.

The origin of evil these myths related but did not explain. Since then, from no church has there come an adequate explanation of the malediction under which man is supposed to labour because of the natural propensities of beings that never were. That explanation these myths, which orthodoxy has gravely, though sometimes reluctantly, accepted, both provide and conceal. They date possibly from the Ormuzdian revelation: "In the beginning was the living Word."

John, or more exactly his homonym, repeated the pronouncement, adding: "The word was made flesh." But, save for a mention of the glory which he had before the world was, he omitted to further follow the thought of Ormuzd, who, in describing paradise to Zarathrustra, likened it, in every way, to heaven. There the first beings were, exempt from physical necessities, pure intelligencies, naked as the compilers of

Genesis translated, naked and unashamed, but naked and unashamed because incorporeal, unincarnate and clothed in light, a vestment which they exchanged for a garment of flesh, coats of skin as it is in Genesis, when, descended on earth, their intelligence, previously luminous, swooned in the senses of man.

In Egypt, the harper going out from Amenti sang: "Life is death in a land of darkness, death is life in a land of light." There perhaps is the origin of evil. There too perhaps is its cure. But the view accepted there too is pre-existence and persistence, a doctrine blasphemous to the Jew as it was to the Assyrian, to whom the gods alone were immortal, and to whom, in consequence, immortal beings would be gods. In the creed of both, man was essentially evanescent. To the Hebrew, he lived a few, brief days and then went down into silence, where no remembrance is. There, gathered among the Refaïm to his fathers, he remained forever, unheeded by God.

The conception, passably rationalistic and not impossibly correct, veiled the beautiful allegory that was latent in the Eden myth. It had the further defect, or the additional advantage, of eliminating any theory of future punishment and reward. In lieu of anything of the kind, there was a doctrine that evil, in producing evil, automatically punished itself. The doctrine is incontrovertible. But, for corollary, went the fallacy that virtue is its own reward. Against that idea Job protested so energetically that mediæval monks were afraid to read what he wrote. Yet it was perhaps in demonstration of the real significance of the allegory that a spiritualistic doctrine —

always an impiety to the orthodox — was insinuated by the Pharisees and instilled by the Christ.

The basis of it rested perhaps partially in the idealism of the prophets. The clamour of their voices awoke the dead. It transformed the skies. It transfigured Jahveh. It divested him of attributes that were human. It outlined others that were divine. It awoke not merely the dead, but the consciousness that a god that had a proper name could not be the true one. Thereafter mention of it was avoided. The vowels were dropped. It became unpronounceable, therefore incommunicable. For it was substituted the term vaguer, and therefore more exact, of Lord, one in whose service were fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God."

In the marvel of that miraculous realization were altitudes hitherto undreamed, peaks from whose summits there was discernible but the valleys beneath, and another height on which stood the Son of man. Yet marvellous though the realization was, instead of diminishing, it increased. It did not pass. It was not forgot. Ceaselessly it augmented.

In the Scriptures there are many marvels. That perhaps is the greatest. Amon, originally an obscure provincial god of Thebes, became the supreme divinity of Egypt. Bel, originally a local god of Nippur, became in Babylon Lord of Hosts. But Jahveh, originally the tutelary god of squalid nomads, became the Deity of Christendom. The fact is one that any scholarship must admit. It is the indisputable miracle of the Bible.

VI

ZEUS

IN Judea, when Jahveh was addressed, he answered, if at all, with a thunderclap. Since then he has ceased to reply. Zeus was more complaisant. One might enter with him into the intimacy of the infinite. The father of the Graces, the Muses, the Hours, it was natural that he should be debonair. But he had other children. Among them were Litai, the Prayers. In the *Vedas*, where Zeus was born, the Prayers upheld the skies. Lame and less lofty in Greece, they could but listen and intercede.

The detail is taken from Homer. In his Ionian Pentateuch is the statement that beggars are sent by Zeus, that whoever stretches a hand is respectable in his eyes, that the mendicant who is repulsed may perhaps be a god[1] — suggestions which, afterward, were superiorly resumed in the dictum: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Litai were not alone in their offices. There were the oracles of Delphi, of Trophonios and of Mopsos, where one might converse with any divinity, even with Pan, who was a very great god. But Olympos was neighbourly. It was charming too. There was unending spring there, eternal youth, immortal beauty, the harmonies of divine honeymoons, the ideal in a golden dream; a stretch of crystal parapets, from which, leaning and laughing, radiant goddesses and resplendent gods looked down, and to whom a people, adolescent still, looked up.

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[1] Odyssey, xviii. 485, v. 447, xiv. 56.

In that morning of delight fear was absent, mystery was replaced by joy. The pageantry of the hours may have been too near to nature to know of shame, it was yet too close to the divine to know of hate. Man, then, for the first time, loved what he worshipped and worshipped what he loved. His brilliant and musical Bible moved his heart without tormenting it. It conducted but did not constrain. It taught him that in death all are equal and that in life the noble-minded are serene.

In the Genesis of this Bible there is an account of a golden age and of a paradise into which evil was introduced by woman. The account is Hesiod's, to whom the Orient had furnished the details. It may be that both erred. If ever there were a golden age it must have been in those days when heaven was on earth and, mingling familiarly with men, were processions of gods, gods of love, of light, of liberty, thousands of them, not one of whom had ever heard an atheist's voice. Related to humanity, of the same blood, sons of the same Aryan mother, they differed from men only in that the latter died because they were real, while they were deathless because ideal.

The ideal was too fair. Presently Pallas became the soul of Athens. But meanwhile from the East there strayed swarms of enigmatic faces; the harlot handmaids of her Celestial Highness Ishtar, Princess of Heaven; the mutilated priests of Tammuz her lover; dual conceptions that resulted in Aphrodite Pandemos, the postures of Priapos, the leer of the Lampsacene, and, with them, forms of worship comparable, in the circumadjacent beauty, to latrinæ in a garden, ignoble shapes that violated the candour of maidens' eyes, but with which Greece became so accustomed that on them moral aphorisms were engraved. "In the mind of Hellas, these things," Renan, with his usual unctuousness, declared, "awoke but pious thoughts."

Pious at heart Hellas was. Even art, which now is wholly profane, with her was wholly sacred. The sanctity was due to its perfection. The perfection was such that imbeciles who fancy that it has been or could be surpassed show merely that they know nothing about it. At Athens, where Pheidias created a palpable Olympos, Pallas stood colossally, a torch in her hand, a lance at her shoulder, a shield at her side, a plastron of gold on her immaculate breast, a golden robe about her ivory form, and on her immortal brow a crown of gold, beneath which, sapphire eyes, that saw and foresaw, glittered. To-day the place where the marvellous creation stood is vacant. With the gorgeous host Pallas has departed. But the torch she held still burns. From the emptiness of her virginal arms, that never were filled, proceeds all civilization.

Adjacently at Eleusis was Demeter. Pallas was the soul of Greece. Eleusis was the Jerusalem, Demeter the Madonna.

Demeter — the earth, the universal mother — had, in a mystic hymen with her brother Zeus, conceived Persephone. The latter, when young and a maiden, beckoned perhaps by Eros, wandered from Olympos and was gathering flowers when Pluto, borne by black horses, erupted, raped her, and tore her away. The cries of the indignant Demeter sterilized the earth. To assuage her, Zeus undertook to have Persephone recovered, provided that in Hades, of which Pluto was lord, she had eaten nothing. But the girl had — a pomegranate grain. It was the irrevocable. Demeter yielded, as the high gods had to yield, to what was higher than they, to Destiny. Meanwhile, in the shadows below, Persephone was transfigured.

Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons
 that laugh and that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow: but thou, Proserpina,
 sleep. . . .
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and
 blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven,
 the night where thou art,

Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep
overflows from the heart, . . .
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of
gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul
of a star.
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place and forget what
was done or undone.
Thou art more than the gods that number the days
of our temporal breath
For these give labour and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.

Like Hesiod, Swinburne erred, though perhaps intentionally, as poets should, for the greater glory of the Muses. Persephone brought not death but life. The aisles of despair she filled with hope. Transfigured herself, Pluto she transformed. She changed what had been hell into what was to be purgatory. It was not yet Elysium, but it was no longer Hades. Plato said that those who were in her world had no wish at all for this.

It is for that reason that Demeter is the Madonna of Greece, as her ethereal daughter was the saviour. The myth of it all, brought by Pythagoras from Egypt is very old. Known in Memphis, it was known too in Babylon, perhaps before Memphis was. But the legend of Isis and that of Ishtar — both of whom decended into hell — lack the transparent charm which this idyl unfolds and of which the significance was revealed only to initiate in epiphanies at Eleusis.

Before these sacraments Greece stood, a finger to her lips. Yet the whispers from them that have reached us, while furtive perhaps, are clear. They furnished the poets with notes that are resonant still. They lifted the drama to heights that astound. Even in the fancy balls of Aristophanes, where men were ribald and the gods were mocked, suddenly, in the midst of the orgy, laughter ceased, obscenities were hushed. Afar a hymn resounded. It was the chorus of the Initiate going measuredly by.

The original mysteries were Hermetic. Enterable only after a prolonged novitiate, the adept then beheld an unfolding of the theosophy of the soul. In visions, possibly ecstatic, he saw the series of its incarnations, the seven cycles through which it passed, the Ship of a Million Years on which the migrations are effected and on which, at last, from the Valley of the Shadow of Death, it sails to its primal home.

That home was colour, its sustenance light. There, in ethereal evolutions, its incarnations began. At first unsubstantial and wholly ineffable, these turned for it every object into beauty, every sound into joy. Without needs, from beatitude to beatitude blissfully it floated. But, subjected to the double attraction of matter and of sin, the initiate saw the memories and attributes of its spirituality fade. He saw it flutter, and fluttering sink. He saw that in sinking it enveloped itself in garments that grew heavier at each descent. Through the denser clothing he saw the desires of the flesh pulsate. He saw them force it lower, still lower, until, fallen into its earthly tenement, it swooned in the senses of man. From the chains of that prison he learned that the soul's one escape was in a recovery of the memory of what it had been when it was other than what it had become.

That memory the mysteries provided.

Those of Eleusis differed from the Egyptian only in detail. At Eleusis, in lieu of visions, there were tableaux. Persephone, beckoned by desire, straying then from Olympos, afterward fainting in the arms of Pluto, but subsequently, while preparing her own reascension, saving and embellishing all that approach, was the symbol, in an Hellenic setting, of the fall and redemption of man.

The human tragedy thus portrayed was the luminous counterpart of the dark dramas that Athens beheld. There, in the theatre — which itself was a church with the stage for pulpit — man, blinded by passions, the Fates pursued and Destiny felled.

The sombre spectacle was inexplicable. At Eleusis was enlightenment. "Eskato Bebeloï" — *Out from here, the profane* — the heralds shouted as the mysteries began. "Konx ompax" — *Go in peace* — they called when the epiphanies were completed.

In peace the initiate went, serenely, it is said, ever after. From them the load of ignorance was lifted. But what their impressions were is unrecorded. They were bound to secrecy. No one could learn what occurred without being initiated, or without dying. For death too is initiation.

The mysteries were schools of immortality. They plentifully taught many a lesson that Christianity afterward instilled. But their drapery was perhaps over ornate. Truth does not need any. Truth always should be charming. Yet always it should be naked as well. About it the mysteries hung a raiment that was beautiful, but of which the rich embroideries obscured. The mysteries could not have been more fascinating, that is not possible, but, the myths removed, in simple nudity they would have been more clear. Doubtless it was for that very reason, in order that they might not be transparent, that the myths were employed. It is for that very reason, perhaps, that Christianity also adopted a few. Yet at least from cant they were free. Among the multiple divinities of Greece, hypocrisy was the unknown god. (Consideration of the others is, to-day, usually effected through the pages of Ovid.) One might as well study Christianity in the works of Voltaire. Christianity's brightest days were in the dark ages. The splendid glamour of them that persists is due to many causes, among which, in minor degree, may be the compelling glare of Greek genius. That glare, veiled in the mysteries, philosophy reflects.

Philosophy is but the love of wisdom.

It began with Socrates. He had no belief in the gods. The man who has none may be very religious. But though Socrates did not believe in the gods he did not deny them. He did what perhaps was worse. He ignored their perfectly poetic existence. He was put to death for it, though only at the conclusion of a long promenade during which he delivered Athenian youths of their intelligence. Facility in the operation may have been inherited. Socrates was the son of a midwife. His own progeny consisted in a complete transfiguration of Athenian thought. He told of an Intelligence, supreme, ethical, just, seeing all, hearing all, governing all; a creator made not after the image of man but of the soul, and visible only in the conscience. It was for that he died. There was no such god on Olympos.

There was an additional indictment. Socrates was accused of perverting the *jeunesse dorée.* At a period when, everywhere, save only in Israel, the abnormal was usual, Socrates was almost insultingly chaste. The perversion of which he was accused was not of that order. It was that of inciting lads to disobey their parents when the latter opposed what he taught.

"I am come to set a man against his father," it is written in *Matthew.* The mission of Socrates was the same. Because of it he died. He was the first martyr. But his death was overwhelming in its simplicity. Even in fairyland there has been nothing more calm. By way of preparation he said to his judges: "Were you to offer to acquit me on condition that I no longer profess what I believe, I would answer; 'Athenians, I honour and I love you, but a god has commanded me and that god I will obey, rather than you.'"

In the speech was irony, with which Athens was familiar. But it also displayed a conception, wholly new, that of maintaining at any cost the truth. The novelty must have charmed. When Peter and the apostles were arraigned before the Sanhedrin, their defence consisted in the very words that Socrates had used: "We should obey God rather than man." [1]

Socrates wrote nothing. The Buddha did not either. Neither did the Christ. These had their evangelists. Socrates had also disciples who, as vehicle for his ideas, employed the nightingale tongue of beauty into which the Law and the Prophets were translated by the Septuagint and into which the Gospels were put

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[1] Acts v. 29.

It would be irreverent to suggest that the latter are in any way indebted to Socratic inspiration. It would be irrelevant as well. For, while the Intelligence that Socrates preached differed as much from the volage and voluptuous Zeus as the God of Christendom differs from the Jahveh of Job, yet, in a divergence so wide, an idealist, very poor except in ideas; a teacher killed by those who knew not what they did; a philosopher that drained the cup without even asking that it pass from him; a mere reformer, though dangerous perhaps as every reformer worth the name must be; but, otherwise, a mere man like any other, only a little better, could obviously have had no share. For reasons not minor but major, Plato could have had none either.

It is related that a Roman invader, sank back, stricken with *deisidaimonia* —

the awe that the gods inspired — at the sight of the Pheidian Zeus. It is with a wonder not cognate certainly, yet in a measure relative, that one considers what Socrates must have been if millennia have gone without producing one mind approaching that of his spiritual heir. It was uranian; but not disassociated from human things.

Plato, like his master, was but a man in whom the ideal was intuitive, perhaps the infernal also. In the gardens of the Academe and along the banks of the Ilissus, he announced a Last Judgment. The announcement, contained in the *Phædo,* had for supplement a picture that may have been Persian, of the righteous ascending to heaven and the wicked descending to hell. In the *Laws,* the picture was annotated with a statement to the effect that whatever a man may do, there is an eye that sees him, a memory that registers and retains. In the *Republic* he declared that afflictions are blessings in disguise. But his "Republic," a utopian commonwealth, was not, he said, of this world, adding in the *Phœdo*, that few are chosen though many are called.

The mystery of the catholicism of the Incas, reported back to the Holy Office, was there defined as an artifice of the devil. With finer circumspection, Christian Fathers attributed the denser mystery of Greek philosophy to the inspiration of God.

Certainly it is ample. As exemplified by Plato it has, though, its limitations. There is no charity in it. Plato preached humility, but there is none in his sermons. His thought is a winged thing, as the thought of a poet ever should be. But in the expression of it he seems smiling, disdainful, indifferent as a statue to the poverties of the heart. That too, perhaps, is as it should be. The high muse wears a radiant peplum. Anxiety is banished from the minds that she haunts. Then, also, if, in the nectar of Plato's speech, compassion is not an ingredient, it may be because, in his violet-crowned city, it was strewn open-handed through the beautiful streets. There, public malediction was visited on anyone that omitted to guide a stranger on his way.

Israel was too strictly monotheistic to raise an altar to Pity, the rest of antiquity too cruel. In Athens there was one. In addition there were missions for the needy, asylums for the infirm. If anywhere, at that period, human sympathy existed, it was in Greece. The aristocratic silence of Plato may have been due to that fact.

He would not talk of the obvious, though he did of the vile. In one of his books the then common and abnormal conception of sexuality was, if not authorized, at least condoned. It is conjectural, however, whether the conception was more monstrous than that which subsequent mysticity evolved.

Said Ruysbroeck: "The mystic carries her soul in her hand and gives it to whomsoever she wishes." Said St. Francis of Sales: "The soul draws to itself motives of love and delectates in them." What the gift and what the delectation were, other saints have described.

Marie de la Croix asserted that in the arms of the celestial Spouse she swam in an ocean of delight. Concerning that Spouse, Marie Alacoque added: "Like the most passionate of lovers he made me understand that I should taste what is sweetest in the suavity of caresses, and indeed, so poignant were they, that I swooned." The ravishments which St. Theresa experienced she expressed in terms of abandoned precision. Mme. Guyon wrote so carnally of the divine that Bossuet exclaimed; "Seigneur, if I dared, I would pray that a seraph with a flaming sword might come and purify my lips sullied by this recital."[1]

Augustin pleasantly remarked that we are all born for hell. One need not agree with him. In the presence of the possibly monstrous and the impossibly blasphemous, there is always a recourse. It is to turn away, though it be to Zeus, a belief in whom, however stupid, is ennobling beside the turpitudes that Christian mysticism produced.

At Athens, meanwhile, the religion of

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[1] Relation sur le Quiétisme.

State persisted. So also did philosophy. When, occasionally, the two met, the latter bowed. That was sufficient. Religion exacted respect, not belief. It was not a faith, it was a law, one that for its majesty was admired and for its poetry was beloved. In the deification of whatever is exquisite it was but an artistic cult. The real Olympos was the Pantheon. The other was fading away. Deeper and deeper it was sinking back into the golden dream from which it had sprung. Further and further the crystal parapets were retreating. Dimmer and more dim the gorgeous host became. In words of perfect piety Epicurus pictured them in the felicity of the ideal. There, they had no heed of man, no desire for worship, no wish for prayer. It was unnecessary even to think of them. Decorously, with every homage, they were being deposed.

But if Epicurus was decorous, Evemerus was devout. It was his endeavour, he said, not to undermine but to fortify. The gods he described as philanthropists whom a grateful world had deified. Zeus had waged a sacrilegious war against his father. Aphrodite was a harlot and a procuress. The others were equally commendable. Once they had all lived. Since then all had died. Evemerus had seen their tombs.

One should not believe him. Their parapets are dimmer, perhaps, but from them still they lean and laugh. They are immortal as the hexameters in which their loves unfold. Yet, oddly enough, presently the oracle of Delphi strangled. In his cavern Trophonios was gagged. The voice of Mopsos withered.

That is nothing. On the Ionian, the captain of a ship heard some one calling loudly at him from the sea. The passengers, who were at table, looked out astounded. Again the loud voice called: "Captain, when you reach shore announce that the great god Pan is dead."[1]

It may be that it was true. It may be that after Pan the others departed. When Paul reached Athens he found a denuded Pantheon, a vacant Olympos, skies more empty still.

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[1] Plutarch: de Oracul. defect. 14.

VII

JUPITER

THE name of the national deity of Israel is unpronounceable. The name of the national divinity of Rome is unknown. To all but the hierophants it was a secret. For uttering it a senator was put to death. But Tullius Hostilius erected temples to Fear and to Pallor. It may have been Fright. The conjecture is supported by the fact that, as was usual, Rome had any number of deified epithets, as she had also a quantity of little bits of gods. These latter greatly amused the Christian Fathers. Among them was Alemona, who, in homely English, was Wet-nurse.

Tertullian, perhaps naïvely, remarked: "Superstition has invented these deities for whom we have substituted angels." In addition to the diva mater Alemona was the divus pater Vaticanus, the holy father Vatican, who assisted at a child's first cry. There was the equally holy father Fabulin, who attended him in his earliest efforts at speech. Neither of them had anything else to do.

Pavor had. At thunder, at lightning, at a meteor, at moisture on a wall, at no matter what, at silence even, the descendants of a she-wolf's nursling quailed. They lived in a panic. In panic the gods were born. It is but natural, perhaps, that Fright should have been held supreme. The other gods, mainly divinities of prey and of havoc, were lustreless as the imaginations that conceived them. Prosaic, unimaged, without poetry or myth, they dully persisted until pedlars appeared with Hellenic legends and wares. To their tales Rome listened. Then eidolons of the Olympians became naturalized there. Zeus was transformed into Jupiter, Aphrodite into Venus, Pallas into Minerva, Demeter into Ceres, and all of them — and with them all the others — into an irritable police. The Greek gods enchanted, those of Rome alarmed. Plutarch said that they were indignant if one presumed to so much as sneeze.

Worship, consequently, was a necessary precaution, an insurance against divine risks, a matter of business in which the devout bargained with the divine. Ovid represented Numa trying to elude the exigencies of Jove. The latter had demanded the sacrifice of a head. "You shall have a cabbage," said the king. "I mean something human." "Some hairs then." "No, I want something alive." "We will give you a pretty little fish." Jupiter laughed and yielded. That was much later, after Lucretius, in putting Epicurus into verse, had declared religion to be the mother of sin. By that time Fear and Pallor had struck terror into the very marrow of barbarian bones. Fright was a god more serviceable than Zeus. With him Rome conquered the world. Yet in the conquest Fright became Might and the latter an effulgence of Jove's.

Jove was magnificent. In the Capitol he throned so augustly that we swear by him still. Like Rome he is immortal. But Pavor, that had faded into him, was never invoked. The reason was not sacerdotal, it was political. Rome never imposed her gods on the quelled. With superior tact she lured their gods from them. At any siege, that was her first device. To it she believed her victories were due. It was to avoid possible reprisals and to remain invincible, that her own national divinity she so carefully concealed that the name still is a secret. With the gods, Rome gathered the creeds of the world, set them like fountains among her hills, and drank of their sacred waters. Her early deity is unknown. But the secret of her eternity is in the religions that she absorbed. It was these that made her immortal.

To that immortality the obscure god of an obscure people contributed largely, perhaps, but perhaps, too, not uniquely. Jahveh might have remained unperceived behind the veil of the sanctuary had not his altar been illuminated by lights from other shrines. In the early days of the empire, Rome was fully aware of the glamour of Amon, of the star of Ormuzd, Brahm's cerulean lotos and the rainbow heights of Bel-Marduk. But in the splendour of Jove all these were opaque.

Jupiter, always imposing, was grandiose then. His thoughts were vast as the sky. In a direct revelation to Vergil he said of his chosen people: "I have set no limits to their conquest or its duration. The empire I have given them shall be without end."[1] Hebrew prophets had spoken similarly. Vergil must have been more truly inspired. The Roman empire, nominally holy, figuratively still exists. Yet fulfilment of the prophecy is due perhaps less to the God of the Gentiles than to the God of the Jews. Though perhaps also it may be permissible to discern in the latter a transfiguration of

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[1] Æneid i. 278.

Jove, who originally Zeus, and primarily not Hellenic but Hindu, ultimately became supreme. After the terrific struggle which resulted in that final metamorphosis, Jerusalem, disinherited, saw Rome the spiritual capital of the globe.

Jerusalem was not a home of logic. Rome was the city of law. That law, cold, inflexible, passionless as a sword and quite as effective, Rome brandished at philosophy. It is said that the intellectual gymnastics of Greece were displeasing to her traditions. It is more probable that augurs had foreseen or oracles had foretold that philosophy would divest her of the sword, and with it of her sceptre and her might. Ideas cannot be decapitated. Only ridicule can demolish them. Philosophy, mistress of irony, resisted while nations fell. It was philosophy that first undermined established creeds and then led to the pursuit of new ones. Yet it may be that a contributing cause was a curious theory that the world was to end. Foretold in the *Brahmanas*, in the *Avesta* and in the *Eddas*, probably it was in the *Sibylline Books*. If not, the subsequent Church may have so assumed.

> Dies iræ, dies illa,
> Solvet sæclum in favilla,
> Teste David cum Sibylla.

Not alone David and the Sibyl but Etruscan seers had seen in the skies that the tenth and last astronomical cycle had begun.[1] Plutarch, in his life of Sylla, testified to the general belief in an approaching cataclysm. Lucretius announced that at any moment it might occur.[2] That was in the latter days of the republic. In the early days of the empire the theory persisting may have induced the hope of a saviour. Suetonius said that nature in her parturitions was elaborating a king.[1] Afterward he added that such was Asia's archaic belief.[2] Recent discoveries have verified the assertion. In the Akkadian Epic of Dibbara a messiah was foretold.[3] That epic, anterior to a cognate Egyptian prophecy,[4] anterior also to the *Sibylline Books*, was anterior too to the Hebrew prophets and necessarily to those of Rome.

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[1] Censorinus: De die nat. 17.
[2] De rerum nat., v. 105.

Among these was Vergil. In the fourth Eclogue he beheld an age of gold, preceded by the advent on earth of a son of Jove, under whose auspices the last traces of sin and sorrow were to disappear and a new race descend from heaven. "The serpent shall die," he declared, adding: "The time is at hand."

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[1] In Augusto, 74.

[2] In Vesp. 4.

[3] Jastrow: *op. cit.*

[4] See back, Chapter III.

The Eclogue was written 40 B.C., during the consulate of Pallio, whom the poet wished perhaps to flatter. Then presently Ovid sang the deathless soul and Tibullus gave rendezvous hereafter. The atmosphere dripped with wonders. The air became charged with the miraculous. At stated intervals the doors of temples opened of themselves. Statues perspired visibly. There was a book that explained the mechanism of these marvels. It interested nobody. Prodigies were matters of course.

The people had a heaven, also a hell, both of them Greek, a purgatory that may have been Asiatic, and, pending the advent of the son of Jove, in Mithra they could have had a redeemer. Had it been desired, Buddhism could have supplied gospels, India the trinity, Persia the resurrection, Egypt the life. From Iran could have been obtained an Intelligence, sovereign, unimaged, and just. That was unnecessary. Long since Socrates had displayed it. In addition, Epicurus had told of an ascension of heavens, skies beyond the sky, worlds without number, the many mansions of a later faith.

Meanwhile, austerity was an appanage of the stoics, in whose faultless code the dominant note was contempt for whatever is base, respect for all that is noble. A doctrine of great beauty, purely Greek, as was everything else in Rome that was beautiful, its heights were too lofty for the vulgar. It appealed only to the lettered, that is to the few, to the infrequent disciples of Zeno and of Cicero, his prophet, who, Erasmus said, was inspired by God.

It may be that Cicero inspired a few of God's preachers. The latter were not yet in Rome. Christ had not come. At that period, unique in history, man alone existed. The temples were thronged, but the skies were bare. Cicero knew that. Elysium and Hades were as chimerical to him as the Epicurean heavens. "People," he said, "talk of these places as though they had been there." But that which was superstition to him he regarded as beneficial for others, who had to have something and who got it, in temples where a sin was a prayer.

There was once a play of which there has survived but the title: *The Last Will and Testament of Defunct Jupiter.* It appeared in the days of Diocletian, but it might have appealed when Cicero taught. Faith then had fainted. Fright had ceased to build. Worship remained, but religion had gone. The gods themselves were departing. The epoch itself was apoplectic. The tramp of legions was continuous. Not alone the skies but the world was in a ferment. It was not until a diadem, falling from Cleopatra's golden bed, rolled to the feet of Augustus, that the gods were stayed and faith revived.

In the interim, prisoners had been deported from Judea. At first they were slaves. Subsequently manumitted, they formed a colony that in the high-viced city resembled Esther in the seraglio of Ahasuerus. Rome, amateur of cults, always curious of foreign faiths, might have been interested in Judaism. It had many analogies with local beliefs. Its adherents awaited, as Rome did, a messiah. They awaited too a golden age. For those who were weary of philosophy, they had a religion in which there was none.

For those to whom the marvellous appealed, they had a history in which miracles were a string of pearls. For those who were sceptic concerning the post-mortem, they offered blankness. In addition, their god, the enemy of all others, was adapted to an empire that recognized no sovereignty but its own. Readily might Rome have become Hebrew. But then, with equal ease, she might have become Egyptian.

For those who were perhaps afraid of going to hell and yet may have been equally afraid of not going anywhere, Egypt held passports to a land of light. Then too, the gods of Egypt were friendly and accessible. They mingled familiarly with those of Rome, complaisantly with the deified Cæsars, as already they had with the pharaohs, a condescension, parenthetically, that did not protect them from Tiberius, who, for reasons with which religion had nothing whatever to do, persecuted the Egyptians, as he persecuted also the Jews. None the less, Rome, weary of local fictions, might have become converted to foreign ideas. In default of Syrian or Copt, she might have become Persian as already she was Greek.

Augustus had other views. Divinities, made not merely after the image of man but in symbols of sin, he saluted. With a hand usually small, but in this instance tolerably large, he re-established them on their pedestals. A relapse to spiritual infancy resulted. It was what he sought. He wanted to be a god himself and he became one. His power and, after him, that of his successors, had no earthly limit, no restraint human or divine. It was the same omnipotence here that elsewhere Jupiter wielded.

Jupiter had flamens who told him the time of day. He had others that read to him. For his amusement there were mimes. For his delectation, matrons established themselves in the Capitol and affected to be his loves. But then he was superb. Made of ivory, painted vermillion, seated colossally on a colossal throne, a sceptre in one hand, a thunderbolt in the other, a radiating gold crown on his august head, and, about his limbs, a shawl of Tyrian purple, he looked every inch the god.

The Cæsars, if less imposing, were more potent. Their hands, in which there was nothing symbolic, held life and death, absolute dominion over everything, over every one. Jupiter was but a statue. They alone were real, alone divine. To them incense ascended. At their feet libations poured. The nectar fumes confused. Rome, mad as they, built them temples, raised them shrines, creating for them a worship that they accepted, as only their due perhaps, but in which their reason fled. In accounts of the epoch there is much mention of citizens, senators, patricians. Nominally there were such people. Actually there were but slaves. The slaves had a succession of masters. Among them was a lunatic, Caligula, and an imbecile, Claud. There were others. There was Terror, there was Hatred, there was Crime. These last, though several, were yet but one. Collectively, they were Nero.

If philosophy ever were needed it was in his monstrous day. To anyone, at any moment, there might be brought the laconic message: Die. In republican Rome, philosophy separated man from sin. At that period it was perhaps a luxury. In the imperial epoch it was a necessity. It separated man from life. The philosophy of the republic Cicero expounded. That of the empire Seneca produced.

The neo-stoicism of the latter sustained the weak, consoled the just. It was a support and a guide. It preached poverty. It condemned wealth. It deprecated honours and pleasure. It inculcated chastity, humility, and resignation. It detached man from earth. It inspired, or attempted to inspire, a desire for the ideal which it represented as the goal of the sage, who, true child of God,[1] prepared for any torture, even for the cross,[2] yet, essentially meek,[3] sorrowed for mankind,[4] happy if he might die for it.[5]

In iambics that caressed the ear like flutes, poets had told of Jupiter clothed in purple and glory. They had told of his celestial amours, of his human and of his inhuman vices. Seneca believed in Jupiter. But not in the Jove of the poets. That god dwelled in ivory and anapests. Seneca's deity, nowhere visible, was everywhere present.[1] Creator of heaven and earth,[2] without whom there is nothing,[3] from whom nothing is hidden,[4] and to whom all belongs,[5] our Father,[6] whose will shall be done.[7]

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[1] De Provid. i.

[2] *Cf.* Lactantius vi. 17.

[3] Epit. cxx. 13.

[4] Lucanus ii. 378.

[5] Ibidem.

"Life," said Seneca, "is a tribulation, death a release. In order not to fear death," he added, "think of it always." The day on which it comes judges all others.[1] Meanwhile comfort those that sorrow.[2] Share your bread with them that hunger.[3] Wherever there is a human being there is place for a good deed.[4] Sin is an ulcer. Deliverance from it is the beginning of health — salvation, *salutem*." [5]

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[1] Nemo novit Deum. Epit. xxxi. Ubique Deus. Epit. xli.

[2] Mundum hujus operis dominum et artificem. Quæst. nat. i.

[3] Sine quo nihil est. Quæst nat. vii. 31.

[4] Nil Deo Clausam. Ep. lxxxx.

[5] Omnia habentem. Ep. xcv.

[6] Parens noster. Ep. cx.

[7] Placeat homini quidquid Deo placuit. Ep. lxxv.

Words such as these suggest others. They are anterior to those which they recall. The latter are more beautiful, they are more ample, there is in them a poetry and a profundity that has rarely been excelled. Yet, it may be, that a germ of them is in Seneca, or, more exactly, in theories which, beginning in India, prophets, seers, and stoics variously interpreted and recalled.

However since they have charmed the world, their effect on Nero was curious.

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[1] Ep. xxvi. 4. [2] De Clem. ii. 6. [3] Ep. xcv. 51.
[4] De Vita Beata, 14. [5] Ep. xxviii. 9.

Seneca was his preceptor. But so too was Art. The lessons of these teachers, fusing in the demented mind of the monster, produced transcendental depravity, the apogee of the abnormal and the epileptically obscene. What is more important, they produced Christianity.

Christianity already existed in Rome, but obscurely, subterraneanly, among a class of poor people generally detested, particularly by the Jews. Christianity was not as yet a religion, it was but the belief of a sect that announced that the world was to be consumed. Presently Rome was. The conflagration, which was due to Nero, swept everything sacred away.

Even for a prince that, perhaps, was excessive. Nero may have felt that he had gone too far. An emperor was omnipotent, he was not inviolable. Tiberius was suffocated, Caligula was stabbed, Claud was poisoned. Nero, it may be, in feeling that he had gone too far, felt also that he needed a scapegoat. Christian pyromania suggested itself. But probably it suggested itself first to the Jews, who, Renan has intimated, denounced the Christians accordingly. Such may have been the case. In any event, then it was that Christianity received its baptism of blood.

All antiquity was cruel, but, barring perhaps the immense Asiatic butcheries, Nero contrived then to surpass anything that had been done. Bloated and hideous, his hair done up in a chignon, a concave emerald for monocle, in the crowded arena he assisted at the rape of Christian girls. Their lovers, their brothers and fathers were either eaten alive by beasts or, that night, dressed in tunics that had been soaked in oil, were fastened to posts and set on fire, in order that, as human torches, they might illuminate palace gardens, through which, costumed as a jockey, Nero raced.

The spectacle in the ampitheatre, which fifty thousand people beheld; the succeeding festival at which all Rome assembled, were two acts in the birthday of a faith.

Then, to the cradle, presently, Wise Men came with gifts — the gold, the frankincense, the myrrh, of creeds anterior though less divine.

VIII

THE NEC PLUS ULTRA

IT was after fastidious rites, the heart entirely devout and on his knees, that Angelico di Fiesole drew a picture of the Christ. The attitude is emulative. It is with brushes dipped in holy water that Jesus should be displayed, though more reverent still is the absence of any delineation.

Reverence of that high character history formerly observed. There is no mention of the Saviour in the chronicles of those who were blessed in being his contemporaries. One indiscreet remark of Josephus has been recognized as the interpolation of a later hand, well-intentioned perhaps, but misguided. Jesus glows in the Gospels. Yet they that awaited the day when, in a great aurora borealis, the Son of man should appear, had passed from earth before one of the evangels was written.

It was a hundred years later before the texts that comprise the New Testament were complete. It was nearly two hundred before they were definitive. In the interim many gospels appeared. Attributed indifferently to each of the Twelve, one was ascribed to Judas. There was a Gospel to the Hebrews, a Gospel to the Egyptians. There were evangels of Childhood, of Perfection and of Mary.

These primitive memoirs were based on oral accounts of occurrences long anterior. Into them entered extraneous beauties, felicities of phrase and detail, which, with naïf effrontery, were put into the mouth of one apostle or another, even into that of Jesus. The ascription was regarded as highly commendable. It was but a way of glorifying the Lord. Besides, the scenarii of these pious evocations the prophets had traced in advance.

"Rejoice, daughter of Zion; shout, daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass."

That king of the poor whom Zachariah had foreseen, the stumbling block of Israel that Isaiah had foretold, the Son, mentioned by Hosea, whom Jahveh had called out of Egypt, was the Saviour, ascending in glory as Elijah had done. A passage incorrectly rendered by the Septuagint indicated a virginal birth. That also was suggestive.

The little biographies in which these

developments appeared were intended for circulation only among an author's narrow circle of immediate friends, at most to be read aloud in devout reunions. If, ultimately, of the entire collection, four only were retained, it is probably because these best expressed existing convictions. Though, irrespective of their beauties, Irenæus said that there had to be four and could be but four, for the reason that there are four seasons, four winds, four corners of the earth, and the four revelations of Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.

It is not on that perhaps arbitrary deduction that their validity resides, but rather because the parables and miracles which they recite became the spiritual nourishment of a world. To their title of eternal verities they have other and stronger claims. They have consoled and they have ennobled. Elder creeds may have done likewise, but these lacked that of which Christianity was the unique possessor, the marvel of a crucified god.

Saviours there had been. Mithra was a redeemer. Zoroaster was born of a virgin. Persephone descended into hell. Osiris rose from the dead. Gotama was tempted by the devil. Moses was transfigured. Elijah ascended into heaven. But in no belief is there a parallel for the crucifixion, although in Hindu legend, Krishna, a divinity whose mythical infancy a mythical prototype of Herod troubled, died, nailed by arrows to a tree.

In Oriental lore Krishna is held to have been the eighth avatar of Vishnu, of whom Gotama was the ninth. Krishna was therefore anterior to the Buddha, at least in myth. But it would be a grave impropriety to infer that with the legend concerning him the narrative of the crucifixion has any other connection than the possible one of having suggested it. The *Bhagavad-Purana*, in which the legend occurs, is relatively modern, though the legend itself may, like the *Tripitaka*, have existed orally, for centuries, before it was finally committed to writing.

There can, however, be no impropriety in recalling analogies that exist between the Saviour and one whom the Orient holds also divine. These analogies, set forth in the first chapter of the present volume, are, it may be, wholly fortuitous, though Pliny stated that, centuries before his day, disciples of Gotama were established on the Dead Sea and, from a passage in Josephus, it seems probable that the Essenes were Buddhists, in the same degree perhaps that the Pharisees were

Parsis. But the point is also obscure. It is immaterial as well. The Gospels were not written in Jerusalem but mainly in Rome, where crucifixions were common, as they were, for that matter, throughout the East, but where, too, all religions were acclimated and the supernatural was at home.

Rome had witnessed the *tours de force* of Apollonios of Tyana. Those of Simon the Magician had also been beheld. Rome had seen, or, it may be, thought she believed she had seen, Vespasian cure the halt and the blind with a touch. The atmosphere then was charged with the marvellous. The temples were filled with prodigies, with strange gods, beckoning chimeras, credulous crowds.

There was something superior. Rome was the depository of the legends and lore of the world. A haunt of the Muses, the sensual city was a hermitage of philosophy as well. These things collectively represented a great literary feast, of which not all the courses have descended to us, though, as is not impossible, a lost dish or two, transmuted, by the alchemy of faith, from dross into gold, the Gospels may perhaps contain.

In that case there is cause for great thankfulness. Moreover, assuming the transmutation, no impiety can be implied. It was as usual and as indicated as were papyrus and the stylus. It is common to-day for a poet, before spreading his own wings, to contemplate those of another. Inspiration is infectious.

A page of verse, whether Hindu, Persian, Egyptian, Greek, or Latin, was as useful then. Dante fed on the troubadours. They are lost and forgot. He divinely stands greater than the tallest of them all. In a measure the same may be true of those from whom the Gospels came. Yet with a very notable difference. The *Divina Commedia* was written for all time. So too were the Gospels. But not intentionally. They were written to prepare man for the immediate termination of the world. With the most perfect propriety, therefore, anything serviceable could have been utilized and probably was. The devout had but to lift their eyes. In the words of Isaiah, there, before them, were the treasures of nations; there were the camels and dromedaries bearing from every side incense and gold; there were the sons of strangers to build up their walls.

The sons were many, the treasures as great. Even otherwise there was the Law, there too were the Prophets. Moses fasted for forty days. Elisha performed a miracle of the loaves, if he did not that of the fishes. Job saw the Lord walking upon the sea. Jeremiah said: "Seek and ye shall find." Isaiah bid those that sorrowed come and be consoled. In the poem of that poet the servant of the Lord had vinegar when he thirsted, he was spat upon and for his garments lots were cast.

In an effort to fill in a picture of which the central figure had passed from the real to the ideal, these things may have been suggestive. So also, perhaps, was the *Talmud*. The redaction of that chaos began in the second century. But the Vedas, the Homeric poems, the Tripitaka as well, existed in memory long before they were committed to writing. The same is true of the *Talmud*. Orally it existed prior to the Christ. Considered as literature, if it may be so considered, it is the reverse of endearing. But of the many maxims that it contains there are some of singular charm. Among others is the Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth.[1] The origin of that, as already indicated, is traceable to the *Tripitaka*, which, parenthetically, were so well known in Babylon that Gotama was there regarded as a Chaldean seer. That abridgement of the Law which is called the Golden Rule is also in the *Talmud*,[2] as also, before the *Talmud* was, it was in the *Tripitaka*. The injunction to love one's enemies is equally in both. So is the very excellent suggestion that one should consider one's own faults before admonishing a brother concerning his defects. But the perhaps subtle intimation that the desire to commit adultery is as reprehensible as the act, and the rather extravagant statement that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kindgom of heaven, these, originally, were perhaps uniquely Talmudic. Currently cited with multiple others they were all so many common sayings, which, strung together in the Gospels, became a rosary of most perfect pearls.

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[1] Talmud Babli: Baba bathra, 11 *a*.

[2] Schabbath, 37 *a*.

In a passage of Irenæus it is stated that the *Gospel according to St. Matthew* was arranged by the Church for the benefit of the Jews who awaited a Messiah descended from David. A Syro-Chaldaic evangel, known as the *Gospel to the Hebrews*, had then appeared. So also had the *Gospel according to St. Mark.* But these offered no evidence that Jesus was the one they sought. Another was then prepared. Written in Greek and bearing the authoritative name of Matthew, it traced from David, Joseph's descent.

The narrative continued: "Now the birth of Jesus Chirst was in this wise. When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child by the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband being a just man and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

The genealogy completed, though perhaps inadequately, since Jesus, not being a son of Joseph, could not have descended from David, the Church continued: "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and call his name Emmanuel."

The prophecy mentioned occurs in Isaiah vii, 14. In the King James version it is as follows; "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." But the Aramaic reading is: "Behold an *'almâ* shall conceive." *'Almâ* means young woman. The Septuagint, in translating it, employed the term *παρθένος*, or maiden. In *Matthew* the term was retained.

Matthew, at the time, had long been dead. Even had he been living it is improbable that he could write in Greek. Unfortunately there were others who could not only write Greek but read Hebrew. In particular, there was a rabbi

Aquila who retranslated Isaiah with no other purpose than the malign object of definitely re-establising the exact expression which the old poet had used.[1]

It was presumably in these circumstances that the *Evangel of Mary* was advanced. Among other elucidations, the work contained professional testimony of the immaculacy that was claimed. Additionally, in reparation of the earlier oversight, the Virgin was genealogically descended from the royal line.

That, however, is apocryphal, and if, regarding the other genealogy, exegesis has since obscured the luminousness of the method adapted by the Church, the latter's intention was none the less irreproachable, and that alone imports. Before it, before the miracle of the nativity and the divine episodes of the transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, reverently the Occident has knelt. They are indeed divine. If they did not occur in Judea, they have occurred ever since. Continuously, in the hearts of the devout, they are repeated.

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[1] Renan: Les Evangiles.

Unhappily there were heretics then as now. To the Gnostics, Jesus was an æon that had never been. To the Docetists, he was a phantasm. There are always brutes that can believe but in the reality of things. There are others to whom the symbolic is dumb. In the Gospels there is much that is figurative, there is more that is ineffable, there are suggestions sheerly ideal.

"In my Father's house are many mansions," the Saviour declared. In his own ministry there are as many lights. He was a vagrant and he created pure sentiment. He was a nihilist and he inspired a new conception of life. He said he had not come to destroy and he changed the face of the earth. He remitted the sins of a harlot and condemned both marriage and love. There are other antitheses, deeper contradictions. These perhaps are more apparent than real. Behind them there may have been the co-ordination of a central thought. Of many gospels but few remain. Among the lost evangels was one that Valentinian said was imparted only to the more spiritual of the disciples. It may be that in it a main idea was elucidated and, perhaps, as a consequence, the meaning of the esoteric proclamation: "Before Abraham was I am."

Yet though now the authoritative explanation be lacking, its significance seems to run beneath the texts. At the first apparition of Jesus, the chief preoccupation of those that stood about was what prophet of the old days had returned in the new. Some thought him Elijah. Others Jeremiah. Antipas feared that he was the Baptist revived. Jesus himself asked the disciples whom he was said to be. Later he assured them that the awaited return of Elijah had been accomplished in John. That assurance, together with the perplexities regarding him and the esoteric announcement which he made concerning himself, can hardly indicate anything else than a belief in reincarnation.

The belief, common to all antiquity, though not necessarily valid on that account, is not discernible in Hebrew thought, perhaps for the reason that it is not perceptible in Babylonian. Yet the myth of Eden barely conceals it. It is almost obvious in the allegory of Beth-el. Solomon said: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever earth was." If the idea contained in that statement was not a part of the philosophy attributed to the Christ, it might have been. The amount of beauty stored in it is more enormous than in any other.

To the materialist the beauty is meaningless. To the mathematician it has the value of a zero from which the periphery has gone. But at the Pillars of Hercules early geographers put on their maps: *Hic deficit orbis* — Here ends the world. They had no suspicion that beyond that world there stretched another twice as great. Materialists may be equally naïf. On the other hand, they may not be. The theory of reincarnation is one that transcends the limits of experience.

Of the many tenets of the belief there

are but two with which the matter-of-fact agrees. One of them concerns the conservation of energy, the other the negation of death. Theory and practice unite in admitting that the supply of energy is invariable. Constantly it is transformed and as constantly transposed, but whether it enter into fungus or star, into worm or man, the loss of a particle never occurs. Death consequently is but the constituent of a change. When it comes, that which was living assumes a state that has in it the potentiality of another form. A tenement has crumbled and a tenant gone forth. Though just where is the riddle.

In the thousand and one nights that were less astronomic than our own, it was thought that the riddle was answered. Poets had erected an edifice of verse and called it Creation. In the strophes of the epic the earth was a flat and stationary parallelogram. About the earth, and uniquely for its benefit, sun, moon and stars paraded. Above was a deity one or multiple. Below were places of vivid discomfort. To the latter, or to the former, the soul of man proceeded. There were no other resorts. Creation had its limits.

Poets younger yet more gray have presented a different conception. In the glare of a million million of suns they have sent the earth spinning like a midge. Beyond the uttermost horizon they have strewn other systems, other worlds; beyond the latter, more. Wherever imagination in its weariness would set a limit, there is space begun.

There too is energy. Throughout the stretch of universes the same force pulsates that is recognizable here. A deduction is obvious. Throughout infinity are sentient beings, perhaps our brothers, perhaps ourselves.

The obvious, very frequently, is misleading. But the dream of precipitation into that wonderful tornado of worlds has the merit of more colourful idealism than that which was formerly displayed. Taken but as an hypothesis, it holds suggestions ampler than any other conveys. It intimates that just as the butterfly rises from the chrysalis, so does the spiritual rise from the flesh. It indicates that just as the sun cannot set, so is it impossible for death to be.

There are topics about which words hover like enchanted bees. Death is one of them. Mediævally it was represented by a skeleton to which prose had given a rictus, poetry a scythe, and philosophy wings. From its eyries it swooped spectral and sinister. Previously it was more gracious. In Greece it resembled Eros. Among its attributes was beauty. It did not alarm. It beckoned and consoled. The child of Night, the brother of Sleep, it was less funereal than narcotic. The theory of it generally was beneficent. But not enduring. In the change of things death lost its charm. It became a sexless nightmare-frame of bones topped by a grinning skull. That perhaps was excessive. In epicurean Rome it was a marionnette that invited you to wreathe yourself with roses before they could fade. In the Muslim East it was represented by Azrael, who was an angel. In Vedic India it was represented by Yama, who was a god. But mediævally in Europe the skeleton was preferred. Since then it has changed again. It is no longer a spectral vampire. It has acquired the serenity of a natural law.

Regarding the operation of that law there are perhaps but three valid conjectures. Rome entertained all of them. There, there was a tomb on which was written *Umbra.* Before it was another on which was engraved *Nihil.* Between the two was a portal behind which the *Nec plus ultra* stood revealed.

The portal, fashioned by the philosophy of ages, still is open, wider than before, on vaster horizons and unsuspected skies. Through it one may see the explication of things; the reason why men are not born equal, why some are rich and some are poor, why some are weak and some are strong, why some are wise and many are not. One may see there too the reason of joys and sorrows, the cause of tears and smiles. One may see also how the soul changes its raiment and how it happens to have a raiment to change.

One may see all these things, and others besides, in the revelation that this life, being the refuse of many deaths, has acquired merits and demerits in accordance with which are present punishments and rewards.

In proportion as these are utilized or disregarded, so perhaps is retrogression induced or progress achieved. But not in Hades or yet in Elysium. These were the inventions of man for his brother. So also was the very neighbourly heaven which the early Church devised. But because that has gone from the sidereal chart, it does not follow that there is no such place. Because there is nothing alarming under the earth, it does not follow that hell has ceased to be. On the contrary. Both are constant, though it be but in the heart.

In the light of reincarnation it is

probable that neither can occur there without anterior cause. But probably too it is the preponderance of either that creates the mystery of life, as it may also foreshadow the portent of death.

Death, it may be, is not merely a law but a place, perhaps a garage which the traveller reaches on a demolished motor, but whence none can proceed until all old scores are paid. Pending payment, there, perhaps the soul must wait. But the bill of its past acquitted, it may be that then it shall be free to pursue on trillions of spheres the diversified course of endless life — free to pass from world to world, from beatitude to bliss, from transformation to transfiguration, from the transitory to the eternal; weaving, meanwhile, a garland of migrations that stretch from sky to sky, marrying its memoirs with those of the universe, and, finally, from some ultimate zenith, reviewing, as it casts them aside, the masks of concluded incarnations.

The prospect, overwhelming in beauty, is really divine. The divine is always utopian. But there is the supreme Alhambra of dream. It exceeds any other, however excessive another may be. It is the *Nec plus ultra.* Into it all may wander and never weary of the wonders that are there. It may be unrealizable, but for that very reason it must be also ideal.

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THE ANATOMY OF NEGATION

BY

EDGAR SALTUS

REVISED EDITION

> " Quoy qu'on nous presche, il fauldroit
> toujours se souvenir que c'est l'homme
> qui donne et l'homme qui reçoit.
>
> MONTAIGNE.

CHICAGO, NEW YORK, & SAN FRANCISCO
BELFORD, CLARKE & COMPANY
1889
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THE
ANATOMY OF NEGATION.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE accompanying pages are intended to convey a tableau of anti-theism from Kapila to Leconte de Lisle. The anti-theistic tendencies of England and America have been treated by other writers; in the present volume, therefore, that branch of the subject is not discussed.

To avoid misconception, it may be added that no attempt has been made to prove anything.

BIARRITZ, *15th September, 1886.*

Il est un jour, une heure, où dans le chemin rude,
Courbé sous le fardeau des ans multipliés,
L'Esprit humain s'arrête, et pris de lassitude,
Se retourne pensif vers les jours oubliés.

La vie a fatigué son attente inféconde;
Désabusé du Dieu qui ne doit point venir,
Il sent renaître en lui la jeunesse du monde;
Il écoute ta voix, ô sacré souvenir !

. . . .

Mais si rien ne répond dans l'immense étendue
Que le stérile écho de l'éternel désir,
Adieu, déserts, où l'âme ouvre une aile éperdue !
Adieu, songe sublime, impossible à saisir !

Et toi, divine Mort, où tout rentre et s'efface,
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé ;
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre et de l'espace,
Et rends-nous le repos que la vie a troublé !

LECONTE DE LISLE.

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NOTE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

Since the preceding note was printed it has been remotely alleged that the absence of an attempt to prove anything argues the absence of a purpose. This it may do, yet the preparation of the present work was none the less premeditated. It was the intention of the writer, not indeed to insist on this or on that, but rather, in displaying the views of philosopher and of sage, to suggest that if the laws which govern the universe are invariable, it would seem to follow that everything which happens happens because it must, in which case there can be little that is of much consequence and nothing whatever that is worthy of dislike, of fear even, or of hope. In brief, it was the writer's endeavor to divest his reader of one or two idle preoccupations, and to leave him serener in spirit, and of better cheer than before.

New York, 25th February, 1889.

THE
ANATOMY OF NEGATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLT OF THE ORIENT.

MAN, as described by Quatrefages, is a religious animal. The early naturalists said the same thing of the elephant; but while this statement, which contains all the elements of a libel, has fallen into disrepute, the former, little by little, has assumed the purple among accepted facts.

Man's belief in the supernatural antedates chronology. It was unfathered and without a mother. It was spontaneous, natural, and unassisted by revelation. It sprang into being with the first flight of fancy.

The characteristic trait of primitive man seems to have been that of intellectual passivity. He was never astonished: if he noticed anything, it was his own weakness; the power of the elements he accepted as a matter of course. The phenomena that he witnessed, the sufferings that he endured, were to him living enemies whose violence could be conjured by prayers and donations. Everything had its spectre ; phantoms were as common as leaves. There was not a corner of the earth unpeopled by vindictive demons. In sleep he was visited by them all, and as his dreams were mainly nightmares, his dominant sensation was that of fright.

As his mind developed, frontiers were outlined between the imaginary and the real ; the animate and the inanimate ceased to be identical. Instead of attributing a particular spirit to every object, advancing theology conceived a number of aggrandized forces. The earth, sea and sky were laid under contribution, and the phenomena of nature were timidly adored. In the course of time these open-air deities were found smitten by a grave defect—they were visible. The fear of the unseen demanded something more mysterious, a hierarchy of invisible divinities of whom much might be suspected and but little known. It was presumably at this point that the high-road to polytheism was discovered ; and when man grew to believe that the phenomena which his ancestors had worshipped were but the unconscious agents of higher powers, the gods were born.

Consecutive stages of development such as these have evidently been far from universal. There are races whose belief in the supernatural is so accidental that any classification is impossible. There are others in whose creeds the transition from animism to broader views is still unmarked. In the equatorial regions of

Africa, in Madagascar, Polynesia, and among certain Tartar tribes, animism and its attendant fetishism is reported to be still observable. The distinction between the palpable and the impalpable, the separation between what is known to be material and that which is conceived to be divine, does not necessarily exist even in countries that have reached a high degree of civilization. In India, the dance of the bayaderes before the gilded statues, and the top-playing that is to amuse a stone Krishna, are cases in point. But these instances are exceptions to the general rule. It seems well established that man, in proportion to his intelligence, passed out of animism, loitered in polytheism, and drifted therefrom into monotheistic or pantheistic beliefs.

The race whose beliefs have held most steadfast from their incipiency to the present day is the Hindu. In their long journey these beliefs have encountered many vicissitudes; they have been curtailed, elaborated and degraded, but in the main they are still intact. At the contact with fresher faiths, the primitive religions of other lands have either disappeared abruptly or gradually faded away. It is India alone that has witnessed an autonomous development of first theories, and it is in India that the first denying voice was raised. To appreciate the denial it is necessary to understand what was affirmed. For this purpose a momentary digression may be permitted.

In the beginning of the Vedic period, Nature in her entirety was held divine. To the delicate imagination of the early Aryan, the gods were in all things, and all things were gods. In no other land have myths been more fluid and transparent. Mountains, rivers and landscapes were regarded with veneration; the skies, the stars, the sun, the dawn and dusk were adored, but particularly Agni, the personification of creative heat. Through lapses of time of which there is no chronology, this charming naturalism drifted down the currents of thought into the serenest forms of pantheistic belief.

The restless and undetermined divinities, omnipresent and yet impalpable, the wayward and changing phenomena, contributed one and all to suggest the idea of a continuous transformation, and with it, by implication, something that is transformed. Gradually the early conception of Agni expanded into a broader thought. From the spectacle of fire arose the theory of a deva, one who shines; and to this deva a name was given which signified both a suppliant and a supplication—Brahmā. In this metamorphosis all vagueness was lost. Brahma became not only a substantial reality, but the creator of all that is. Later, the labor of producing and creating was regarded as an imperfection, a blemish on the splendor of the Supreme. It was thought a part of his dignity to be majestically inert, and above him was conceived the existence of a still higher being, a being who was also called Brahmâ; yet this time the name was no longer masculine, but neuter and indeclinable—neuter as having no part in life, and indeclinable because unique.

This conception of a neuter principle, eternal, inactive, and a trifle pale perhaps, was not reached during the period assigned to the Vedas. It was the work of time and of fancy, but it was unassisted. The religion of India is strictly its own ; its systems were founded and its problems solved before the thinkers of other lands were old enough to reflect. In Greece, which was then in swaddling clothes, Anaxagoras was the first who thought of a pure Intelligence, and this thought he contented himself with stating ; its development was left to other minds, and even then it remained unadorned until Athens heard the exultant words of Paul. Nor could the Hindus have gathered their ideas from other countries. Their brôthers, the Persians, were watching the combat between Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman. With the Hebrews there was no chance nor rumor of contact : Elohim had not given way to Jehovah. Chaldea was celebrating the nuptials of Nature and the Sun ; while far beyond was Egypt, and on her heart the Sphinx.

It seems, then, not unsafe to say that the Vedas and the theories that were their after-growth have no connection with any foreign civilization. Beyond this particular, Brahmanism enjoys over all other religions the peculiar distinction of being without a founder. Its germ, as has been hinted, was in the Vedas ; but it was a germ merely that the priests planted and tended, and watched develop into a great tree, which they then disfigured with engraftments.

Emerson recommended us to treat people as though they were real, and added, "Perhaps they are." But the doubt that lingered in the mind of the stately pantheist never entered into that of the Hindu. In its purest manifestation the creed of the latter was a negation of the actuality of the visible world. The forms of matter were held to be illusive, and the semblance of reality possessed by them was considered due to Māyā. Māyā originally signified Brahmâ's longing for something other than himself; something that might contrast with his eternal quietude; something that should occupy the voids of space; something that should lull the languors of his infinite ennui. From this longing sprang whatever is, and it was through Māyā, which afterwards became synonymous with illusion, that a phantom universe surged before the god's delighted eyes, the mirage of his own desire.

This ghostly world is the semblance of reality in which man dwells: mountains, rivers, landscapes, the earth itself, the universe and all humanity, are but the infinite evolutions of his fancy. The ringing lines that occur in Mr. Swinburne's "Hertha" may not improperly be referred to him:

"I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me, God and man;
I am equal and whole.
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily.
I am the soul."

Familiarly, Brahmâ is the spider drawing from his breast the threads of existence: emblematically, a triangle inscribed in a circle; poetically, the self-existing supremacy that is enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold; and theologically, the one really existing essence, the eternal germ from which all things issue and to which all things at last return.

From man to Brahmâ, a series of higher forms of existence are traceable in an ascending scale till three principal divinities are reached. These, the highest manifestations of the First Cause, Brahmā the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer, constitute the Tri-murti, the Trinity, typified in the magically mystic syllable Om. To these were added a host of inferior deities and even local gods similar to those which the Romans recognized in later years. Such was and still is the celestial hierarchy. In the eyes of the Hindu, none of these gods are eternal. At the end of cycles of incommensurable duration, the universe will cease to be, the heavens will be rolled up like a garment, the Tri-murti dissolved; while in space shall rest but the great First Cause, through whose instrumentality, after indefinite kalpas, life will be re-beckoned out of chaos and the leash of miseries unloosed.

This delicious commingling of the real and the ideal degenerated with the years. Like Olympus, it was too fair to last. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, once regarded as various manifestations of the primal essence, became in lapses of time concrete. Female counterparts were found for them, and the most poetic of the creeds of man was lowered into a sensuous idolatry. To-day there is nothing, however monstrous or grotesque, that is deemed unfit for worship. In Benares there is a shrine to small-pox; in Gaya there is one to the police; and it may be that somewhere between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas an altar has been raised to those who dull digestion with the after-dinner speech.

This, however, is the work of the priest. In earlier days the higher castes of man, the younger brothers of the gods, were thought capable of understanding the perfection that resides in Brahm. It was held that they might ascend to the rank of their elders, and with them at last be absorbed in the universal spirit. The one pathway to this goal was worship, and over it the priests constituted themselves the lawful guides.

The laws which they codified were numberless, and an infraction of any one of them was severely visited on the transgressor. For each fault, whether of omission or commission, there was an expiation to be undergone, and it was taught that the unatoned violation of a precept precipitated the offender into one of twenty-eight hells which their inflammable imaginations had created.

In the face of absurdities such as these, it is permissible to suppose that, like the Roman augurs, the educated Brahmans could not look at each other without laughing; yet, however this may be, it seems certain that many of the laity laughed at them. Already in the Rig-Veda mention was made of those who jeered at Agni.

The question as to whether there is really another life seems to have been often raised, and that too in the Brahmanas. Yaska, a venerable sage, found himself obliged to refute the opinions of sages older and more venerable than himself, who had declared the Vedas to be a tissue of nonsense. This scepticism had found many adherents. The name given to these early disbelievers was Nastikas—They who deny. Like other sects, they had aphorisms and slokas of their own, which with quaint derision they attributed to the tutor of the gods. The aphorisms appear to have been markedly anti-theistic, while the slokas were captivating invitations to the pleasures of life.

"Vivons, ouvrons nos cœurs aux ivresses nouvelles :
Dormir et boire en paix, voilà l'unique bien.
Buvons ! Notre sang brûle et nos femmes sont belles :
Demain n'est pas encore, et le passé n'est rien !"

Among those who laughed the loudest was Kapila. His life is shrouded in the dim magnificence of legends. There let it rest ; yet if little can be said of the man, his work at least is not unfamiliar to students. The Sānkhya Ķārika, which bears his name, is one of the most important and independent relics of Indian thought. In its broadest sense, Sānkhya means rationalism or system of rational philosophy. In India it is known as the philosophy Niriswara, the philosophy without a god.

Kapila was the first serious thinker who looked into the archaic skies and declared them to be void. In this there was none of the moderation of scepticism, and less of the fluctuations of doubt. Kapila saw that the idea of a Supreme Being was posterior to man; that Nature, anterior to her demiurge, had created him; and he resolutely turned his back on the Tri-murti, and denied that a deity existed, or that the existence of one was necessary to the order and management of the world. The motor-power he held to be a blind, unconscious force, and of this force, life was the melancholy development. If he had disbelieved in transmigration, Schopenhauer would not have startled the world with a new theory.

Kapila's purpose was to relieve man from suffering. There were no rites to be observed. Knowledge and meditation were alone required. He recognized but three things—the soul, matter and pain. Freedom from pain was obtainable, he taught, by the liberation of the soul, from the bondage of matter. According to his teaching, the heavens, the earth and all that in them is, are made up of twenty-five principles, and of these principles matter is the first and the soul the last. Matter is the primordial element of universal life, the element that animates and sustains all things. The principles that succeed it are simply its developments. Of these, the soul is the chief. It is for matter to act and for the soul to observe. When its observations are perfect and complete, when it has obtained a discriminative knowledge of the forms of matter, of primeval matter and of itself, then is it prepared to enter into eternal beatitude.

On the subject of eternal beatitude, each one of the systems of Eastern thought has had its say. That which Kapila had in view is not entirely clear. He gave no description of it otherwise than in hinting that it was a state of abstract and unconscious impassibility, and he appears to have been much more occupied in devising means by which man might be delivered from the evils of life than in mapping charts of a fantastic paradise.

The sentiment of the immedicable misery of life is as prominent in the preface of history as on its latest and uncompleted page. The problem of pain agitated the minds of the earliest thinkers as turbulently as it has those of the latest comers. In attempting to solve it, in endeavoring to find some rule for a law of error, the Hindu accepted an unfathered idea that he is expiating the sins of anterior and unremembered existences, and that he will continue to expiate them until all past transgressions are absolved and the soul is released from the chain of its migrations. According to the popular theory, the chain of migrations consists in twenty-four lakhs of birth, a lakh being one hundred thousand.

Apparently such beatitude as lay beyond the tomb consisted to Kapila in relief from transmigration, and this relief was obtainable by the ransomed soul, only, as has been hinted, through a knowledge acquired of matter and of itself. Garmented in the flesh of him that constitutes its individuality, the soul was to apply itself to an understanding of Nature, who, with the coquetry of a bayadere, at first resists and then unveils her beauties to the eyes of the persistent wooer. This knowledge once obtained, the soul is free. It may yet linger awhile on earth, as the wheel of the spinner turns for a moment after the impulse which puts it in motion has ceased to act; but from that time the soul has fulfilled all the conditions of its deliverance, and is forever affranchised from the successive migrations which the unransomed soul must still undergo.

In his attack on official theology, Kapila paid little attention to its rites and observances. He probably fancied that if the groundwork was undermined, the superstructure would soon totter. In this he was partially correct, though the result of his revolt was entirely different from what he had expected. The climax of his philosophy is a metaphysical paradox: "Neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor is there any I"—a climax which must have delighted Hegel, but one which it is difficult to reconcile with the report of the philosophy's present popularity. And that it is popular there seems to be no doubt. There is even a common saying in India that no knowledge is equal to the Sānkhya, and no power equal to the Yoga, which latter, a combination of mnemonics and gymnastics, is a contrivance for concentrating the mind intently on nothing.

But whatever popularity the Sānkhya may now enjoy, it is evident that, like other systems of Eastern thought, it was understood only by adepts; and even had the science which it taught been offered to the people, it was not of a nature to appeal to them. The masses to-day are as ignorant as carps, and at that time they were not a whit more intelligent. Besides, it was easier to understand the Tri-murti than twenty-five abstract principles. Brahmā was very neighborly, and his attendant gods were known to tread the aisles of night. The languid noons and sudden dawns were sacred with their presence. What could be more reasonable? If life was an affliction, that very affliction carried the sufferer into realms of enchantment, where Brahmâ was enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold.

It is small wonder then that Kapila's lessons left the established religion practically unharmed. Kant's "Kritik" did not prevent the Königsbergians from listening to the *Pfarrer* with the same faith with which their fathers had listened before them. And Kant, it may be remembered, was not only a popular teacher, he was one that was revered. But aside from any influence that Kapila's philosophy may have exerted, it was evidently smitten by a grave defect. Concerning the soul's ultimate abiding-place it was silent. This silence enveloped the entire system in an obscurity which another and a greater thinker undertook to dissipate.

It has been said before, and with such wisdom that the saying will bear repetition, that revolutions are created, not by the strength of an idea, but by the intensity of a sentiment. In great crises there is a formula that all await; so soon as it is pronounced, it is accepted and repeated; it is the answer to an universal demand. Toward the close of the sixth century before the present era, at Kapilavastu, a city and kingdom situated at the foot of the mountains of Nepal, a prince of the blood, after prolonged meditations on the misfortunes of life, pronounced a watchword of this description.

The name of this early Muhammad was Siddārtha. He was the heir of the royal house of Sakya, and in later years, in remembrance of his origin, he was called Sakya-Muni, Sakya the Anchorite, to which was added the title of Buddha, the Sage. The accounts of his life are contained in the Lalita Vistâra, a collection of fabulous episodes in which the supernatural joins hands with matter-of-fact. It is said, for instance, that he was born of an immaculate conception, and died of an indigestion of pork. Apart from the mythical element, his life does not appear to have been different from that of other religious reformers, save only that he is supposed to have been born in a palace instead of a hovel. To his twenty-ninth year Siddārtha is represented as living at court, surrounded by all the barbaric ease and gorgeousness of the Ind. Yet even in his youth his mind appears to have been haunted by great thoughts. He took no part in the sports of his companions, and was accustomed, it is said, to wander away into the solitudes of bamboo, and there to linger, lost in meditation.

In the course of time he was married to a beautiful girl, but even in her fair arms his thoughts were occupied with the destinies of the world. During the succeeding festivals and revels, amid the luxury of the palace and the enticements of love, he meditated on the miseries of life. In Brahmanism he found no consolation. At its grotesqueness he too smiled, but his smile was nearer to tears than to laughter. The melancholy residue of his reflections was with him even in dream, and one night—so runs the legend—he was encouraged in a vision to teach mankind a law which should save the world and establish the foundation of an eternal and universal rest.

A combination of fortuitous circumstances, the play of the merest hazard, appears to have strengthened the effect of this vision. On the high-roads about Kapilavastu he encountered a man bent double with age, another stricken by fever, and lastly a corpse. "A curse," he cried, "on youth that age must overcome; a curse on health that illness destroys; a curse on life which death interrupts! Age, illness, death, could they but be forever enchained!" Soon after, he disappeared, and seeking the jungles, which at that time were peopled with thinkers of ken, he devoted himself to the elaboration of his thoughts. It was there that he seems to have acquired some acquaintance with the philosophy of Kapila. He divined its significance and saw its insufficiency. Thereafter for six years he gave himself up to austerities so severe that, in the naïve language of the legend, they startled even the gods. These six years are said to have been passed at Ouruvilva, a place as famous in Buddhist annals as Kapilavastu. In this retreat he arranged the principles of his system, and perfected the laws and ethics which were to be its accompaniment. Yet still the immutable truth that was to save the world escaped him. A little longer he waited and struggled. The Spirit of Sin, with all his seductive cohorts, appeared before him. The cohorts were routed and the Spirit overcome; the struggle was ended; and under a Bodhi-tree which is still shown to the pilgrim, Siddārtha caught the immutable truth, and thereupon presented himself as a saviour to his fellows.

Such is the popular legend. Its main incidents have been recently and most felicitously conveyed in *The Light of Asia.* As a literary contribution, Mr. Arnold's poem is simply charming; as a page of history, it has the value of a zero from which the formative circle has been eliminated. The kingdom of Kapilavastu, or rather Kapilavatthu, was an insignificant hamlet. The Buddah's father was a petty chieftain, the rājā of a handful of ignorant savages. Palaces he had none; his wealth was his strength; and could his concubine be recalled to life, she would, had she any sense of humor, which is doubtful, be vastly amused at finding that she had been given a rôle in the solar myth.

There can, however, be no doubt that the Buddha really lived. His existence is as well established as that of the Christ. To precisely what an extent he was a visionary is necessarily difficult of conjecture. Yet unless all belief in him be refused, it seems almost obligatory to assume that after years of reflection he considered himself in possession of absolute knowledge. The truth which he then began to preach was not a doctrine that he held as personal and peculiar to himself, but rather an eternal and changeless law which had been proclaimed from age to age by other Buddhas, of whom he fancied himself the successor.

To speak comparatively, it is only with recent years that the attention of Western students has been attracted to Buddhist literature. To-day, however, thanks to translations from the Pali and kindred tongues, it is possible for any one to study the doctrine from the sacred books themselves. There are verses in the Vedas which when recited are said to charm the birds and beasts. Compared with them, the Buddhist Gospels are often lacking in beauty. To be the better understood, the priests, who addressed themselves not to initiates but to the masses, employed a language that was simple and familiar. There are in consequence many repetitions and trivial digressions, but there are also parables of such exquisite color, that in them one may feel the influence of a bluer sky than ours, the odor of groves of sandal, the green abysses of the Himalayas, and the gem-like splendor of white Thibetian stars.

The Buddha believed neither in a personal nor an impersonal God. The world he compared to a wheel turning ceaselessly on itself. Of Brahman tenets he preserved but one, that of the immedicable misery of life. But the doctrine which he taught may perhaps best be summarized as resting on three great principles—Karma, Arahatship and Nirvāna. When these principles are understood, the mysteries of the creed are dissolved, and the need of esoteric teaching diminished.

It may be noted, by way of proem, that the theory of the transmigration of souls is not advanced in the Vedas. It is a part of Brahman teaching, but Brahmanism and Vedaism are not the same. The Vedas are claimed as the outcome of direct revelation, while all that part of post-Vedic literature in which Brahmanism is enveloped is held to be purely traditional. The origin of the theory of the transmigration is indiscoverable, but it is one which has been shared by many apparently unrelated races. It was a part of the creed of the Druids; the Australian savage, as well as some of the American aborigines, held to the same idea; thinkers in Egypt and in Greece advanced identical tenets; it is alluded to in the Talmud, and hinted at in the Gospel which bears the name of St. John. Possibly it was held by the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, and in that case it is equally possible that it was through them that the doctrine descended into Brahmanism. But whether or not its engraftment came about in this way is relatively a matter of small moment. The important point to be observed is that it was not received by the Buddhists. The popular idea to the contrary is erroneous.

Spinoza noted that there is in every man a feeling that he has been what he is from all eternity, and this feeling has not left the Buddhist unaffected. But between such a sentiment and a belief in transmigration the margin is wide. The popular error in which the two are confused has presumably risen from a misunderstanding of the laws of Karma and Vipāka, the laws of cause and affect. The difference therein discoverable amounts in brief to this : in the theory of transmigration the soul is held to be eternal ; in Buddhism the existence of the soul is denied. In the one, the ego resurrects through cycles of unremembered lives : in the other, nothing survives save the fruit of its actions. In the one, every man is his own heir and his own ancestor ; in the other, the deeds of the ancestor are concentrated in a new individual. In each there is a chain of existences, but in the one they are material, in the other they are moral. One maintains the migration of an essence, the other the results of causality ; one has no evidence to support it, the other accords with the law of the indistructibility of force. One is metempsychosis, the other palingenesis ; one is beautiful, and the other awkward ; but one is a theory, and the other a fact.

From this chain the Hindu knew no mode of relief. Prior to the Buddha's advent, there was an unquestioned belief that man and all that encompasses him rolled through an eternal circle of transformation ; that he passed through all the forms of life, from the most elementary to the most perfect ; that the place which he occupied depended on his merits or demerits ; that the virtuous revived in a divine sphere, while the wicked descended to a yet darker purgatory; that the recompense of the blessed and the punishment of the damned were of a duration which was limited; that time effaced the merit of virtue as well as the demerit of sin; and that the law of transmigration brought back again to earth both the just and the unjust, and threw them anew into a fresh cycle of terrestrial existences, from which they could fight free as best they might.

When the Buddha began to teach, he endeavvored to bring his new theories into harmony with old doctrines. Throughout life, man, he taught, is enmeshed in a web whose woof was woven in preceding ages. The misfortunes that he endured are not the consequences of his immediate actions; they are drafts which have been drawn upon him in earlier days—drafts which he still must honor, and against which he can plead no statute of limitations. Karma pursues him in this life, and unless he learns its relentless code by heart, the fruit of his years is caught up by revolving chains, and tossed back into the life of another. How this occurred, or why it occurred, is explainable only by a cumbersome process from which the reader may well be spared; and it may for the moment suffice to note that while the Buddha agreed with the Brahmans that life formed a chain of existences, it was the former who brought the hope that the chain might be severed.

The means to the accomplishment of this end consist in a victory over the lusts of the flesh, the desire for life and the veils of illusion. When these have been vanquished, the Arahat, the victor, attains Nirvāna.

Nirvāna, or Nibbāna as it stands in the Pali, is not a paradise, nor yet a state of post-mortem trance. It is the extinction of all desire, the triple victory of the Arahat, which precedes the great goal, eternal death. The fruits of earlier sins remain, but they are impermanent and soon pass away. Nothing is left from which another sentient being can be called into existence. The Arahat no longer lives; he has reached Para Nirvāna, the complete absence of anything, that can be likened only to the flame of a lamp which a gust of wind has extinguished.

The Buddha wrote nothing. It was his disciples who, in councils that occurred after his death, collected and arranged the lessons of their master. In these synods the canon of sacred scripture was determined. It consisted of three divisions, called the Tri-pitaka, or Three Baskets, and contained the Suttas, the discourses, of the Buddha—the Dharmas, the duties enjoined on the masses—and lastly the Vinayas, the rules of discipline.

The Dharmas contain the four truths whose discovery is credited to the Buddha. The first is that suffering is the concomitant of life. The second, that suffering is the resultant of desire. The third, that relief from suffering is obtained in the suppression of desire. And fourth, that Nirvāna, which succeeds the suppression of desire, is attainable only through certain paths. These paths are eight in number; four of which

—correctness in deed, word, thought and sight —were recommended to all men ; the remainder —the paths of application, memory, meditation and proper life—being reserved for the eremites.

For the use of the faithful, the four truths have been condensed in a phrase : " Abstain from sin, practice virtue, dominate the flesh—such is the law of the Buddha." The recognition of the four truths and the observance of the eight virtues are obligatory to all who wish to reach Nirvāna. The neophyte renounces the world and lives a mendicant. Yet inasmuch as a society of saints is difficult to perpetuate, members are admitted from whom the usual vows of continence and poverty are not exacted.

The charm of primitive Buddhism was in its simplicity. The faithful assembled for meditation and not for parade. The practice of morality needed no forms and fewer ceremonies. But with time it was thought well to make some concession to popular superstitions ; and although the Buddha had no idea of representing himself as a divinity, every moral and physical perfection was attributed to him. The rest was easy. Idolatry had begun. To the right and left of a saint elevated to the rank of God Supreme, a glowing Pantheon was formed of the Buddhas that had preceded him. A meaningless worship was established ; virtues were subordinated to ceremonies ; and to-day before a gilded statue a wheel of prayers is turned, while through the dim temples, domed like a vase, the initiates murmur, " Life is evil."

In attempting to convert the multitude, the Buddha made no use of vulgar seductions. From him came no flattery to the passions. The recompense that he promised was not of the earth nor material in its nature. To his believers he offered neither wealth nor power. The psychic force, the seemingly supernatural faculties, that knowledge and virtue brought to those who had reached superior degrees of sanctity, were shared by the Brahmans as well; they were an appanage, not a bait. The one reward of untiring efforts was an eternal ransom from the successive horrors of Karma. The paradise which he disclosed was the death of Death. In it all things ceased to be. It was the ultimate annihilation from which life was never to be re-beckoned.

It is not surprising that the captivating quiet of a goal such as this should forcibly appeal to the inclinations of the ascetic; the wonder of it is that it could be regarded for a moment as attractive to the coarse appetites of the crowd. Nor does it seem that the Christ of Chaos made this mistake. It was the after-comers who undertook to lift the commonplace out of the humdrum. The Buddha's hope of the salvation of all mankind was a dream extending into the indefinite future; the theory of immediate emancipation was never shared by him. For the plain man, he laid down a law which was a law of grace for all, that of universal brotherhood. If its practice was insufficient to lead him to Nirvāna, it was still a preparation thereto, a paving of the way for the travellers that were yet to come.

The method which he employed to convert his hearers seems to have been a tender persuasion, in which there was no trace of the dogmatic. He did not contend against strength, he appealed to weakness, varying the insinuations of his parables according to the nature of the listener, and charming even the recalcitrant by the simplicity and flavor of his words. In these lessons there were no warnings, no detached maledictions ; but there were exhortations to virtue, and pictures of the sweet and sudden silence of eternal rest. His struggle was never with creeds, but with man, with the flesh and its appetites ; and from the memory of his victorious combat with himself there came to him precepts and maxims of incomparable delicacy and beauty. These were his weapons. His teaching was a lesson of infinite tenderness and compassion ; it was a lesson of patience and resignation and abnegation of self, and especially of humility, which in its renouncement of temporal splendors opens the path to the magnificence of death.

In the ears of not a few modern thinkers, this promise of annihilation has sounded like a gigantic paradox. It has seemed inconceivable that men could be found who would strive unremittingly their whole lives through to reach a goal where nothing was. And yet there were many such, and, what is more to the point, their number is constantly increasing. On the other hand, it has been argued that to those who knew no prospect of supernal happiness and who had never heard of an eternity of bliss, the horror of life might be of such intensity that they would be glad of any release whatever. But the value of this argument is slight. The spectacle of a Buddhist converted to Christianity is the most infrequent that has ever gladdened the heart of a missionary. Per contra, the number of those who turn from other creeds to that of Buddhism is notoriously large. The number of its converts, however, is not a proof of its perfections. And Buddhism is far from perfect : its fantastic shackles may be alluring to the mystic, but they are meaningless to the mathematician. It may be charming to hold a faith which has put pessimism into verse, and raised that verse into something more than literature ; but it is useless. The pleasure of utter extinction is one which we will probably all enjoy, and that too without first becoming Arahats ; and yet, again, we may not. The veil of Māyā is still unraised. The most we can do to lift it is to finger feebly at the edges. Sakya-Muni taught many an admirable lesson, but in his flights of fancy, like many another since, he transcended the limits of experience. Let those who love him follow.

Charity is the New Testament told in a word. When it was preached on the Mount of Olives it must have brought with it the freshness and aroma of a new conception. Before that time, the Galileans had heard but of Justice and Jehovah ; then at once they knew of Christ and Compassion ; and ever since the name and the virtue have gone hand-in-hand. And yet five hundred years before, a sermon on charity was preached in Nepal.

The charity which Sakya-Muni taught was not the ordinary liberality which varies from a furtive coin to a public bequest. It was a boundless sympathy, a prodigality of abandonment in which each creature, however humble, could find a share, and which, once entered in the heart of man, extinguished every spark of egotism. This sentiment of universal compassion was one which the two greatest of the world's reformers sought alike to instil. Between the Prince of Kapilavastu and Jesus of Nazareth there are many resemblances, but none, it may be taken, more striking than this. Beyond the common legend of their birth, both were supposed to have been tempted by the devil ; and by the Buddha, as the Christ, the devil was vanquished. Their lessons in ethics were nearly the same ; both were nihilists ; both held that the highest duty is to be at variance with self ; both struck a blow at the virility of man, and neither of them wrote. About the lives of each the myth-makers have been at work ; both were deified ; and if to-day the believers in the Buddha largely outnumber those of the Christ, it is only fair to note that the former have enjoyed advantages which the latter have never possessed. Through none of their wide leisures have they ever held it a blasphemy to think.

Another religion without a God, and one which is a twin-sister to Buddhism, is that of the Gainas. Explanatory documents concerning it are infrequent, and in search of information the student is usually obliged to turn to Brahman sources. The Gainas are the believers in Gina, the Victorious, as the Buddhists are believers in Buddha, the Sage. A Gina—in Buddhism this term is one of the many synonyms of Sakya-Muni—is a prophet who, having attained omniscience, comes to re-establish the law of salvation when it has become corrupted through the march of time. There are said to have been twenty-four Ginas, including the most recent; and as the Gainas maintain that the Buddha was a disciple of the founder of their creed, the number corresponds to that of Siddãrtha and his twenty-three predecessors. The Gainas, like the Buddhists, deny the authority of the Vedas; they consider them apocryphal, and oppose in their stead a collection of Angas of their own. No sect has been more rigorous than they in the respect of everything that lives. They eat no flesh; and it is reported that the stricter devotees filter their water, breathe through a veil, and as they walk sweep the ground before them, that no insect, however insignificant, may be destroyed. Among the customs in which they differ from Buddhism, suicide is the one worth noting. For a long period this rite seems to have been decorously observed. On most other points the two beliefs are in apparent agreement. The Gainas, too, are atheists. They admit of no Creator, and deny the existence of a perfect and eternal Being. The Gina, like the Buddha, has become perfect, but it is not thought that he has always been so.

This negation has not prevented a particular division of the faith from affecting a kind of heretical and schismatic deism, Like the Nepalese, who have imagined an Adibuddha, a supreme Buddha, they also have invented a Ginapati, a perfect Gina, whom, in opposition to their canonical Angas, they regard as primordial creator. The Angas teach that man possesses a soul, and that his soul, although a pure and an immortal intelligence, is yet the prey of illusion, and for that reason condemned to bear the yoke of matter through an indefinite series of existences. In Gainism it is not existence that is an affliction, it is life; and the Nirvāna is less an annihilation than an entrance into eternal beatitude. To distinguish between the two faiths, the Brahmans called the Buddhists, "They who affirm," and the Gainas, "They who say, Perhaps."

The Chinese, who are our elders in little else than corruption, feel as much need for a religion as a civilian does for a military uniform. From the threshold of history to the present day, the inhabitants of the celestial Empire have had no term wherewith to designate a deity. The name of God has not entered into their philosophy. As a rule, then, when an educated Chinese is asked what his creed is, he answers, that not being a priest, he has none at all. The clergy have three: the official religion—originated by Confucius—Buddhism and Tauism. The latter faith was founded by Laou-tze.

The life of this early thinker has been as liberally interwoven with legends as that of the

Buddha. The Orient seems to have had a mania for attributing the birth of reformers to immaculate conceptions ; and one learns with the weariness that comes of a thrice-told tale, that the mother of Laou-tze, finding herself one day alone, conceived suddenly through the vivifying influence of Nature. But though the conception was abrupt, the gestation was prolonged, lasting, it is said, eighty-four years ; and when at last the miraculous child was born, his hair was white—whence his name, Laou-tze, the Aged Baby. This occurred six hundred years before the present era.

The philosophy of this prodigy, contained in the Taou-tĕh-king, the Book of Supreme Knowledge and Virtue, is regarded by Orientalists as the most profound and authentic relic of early Chinese literature. The most profound, as rivalling the works of Confucius and Mencius ; and the most authentic, in that it was the only one said to have been exempt from the different edicts commanding the destruction of manuscripts.

Laou-tze was probably the first thinker who established the fact that it is not in the power of man to conceive an adequate idea of a First Cause, and the first to show that any efforts in that direction result merely in demonstrating human incompetence and the utter vainness of the endeavor. When, therefore, he was obliged to mention the primordial essence in such a manner as to be understood by his hearers, the figurative term which he employed was Tau.

"Tau," he said, "is empty, in operation exhaustless. It is the formless mother of all things." And to this description Spinoza found little to add.

Laou-tze appears to have dipped into all the philosophies then in vogue, and after taking a little eclectic sip from each, elaborated a system so cleverly that he may safely be regarded as the earliest moralist. His doctrine was thoroughly pantheistic. Man, he taught, is a passing and inferior phase of the Great Unity which is the beginning and end of all things, and into which the soul is absorbed. Happiness, he added, is like paradise, an imaginary Utopia, a fiction of the non-existent extending beyond the borderlands of the known. And on the chart which he drew of life, he set up a monitory finger-post, warning men that the only real delights were those that consist in the absence of pain. Enterprise, effort and ambition, were so many good, old-fashioned words which to this early pessimist represented merely a forethought for a future generation. And of a future generation he saw little need. The one laudable aim was in the avoidance of suffering. After all, what was there in life? Nothing save a past as painful as the present, with hope to breed chimeras and the future for a dream.

Like Buddhism, the doctrine of Laou-tze degenerated with the years. Their common simplicity was too subtle for the canaille, and to each gaudy superstitions have been added. Yet in their primal significance they are as ushers of negation, the initial revolt at the supernatural, the first reasoned attempts to route the spectres from the mind of man.

In earlier Hinduism, life was a nightmare, and the universe a phantasm that vaunted itself real. In an effort to escape, Kapila lost himself in abstractions, the Buddha ordered Death to stand a lackey at the door of Peace, while Laou-tze turned his almond eyes within and descended the stair of Thought. To the first, salvation lay in metaphysics ; to the second, in virtue ; to the third, in indifference. Had their theories been fused, the revolt might not have been so vain.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEGATIONS OF ANTIQUITY.

THE clamor of life and thought entered Greece through Asia Minor. Quinet has called the itinerary of the tribes that took possession of her hills and vales, an itinerary of the gods. That somnambulist of history has seen, as in a vision, their passage marked, here by a temple, there by a shrine. While the tribes dispersed, the gods advanced. Orpheus has told the story of their youth ; but now Orpheus is indiscoverable, and the days of which he sang are as vague as the future. When the gods entered folk-lore, they had already ascended Olympus, and the divinity of Jupiter was attested in traditions out of which Homer formed another Pentateuch. The name of the Ionian Moses is as unsubstantial as that of Orpheus ; but if his personality is uncertain, it is yet a matter of common knowledge that his epics formed the articles of an indulgent creed, and that from 'them the infant Greece first learned the pleasures that belong to dream. At this time the mysteries of the archaic skies were dissolved. Dread had vanished ; in its place was the Ideal. Throughout the mellow morns and languid dusks there was an unbroken procession of the gayest, the most alluring divinities ; their fare was ambrosia, their laughter was inextinguishable. Virtue was rewarded on earth, and Nemesis pursued the wrong-doer. The dower of men and maidens was beauty; love was too near to nature to know of shame; religion was more æsthetic than moral, more gracious than austere. The theologians were poets: first Orpheus, Musæus and Linus, then Homer and Hesiod; mirth, magnificence and melancholy they gave in fee.

Homer was not only a poet, he was an historian as well; and it is a fact amply demonstrated that he believed as little in the sacerdotal legends as Tennyson in the phantom idyls of Arthur. At that time no semblance of revealed religion was affected: the people, however, like all others before and since, would have gods, and gods they got; yet in displaying them to the infant race, Homer laughed at the divinities, and predicted that their reign would some day cease.

This prescience of the incredulity that was to come is significant. The history of Greece is one of freedom in art, in action, but particularly in thought. The death of Socrates, the flight of Aristotle, are among the exceptions that make the rule. In its broad outlines, the attitude of Hellenic thought was one of aggressive scepticism. This attitude may have been due to the fact that there was nothing which in any way resembled a national faith; each town, each hamlet, each upland and valley, possessed myths of its own, and such uniformity as existed appears to have been ritualistic rather than doctrinal.

But perhaps the primal cause is best attributable to that nimble spirit of investigation which is at once a characteristic of the Greek intellect and a contrast to the cataleptic reveries of the Hindu.

It goes without the need of telling that the philosophers put Jupiter aside much as one does an illusion of childhood, and possibly with something of the same regret. But this leniency on their part was not universally imitated. The story of Prometheus, the most ancient of fables, traces of which have been discovered in the Vedas, became in the hands of Æschylus a semi-historical, semi-cosmological legend, in which the Titan, as representative of humanity, mouths from the escarpolated summits of Caucasus his hatred and defiance of Jove. Euripides, too, was well in the movement. There was not an article of Hellenic faith that he did not scoff at. Then came the farce. Aristophanes found nothing too sacred for his wit; with the impartiality of genius he joked at gods and men alike.

While the poets and dramatists were pulling down, the philosophers were building up. If the belief in an eternal fancy ball on Olympus was untenable, something, they felt, should be suggested in its place. In lieu, therefore, of the theory that Jupiter was the first link in the chain of the universe, Thales announced that the beginning of things was water; Anaximenes said air; Heraclitus preferred fire. Anaximinder held to an abstraction, the Infinite. Pythagoras, who, like all his countrymen, dearly loved a quibble, declared that the First Cause was One. This One, Xenophanes asserted, was a self-existent Mind. Empedocles gave as definition a sphere whose centre was everywhere and circumference nowhere, a definition which Pascal revived as an attribute of the Deity. Anaxagoras, who was banished for his pains, believed in a pure Intelligence. This pure Intelligence was not a deity, except perhaps in the sense of a *deus ex machinâ;* it was an explanation, not a god. But even so, it looked like one; there were already too many unknown gods, and the idea was not received with enthusiasm. Among those who opposed it with particular vehemence was Diagoras, he who first among the Greeks received the name of atheist. This logician chanced one day to be at sea during a heavy storm. The sailors attributed the storm to him. All that they were enduring was a punishment for conveying such an impious wretch as he. "Look at those other ships over there," said Diagoras. "They are in the same storm, aren't they? Do you suppose that I am in each of them?"

Diagoras had learned his lessons from Democritus, a thinker who in certain schools of thought holds to-day a position which, if not superior, is at least equal to that of Plato. The reason of this admiration is not far to seek. Democritus is the grandsire of materialism. Materialism is out of fashion to-day, but to-morrow it may come in again. During a long and continually rejuvenated career, it has been a veritable hydra. Every time its head seemed severed for all eternity, there has sprouted a new one, and one more sagacious than the last.

The theory of atoms announced in the remote past and repeated in recent years underwent a baptism of fire at the beginning of the present century. Dalton applied it to the interpretation of chemical laws, and a little later a band of German erudites embellished it with the garlands of new discoveries. Contemporary science treats it with scant respect; but all who are of a liberal mind admit that its conclusions have been useful implements of progress. Its originator, Democritus, was a contemporary of Sakya-Muni. It is even possible that he sat at the Buddha's feet ; he is said to have wandered far into the East ; and it is also recorded that he visited Egypt, whither he had been preceded by Pythagoras, and where his questioning eyes must have met the returning stare of the Sphinx.

At that time travelling was not necessarily expensive, yet in his journeys Democritus squandered his substance with great correctness; and when after years of absence he returned to his home, he found himself amenable to a law of the land which deprived of the honors of burial those who had dissipated their patrimony. A statute of this description was not of a nature to alarm such a man as Democritus. He invited all who cared to do so, to meet him in the public square, and there, through the wide leisures of Thracian days, he recited passages from Diakosmos, his principal work. This procedure, together with the novelty of the ideas which he announced, so impressed his hearers, that they made for him a purse of five hundred talents, and after his death erected statues in his honor. Those indeed were the good old days.

In the system which Democritus suggested to his countrymen, matter was pictured as the union of an infinite number of indivisible elements, which in the diversity of their forms represent the phenomena of nature. Beyond these indivisible elements, space held but voids. Atoms and emptiness is the theory in a phrase. The voids are the absence of obstacles, and the atoms continually passing through them are the constituents of all that is. In their eternal voyage through space, these atoms meet, unite and separate, unruled save by the laws of unconscious and mechanical necessity. To their chance clash is due the world; the universe is one of their fortuitous combinations, and the hazard which presided at its formation will some day see it again dissolved. The word hazard, it may be noted, is used from lack of a better term. In exact speech there seems to be nothing which at all resembles it. The accident that occurs in the street, the rambles of the ball on the roulette-table, may seem the play of chance; but were the predisposing causes understood, the accident would be recognized as the result of a cause in which chance had no part, and in the rambles of the ball the operations of consistent laws would be discerned. Dubois Reymond has noted that if, during a short though determined space of time, an intelligent man were able to mark the exact position and movement of every molecule, he could, in accordance with the laws of mechanics, foresee the whole future of the world. In the same manner that an astronomer can foretell the date on which a comet, after years of remote wanderings, will re-visit our heavens, so in his equations could this imaginary individual read the precise day when England shall burn her last bit of coal, and Germany brew her last keg of beer.

Beyond this theory, which as a matter of course includes the denial that man is a free agent, Democritus was accustomed to assert that out of nothing, nothing comes—an axiom which one does not need to be a mathematician to agree with, though it is one that somewhat impairs the scientific value of the first chapter of Genesis. And were it otherwise, if things sprang from nothing, the producing cause would be limitless; men might issue from the sea, and fish from the earth. In the fecundity of chaos, everything, even to the impossible, would be possible. But in a system such as this, in which the operations of nature are represented as effected by invisible corpuscles which possess in themselves the laws of all their possible combinations, there is room only for the actual; the universe explains itself more or less clearly, and that too without recourse to a First Cause or an over-watching Providence.*

Democritus was one of the first quietists, but he was quietist without leanings to mysticism. He was among the earliest to note that it is the unexpected that occurs ; and he barricaded himself as best he might against avoidable misfortune by shunning everything that was apt to be a source of suffering or annoyance. Beyond mental tranquillity, he appears to have praised nothing except knowledge ; and it is stated that he hunted truth not so much for the pleasure of the chase as for the delight which the quarry afforded.

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* Nolen: La philosophie de Lange. Wurtz: La théorie atomique.

The negations of Democritus had been well ventilated when the stage of history was abruptly occupied by a band of charlatan nihilists, who personified the spirit of doubt with ingenious effrontery. These were the sophists. To be called a sophist was originally a compliment. It meant one who was a master in wisdom and eloquence. But when Greece found herself imposed upon by a company of mental gymnasts, who in any argument maintained the pros and cons with equal ease, who made the worst appear the best, who denied all things even to evidence, and affirmed everything even to the absurd, and who took sides with the just and the unjust with equal indifference—then the title lost its lustre and degenerated into a slur. This possibly was a mistake. A disapproval of the paradoxes of these dialecticians is almost a praise of the commonplace. Yet the sophists deserve small approbation. Their efforts to show that all is true and all is false, and, above all, the brilliancy of their depravity, undermined thought and morals to such an extent that philosophy, which had taken wings, might have flown forever away, had it not been re-beckoned to earth by the familiar reform instituted by Socrates.

Socrates was as ungainly as a satyr, but the suppleness of his tongue was that of a witch. At the hands of this insidious Attic, the sophists fared badly. He brought their versatilities into discredit; and in reviewing and enlarging a forgotten theory of Anaxagoras, purified thought with new lessons in virtue. This reaction seems to have been of advantage to moral philosophy, but detrimental to metaphysics; so much so, in fact, that his hearers turned their backs on theory, and devoted themselves to ethics. "Give me wisdom or a rope," cried Antisthenes, presumably to appreciative ears; and when Diogenes lit his dark lantern in broad daylight, he found every one eager to aid him in the ostentatious bizarrerie of that immortal farce.

In the midst of these pre-occupations there appeared a thinker named Pyrrho, to whom every sceptic is more or less indebted. Pyrrho was born at Elis. His people were poor, and doubtless worthy; but their poverty compelled him to seek a livelihood, which for a time he seems to have found, with his brush. By nature he was sensitive, nervous, as are all artists, and passionately in love with solitude. From some reason or another, but most probably from lack of success, he gave up painting, and wandered from one school to another, until at last a sudden introduction to Democritus turned the whole current of his restless thought. For this introduction he was indebted to Anaxarchus, a philosopher who went about asserting that all is relative, and confessing that he did not even know that he knew nothing. But in this there was possibly some little professional exaggeration. He was a thorough atomist, and very dogmatic on the subject of happiness, which, with broad good sense, he insisted was found only in the peace and tranquillity of the mind.

In Alexander's triumphal suite, Pyrrho went with this scholar to Asia, and together they visited the magi and the reflective gymnosophists. The abstracted impassibility of these visionaries caused him, it is said, an admiration so intense that he made from it a rule of daily conduct; and one day when his master, with whom he was walking, fell into a treacherous bog, Pyrrho continued calmly on his way, leaving Anaxarchus to the mud and his own devices. It may be that in this there was some prescience of the modern aphorism that any one is strong enough to bear the misfortunes of another; but even so, Pyrrho, when it was necessary, could be brave in his own behalf, and one of the few anecdotes that are current represent his unmurmuring endurance of an agonizing operation. This occurred before any one was aware of the imperceptibility of pain; the stoics were yet unborn.

During his long journey, Pyrrho acquired all, or nearly all, that the East had to teach. He listened to Brahman and Buddhist, and took from each what best they had to give. The impassibility of the one appealed to him forcibly, the ethics of the other seemed to him most admirable; and with these for luggage, packed together with an original idea of his own, he returned to his early home, where his fellow-citizens, as a mark of their appreciation, elevated him to the rank of high priest, a dignity which may have caused him some slight, if silent, amusement.

At that time Greece was rent by wars and revolutions. In the uncertainty of the morrow and the instability of all things, there was a general effort to enjoy life while enjoyment was yet to be had, and to make that enjoyment as thorough as possible. When, therefore, Pyrrho announced his intention to teach the science of happiness, he found his audience ready-made.

The doctrine which he then unfolded was received at first with surprise, but afterwards with sympathetic attention; it gained for him wide praise, and also fervent followers. These followers, to whom the thanks of posterity are due, took to themselves the duty of preserving his teaching; for, like Socrates, Pyrrho wrote nothing.

It has been hinted that Pyrrho accepted the materialism of Democritus, admired the hedonism of Anaxarchus, and practised the impassibility of the Hindus. These elements, which formed what may be termed the angles of his system, were rounded and completed by an original doctrine, which represented doubt as an instrument of wisdom, moderation and personal welfare. Before this time there had been much scepticism, but it had been of a vacillating and unordered kind, the indecision of the uncertain, and no one had thought of making it a stepping-stone to happiness. This Pyrrho did, and in it lies his chief originality.

The scepticism which Pyrrho instituted was an unyielding doubt, and one, paradox as it may seem, which was highly logical. In it Kant found the outlines of his Criticism traced in advance, and that too by a master-hand. Pyrrho admitted no difference between health and illness, life and death. He expected nothing, asked for nothing, believed in nothing. If he ever struggled with himself, the struggle was a silent combat, of which his heart was the one dumb witness. He was not simply a sceptic, nor yet merely a cynic; he was a stoic, with a leaven of both. To the eternal question, "What am I?" he answered, "It matters not." He had but one true successor —Montaigne. The everlasting refrain, *Que sçay ie?* is an echo, faint may be, but still an echo, of his own unperturbed indifference. The only refuge in the midst of the uncertainties to which man is ever a prey, lay, Pyrrho held, in an entire suspension of judgment. Between assertion and denial he did not so much as waver; he balanced his opinion in a perfect equipoise. As there is no criterion of truth, his position was impregnable.

"There is," he taught, "nothing that is inherently beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, and hence nothing that can be defined as an absolute truth. Things in themselves," he added, "are diverse, uncertain and undiscernable. Neither sensation nor thought is capable of teaching the difference between what is true and what is false. As a consequence, the verdict of mind and of senses should be equally distrusted ; an opinionless impassibility should be observed ; nothing should be denied, nothing should be affirmed ; or if one of the two seems necessary, let the affirmation and the denial be concurrent."

And happiness ? some one may ask. But that is happiness. Where there is indifference and apathy, there too is ataraxia, the perfect and unruffled serenity of the mind. If in act, word and thought, an entire suspension of judgment be maintained—if men, and women too, and events and results and causes, concerning all of which we may have our fancies and our theories, but whose reality escapes us, are treated with complete indifference—then do we possess an independent freedom, an unroutable calm. Once freed from beliefs and prejudices, an exterior influence is without effect ; perfect impassibility is obtained ; and with it comes the passionless serenity, the ataraxia, which is the goal of the sage.

Such in its broadest outlines was Pyrrho's doctrine. Confute it who may. For the details the reader must turn to back book-shelves where speculative spiders are the only hosts, and there thumb the mildewed pages of Sextus Empiricus, Aristocles and Diogenes Laertius. It should be noted that Pyrrho's scepticism did not extend to virtue, which he was fond of saying is the one thing whose possession is worth the gift. At an advanced age he died, greatly esteemed by his townsmen, who to do him honor exempted all philosophers from taxation. But elsewhere he was forgotten, and at the time of his death his brilliancy was eclipsed by the rising glories of Epicurus.

When Epicurus addressed the public, he was no longer a young man. His early life had been an unbroken journey. No sooner was he settled in one place, than circumstances compelled him to seek another. These inconveniences did not prevent him from cultivating philosophy, for which from boyhood he evinced a marked predilection. "In the beginning was chaos," his first tutor announced. "And where did chaos come from?" asked Epicurus. But to this the tutor had no answer, and the boy turned to Democritus.

To this master much of his subsequent philosophy is attributable, but his personal success was due to the charm of his manner and the seduction of his words. Syrians and Egyptians flocked to Athens to hear him speak, and few among them went away dissatisfied.

At that time the riot of war had demoralized society. The echoes from a thousand battlefields had banished all sense of security. Greece, moreover, was as tired of speculations as of conflicts; the subtleties of the Lyceum had outwearied the most intrepid. In the midst of the general enervation, Epicurus came, like another Pyrrho, to tell the secret of Polichinelle, to paint pleasure and describe happiness. In the telling he made no mysteries ; his hearers approached him without effort. Pleasure, he held, was too simple and unaffected to need logical demonstrations ; and to make her acquaintance, common-sense was a better letter than mathematics. But pleasure should not be sought merely for pleasure's sake. It should be regarded as a means to an end. Between pleasure and pleasure there is always a choice. There are pleasures that should be shunned, and there are trials that should be endured. There is the pleasure that is found in the satisfaction of the flesh, and there is the pleasure which is found in the tranquillity of the mind. The one lasts but a moment, and wanes in repetition ; the other endures through life, and increases with the years. All this Epicurus thoroughly understood. He had a maxim to the effect that wealth does not consist in the vastness of possessions, but in the limitation of desires. He did not restrict his hearers to scanty enjoyments ; on the contrary, he preached their multiplication, but it was a multiplication which was both a lure and a prohibition. He wished men to live so simply that pleasure, when it came, might seem even more exquisite than it is. Of all the high-roads to happiness, he pointed to prudence as the surest and most expeditious. The prudent are temperate in all things, unambitious and of modest requirements, and through this very prudence maintain the health of mind and body which in itself is the true felicity of the wise.

The Epicurean doctrine was one long lesson in mental tranquillity. Anything that ministered to contentment was welcomed, and all things that disturbed it were condemned. Among the latter were the gods.

> "Ces dieux que l'homme a fait, et qui n'ont pas fait
> l'homme."

The proper way to treat them was a difficult question. Epicurus had no taste for hemlock, and he found his garden very pleasant. He had no wish to flee, like Aristotle, in the night, nor mope, like Anaxagoras, in a dungeon. He was a teacher, not a martyr. His position, therefore, was one of extreme delicacy. On the one hand, he was obliged to consider his personal inconvenience; on the other, the superstitions of the masses. To respect the former and banish the latter, Epicurus took the gods and juggled with them, and in the legerdemain they mounted to such altitudes that from them the vulgar had nothing left to hope or to fear. Their existence was openly admitted, and their intervention as openly denied. In words of devout piety he took from them the reigns of government, and pictured their idleness as an ideal impassibility. After that, Olympus was to let.

The early legends say that the first created thing was fear. After routing the gods, Epicurus undertook to banish dread; *il timor della paura*, as the Italians have it in their insidious tongue—the fear of fright, or at least that particular form with which hallucinated antiquity was accustomed to terrify itself into repentant spasms. Aided by the materialism of his master, Epicurus looked across the tomb, and announced that there no tormenting phantoms lurked in ambush. The dissolution of the atoms composing the body was also a dissolution of the atoms composing the soul. This affirmation of nothing divested life of a constant anxiety. It took from it one more care. It made the tranquillity of the mind easier, and assured it against an idle pre-occupation.

This doctrine, far from giving free play to the passions, held them well in check. Epicurus could see two sides to a question as well as another. Morality and temperance even to abstinence were praised. His hearers were enjoined to limit their desires, and at all times to be just and to be charitable. The virtues, too, were praised; and this not so much perhaps on account of their inherent beauty, as because they were safeguards against mental disturbance.

In disclosing his ideas, Epicurus necessarily refuted other theories; but his candor, his unalterable placidity and his luminous good faith, disconcerted his adversaries, whose infrequent reprisals he answered, if at all, with an epigram.

In disinteresting his adherents from all things and even from themselves, it was the wish of Epicurus to create, not a school of thought, but a something whose status should approach that of a general disbelief. It was to be a religion whose one dogma was repose. In this purpose he very nearly succeeded. By the terms of his will, his garden, his writings and authority descended from one disciple to another in perpetuity. There was then no statute of mortmain, and the terms of the testament remained in force for seven hundred years—in fact, down to the last gasp of classic antiquity.

The continuity which it enjoyed is perhaps less attributable to its dogmas than to a sentiment of great delicacy which pervaded it. Christianity teaches that all men are brothers, but Epicurism practised the lesson before it was taught. Its bonds were those of friendship. Cicero has given it to history that the Epicureans had one to another the most unselfish sentiments. There was no community of goods. Friendship gave its own from a sense of pleasure and not from constraint.

During its long reign, Epicurism attracted many converts from other sects, but lost none of its own adherents. This singularity was explained by a wit of the baths, who, adjusting his toga, noted with the light banter of the day that it was easy enough to make a eunuch of a man, but another matter to make a man of a eunuch. It is possible that this *bel esprit* had grasped the doctrine better than his hearers. Certainly it has not always been thoroughly understood. Montesquieu accused it of corrupting Rome ; but the accusation is groundless, for at its advent the Eternal City was one vast lupanar.

Seneca said of Epicurus that he was a hero disguised as a woman, and it is in this disguise that he is usually represented. The doctrine which he gave to the world seemed to praise sensuality where in reality it preached repose. Idlers in all times have halted at the appearance and omitted to go further. For this reason, if for none that is better, there has always been a false and a true Epicurism. Unhappily, the bastard has been best received, and in its reception it has managed to discredit both the philosopher and the philosophy.

Over the gateway to his olive-gardens Epicurus had written : " Enter, stranger ; here all is fair ; Pleasure lords the day." The sign was a bait, and of a flavor far different from the repellent severity of the notice which swung from the Academe. There admittance was refused to those who did not know geometry. But when the stranger, attracted by the proffered allurement, entered the gardens, he found that the lording of pleasure meant health of body and of mind.

There were some who entered, and who, delighted at the teaching, remained. There were others who entered at one gate and passed out discomfited at another ; and there was also a third class, who, noting the tenor of the invitation, and knowing that the host was a philosopher, passed on charmed with the idea that the gratification of the senses possessed the sanction of metaphysics. These latter necessarily compromised Epicurus ; and when his doctrine passed from Athens to Rome, it had been preceded by a bad reputation. For this the excuse is, seemingly, small. Epicurus was as voluminous a writer as Voltaire ; and if the Romans misunderstood him, it is either because their knowledge of Greek was slight, or else because they were content to accept his teaching on hearsay. Toward the close of the republic, the system—such little at least as was generally known—became largely the fashion ; and the elegance of Rome, like the indolence of Athens, cloaked its corruption with a mind-woven mantle of imaginary philosophy.

In descending the centuries, its reputation has not improved. Epicurism is not now synonymous, as it once was, with refined debauchery ; yet at the dinner-tables of contemporary clubland there are many still unaware that he who is claimed as patron-saint had tastes so simple that his expense for food was less than an obolus a day, while Metrodorus, his nearest friend, expended barely a lepton more. Now and then, on high-days and festivals, a bit of cheese was eaten with sensual relish ; but it is a matter of history that the ordinary fare of these voluptuaries was bread dipped in water.

The national divinity of the Romans is unknown. To all but the hierophants his name was a secret. Cicero has admitted that to him it was undisclosed. A tribune was even put to death for having pronounced it. If, in such a matter, conjectures were worth anything, it would not be irrational to fancy that the deity who ranked as Jupiter's superior was Pavor, Fright.

The hardiest and foremost conquerors in the world, the descendants of a she-wolf's nursling, were timid as children before the unintelligibility of the universe. Their earliest gods were revealed in the thunder; their belief was a panic; and when the panic subsided, it was succeeded by a dull, unreasoning dread.

No other land has seen a vaster Pantheon. There were so many divinities that Petronius said it was easier for the traveller to meet a god than a man. The more there were, the less insecure they felt. When they conquered a country, they took the gods as part of the spoils, but they treated them with great reverence; the temples were left standing and the altars unharmed. This moderation was probably due less to a sense of duty than to fear. They were afraid of their own gods; they were afraid of those of other nations; and those of whom they knew the least seem to have frightened them most.

In those days there was no iconoclasm, nor was there any attempt to make proselytes. The whole sentiment of Roman antiquity was opposed to the suppression of a creed, and such an idea as supplanting one religion by another was unknown. This liberality was particularly manifest during the latter part of the republic. At that time a statue to Isis was erected vis-à-vis to Jupiter. Sylla escorted a Syrian goddess to Rome, and Mithra, who had been lured from the East, became very popular among the lower classes. But all this occurred after triumphant campaigns. When Rome was young, her gods, if equally numerous, were less concrete.

The religion of the Sabines and the Latins was the naturalism of their Aryan ancestors. In it the gods, if emblematic, were unimaged ; they were manifestations of the divine, but not actual divinities. Each new manifestation was a fresh revelation, to which the early Italiot was quick to give a name and found a worship ; but in the worship there was more of dread than of hope, the dread of the unknown and the invisible.

Gradually the gods became less abstract, but as M. Boissier has hinted, they were probably as lack-lustre as the imagination of the laborers that conceived them, and so remained dully and dimly perceived until peddlers from Cumæ and Rhegium came over with wares and legends. To their tales the Romans listened with marvelling surprise. Their gods, like themselves, were poor and prosaic ; they had no history, no myths ; and with a pleasant and liberal sense of duty, they robed them with the shreds and tatters of Ionian verse.

At precisely what epoch this occurred is uncertain ; but as the art of writing was familiar to the Romans in very ancient times, and as it has been shown that the Roman alphabet was drawn from Eolo-Dorian characters, it is not unreasonable to infer that relations between the two races were established at a comparatively early date.

The gods to whom the freedom of the city was thus unwarily granted, grew and expanded with it, but their native charm had been lost in crossing the sea. The serene mythology in which they were nursed was supplanted by gloomy superstitions ; the gay and gracious fictions were dulled with grave chronicles ; and the gods, who at home were cordial and indulgent, developed under the heavy hand of their adopters into an inquisitive and irritable police.

Instead of being loved, they were feared, and the fear they inspired was the heartrending fright of a child pursued.

To the untrained minds of their supplicants they lurked everywhere, even in silence. They were cruel and vindictive ; they tormented the Roman out of sheer wantonness, for the mere pleasure of seeing him writhe. Plutarch has confided to posterity that in those days a man could not so much as sneeze without exposing himself to their anger. In such circumstances, worship was not merely a moral obligation, it was a matter of business, a form of insurance against divine risks, in which the worshipper with naïve effrontery tried to bargain with the gods that they should hold him harmless. This effort was solemnized by a religious ceremony whose meaning had been forgotten, and during which the priests mumbled prayers in a jargon which they did not understand.

With a retrospect even of two thousand years, it is a little difficult to fancy that the Romans pinned their faith to these mummeries, yet such seems to have been the case. In Greece there was much incredulity, but it was the laughing incredulity of a boy who has disentangled himself from the illusions of the nursery. That of the Romans took a different form ; it was an irritated scepticism which vacillated between defiant negation and fervent belief. Doubtless there were enlightened men who took it all easily and with several grains of Attic salt; but they were infrequent; incredulity seems to have been the exception and in no wise the rule.

When the Roman, angered to exasperation, braved the gods with a sacrilege, at the first sign of impending danger he was quick to implore their protection. Sylla, feeling in the humor, sacked Delphi and insulted Apollo; all of which, Plutarch says, did not prevent him, the first time he was frightened, from praying to the very god whose temple he had pillaged. And Sylla, it may be remembered, was the last one to harbor any unnecessary superstitions. If remorse was felt by such an accomplished ruffian as he, what could be expected of the mass of his compatriots, who, if equally ruffian, were far less accomplished?

In reading back through history, it seems as though the Romans hated their divinities and yet were afraid to show their hatred; and it seems too that had one of them met a god alone, that god would have fared badly. Indeed, it is probable that the majority were animated with a feeling of displeasure like to that of the Norse warrior who ardently wished to meet Odin that he might attack and slay him. Nevertheless, they attended to their religious ceremonies; though they did so, perhaps, very much as most people pay their taxes. Of two evils, they chose the least. But when it was found that Evemerus had announced that the gods were ordinary bullies, who had been deified because every one was afraid of them, it was very generally thought that the right nail had been struck full on the head. In any event the idea was highly relished ; and when in a certain play an individual was introduced who denied that there was such a thing as a Providence, the applause of the audience was appreciatively eruptive. It was like the sight of a sail to shipwrecked sailors.

This, however, was all very well in comedy, where any little blasphemy brought with it the thrill and flavor of forbidden fruit ; but tragedy was a different matter. There, it is said, when the hero announced his escape from the infernal regions, children screamed and women shuddered. And indeed the contemporary pictures of the land of shades seem well calculated to terrify even the valiant. In the imagination of the people, any life beyond the tomb was nearly synonymous with an eternal nightmare. Of actual and physical torture there was none, or at least none, they believed, for them. The vengeance of Jupiter descended only on Titans and insurgent kings ; it disdained the insignificance of the vulgar.

Nor was there any hope of happiness. The beatitude of the Elysian Fields was only for the anointed. The common mortal received neither reward nor punishment. The just and the unjust were plunged into the grotesque horrors of a fantastic night, from which, save on the stage, there was no escape.

The poets, admittedly, gave pictures of after-life that were other and more alluring than this, but their pictures were discredited ; and besides, between the conceptions of the dreamer and the opinions of the masses there is a chasm that is never bridged. To the general public the idea of immortality does not seem to have been a consolation. Probably it partook something of the character of an embarrassing dilemma. On the one hand was the liberty to accept it for what it was worth ; on the other was the privilege to disbelieve in it entirely. There were doubtless not a few who took the latter course, and whose consequent freedom of thought must have been a cause of shuddering envy to the orthodox ; but so inextinguishable is the love of life, that the majority seem to have preferred to believe that existence, however miserable, was continued beyond the tomb, to adopting any theory which savored of extinction. They were afraid, Seneca said, to go to Hades, and equally afraid not to go anywhere.

Toward the latter part of the republic, the credulity of the masses was somewhat impaired. Echoes of the *obiter dicta* of the enlightened reached their ears. Besides, there was then little time for devotional exercises. Rome was in a ferment ; the tramp of soldiery was continuous ; cities were up at auction; nations were outlawed; institutions were falling ; laws were laughed at ; might was right, and magnificent vice triumphant. The field, then, was prepared for nothing if not a moralist, and Nature, who is often beneficent, produced one in the nick of time.

The annals of literature are harmonious with the name of Rome, yet Rome was the mother of but two men of letters—Cæsar and this moralist who was called Lucretius. Concerning the latter, history has been niggardly. It is said that he was born when Cæsar was a child, and died when Vergil was putting on the *toga virilis ;* but beyond these dates history is dumb.

Lucretius is known to be the author of a poem, the most exquisite perhaps in the Latin tongue ; but after that is recorded there are no anecdotes to help the sentence out. "Veil thy days," Epicurus had said, and the passionate Roman took the maxim for a motto. How he lived or why he lived, has been and now always will be purely conjectural. Yet if there is no diary to tell of the poet's incomings and outgoings, it is not a difficult matter to familiarize oneself with his train of thought and to picture the circumstances that directed it.

During his childhood, Sylla and Marius were playing fast-and-loose with their armies and with Rome. As a boy he could have witnessed a massacre beside which St. Bartholomew's was a street row—the massacre of fifty thousand allies at the gates of Rome—and on the morrow he may have heard the cries of eight thousand prisoners who were being butchered in the circus ; while Sylla, with the air of one accounting for a trivial incident, explained to the startled Senate that the uproar came from a handful of insurgents bellowing at the whip. Later came the revolt of Spartacus, the conspiracy of Cataline, the flight of the coward Pompey, and finally the passing and apotheosis of Cæsar. If such things are not enough to give impressions to a poet, then one may well wonder what are.

In a monograph on this subject,* to which, it should be said in passing, the present writer is much indebted, M. Martha has noted that Lucretius believed in but one god. That god was Epicurus. "Deus ille fuit, deus," he exclaimed ; and if the words sound exuberant, they may perhaps find an excuse in the fact that the Romans were very ignorant and Epicurus very wise. How he became acquainted with the works of the grave Athenian is unrecorded. In Rome, as has been hinted, contemporary acquaintance with them was scant and consisted of hearsay. At that time some fragmentary translations of Greek physics had been made, and it is possible that through them his attention was directed to materialism in general and Epicurism in particular. There is even a legend which represents him studying in Athens at the fountain-head. But however this may be, it is clear that Lucretius gave Rome her first real lesson in philosophy.

The doctrine which Lucretius preached to his compatriots was one of renunciation—renunciation of this world and renunciation of any hope of another. He was fanatical in his disbelief, and he expounded it with a vehemence and with an emphasis which, while convincing enough in its way, was yet in striking contrast to the apathy of Epicurus, who, serenely consistent to his principles, saw, as M. Martha says, no need to get excited when admonishing others to be quiet. But their tasks were dissimilar. Epicurus addressed himself to those who were already indifferent, while those who listened to Lucretius were still among the horrors of their original faith.

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* Le Poème de Lucrèce.

It was these horrors that Lucretius set about to dissipate. His imagination had caught fire on the dry materialism of Greece, and it was with the theory of atoms that he sought to rout the gods. The undertaking was not a simple matter. The abolition of the divine was an abolition of every tenet, political as well as devotional. The moment the atomistic theory was accepted, away went the idea that the phenomena of nature were dependent on the will of the gods; the whole phantasmagoria of religion faded, and with it the elaborate creed of centuries evaporated into still air. There was nothing left; even death was robbed of its grotesqueness.

To those who objected that in devastating the skies a high-road was opened to crime, Lucretius, pointing to the holocausts, the hecatombs and the sacrifices, answered, "It is religion that is the mother of sin."

> "Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta."

Other teachers had tried to purify religion, but Lucretius wished nothing short of its entire suppression; it had been without pity for Rome, and he was without pity for it. He hacked and hewed it with all his strength, and with a strength that was heightened by irony and science. The irony was not new to Rome, but the science was. Against the panic of superstition he opposed the tranquillity of common sense; against Pavor, Veritas, or at least that which seemed truth to him.

There is nothing classic about Lucretius except his materialism. The value of that is slight, but contemporary readers have found themselves startled at the modernity of his sentiments. The cry of disgust which came from him is identical with that which the latest singers have uttered. Their common pessimism has been echoed across the centuries. In many ways Lucretius may be considered Pyrrho's heir as well as that of Epicurus. Between the testators the difference is not wide. One addressed the mind, the other the heart; the ultimate object, the attainment of happiness, was the same. If their dual influence has been unimportant, it is perhaps because the goal is fabulous. In this respect Lucretius may then be considered their direct successor, and one, moreover, who had his own views regarding the possible improvement of the possessions which descended to him. Lucretius not only denied the existence of the gods, he denied the existence of happiness. There was none in this life, and in his negation of an hereafter there could be none in another. As for ambition, what is it but a desire for an existence in the minds of other people—a desire which when fulfilled is a mockery, and unfulfilled a tomb? And besides, to what does success lead? To honor, glory and wealth? But these things are simulachres, not happiness. Any effort, any aspiration, any struggle, is vain.

> "Nequidquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum
> Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."

Nequidquam! In vain, indeed! How vain, few knew better than Alfred de Musset, when he paraphrased that immortal, if hackneyed, distich in lines like these:

> "Au fond des vains plaisirs que j'appelle à mon aide,
> Je sens un tel dégout que je me sens mourir."

But Lucretius' *nequidquam* applied not only to empty pleasures; it applied to all the illusions that circle life, and to all that drape the grave. His disenchantment needed but one thing to be complete, a visit from that thought which was afterwards to haunt De Vigny:

> "Seul, le silence est grand, tout le reste est faiblesse."

Whether or not the influence of Lucretius was great enough to effect a revolution, is difficult to determine. But this at least is certain: he was a popular poet, and the appearance of his work coincided with a great decline of superstition. The dread which had been multiplying temples subsided. Among the educated classes, atheism became the fashion. Those who were less indifferent occupied themselves in cooling their indignation, but believers were infrequent. Varro declared that religion was perishing, not from the attacks of its enemies, but from the negligence of the faithless. The testimony of Lucilius is to the effect that no respect was shown to laws, religion, or to gods. To Cicero the latter were absurd ; and the immortality of the soul, which Cæsar denied in the open senate, was to him a chimera. " In happiness," he said, " death should be despised ; in unhappiness it should be desired. After it there is nothing." Cornelius Nepos looked back and saw temples in ruins, unvisited save by archaic bats. Religion was a thing of the past. Here and there it received that outward semblance of respect which is the due of all that is venerable, but faith had faded and fright had ceased to build. The Romans, some one has suggested, were not unlike those fabled denizens of the under-earth, who suddenly deserted their subterranean palaces, left their toys, their statues and their gods to the darkness, and, emerging into the light, saw for the first time the pervasive blue of the skies and the magnificent simplicity of nature.

Later there was a revival. The restoration of religion was undertaken as a governmental necessity. The Senate proclaimed the divinity of Augustus, and thereafter the Cæsars usurped what little worship was left. That there was much faith in their divinity is doubtful. Valerius Maximus appears to have had no better argument than that they could be seen, which was more than could be said of their predecessors. Vespasian seems to have taken the whole thing as a joke. " I am becoming a god," he said with a smile as he died. Meanwhile, in the general incredulity, the earlier deities lost even the immortality of mummies. Under Diocletian a pantomime was given with great success. It was called, *The Last Will and Testament of Defunct Jupiter.*

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVULSIONS OF THE CHURCH.

THE earliest barbarian that invaded Rome was a Jew. He did not thunder at the gates; he went unheralded to the Taberna Meritoria—a squalid inn on the Tiber that reeked with garlic—broke his fast, and then sauntered forth, as any modern traveller might do, to view the city. His first visit was to his compatriots at the foot of the Janiculum. To them he whispered something, went away, returned and whispered again. After a while he spoke out loud. Some of his hearers contradicted him; he spoke louder. The peddlers, the rag-pickers, the valets-de-place and hook-nosed porters grew tumultuous at his words. The ghetto was raided, and a complaint for inciting disorder was lodged against a certain Christus, of whom nothing was known and who had managed to elude arrest.

Who was this Christus? Apart from the Gospels, canonical and apocryphal, history gives no answer. He is not mentioned by Philo or Justus. Other makers of contemporary chronicles are equally silent. Josephus makes a passing allusion to him, but that passing allusion is very generally regarded as the interpolation of a later hand. It may be added, that while

Justus and Josephus say nothing of Jesus, they yet describe Essenism, and in those days many of the tenets of the early Church were indistinguishable from it. It seems, therefore, not unfair to suppose that either these historians knew nothing of the teaching of the Christ, or else that they considered it too unimportant to be deserving of record.

An early legend has, however, been handed down from Celsus, a Jew who lived about the time of Hadrian. The work containing this legend has been lost, and is known only through fragments which Origen has preserved. In substance it amounts to this. A beautiful young woman lived with her mother in a neglected caphar. This young woman, whose name was Mirjam — Mary — supported herself by needlework. She became betrothed to a carpenter, broke her vows in favor of a soldier named Panthera, and wandering away gave birth to a male child called Jeschu—Jeschu being a contraction of the Hebrew Jehoshua, of which Jesus is the Greek form. When Jeschu grew up, he went as servant into Egypt, which was then the head-quarters of the magicians. There he learned the occult sciences, and these gave him such confidence that on his return he proclained himself a god.

The story of Mirjam and Panthera is repeated in the Gemaras—the complements and commentaries of the Talmud — and also in the Toledoth Jeschu, an independent collection of traditions relative to the birth of the Christ.

These later accounts differ from that of Celsus merely in this, that Mirjam is represented as a hairdresser, while Panthera or Pandira is described as a freebooter and a ruffian. It may be noted that, in a work on this subject, Mr. Baring-Gould states that St. Epiphanius, when giving the genealogy of Jesus, brings the name Panthera into the pedigree.*

The importance of these legends is slight, and the question of their truth or falsity is of small moment. That which it is alone important to consider is the individuality of the Saviour; and the point whose conveyance has been sought is simply this, that beyond a restricted circle nothing was known of it during the first century of the present era.

Jesus, the Anointed, the Christ, was the flower of the Mosaic Law. The date of his birth is uncertain, and the story of his early years is vague. The picture of his boyhood, in which he is represented as questioning the Darschanim, the learned men, is, however, familiar to us all. In the schools—the houses of Midrasch, as they were called—he heard the sacred books of his race expounded, and learned such lessons in ethics as were obtainable from the moralists of the day. Meanwhile the dream of Israel, the forecast of a triumphant future, the advent of a Messiah, the abrupt upheaval which was to be both the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctification of the faithful, the remission of sins and the magnificence that was to be, were constantly discussed before him. As he grew older, he seems to have placed little credence on these prophecies ; he waived them aside, retaining only the lessons in ethics, to which, in advancing years, as his own ministry began, he added an idea which he had gathered from one preaching in the wilderness, an idea which his own originality heightened with a newer force and flavor, and which formed the subsequent corner-stone of the Christian Church.

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* The Lost and Hostile Gospels.

At that time his belief in himself appears to have been slight. To the title of Messiah he made no claim. It was given to him unsought by his earliest adherents, who later imagined a genealogy which certain fractions of Christianity declined to accept. Among these, the Ebionites and Docetæ are the most noteworthy. To the one he was an ordinary individual ; to the other, a phantasm.

The story of his birth is one which is common to many religions. In a fragment of Irenæus it is stated that the Gospel according to St. Matthew was written to the Jews, who earnestly desired a Messiah of the royal line of David. To satisfy them that their wish was fulfilled was not an easy matter. The Aramaic Gospel to the Hebrews, as well as the gospel according to St. Mark, offered no evidence that Jesus was the one they sought. But the early Church had the boldness of youth. Against the existing Gospels she opposed a new evangel, one which was more complete and convincing than its predecessors, and one, moreover, which bore the revered and authoritative name of Matthew. St. Matthew, however, had then long been dead, and his ability to write in Greek does not appear to have been suspected.

The Gospel which the Church attributed to him is to-day very generally regarded as a compilation of its predecessors, with the addition of a genealogy. The Messiah, it had been prophesied, would be of the house of David, and accordingly an effort was made to show that Jesus was of the royal race. The royal race seems then to have been extinct ; but that is a side issue. The one point to be noted is that the descent of Jesus is claimed through Joseph, who, it is stated, was not his father.

The genealogy completed, the historian turned his attention to two passages in what is known to-day as the Old Testament. The first of these passages occurs in Isaiah (vii. 14—16), the second in Micah (v. 2). The first relates to a child that the Lord was to give as a sign, and the second designates Bethlehem as his future birthplace. It may be noted that the term in Isaiah which refers to the child's mother, and which was afterwards rendered into παρθένος, is *olme*, and *olme* means young woman. The pseudo-Matthew, however, preferred a narrower description, and represented the mother as a virgin. In regard to the second passage, there is doubtless some mistake, as all impartial commentators are agreed that the nativity of Jesus took place, not at Bethlehem, but at Nazareth.

There are, however, few great events which have been handed down through history unswathed in fables and misconceptions. The Gospel according to St. Matthew—and the remark holds true of the others—was written without any suspicion that it would be subjected to the scrutiny of later ages ; it was written to prepare man for the immediate termination of the world. Such misstatements as it contains may therefore be regarded with a lenient eye.

But to return to the point. However slight was the belief of Jesus in himself, it is tolerably clear that the pretensions of his adherents angered the Nazarenes. They declined to admit the royal and supernatural claims that were advanced in favor of one whose kinsmen were of the same clay as themselves. To them he was merely a graceful rabbi. Yet when he addressed the wondering fishers of Galilee, his success was both great and immediate. His electric words thrilled their rude hearts ; they were both charmed and coerced by the grave music which he evoked from the Syro-Chaldaic tongue ; their belief in him was spontaneous ; they regarded him as dwelling in a sphere superior to that of humanity ; gladly would they have proclaimed him king ; and it was from their unquestioning confidence that Jesus drew a larger trust in himself. Certainly his personal magnetism must have been very great. There is a legend which represents him as being far from well-favored, and this legend, like the others, is doubtless false. It is probable that he possessed that exquisite, if effeminate, type of beauty which is not infrequent in the East. One may fancy that his tiger-tawny hair glistened like a flight of bees, and that his face was whiter than the moon. In his words, his manner and appearance, there must have been a charm which was both unusual and alluring. Indeed, there were few who were privileged to come into direct contact with him that did not love him at once; but the multitude stood aloof. It refused to recognize the son of David in the mystic anarchist who had not where to lay his head.

The ministry of Jesus did not extend over three years. M. Renan thinks it is possible that it did not extend much over one. But the time, however short, was well filled. On its lessons, races and nations have subsisted ever since. The pity of it is that the purport of the instruction should have been misunderstood.

It has been already hinted that the cornerstone of the Christian Church was formed of an idea which Jesus gathered from John the Baptist. When, therefore, he sent forth his disciples, he gave them no other message than that which he had himself received: "Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he added: "Verily, I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before the Son of Man be come." "All these things shall come upon this generation," were his explicit words to his hearers and disciples. After the episodes in the wilderness, Jesus went into Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand."

And a little later he addressed his auditors in these words : "Verily I say unto you that there be some of them that stand by which shall in nowise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Citations of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely. If the testimony of the Gospels is to be believed, it is evident that the disciples were convinced that the fulfilment of the prophecy was a matter of months or at most of a few years. They lived, as M. Renan has noted, in a state of constant expectation. Their watchword was *Maran atha*, The Lord cometh. In fancy they saw themselves enthroned in immutable Edens, dwelling among realized ideals amid the resplendent visions which the prophets had evoked.

It was this error that formed the corner-stone of the Christian Church. When later it was recognized as such, the Church interpreted the "kingdom of God" as the establishment of the Christian religion.

But Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion, and still less of substituting a personal doctrine for the Mosaic Law. He came to prepare men, not for life, but for death. The virtues which he praised most highly were those of renunciation and abnegation of self. His one thought was centred in the approaching end of the world. It was on this belief that the value of his teaching rested ; viewed in any other light, his continual condemnation of labor would be inexplicable; while his prohibition against wealth, his adjuration to forsake all things for his sake, the blow which he struck at the virility of man, his praise of celibacy, his disregard of family ties, his abasement of marriage, and his contempt even of the dead, would be without meaning.

The faith which he inculcated was a necessary preparation for the event then assumed to be near at hand. It was exacted as a means of grace. In it the reason, the understanding, had no part. It was the complete submission of the intelligence, a resolution to accept dogmas without question. In the moral certainty which his believers possessed of the immediate realization of their hopes, it is not surprising that this faith should have been readily accorded. The enigma lies in the faith of the subsequent centuries. It may be, however, that the doctrine which has descended to us was merely the exoteric teaching. Of at least fifty Gospels that were written, four only have been recognized by the Church. Of these, the originals do not exist, and their supposed texts have been so frequently re-touched, that more than thirty thousand variations are said to have been discovered. It may be, then, that there was another doctrine, an esoteric teaching, which was never fully disclosed, or else has been lost in the dust-bins of literature. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Valentine is recorded as asserting that he had received an esoteric doctrine which Jesus imparted only to the most spiritual among his disciples ; and the possibility is further heightened by the incongruity between the sublimity of the genius which was the Christ's and the tenancy of a belief in the realization of the visions of Daniel.

Jesus was in no sense a scientist, but his insight was piercing and his intuitions clairvoyant. He was the most transcendent of rebels, but he was possessed of a comprehension too unerring to be deluded by the utopias of dreams. It may be, then, that in the solitudes of the desert he conceived some such system as that which was taught by his predecessor in Nepal. To him, as to the Buddha, life was a tribulation. And what fairer paradise could there be than the infinite rest of chaos ? Let the sullen rumble of accursed life once be quelled, and God's kingdom would indeed be come with power. What save this could have been that peace which passeth all understanding ?

It may be remembered that according to the Hebrew sages man survived only in his children. The doctrine of resurrection, and the attendant theory of rewards and punishments, was unknown to them. But at the time of the advent of the Christ, these ideas were part of the teaching of the Pharisaic party. Where they were gathered is uncertain. They may have been acquired through acquaintance with the Parsis—and certainly Satan bears an astonishing resemblance to Ahriman—or they may have merely represented the natural development of Messianic hopes. In any event they seem to have pre-occupied Jesus greatly ; and when questioned about them, he gave answers which, while delicate in their irony, are seldom other than vague.

It is probable that at the time when the questions were addressed to him, his system, which owing to his sudden death was perhaps never fully elaborated, was then merely in germ. But that he reflected deeply over the views of the patriarchs there can be no doubt, and it is equally indubitable that he considered the high-road to salvation to be discoverable, if anywhere, through them. The logic of it amounted to this : Life is evil ; the evil subsists through procreation ; ergo, abolish procreation and the evil disappears.

Many texts from the canonical Gospels might be given in support of this statement, but to cultivated readers they are doubtless too familiar to need repetition here. For the moment, therefore, it will suffice to quote two passages from the lost Gospel according to the Egyptians, a chronicle which was known to exist in the second half of the second century, and was then regarded as authoritative by certain Christian sects. The passages are to be found in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, iii. 6—9. In one, the Saviour speaks as follows : "I am come to destroy the work of the woman : of the woman, that is of concupiscence, whose works are generation and death." In the other passage, Salome, having asked how long men should live, the Lord answered, "So long as you women continue to bear children."

These passages, if authentic, and there is little reason to think them otherwise, seem tolerably conclusive. In any event, it was this idea that peopled with hermits the deserts of Nitria and Scete, and it was this same idea which in its weakened force filled those bastilles of God, the convents and monasteries of pre-mediæval days. Cerdo, Marcion, and others of lesser note, advocated a doctrine of which it was evidently the starting-point; in many religious communities its influence is still distinguishable; but the question as to whether or not the idea as here represented was really the one on which the thoughts of the Saviour were turned, seems best answerable in the affirmative, if for no other reason than that it is less extravagant and more logical to regard the Christ as a practical philosopher than as an alluring visionary. And if he was not the one, he must have been the other. Certainly no one can claim for him any higher originality than that which was manifested in the form and flavor of his parables. He was the most entrancing of nihilists, but he was not an innovator. Others before him had instituted a reaction against the formalism of the Judaic creed. The austerity of his ethics, the communism which he preached, his contempt of wealth, and his superb disdain of everything which was of this world, were integral parts of the doctrine of the Essenes. The conception of a Supreme Being, differing in benignity from the implacable terrorism which Jehovah exerted, had been already begun by the prophets. Jesus unquestionably amplified the Father of Israel into the God of Humanity, but he did not invent him. It may be further noted that Jesus had no thought of representing himself as an incarnation or descendant of the Deity. To such a title he made no claim, nor except in certain passages inserted in the fourth Gospel, is he ever represented as using it. If Son of God at all, he was so in the sense that might apply to all men, and of which the address beginning, "Our Father who art in heaven," is a fitting example.

Yet this at least may be said. He created pure sentiment, the love of the ideal. He gave the world a fairer theory of æsthetics, a new conception of beauty, and he brought to man a dream of consolation which has outlasted centuries and taken the sting from death. So singular and powerful was the affection which he inspired, that after the crucifixion, Mary of Magdala, in the hallucinations of her love asserted that he had arisen. He arose, indeed, but as elsewhere suggested, it was in the adoring hearts of his disciples. And had it been otherwise, had their natures been less vibrant, their sympathies less exalted, less susceptible to psychological influences, the world would have lost its suavest legend, and the name of the pale Nazarene would have faded with those of the Essenes of the day.

M. Renan says that Rome, through relations with Syria, was probably the first occidental city that learned of the new belief. There were then, he has noted, many Jews there. Some were descendants of former prisoners of war, others were fugitives ; but all were poor, miserable and down-trodden. To this abject colony Christianity brought an unexpected hope. The ideal, it is true, had fled from earth ; but was it not possible to find it again above ?

Many there were that accepted the new creed unquestioningly, but some of their more conservative brethren, disturbed at its dissidence with their orthodox tenets, denounced their compatriots to the government. It is possible that a certain amount of suppression was then exercised, but it appears to have been accidental and momentary. The Romans were familiar with too many deities to be alarmed at the advent of a new one. Their polytheistic tendencies made it quite easy for them to believe in a god, made man, and the suppressions which ensued were ordered in the interest of the public peace. The Christians were evidently regarded as seditious ; in denying the divinity of the Cæsars they were guilty of nothing less than high-treason. They were punished accordingly, but their punishment had no religious signification. The Epicureans might easily have been subjected to analogous treatment, but the Epicureans were philosophers, and as such saw no reason for pulling a wry face at harmless mummeries.

Then, too, the early Christians seem to have made themselves extremely unpopular. The Pantheon was most hospitable ; its niches were free to every comer. But the believers in the Nazarene would have none of it. They not only refused any allegiance to Olympian potentates, but they would not permit their own God to consort with them. It was tantamount to saying that Jupiter's society was pernicious. There were few indeed that pinned much faith to that opulent divinity; but the open show of respect which was demanded as a governmental necessity was generally accorded, and nothing else was asked. The Christians, moreover, gave offence by their mode of life. They appear to have been a quiet, silent and possibly inoffensive sect, who avoided the forum and the circus, and passed their hours in sullen seclusion. Added to this, they predicted the approaching end of the world, which was obstinate enough to continue to revolve through spacious voids of which they were utterly ignorant; and this prophecy on their part could not have been regarded otherwise than as an open slur on the imperial optimism of the day.

It was doubtless about this time that the edict, *Non licet esse Christianos*, was passed—an edict which with curious clairvoyance appears to have been directed mainly against those Romans who were tempted to embrace the new belief. It is one of the platitudes of history that Rome fell through her rottenness. Yet, as M. Renan has been at no loss to show, Rome fell when her soldiery became converted. The spirit of peace which pervaded the early Church enervated a nation; the virility of the most belligerent of races was sapped. But this is a digression. During its infancy, Christianity was smitten by a disease which has been likened to croup. This croup was endemic in Alexandria, and from there floated over to Rome. It was called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a compound of corrupt Platonism, Hinduism and charlatanism. To abandon M. Renan's simile and take another, it was the bridge over which the world passed from paganism. Gnosticism gathered up theosophy, mysticism, rites, ceremonials and art—everything, in fact, which seemed worth the gathering—and passed them all to Christianity, which, thus equipped, set out on its triumphant career. But not at once. The populace, as has been hinted, was not favorably disposed. Tertullian says that a Christian was defined as an enemy of gods, emperors, laws, customs, and Nature itself. To the believers in Jesus was ascribed the influence of that which the modern Roman calls the jettatura. They were held to be connected with every calamity; and after each disaster the Eternal City echoed with shrieks from uncounted throats, *Christianos ad leonem!* To the circus with the Christians; let them camp with the beasts! It was then that Christianity learned to hate.

Meanwhile, the Ghetto mounted like a flood. Its ascension was favored by many things. The atmosphere of Rome dripped with metaphysics, and through it had passed a new and pervading sense of lassitude. Nero was dead; and Nero, it may be noted, was paradox incarnate. He was an imperial nightmare that was far from unpopular; a drama of the horrible, with a joke for finale; a caricature of the impossible in a crimson frame; a Cæsar whose follies were laws and whose laws were follies; a maniac whose cell was the world and whose delirium was fame ; a sceptred acrobat, with a throne for spring-board ; an emperor jealous of a tenor ; and a cabotin jealous of the gods ; in fact, the antithesis of the humdrum. Under him, Rome saw luxury and ferocity hand-in-hand ; cruelty married to pleasure. Christians mantled in flame illuminated the gardens of a prince. Intoxication had no frontiers. Life itself was a breathless chase after impossible delights. But now all was quite different, and it was with something of that lassitude which succeeds an orgy that the Romans found themselves tired even of themselves. They could not all have the moon for mistress. What was there left for them to do? Christianity offered itself, and as often as not Christianity was accepted.

After Constantine had used the new belief as a masquerade, its spread was rapid. Julian, indeed, threatened to prevent such of the Galileans from wearing their heads as refused to aid him in the reconstruction of polytheism, but the halt under him was momentary. The impulsion continued unchecked ; the intermediate persecutions had made it notorious ; the advance continued, but in the advance the watchword, *Maran atha*, had lost its meaning. The end of the world was no longer expected. Fortune favoring, Christianity turned optimist. Yet paganism was not dead ; it had merely fallen asleep. Isis gave way to Mary ; apotheosis was replaced by canonization ; the divinities were succeeded by saints ; and, Africa aiding, the Church surged from mythology with the Trinity for tiara.

At the close of the fourth century, the Church was practically mistress of civilization. Her sway was immense and uncontested. And what a sway it was! Temples, statues and manuscripts were destroyed. Bands of monks went about pillaging and demolishing whatever they could. The Bishop Theophilus, after destroying the temple of Serapis, set fire to the Alexandrian library which contained nearly all the literary treasures of the past. But the power of the Church, though magnificent, was brief. At the moment when her glory was most brilliant, when Julian was forgotten and persecution had ceased, a mixed multitude of barbarians beat at the gates of Rome, and in their victorious onslaught swept antiquity away.

When the Church found herself surrounded by unfamiliar kings and chieftains—a set of fair, proud, honest and brutal ignoramuses, who wandered from place to place, or shut themselves up and got drunk in their strongholds, and with whom she had nothing in common—her dominant idea was to govern them. In this she succeeded: strength, however great, is defenceless against cunning, and the Church then was the depository of all the intelligence of the age. But her first act was to save herself from the violence to which society fell a prey. To save herself, she announced the principle of a separation of spiritual and temporal power. This accepted, she announced as corollary the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal. The rest was easy. Free inquiry was condemned; belief was forced;

heretics were persecuted; and out of the ashes of imperial Rome a mitred prelate dragged a throne. *L'Eglise, c'était lui.* Through his influence the barbarians were led to baptism like brutes to the slaughter. Those who objected were baptized by force. Dagobert had all Gaul baptized in this way. Thereafter the Church presided over an eclipse of the intellect that lasted a thousand years. During that thousand years it was blasphemy to think; yet over those ages that are known as dark there hovered that prescience of fairer things which is the accompaniment of night.

Meanwhile, in a corner of the Orient whither some of the flotsam and jetsam of civilization had drifted, a college of charlatans wearied the centuries with abstractions and discussions on words. Their earlier disputes are legendary. One of them concerned the soul. Was the soul round or oblong? This question was never satisfactorily determined. Another proposition which was much discussed concerned the Saviour. Was he, or was he not, co-eternal with God? The Council at Nicæa, to which appeal was made, decided that he was both; and the Church anathematized all those who disagreed with its decision. In spite of the anathema, certain erudites suggested a compromise which involved the acceptance or rejection of an iota: ὁμοούσιος signified consubstantial, ὁμοιούσιος signified like as to the substance. If the one term were replaced by the other, the difficulty, it was argued, would be removed. But this solution was too easy to be well received, and the absence of that iota caused the death of several thousand dissenters.

Later, Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, asserted that Mary, being of the earth earthy could not rightly be considered the mother of a God. This assertion was condemned as heretical by the General Council of Ephesus, and it was ordered that those who accepted it should be exterminated at once. Eutyches the archimandrite announced the contrary of that which Nestorius had advanced. He, too, was excommunicated; the true doctrine being that Jesus was both a perfect divinity and a perfect man. Then suddenly the Orient became peopled with heretics; some held to Nestorius, others to Eutyches. In the second quarter of the sixth century, Justinian, an emperor who is said to have been so illiterate that he could not write his own name, and who in consequence was easily bored by subtleties, confiscated the property of all who were suspected either of Nestorian or Eutychian sympathies. In spite of these efforts, heresy was not suppressed; or perhaps it would be more exact to say that when one was suppressed, its place was immediately filled by another. At last, Heraclitus in utter exasperation issued an edict forbidding any one to speak of the single or double nature of Jesus the Christ. This edict itself was regarded as heretical, and continued to be so regarded until Constant published another which forbade any theological discussion, no matter of what kind, nature or description. To this edict, which the Pope Theodore qualified as an abominable subtlety, no one paid any attention. Constant, however, refused to be idle. He tried to check the spread of monachism, which at that time was enormous, and failing, went to Rome and sacked it.

In the eighth century appeared the heresy known as that of the iconoclasts. The Church, as has been hinted, adopted much of the pomp of paganism, and with advancing years made herself gorgeous with crosses, images and tapers; but a particular predilection was manifested in favor of big dolls, whether of marble, bronze or precious metals. To this the iconoclasts objected; with the Emperor Leo for chief, they destroyed the statues of Jesus, of Mary, of the saints and angels, wherever such statues were to be found; and for many years persecuted and massacred the worshippers. Yet when the Empress Irene assumed the purple, the iconoclasts were at once pursued with a vigor that was riotous and avenging. It is just possible that this terrible lady perceived that the destruction of images was the destruction of art. But be this as it may, the Beautiful had been sadly frightened, and thereafter remained invisible until lured to view again by the enticements of the Renaissance.

In Europe, matters were even worse. There was a continual panic, a ceaseless fear. There was no security, either civil or ecclesiastical. Diseases of the mind and body were omnipresent; famine at times was so ruthless that anthropophagy was openly practised. The only theory of right was might, and of this the Church held the reins. Many of the bishops were little better than bandits. They passed their days in wandering from place to place and in pillaging right and left. In a forgotten tale of Cervantes, one amiable scoundrel hails another, "Does your Grace happen to be a highwayman?" "Yes," the other answers, "in the service of God and honest people." Eliminate the courtesy and replace it with a blow from a bludgeon, and the question and answer may be represented as repeated indefinitely for five centuries.

Those of the clergy whose tastes were less adventurous devoted themselves to study and were looked upon as magicians; others, in the dim recesses of undrained monasteries, weary of all things, and most of life, gave themselves up unresistingly to acedia, the delirious pessimism of the cloister, and shrieked for death.

It was in those days that a demon of uncommon ugliness flitted through the gloom of the abbeys, whispering gaily to the cowering monks, "Thou art damned, and thou, and thou art damned for all eternity!" In the cathedrals, maidens had seen a beckoning fiend, who through shudders of song had called them down to swell the red quadrilles of hell. These visitors of course were legates of Satan. And who was Satan? His biography, though well filled, need not be long.

Satan was Jew from horn to hoof. The registry of his birth is contained in the evolution of Hebraic thought. In early ages, when sabaism, the primitive polytheism of the Semitic tribes, narrowed into monotheism, Jehovah was worshipped as the one real divinity. In his hands were the springs of all that is, of good and evil as well. But this idea was transient. About the Eternal were grouped a number spirits whose duty it was to supervise the works of man. Among these celestials was one whose rôle was limited to that of accuser. This rôle appears to have been gradually expanded into one of general hostility. Above was Jehovah, below was man ; while between the two were the inimical eyes of Satan. In the younger books of the Old Testament, Satan is little more than a detective ; in the New Testament he is an inciter to evil. But during the intervening period two things seem to have happened. The Hebrews had communicated with the Parsis, and Satan, banished from heaven, had assumed all the powers and attributes of Ahriman. Thereafter he was hatred incarnate, the spirit that *stets verneint*, the fallen son of a mighty father, a disinherited prince who had founded a rival monarchy and called it Hell.

It is in this guise that he appears in the New Testament, and the delicate moral of the Synoptic Gospels is perhaps little more than the prefigurement of the endless conflict between right and wrong. But be this as it may, it is evident that after Satan and the Saviour had met, the apparitions of the former became a matter of frequent occurrence. Did not his minions the sucubes and incubes haunt with lascivious lips the sleep of holy men and holier women? Was it not through his artifices that St. Victor was seduced by a beautiful girl? Did he not personally menace and threaten St. Maur? The stone which he flung at the inflexible St. Dominick is a matter too well attested to be susceptible of doubt. See how he tempted St. Anthony. In fact, unvisited by him it was difficult to be considered a a saint at all. In the middle ages he was everywhere. The atmosphere was so heavy with his legions, that the Messalians made spitting a part of their devotions. From encountering him at every turn, the world at last became used to his ways, and thereupon imagined that pact in which the devil agrees, in exchange for the soul, to furnish whatever is desired. The case of Gerbert is one in point. According to the gossip of the day, Gerbert, once a Spanish student, afterwards Archbishop of Ravenna, and subsequently Pope, entered into an agreement of this kind, and one night the devil came in person to claim him. It was the agreement they had made together long before in Cordova, where Gerbert, finding his studies too arduous, had signed the bond in exchange for the royal road. It was the devil who had taught him all he knew—algebra, clock-making, and how to become a Pope. It was clear as day that he would have known none of these things without infernal assistance. Gerbert resists, but Mephisto proves his claim. "You did not think me a logician, did you?" are said to have been his historic words, and, presto! Gerbert disappears in a fork of lambent flame.

When Christianity first raised its head, it viewed the pagan gods as part of the cohorts of Satan. These cohorts Tertullian divided into two classes—the rebels who had been banished from heaven in Satan's train, and the angels who in antediluvian days had fallen in love with the daughters of men. Their queen was Lili Abi (Lilith), Adam's first wife, from whose name our lullaby is said to be derived. The Dusii, a later subdivision who have given us the deuce, were so well known to St. Augustine that he declared it an impertinence to deny their existence. These latter appear to have been a malignant set of incubi who made a prey of women. Mr. Lecky says that but little over a hundred years ago an annual mass was given in the abbey of Poissey that the nuns might be preserved from their wiles.

Satan, meanwhile, lost much of his dignity. Mice, wolves and toads became his symbols, his auxiliaries, and even his momentary incarnations. Throughout the middle ages no sorcerer was considered well equipped without a sleek black cat, an animal to which, like many a sensible mortal, the devil appears to have been greatly attached. It was in the company of the cat that the sabbat was attended. The sabbat was popularly held to be a mass offered to Satan, and any one suspected of attending it, or being in any wise affiliated with Mephisto, was burned. The first punishment for this offence occurred in Toulouse in 1275. During the next fifty years over four hundred people were burned in the neighborhood. In the fifteenth century all Christianity joined in a hunt for witches; and the hunt continued for three hundred years, until every sorcerer had disappeared and Salem put out her bonfires. In each country the warmth of the chase was in direct proportion to the power of the clergy. To spare a witch was considered an insult to the Almighty. Luther was particularly vehement on this point; so, too, was Calvin; and Wesley was as great a fanatic as any. Montaigne was one of the first to laugh at witchcraft; but Montaigne, like all advanced thinkers, was wickedly incredulous. The hunt, as has been hinted, was continued, and it was kept up not only until all the witches had disappeared, but until all belief in the devil had gone with them. Persecution subsided when scepticism began. The history of the Inquisition is exactly analogous. When the world began to think, intolerance ceased.

During this time Satan was not otherwise idle. He continued to appear in the most unexpected and surprising manner, and that, too, up to within comparatively recent dates. His last historical appearance is in a pleasant anecdote in which he is represented as visiting Cuvier. He enters the great man's study with his usual *quærens quem devoret* air. "What do you wish of me?" Cuvier asks curtly, for he is annoyed at the intrusion. "I've come to eat you." But Cuvier's shrewd eye had already examined him. "Horns and hoofs!" he retorts; "granivorous! You can't do it." Whereupon, outfaced by science, Satan vanished through an in-quarto, never to appear again save when, in the garb and aspect of a policeman, he visits the conscience of the misdemeanant.

But to return to the middle ages. The chronicles of Cassien, Vincent de Beauvais and Raoul Glaber, are filled with lurid pictures of those dark days. Disasters followed one another with the regularity of the seasons. The desolation which the Church had sought to stay had increased to terrific proportions. The empire of Karl the Great had been swept away as utterly as that of the Cæsars. Throughout Europe there was a hideous fear, a breathless expectation. The Antichrist had come. His presence was signalled from the pulpit. Churches, monasteries, donjons and burgs, echoed and thrilled with the rumor of his sacrileges. Now he was the son of the Popess Johanna, conceived during a pontifical procession ; now he was a ruffian marauder, burning basilicas and violating the tombs of the saints. In the ninth century there was an eclipse of the sun which frightened a king to death. In 945, while a cyclone swept over Paris, monsters armed with battle-axes dropped from the skies, and, rushing into a church, tore down the pulpit, which they used as a battering-ram to destroy a neighboring house. In 988, a wolf entered the cathedral of Orleans, and, seizing the bell-rope in his mouth, rang out the knell of the world. It was evident to every one that the trumpets of the last judgment were soon to be heard. At once there was a frantic effort to make peace with God ; there was a rush for the monasteries, and a general donation of property to the Church. The *dies iræ* was at hand. The exact date was known. It was to come on the 25th of March, A. D. 1000. An hysterical rictus passed over the face of Christendom ; the forgotten hope was to be realized ! At last the *dies illa* arrived. In the Holy See the Pope sat, enervated and impatient, counting the minutes and awaiting the climax through the succeeding fractions of each hour. In the churches, the crowd, with heads bowed to the ground, felt time limp by and yet saw no sign. The expectation lasted four days and four nights. Then, so runs the chronicle, an immense dragon rushed through the open skies. In an abbey the eyes of a Christ were seen to weep. Yet still the earth remained unsundered and humanity unclaimed.

When the panic subsided, the Church found that her wealth had been largely increased. Her power, too, had developed. The cowl was everywhere, and everywhere it was dreaded. This dread was not unmingled with disgust ; the fanaticism, asceticism and illiteracy of the clergy resulted as often as not in delirium and satyrisis. Indeed, their customs were neither amiable nor cleanly. The different bulls which the Popes launched at them make it easy to see of what they were capable, and difficult to fancy of what they were not. But their manners and morals are relatively unimportant ; the terrorism that the Church exerted is more to the point.

The chief instruments of coercion of which the Church disposed were excommunication and the confessional. Without confession, no absolution; and without absolution, eternal torture. There is a quaint little anecdote about the Curé of Mendon, in which that immortal jester is represented face to face with Clement VII. His Holiness having graciously permitted him to ask a favor, Rabelais begged to be excommunicated. Exclamation-points and question-marks shot from the Pontiff's eyes. "Holy Father," said the apostate, "I am a Frenchman. I come from a little town called Chinon, where the stake is often seen. A good many fine people have been burned there: some of my relatives, among others. But if your Holiness would excommunicate me, I fancy that I would never be burned. And my reason is this. Journeying lately with the Bishop from Paris to Rome, we passed through the Tarantaises, where the cold is bitter. Having reached a hut where dwelled an old woman, we besought her to make a fire. She took a faggot and tried to light it, but did not succeed; then she took some straw from her bed, and, being still unable to make it burn, she began cursing, and said, 'Since the faggot won't burn, it must have been excommunicated by the Pope's own jaw.'" This of course occurred after the Reformation, and relates to a man who was a notorious sceptic. It is even probable that the story is a fabrication; but as an anecdote it is serviceable in pointing the moral of the decadence of great things. In the primitive days of the Church, excommunication amounted merely to expulsion. Those against whom it was addressed were shut out of a limited circle; but when that circle expanded until it circumscribed all society, the potency of excommunication was prodigious. If the anathema was launched at a king, his entire monarchy fell under the ban. When Philippe Auguste was excommunicated, neither baptism, marriage nor burial was permitted in the realm. Corpses rotted in the highways. The people became wild with terror. This state of affairs lasted for eighteen months—in fact, until the interdict was removed. But with time, as has been hinted, its potency waned; like other good things, it was overdone; and early in the fifteenth century all those who had the heart to laugh must have been hugely amused at the spectacle of three rival popes excommunicating each other.

During the dark ages, however, amusement was rare. The masses were a prey to all the delusions and depressions that come of poor nourishment. They were ignorant and credulous; their minds were filled with fables and legends; they were terrorized by the dead as well as the living; agonized in this life, they were threatened with everlasting torture in another. It is, therefore, but small wonder that they shuddered at the viaticum and trembled before the priest. It was through his ministrations alone that salvation was obtainable.

At first the priest was merely an intercessor. In return for his good offices, he asked of the penitent little else than fasting, prayer and contrition; but gradually he discovered that these canonical penances were without advantage to himself, and he began to exact payment for the divine forgiveness which it was his privilege to declare. In the course of time, this custom was found so profitable that plenary indulgences were granted. In 1300, pilgrims from far and near flocked to Rome and covered the altars with gold. Every sin, every penalty, was remitted. The claims of purgatory were obliterated. The joy was so great, that the pilgrimage was called a jubilee.

The jubilee was instituted by Boniface VIII., the author of the bull *Ausculta fili*, in which he declared that, as representative of God, he had the right and the power to uproot, tear down, destroy, dissipate, rebuild and raise up in His name. In spite of this fine language, the Avignon Consistory established that he had asserted that the Trinity was an absurdity; that it was fatuous to believe in it; that religion was a lie; that there was no harm in adultery; and that he, the pope, who could humble kings, was mightier than Christ.

The success of the first jubilee was so great that Urban VI. held another; only instead of summoning the pilgrims to Rome, he allowed his absolution to be hawked about wherever sinners most did congregate. It had been said that the riches of man are his redemption, and the clergy were very ready to put the saying into practice. Indulgences were not only sold, they appear to have been forced on those who refused them. A dominican, Johan Tetzel, took charge of the sale in Germany of those granted by Leo X. He announced that he had power to deliver a full discharge from the penalties of sin, even *si quis Virginem vitiasset ac gravidam fecisset.* His tariff is still exhibited.

Meanwhile, the General Councils had moved from Constantinople to Rome. The heresies which they were called upon to consider were mainly protestations against the despotism of the Church. First came the heresies of the Petrobusians and the Arnoldists—unimportant, but vexatious ; so vexatious, in fact, that their respective founders, Petrus de Brueys and Arnold de Bresse, were burned at the stake. The Petrobusians were followed by the Vaudois, who, although pursued, proscribed and anathematized, maintained a secret continuity until Calvinism offered them a harbor. Another heresy was that of the Albigenses. The Albigenses, who came from a village in Languedoc, at a time Michelet has noted, when Languedoc was a Babel, professed a mixture of Gnosticism and Manicheism. They considered the Saviour to have been a man, like any other, who had suffered the just punishment of his sins. But, what was more serious, they questioned the prerogatives of the Holy See. Innocent III. determined to exterminate them. At his commands the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy set out for Languedoc. The query was, how the heretics were to be distinquished from the orthodox. " Kill them all," said

Armand, the pope's legate ; " kill them all ; God will know his own." Sixty thousand are reported to have been killed ; and of these, seven thousand were slaughtered in a cathedral that was ringing with a Te Deum. The whole of Provence was devastated ; vines were uprooted, harvests destroyed, and houses torn down. As this seemed insufficient, the bishops received orders to visit personally or by delegate any portion of their diocese in which they suspected that heretics might lurk. When this decretal was made, the Inquisition was established. " Et ardet," said the pseudo St. John ; and those two words were sufficient to send over half-a-million of human beings to the stake.* Yet still heresies continued to appear. There was the heresy of the Dulcinists, the heresy of John Wicliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague. J'en passe et des plus exquises.

From the Crusades, in which nations wrangled over a sepulchre, sprang a new heresy, or rather an apostasy—that of the Templars, whose office it had been to protect pilgrims on their way to the East. It was claimed that, instead of attending to their duties, they had become believers in Muhammad ; and, moreover, that they held Salahaddin to be a valiant and courteous knight, which he probably was. Muhammad, who had long been turned to dust, was a well-intentioned visionary, afflicted with what is known to pathology as hysteria muscularis—the only disease that ever founded a religion. Now if the Templars were apostates, they at least were logical. The Papacy had pitted Christianity against Muhammadanism, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. The result was that the latter proved its claim. This point, however, does not seem to have been advanced in their favor. They were tried, convicted, and many of them were burned.

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* **Michelet: Histoire de France. Llorente; Histoire de l'Inquisition.**

Meanwhile, the popes and princes of the Church had lost faith, and decency as well. Petrarch, in his letters *Sine titulo*, speaks of the papal court as follows :

"There is here (in Avignon) everything imaginable in the way of confusion, darkness and horror. Avignon is the sewer of every vice, the gully of every wickedness. I know from personal experience that in this place there is neither piety nor charity. Faith is absent; there is nothing holy, nothing just, nothing human. Friendship, modesty and decency are unknown. Houses, squares, temples, courts and pontifical palaces drip with lies. The hope of a future life is considered an illusion ; Jesus Christ is looked upon as a useless invention ; virtue is regarded as a proof of stupidity, and prostitution leads to fame."

Such is Petrarch's account ; but Petrarch was possibly annoyed because his sister had been seduced by the pope.

The Abbé Guyot, author of the "Dictionary of Heresies," says, though alluding this time to Rome : "The luxury of the bishops, their scandalous mode of life, their ignorance, which is on a par with their vices, have furnished heretics with excellent grounds for violent rhetoric."

Of Sixtus IV., Infessura says, in words that are best left untranslated, " puerorum amator et sodomita fuit." And it would appear, not only that he was guilty of these charming practices, but that he granted indulgences for their general commission. Innocent VIII., his successor, by way of setting a good example to future pontiffs, made public acknowledgment of four sons and three daughters. He established an agency where the remission of sins could be bought as readily as a railway ticket to-day. Of Alexander VI.. the father and lover of Lucretia Borgia, little that is favorable can be said, except perhaps that he was the most magnificent ruffian that Rome had seen since the days when Nero, with a concave emerald for monocle, watched the rape of Christian girls.

If the popes were a bad lot, the clergy do not seem to have been much better. Gerson says that the cloisters were markets, the convents lupanars, and that the churches and cathedrals were lairs of bandits and thieves. But the mediæval priest was not only a voluptuary and a freebooter, he appears to have been a jocular blasphemer as well. It is a part of history that when Luther reached Rome he heard more than one of them consecrate the Eucharist with a jeer: "Panis es et panis manebis, vinum es et vinum manebis." There cannot have been two hells; and, granting that there was one, the Roman

Catholic and Apostolic Church seems to have been built on it.

In the year 1500 the world was very old. The Renaissance had lied. It had promised and not fulfilled. A few years before, Savonarola had sought to reform Christianity, and particularly the pope. He was burned. In words that rise and greet and kiss the eye, Dante had rejuvenated hell. Petrarch had poured the newest of wine into a cup that was gothic. Across the centuries an unterrified spirit of beauty had called to Boccaccio, and he had repeated the message to inattentive ears. There seemed to be no one that cared to blow away the dust of ages. Every germ that promised fruit was neutralized. Yet Italy was peopled with atheists. The jurisdiction of the Orient was lost; England was no longer a vassal. A tottering pontiff anathematized in vain, and, seeing the uselessness of his maledictions, filled Europe with the uproar of his debauches. The world was very old, but in the printing-press it had found the waters of youth. The earth was larger, and soon the skies were to be unveiled.

It was in those days that a German monk threw an ink-bottle at the devil and defied the pope. A little later, Bohemia seceded. Germany followed in the wake, and with her went Switzerland and the Northern States. Luther's heresy became orthodoxy. And yet the newest thing about it was so old that it had been forgotten. Everywhere it was welcomed. The question of its youth or age had nothing to do with it. It was in opposition to the existing order of things, and as such it was a success. Catholicism was a twilight, Lutherism a dawn. Christ said, Prepare; the Church said, Sleep; the Reformation called upon the world to awake. Luther's aim was to lead belief back to the starting-point, but for the time being his aim was overlooked. The heresy which bore his name was considered merely a quarrel between monks. "Bravo!" Hutton said; "let them eat each other up!"

Luther, who was a courageous blunderer and sincere in all his endeavors, did something more than try to change the current of affairs. He created German as Dante had created Italian. It was he who caught and tamed the ringing tongue of the Niebelungen. From the resisting heroes of the Rhine he lured a secret, and first of his race, gave to a nation a language for birthright.

Barbarism, meanwhile, had not absorbed itself. Pyrrho still slept. The reform which Luther instituted aggravated the evils which it proposed to correct. The Protestantism which followed was as intolerant as the mother Church; more so perhaps, for it had the intolerance of youth, and as it broke and scattered into countless creeds, each of the brood, save the Quakers, arrogated to itself the right to persecute and destroy. To Luther, persecution seemed not only lawful but necessary. Calvin, who was as intolerant as the Inquisition and every whit as fanatical, made it a prop of his church. And Knox, to whom one mass was more frightful than ten thousands insurgents, declared that an idolater merited nothing less than death.

But persecution, however endorsed, was not of a nature to resist the influence of advancing thought. As scepticism arose, intolerance declined; and as belief in future punishment passed away, so did the torture of the recalcitrant. It may be noted that the lamented Ranke estimates the number of human beings destroyed by Christianity as surpassing ten million. And yet there are people who think that Justice merely limps. During ten centuries it sat motionless in a cul de-jatte.

Among the first to break a lance in the Lutheran tragedy was Erasmus. No one that has read "The Cloister and the Hearth" will need to be reminded that the story of Gerard and Marguerite is the history of his parentage. As a knight-errant of free thought he went about combating intolerance. In the last pages of the ever-famous "Praise of Folly," he showed, with exquisite felicity of diction, the folly of creeds and sects. We are wiser now; but the world then was learning the alphabet. Erasmus received his full share of abuse, and, what is more to the point, saw his enemies exhaust twenty-seven editions of his work. Unpopularity has its advantages.

In spite of his intrepidity, Erasmus was as a small boy in comparison to that *abstracteur de quinte essence*, Master Alcofrybas Nasier. Where Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had looked into the past, the author of the exceedingly horrifying life of the Great Gargantua pointed to unexplored horizons. The "Praise of Folly" was cold as a rapier; the biography which Rabelais gave to the public was as exuberant, as prodigal and as turbulent as the sea. It was a new praise of Nature. Its appearance marked the beginning of another Renaissance; in all its pantagruelism there was not a single tear. Its philosophy was a commingling of science and satire; it was unexampled in boldness, but it was not dogmatic. Rabelais, who had been educated in a monastery, where the vows were those of ignorance and not of religion, was too wise to be an atheist. He objected mightily to tyranny, but he did not meddle with the unknowable. If he was anything, he was an agnostic. "I am going in search of the great Perhaps," he said on his death-bed. His obscenity is compromising, but it is not blasphemous. The nakedness of his thought extended only to the real.

Another thinker who refused to take a step beyond the actual was Montaigne. Where Rabelais hesitated, Montaigne doubted. He had caught the Isostheneia of Pyrrho, and balanced his thought in a perfect equilibrium. He neither affirmed nor denied. If he fancied that the universe was a foundling, his good taste prevented him from openly questioning the parentage. In this respect his silence is admirable and well worthy of imitation. Christianity he looked upon as a decadence. He noted with mild regret that the high-roads of civilization were moss-grown and abandoned, and that the compass which the Greeks had used was buried under the dust of centuries. But he waived conclusions; his thought was too volatile to convey a decision. Stella said that had Swift so desired, he could have written beautifully about a broomstick. Montaigne wrote about nothing at all with a charm that has never been excelled.

When Montaigne put a question-mark, Charron shrugged his shoulders; the *Que sçay ie?* the What do I know? became, What does it matter? And yet, like many another that affected indifference, Charron was ardent and prone to indignation. In his chief work, *Dè la Sagesse*, a work undeservedly forgotten, he said many smart things to the orthodox, and he said them, too, in a language which, if antiquated to-day, was then very virile. He was among the first to note that ideas of right and wrong vary with the latitude. "That which is impious, unjust and abominable in one place, is piety, justice and honor in another. There is not a law, a custom or a belief, that is everywhere received or rejected." Religion, too, he held to be a question of latitude. "Our religion is that of the country in which we are born and educated; we are circumcised and baptized, we are Jews, Muhammadans or Christians, before we know that we are men." To which he added: "A strange thing it is that the Christian religion, which, being the only belief true and revealed of God, ought to be extremely one and united, because there is but one God and one truth, is, on the contrary, torn into many parts and divided into many conflicting sects, to such an extent even, that there is not an article of faith or point of doctrine which has not been diversely argued and agitated, and given rise to heresies and dissensions. But what makes it seem still more strange is, that in the false and bastard religions, whether Gentile, Pagan, Jewish or Muhammadan, the like divisions do not appear." And much more to the same effect; concluding that truth is intangible, religions are equally *estranges et horribles au sens commun*, and that the sovereign remedy for the ills of life is *de se prester à aultruy et denese donner qu'à soy.*

While Charron in this manner was foreshortening Pyrrho, Sanchez, a Spaniard, was laying the foundations of agnosticism in a work entitled, *Tractus de multum nobile et prima universali Scientia, quod non scitur*—"Treatise on the very noble and extremely universal Science, to-wit, that we know nothing." This contribution to literature appears to have created quite a little commotion; but, strange as it may seem, the commotion subsided, and to-day, outside the covers of a dictionary of philosophy, Sanchez, like Charron, is hard to find.

In the course of these international attacks, Rome had heard Bruno announce that the universe was a living organism whose soul was God. He was sent to the stake. Vanini had refused to discuss the immortality of the soul before he was old, rich and a German. He was burned at Toulouse. Campanella wrote a book against heresies, and was tortured at Naples seven times for his pains.

But the fangs of Romanism were being drawn. The Pope Urban VIII. had written on his brother's tomb, *Hic jacet pulvis et cinis, postea nihil,* and announced that the world governed itself. Decidedly the influence of the Church was on the wane, and yet the time was still far away when thought was to be disenthralled.

Were it not for a handful of thinkers, the seventeenth century might be catalogued among the dark ages. The intellectual fecundity which was the characteristic of the sixteenth gave way to an era which was largely one of mental stagnation. The world seemed tired of disputes, and inclined, too, to accept old beliefs unquestioned. The hand of scholasticism was still upon it. It viewed speculation with uneasy dread, and kept its anxious eyes fixed upon the past.

And yet there were a few whose instincts invited to other vistas. In Holland was Spinoza; in England, Bacon and Hobbes; in Germany, Kepler and Leibnitz; while in France was Gassendi, Bayle, but first Descartes. "Give me force and matter," he cried, "and I will refurbish the world." Force and matter were not forthcoming, but in that magnificent boast was the accouchement of modern thought. One may even say that its layette was already prepared. A few years before, Europe had listened to Galileo recanting his heresy; but when, before the assembled prelates, the prisoner muttered, *E pur si muove,* a page of history was turned down, and across it was written, Farewell to Rome.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISSENT OF THE SEERS.

IN one of the forgotten plays of Laberius, a jester is represented as recommending a smug-faced companion to get a foretaste of philosophy in the latrinæ. In one sense the jester was wise in his generation and clairvoyant too. About philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, the impolite have always discerned a bad odor. And this not without reason. In literature there is nothing more unpleasant than an attempt to prove something ; indeed, if ever a proper penal code is devised, the dietary products of logic will be declared contraband, and every ergo banished the realm. In the absence of any criterion of truth, such a word as Therefore has seemingly no *raison d'être.* The sum of all the angles of a triangle may be equal to two right-angles, but however amply that fact or any other be demonstrated, it cannot lift the inquisitive beyond the limits of an experience which in itself may be erroneous. Who shall say but that in some other sphere, where perhaps there are now such commodities as square fluids and moral substances,—who shall say but that there the sum of all the angles of a triangle may not be equal to two right angles ; or, as Mill has suggested, who shall say but that there is a land where two and two make five? Yet, waiving such magnificent hypotheses, and granting that deductions which follow from experience are not erroneous, it must be admitted that they bring us no nearer the truth; the essence, the reason of things is as intangible as before.

And metaphysics has yet another defect. The eternal questions, What am I? What can I know?—questions which it purports to answer—are left for all response as vague as the enveloping scholia. But the good that comes of evil is ever re-nascent, and out of the questions and answers have sprung the three foremost systems of modern anti-theistic thought. Of these, Pantheism takes the precedence, which is the due of age. Its nominal founder is Spinoza.

The life of Baruch Spinoza should be taught to every school-boy. It is not only as uninteresting as the ordinary studies of average youth, but it holds a lesson of such gentleness, modesty and abnegation of self, that in a search for a better one the whole parade of history might be reviewed in vain.

Like certain other notabilities, Spinoza was a Jew. His parents were descendants of Portuguese Israelites, who had fled from the Inquisition and unfolded their tents behind the dykes of the Netherlands. To-day, in Amsterdam, any valet-de-place will designate the early home of the philosopher, and every valet-de-place will point to a different house. But when the sight-seer is tired into satisfaction, discrepancies are of small moment. Moreover, after exhausting his imagination on the Burgwal, any valet-de-place is competent to show the exact spot near the synagogue where a fanatic believer aimed a dagger at the thinker's heart. The aim was unsuccessful, though it rent the coat; and this coat the guide, if he is clever, will tell you that Spinoza kept ever after among his memorabilia. But, clever or not, give him a louis and let him go. Spinoza's life is not such an one as should be listened to in the streets.

In the library at Wolfenbeütel there is a portrait of a grave, olive-skinned Hebrew, who stands in the upright idleness which is peculiar to portraits in oil. The hair falls back and over the shoulders in an expanding flood. The face is nearly oval, and the eyes are large and patient. This portrait, which is of Spinoza, was probably painted toward the close of his life. He died, it may be noted, at the age of forty-four, in the year 1677. As has been hinted, his life is without interest. If there was a tragedy in it, it was, as Oscar Wilde would say, that there was none at all. There is some mention of a little romance with the daughter of his teacher. But Spinoza was poor, and it is said that a wealthier student made diamonds of indifferent water fall in miniature cascades before the maiden's unresisting eyes. It is possible that this legend, out of which Auerbach has weaved one of his charming tales, is not untrue. There is a quotation to the effect that Mammon can win his way where angels might despair; and if an angel, then, *à fortiori*, a philosopher. In any event, Spinoza appears to have been jilted, which probably was the best thing that could have happened. A thinker should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Spinoza was educated to be a rabbi, but with increasing years he grew too big for Jewish theology and declined to visit the synagogue. It was then that some zealot tried to stab him. This argument being insufficient, the elders offered him an annual pension of a thousand florins, on condition that now and then he would appear in the synagogue and keep his opinions to himself. Spinoza was very poor, but his opinions were to him more precious than money. He refused therefore, and was excommunicated at once. The great ban, the Schammatha, was publicly pronounced upon him. For half-an-hour, to the blare of trumpets, he was cursed in the name which contains forty-two letters; in the name of Him who said, *I am that I am and who shall be*; in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Tetragrammaton; in the name of the Globes, the Wheels, Mysterious Beasts and Ministering Angels; in the name of the great Prince Michael; in the name of Metateron, whose name is like that of his master; in the name of Achthariel Jah. The Seraphim and Ofanim were called upon to give mouth to the malediction. Jehovah was supplicated never to forgive his sin, to let all the curses in the Book of the Law fall upon and blot him from under the heavens. Then, as the music swooned in a shudder of brass, the candles were reversed, and through the darkness the whole congregation chanted in unison, Amen !

After that, Spinoza, being no longer a Jew, changed his name from Baruch to Benedictus, and turned his thoughts from the Kabbala to Descartes. The life he thereafter led was one of extreme simplicity. He earned his bread by polishing lenses, and expended on it but a trifle more than the traditional obolus of Epicurus. When his father died, his sisters, arguing that a heretic had no right nor title to the property of the faithful, tried to keep from him his inheritance. Spinoza, however, appealed against them, won his suit, and then gave back as free gift all the contested property except one bed, which his biographer Colerus admits, *était en verité fort bon.* A few other instances of his magnanimity might be given, and a few anecdotes of his gentleness related ; but when they were told, the reader would find himself as unacquainted with the man as before. Properly speaking, he had no biography ; his life was one of solitude ; its essence was meditation ; and the Wolfenbeütel portrait would have served its purpose better, had it represented the sombre face of one whose eyes were lost in thought, and whose patient hand polished a concave lens.

Spinoza's fame rests principally on two works which shortly after his death were proscribed as profane, atheistic and blasphemous. These works are the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* and the *Ethica.* The first in the key-note of rationalism, the second is the basis of modern philosophy. The rationalism of the first and the philosophy of the second stand in the closest connection. In both, Nature is shown to be an omnipotent ruler, in whose court such a parvenu as the supernatural is not received.

Spinoza's negations are three-fold. He denied the existence of an extra-mundane Deity; he denied that man is a free agent; and he denied the doctrine of final causes.

His negation of the existence of an extra-mundane Deity is not always clearly understood. The term *Deus* is strewn through his pages, and its repetition has often misled the unwary. There is, he taught, but one substance, and in this substance all things live, move and have their being. It is at once cause and effect; it is God. But the term thus used has nothing in common with the theistic idea of a Creator, who, having fashioned the world, "sits aloft and sees it go." On the contrary, God and the universe were to Spinoza one and identical; they were correlatives; the existence of the one made that of the other a logical necessity. To him the primordial entity, the *fons et origo rerum*, was God; but God was Nature, and Nature, Substance. The three terms he used interchangeably; the former predominate in his earlier writings, the third in the Ethics. His reason for making use of the first is not entirely apparent, unless it be, as Dr. Martineau has suggested, that even when the sun of Israel had set, he still loved to linger in the mystical penumbra of an earlier faith. But be this as it may, and however his use of the term may be interpreted, it is tolerably clear that Spinoza, far from lowering the Deity to Nature, exalted Nature to a God. God was everywhere, and every region was filled with the Divine.

Spinoza has been frequently blamed for reading the banns over the unknowable and the known, and perhaps the blame is not altogether undeserved. But in this connection it may not be amiss to call Goethe to his rescue. And Goethe, it may be remembered, is the Spinoza of verse. "To discuss God apart from Nature," said the poet, "is both difficult and dangerous. It is as though we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the medium of the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity of accusing of absurdity those who philosophically unite the world with God." Voltaire, however, took a different view, the view of an inconsequent historian who relies on his wit. Now wit is little else than the commonplace in fine clothes ; and Voltaire, who treated the humdrum with the skill of a modiste, drew the threads of fancy, and worked an elaborate hemstitch :

"Alors un petit Juif, au long nez, au teint blême,
Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,
Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,
Caché sous le manteau de Descartes son maître,
Marchant à pas comptés, s'approcha du grand Etre :
'Pardonnez moi,' dit-il, 'en lui parlant tout bas,
Mais je crois entre nous, que vous n'existez pas.' "

That which is called Free-will had to Spinoza a purely verbal existence. To him, the state of mind at any given moment is the effect of some definite cause, which itself is the effect of a preceding cause, and so on without end. His argument is to the point: "Imagine that a stone which has been set in motion becomes conscious, and, so far as it is able, endeavors to persist in its motion. This stone, since it is conscious of and interested in its endeavor, will believe that it is free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wills. Now such is the freedom of man, which every one boasts of possessing, and which consists but in this, that men are aware of their own desires, and ignorant of the causes by which those desires are determined." *

This apt negation of free-will in man, Spinoza extended to broader spheres ; and in showing that Nature has no alternatives, no standards of comparison of better or worse, and no appreciation of antitheses, of right or of wrong—in fact, that everything occurs in virtue and in accordance with eternal laws which could not be otherwise—arrived at the consoling deduction that he who understands that everything which happens, happens necessarily, will find nothing worthy of hatred, mockery or contempt, but rather will endeavor, so far as human power permits, to do well, and, as the phrase goes, to be of good cheer.

There is something in the foregoing theory that seems to savor of Calvinistic predestination. But it is only a savor. To the Calvinist, pre-

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* Lettre 62. Traduction de Emile Saisset.

destination is made endurable by the belief that everything is ordained by the highest wisdom; while to the Pantheist, man is never the subject of fate. The laws of necessity are identical with his own nature, and it is through an understanding of them that he finds himself at peace with all the world.

Spinoza held the doctrine of Final Causes to be untenable, because inconsistent with the perfection that resides in God. His argument, which is advanced in the *Ethica*, has the charm which attaches to brevity: "If God acts for a designed end, it must be that He desireth something which He hath not."

Spinoza was neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He neither laughed at life nor grieved over it. It is possible that he understood it. Like many another before him, he had looked about for happiness; and in the search he saw that such simulachres as wealth, distinction and pleasure, even to that *grande dame* whose name is Glory, were smitten with one and the same defect. The desire for them sprang from an archaic source, the love of the transitory. But happiness to be real, he argued, should be imperishable. And where could such happiness be found?—where, indeed, save in the love of the eternal and the unending, in the love of truth, which in purifying and exalting the heart shields it from vain desires? If Spinoza had not been a geometrician, he would have been a poet.

In the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, Spinoza noted, with great good sense, that a plain man who does not enter upon philosophy may without harm and even with propfit believe whatever he finds most edifying, provided he believes it sincerely. And it is related that his hostess, a simple-minded Lutheran, having asked him whether the religion she professed was capable of assuring her salvation, he advised her to seek no other, nor to doubt of its efficiency. "Do but good works," he said, "and endeavor so far as it is possible to lead a peaceful and virtuous life."

As Heine has well said, wherever a great mind gives utterance to its thoughts, there too is Golgotha. Spinoza was persecuted during his lifetime, and after death his works were condemned as profane, blasphemous and atheistic. And yet it is probable that few men more sincerely religious than he have ever lived and taught. His doctrine was one of abnegation of self and patient devotion to the eternal. He was in love with the Infinite ; it was Nature that fluttered his pulse ; it was the Spirit of the universe that filled his heart with living springs. Nevertheless there are to-day many warm-hearted and accomplished gentlemen whose views on Spinoza are a trifle more than two hundred years behind the age. To them he is still the blasphemer. But in all sincerity one may ask which is the more blasphemous, nay, which is the more vulgar, the mind that pictures the Deity as a jealous tyrant who keeps the world as a separate establishment, or the thinker who seeks to banish the dream that veils the part from the whole, and who shows the soul of man and of the universe to be the same ?

In attempting to convey the higher view, Spinoza admittedly transcended the limits of experience. Indeed, there are contemporary free-thinkers who are ready to assert that he was sunk in the grossest superstitions. Perhaps he was ; yet his superstitions were so refined, that in them there was room for nothing but the ideal.

A few years after Spinoza's death, on the 22nd day of November, 1694, François Arouet and Marie-Marguerite Daumart, his wife, caused to be baptized at the church of St. André des Arcs in Paris, a male child, who, born dying six months before, lived long enough to christen himself Voltaire.

The heart of the eighteenth century was like a veilliebchen. As Michelet, who dissected it, announced, it was double. One half was Diderot, the other Voltaire ; but Rousseau was wedged between. Voltaire wished superstition abolished and the throne preserved; Rousseau wanted the monarchy abolished and the altar upheld. Diderot sought the overthrow of both.

The united works of Diderot and Voltaire form a library of ninety volumes. But much of their labor is uncatalogued. Their ninety-first achievement is the French Revolution, their ninety-second is Modern Thought. If they are little read to-day, it is because their ideas have become common property, their daring seems less bold. Concerning Diderot, a word will be said later on;

but no conjunction of phrases is rich enough to paint Voltaire. His figure is as familiar as the moon, yet the currents of his thought are almost as intangible. Nature, who, as Malebranche has said, speaks neither Latin nor Greek nor Hebrew, had taught him the nothingness of creeds. He had but one dogma, Reason. When he preached God and liberty, the liberty was freedom of thought, and God the deification of common-sense. In his vague deism there was room for many things. "Believe in God," he said to a questioning rhymster; "believe in God; there is nothing more poetic." But to Madame du Deffand, in whom he confided, he admitted his acquaintanceship with a man who thoroughly believed that when a bee died it ceased to hum. That man was none other than himself. In those days there were not a few who believed as he did. Among them was that most anti-christian of monarchs, the fat Frederick, who played badly on the flute, wrote verses that limp after him through history, but who possessed an enchanted sword, a nimble wit, and a great fund of appreciation for those whose views coincided with his own.

From this monarch there came to Voltaire an invitation requesting the pleasures of his society, and this invitation Voltaire accepted. Voltaire was never young. When he reached Berlin his hair was white, and he looked, Madame de Staël has said, like a wicked old monk come back from another world to visit this; but such a fascinating pagan was he, that in winning him from the fifteenth Louis of France, Frederick valued the gain more highly than a province.

At the historic suppers of the king, Voltaire likened the symposiasts to the seven sages of Greece in a lupanar. "In no corner of the globe," he said, "has liberty of speech been greater, or have superstitions been treated with keener contempt." Beside Voltaire and Frederick, the usual guests were the Marquis d'Argens, Lamettrie, Maupertuis, Algarotti and d'Armand. The last-named gentlemen are relatively unimportant, but the others should not pass unnoticed.

D'Argens was not only the king's guest, he was his nearest friend, a sort of dignified Triboulet. He was a Provençal, an ex-free lance, handsome and dissipated, who after a riotous career, during which he had explored most of the side scenes of life, made love in five languages, and fought over the better part of Europe, retired suddenly to Holland and burned the midnight oil. It was the old story of the devil turned hermit. In Holland in those days, thought was almost untrammelled. When a foreign author was afraid of the printers in his own country, he set those of the Netherlands at work, very much as the ultra-naturalists of contemporary France obtain to-day the assistance of Belgian publishers. D'Argens therefore went to the Hague, hired an apartment, shut himself up for six months, and then walked out with the *Lettres Juives* in his pockets.

The *Lettres Juives*, which are nothing if not liberal, were read and appreciated by the Crown

Prince of Prussia, who at once asked d'Argens to pay him a visit. But d'Argens sent a regret. The throne was occupied by Frederick Wilhelm, and that monarch was not an agreeable person. If he took a walk, everybody took to their heels. Voltaire has given it to history that whenever he met a woman in the street, he sent her about her business: "Get thee hence, thou trull, thou trollope; thy place is at home!"—a remonstrance which was accompanied as often as not by a blow or a kick; and Voltaire adds that whenever a minister of the gospel took it into his head to view a parade, he was, if caught, treated in precisely the same manner.

D'Argens knew him by reputation, and declined his son's invitation with thanks. "To reach Potsdam," he wrote to the prince, "I should have to pass three battalions; and as I am tall, well-built, and not altogether bad-looking, I don't dare." But when the prince became king, there was nothing to fear, and Potsdam counted another guest.

It was not long before d'Argens became the chamberlain, and, as has been hinted, the friend of the king. He was a brilliant conversationalist, epigrammatic, paradoxical, and possessed of great opulence of imagination. And Frederick, who at that time, was possibly the only German in Berlin who knew how to talk, knew, too, how to appreciate that ability in another. The intimacy increased with years. When the king, overcome by public and private misfortunes, doubtful of the morrow and uncertain even of the day, reflected on the advantages which a bare bodkin can procure, d'Argens hurried to the rescue with comforting maxims. The king listened, but would have his say: "Philosophy, my dear Marquis, is an excellent remedy against the ills of the past or of the future, but it is powerless against those of the present." "And what about the impassibility that Zeno taught?" "Zeno," answered the king, "was the philosopher of the gods, and I am a man." Nevertheless he took heart again, and all thoughts of the bodkin were dismissed. But d'Argens was not always so comforting. On the eve of the battle of Rosbach, Frederick happening to remark that if he lost it he would go and practice medicine in Venice, Triboulet steadied himself against a table and hissed. "Toujours assassin."

D'Argens and Frederick grew old together. They had disputes which made them faster friends. They played practical jokes on one another, and quarrelled noisily over trifles. The king often acted like a school-boy, and d'Argens not infrequently forgot that he was a philosopher. He remembered, however, that he was not born in Berlin. About Sans-Souci there circled at times an icy wind that made him dream of Provence. One day he asked for his passport. Frederick was vexed; he did not like to be deserted; it diminished him in his own esteem. "Bah!" he exclaimed, "what is a prince born for, unless it be to cause ingratitude?" But he gave the exeat, and d'Argens returned to his early home. Soon after he died—a convert, so it was said.

When Frederick heard the rumor, he laughed; he knew d'Argens too well to believe any such gossip as that. "If he received the Last Sacrament," he said, "it is because it was given to him by main strength."

"D'Argens," said Voltaire, "has the wit of Bayle and the charm of Montaigne." The doctrine which he displayed in the *Philosophie du bon sens* is a half-hearted Pyrrhonisn. He, too, saw that there was no criterion of truth, but he could not always keep his eyes on the fact. "How," he asked, "can men pretend to know the essence of things when they are ignorant of their own?" That they cannot may be readily admitted, unless it be that they are willing to supersede judgment with faith, which proceeding is the one that d'Argens recommended. He was deeply purposeful, but he was circumspect. What he shook with one hand, he steadied with the other. When he showed the advantages of belief, he was not in a greater hurry to do anything else than to show its disadvantages. First he honeycombed it with doubt and toppled it over completely. Then he set to work and built it up anew. After which he gave it another shake, and so on indefinitely, until his ink blushed and his pen refused its office. The method employed by M. Renan is not dissimilar.

There are few lands in Europe that have been more fecund in myths than Brittany. The belief in that lost city of Is, whose spires the fishers sometimes saw, whose bells, rung by the waves, clang through the winter nights, and whose magnificence was such that for the capital of France no better name could be found than Par-Is, equal to Is—the belief in that lost city was the origin of many beautiful legends. In few other lands has the faith in the weird and the supernatural been preserved with greater simplicity. Yet through one of those paradoxes of which Nature alone holds the secret, Brittany has been as fertile of doubt as of credulity. Many of the foremost of French anti-theists claim it as their home. Between Maupertuis and Renan there is a parade of familiar names, and of these names few are more significant than that of Lamettrie.

Lamettrie appears to have been an unprincipled saint, a rake without vices. He was brilliant and whimsical, an excellent purveyor of the entremets of the imagination; and as it is the individual and not the topic that makes or unmakes conversation, the great Frederick held him in high favor. Some years before Voltaire appeared in Berlin, Lamettrie had written a book, *l'Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, which had created such a stir that he had been obliged to leave France and seek refuge in Holland. There he published another book, *l'Homme machine*, which created even a greater stir; and while he was wondering where he should hide, Frederick, who had read his writings, and who never let slip an opportunity of adding another philosopher to his collection, invited him to Berlin. "He is a victim of theologians and fools," said the monarch; "let him come here and write what he pleases. I am always sorry for a philosopher in difficulties; were I not born a prince, I would be one myself."

Lamettrie was quite willing to accord to a king the pleasures of his company, and took a seat at the royal supper-table without delay. Frederick was so charmed with him that he made him his salaried reader. "I am delighted with my acquisition," he said; "Lamettrie is as light-hearted and clever as any one can be. He is a sound physician and hates doctors; he is a materialist and not material. He says scandalous things now and then, but we weaken his Epicurean wine with the water of Pythagoras."

Like some other gentlemen of a sceptical turn, Lamettrie announced that vice and virtue were purely relative—a platitude which has been running about the book-shelves ever since books were shelved. But he added something which is worth larger attention: "Away with remorse!" he exclaimed; "it is a weakness, an outcome of education." And if virtue and vice are merely questions of surroundings, it is indeed difficult to view remorse otherwise than as a pre-mediæval emotion. But virtue, to say nothing of vice, is something more. According to the Buddha, virtue is the agreement of the will and the conscience, a definition which would be matchless if the will were free. Marcus Aurelius called it a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature; but if the boundless immorality of Nature be conceded, as it should, the fine words of the emperor are as empty as the wind. Virtue, said one who had eyed it narrowly, virtue is a name. Perhaps. Yet virtue declines to be dismissed with a phrase; there is a disturbing magnificence about it which routs the most skilful. In describing it, Raphael is a better lexicographer than Shakespeare, though even Raphael, for all his cunning, could not paint a temperament. And virtue is little else than a question of disposition. It may be sunned and watered by a thousand influences, it may be hedged and fortified, but in its essence it is temperamental. However great the outward success may appear, the lessons and precepts of ages will not suffice to keep it unspotted if the inner spirit be adverse. And as with virtue, so too with vice. Standards may differ with the climate, but in each case, it is the conscience that elects itself judge. It is the heart, memory aiding, that gives us a paradise or a hell. If we could hush the conscience and still the heart, we might afford to listen to Lamettrie; and perhaps in future ages, when through the progress of evolution man will lose the lobes of his ears as he has already lost his tail, when he will be as completely bald as he was once entirely hirsute, perhaps then the conscience will go the way of useless possessions; but meanwhile to declaim against it is as profitable as asking alms of statues. We are perfectly free to enjoy our remorse undisturbed.

Lamettrie admitted no other life than this, and not unnaturally sought to make the most of the worst. His ideas are contained in a treatise on Happiness, which he prefixed to a translation of

Seneca's thoughts on the same subject. "Our organs," he said, "are susceptible of sensations which render life agreeable. When the impression which a sensation conveys is brief, it is pleasure that we experience; prolonged, it is bliss; permanent, it is happiness. But in every case it is the same sensation, differing merely in intensity and duration. The absence of fear and desire is happiness in its primitive state; but to possess all that one wishes—to have beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory—that is a happiness which is real and perfect."

The spectacle of a eudæmonist is as charming as that of a ballerina. Both belong to the category of the Delightful. But even though one be pleasured by a Taglioni, there comes a moment when the pleasure palls. Lamettrie, who was fond of adventurous flights and incursions—not perhaps to the unknowable, but to that which he might have known and did not—was wont to please his readers with the *entrechats* of a lawless imagination. As a consequence, his views, if entertaining, are valueless. The real and perfect happiness of which he speaks is a will-o'-the-wisp of fancy. The possession of all that one wishes, whether the possession is concomitant, as in fairy tales, with the wish, or obtained after years of striving, does not and never will constitute happiness. In its essence, happiness is intangible; the desire for it is insatiable; and consequently, and despite every possession, it is ever unsatisfied. There may be a happiness which is transitory and fugitive, but there is none that is permanent. To say to the contrary is to announce one of the most insolent absurdities that has ever been proclaimed in the privileged aisles of the insane. For the sake of example, let it be supposed that in some one person are united all the factors which Lamettrie mentions—beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory ; if these possessions are what may be termed congenital, as in the case of a poet-prince, they are taken by their possessor as a matter of course, and have never served as preservatives from discontent ; on the other hand, if their re-union is accomplished after more or less prolonged endeavors, their possessor, in obtaining them, finds himself as poor as before ; he might be able to call the world his own, and yet not know what happiness is. The honors, the riches and glory to which he aspired, are as empty as the hands of the dead. If they are magnificent, it is only from afar. The best that can be, the best that ever has been, is in the discovery and maintenance of contentment. Its factors are two-fold—the first is health ; the second, indifference.

Lamettrie's chief titles to recognition rest on the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme* and the *Homme machine*. The first-mentioned work is an argument against the belief in the immortality of the soul. With this doctrine ancient philosophy had little to do. With the exception of Pythagoras and Plato, the thinkers of classic antiquity agreed in one particular—the soul was material. Even to Tertullian its immateriality was unestablished. "Animam nihil est," he said, "sed corpus non sit ;" and not a few of the fathers of the Church held the same opinion. The masses of course thought differently. The belief in a future life was by them unquestioned. It probably arose from the re-appearance of the dead in the dreams of the living. But in Greece, as in the Roman Empire, the life prefigured was one in which there was little charm. The neglect of funeral rites turned it into a dull and restless torture. In this particular the observances of believers were little else than precautionary safeguards, and the *Requiescat in pace* which is to be seen on contemporary tomb-stones is but a forlorn survival of their naïve superstitions. Later, when it was taught that the soul was imperishable, not through an inherent indestructibility, but through the influence of grace divine, its materiality was still undoubted. The soul and the body were considered inseparable. There were casuists who thought otherwise, and their disputes are legendary ; but their disputes occurred in an era when faith was well-nigh universal. When the distinction between the soul and the body was at last satisfactorily established—that is, to those who were interested in the establishment of a satisfactory distinction—the believer found himself turning back to Plato. The soul was represented as a resultant of the forces of the body, very much as harmony is known to be won from the strings of the lyre. Yet, as Simmias queried, when the strings are broken and the wood reduced to dust, from what shall the harmony be produced ?

In the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, little is said on this subject. It was not Lamettrie's intention to narrate what had been thought; what he wished to do was to paint the soul's development, and he put forth his best efforts to show that that which is termed soul is but the outcome of the perfectionment and education of the senses.

In *l'Homme machine* it is again a question of the soul, and the conclusion of course is the same. In spite of Descartes, who taught of two substances precisely as though he had seen and counted them; in spite of Leibnitz, who spiritualized matter instead of materializing the spirit; in spite of every one and everything to the contrary, Lamettrie, in broad paragraphs, proved to his own satisfaction that to think, to feel, to distinguish right from wrong as readily as blue from yellow, and to be but an animal, superior, perhaps, but still a brute, is not a bit more contradictory than it is for a parrot or a monkey to be able to distinguish pleasure from pain.

"Man is a machine," he said, "wound up and kept running by digestion. The soul is the mainspring. Both, of course, are material. As to thought, it is as much a property of matter as is electricity, motricity, impenetrability and breadth. To query with Locke whether matter can think, is tantamount to wondering whether it can tell time. In brief, man is a machine, and throughout the universe there is but one substance diversely modified. Such," he concluded "is my idea, or rather such is the truth. *Dispute qui voudra.*"

Another Breton who found a seat at the royal supper-table was Maupertuis. Before he found it, there had been some discussion among the erudite concerning the sphericity of the globe, and two separate expeditions were sent from France to measure different degrees of longitude. One went to Lapland, the other to Peru. Maupertuis, who was a geometrician, was placed at the head of the Polar expedition. He set out at once for Sweden, and after sixteen months of fatiguing adventures, returned to Paris to find himself the hero of the day. But in a city like Paris, a knowledge of the meridian, however exact, is not an attainment apt to make a man ceaselessly admired ; and Maupertuis, who had taken the admiration quite seriously, and had had himself painted, mantled in fur, in the act of flattening the globe, soon found that his glory was so much vapor. Now Maupertuis was not only a geometrician, he was a philosopher, and the occupant of the Prussian throne was, as has been hinted, ever ready to add a new one to his collection ; consequently, while Maupertuis was wondering at the inconstancy of his compatriots, a note was brought to him from Frederick. "Come to Berlin," it ran. "You have taught the world the form of the earth ; you shall learn from a king how much you are appreciated."

The king at that time, however, happened to be in a battle-field ; and to the battle-field Maupertuis, with the true spirit of a courtier, directed his steps. Unfortunately for him, Frederick was obliged to retreat, and Maupertuis was taken prisoner. At first it was thought that he had been killed ; but when it was learned that he had been conducted to Vienna and there fêted at court, Voltaire took occasion to say a few smart things, and the world smiled with amusement and relief.

At Vienna, the Queen asked him what his philosophy taught him to think of two princes who wrangled over patches of a planet which he had measured. "I have no right," he answered sedately, "to be more philosophic than kings." To change the subject, her Majesty deigned to inquire whether the Queen of Sweden was not the most beautiful princess in Europe. To which Maupertuis, who was nothing if not régence, answered, with his best bow, "I had always thought so until now." After that, he was returned unransomed to Frederick.

At Berlin, a young Pomeranian lady fell in love with him. His conversation, it appears, was so lively, that women never suspected him of being a savant. The young Pomeranian became his bride ; while he, through the king's good offices, was made President of the Berlin Academy,—a sort of Minister of Literature, much as d'Argens was Minister of the Stage. Voltaire, meanwhile, was lounging at Sans-Souci. Maupertuis had not forgotten the smart things he had said, and Voltaire was perhaps a little jealous of the favor shown to a rival. But, be this as it may, it is a part of history that no love was lost between them. When Voltaire had the king's ear, he poured into it scurrilous anecdotes about his compatriot; and when Maupertuis enjoyed a similar privilege, the tale of his grievances never tarried. "They take me for a sewer," said Frederick, with the indulgent smile of a man who has said a good thing.

Frederick sided with Maupertuis. It is possible that in some kingly fashion he, too, was jealous, though in his case the jealousy was of one whose royalty threatened at times to overshadow his own. Voltaire was irascible; he was annoyed at the preference; and after brooding over his discontent, he composed and published a pamphlet entitled *Docteur Akakia.*

In this trifle Maupertuis was lampooned as no one had ever been before; his pet theories—to wit, that there is no other proof of God than an algebraic formula, and that nothing which we see is as we see it—were held up to the laughter of the world. Frederick caused the edition to be seized and burned by the headsman. Voltaire, however, was not easily circumvented. A few copies escaped the auto-da-fé and went careering over Europe. Maupertuis was forever ridiculous, but Voltaire was still unsatisfied. He kept pricking him with his pen, until Maupertuis, outwearied with his struggle with an ogre, took to his bed and died of mortification—"between two monks," said the relentless Arouet. "What do you think of him?" he asked d'Alembert; "he has been suffering for a long time from a replie tion of pride, but I did not take him either for a hypocrite or an imbecile."

Maupertuis was one of the first of the modern thinkers that have ventured to add up the balance-sheet of pleasure and pain, and also one of the first to discover that the latter largely exceeds the former; indeed, so large did the excess seem, that he had no hesitation in announcing that were all that is painful in life suppressed and only the pleasurable moments counted, the duration of the happiest existence would not exceed a few hours.

He had scanned the *paysages de tristesse* as carefully as another, and the fairest vista that he saw was behind the delinquent hands of death. "Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil,"—After death is nothing; death itself is naught,—said Seneca; and Maupertuis, who agreed with him thoroughly, advocated suicide, and praised the stoics for teaching that it was a permissible remedy, and one that was most useful, against the ills of life. "If," he argued, "a man believes in a religion which offers eternal rewards to those that suffer, and which threatens with eternal punishment those that die to avoid suffering, it is not bravery on his part to commit suicide, nor is it cowardice, it is idiocy. On the other hand, a man who has no belief in a future life, and who is solely occupied in making this one as little unpleasant as possible, sees neither rhyme nor reason in submitting to misfortunes from which he can free himself in a trice." Nevertheless, Maupertuis died a natural death, and, as Voltaire said, between two monks at that.

Maupertuis, Lamettrie, d'Argens, even to the philosopher king himself, were dominated and overshadowed by Voltaire. Though purposeful, their influence was slight; it had barely strength enough to cross the Rhine. But on the other side of that muddy river there was then a group of thinkers whose influence can be felt in some of the currents of contemporary thought, and concerning whom a word or two may now be said.

When the foremost of England's sceptics, David Hume, visited Paris, he found a warm welcome at the house of the Baron d'Holbach. it was there, Burton says, that professing he had never met an atheist, Hume was told that he was in the company of seventeen. Of these, the more noteworthy were Diderot, d'Alembert, Naigeon and the host.

The Baron d'Holbach was a German who had been educated in France. He was a man of large wealth, wise, liberal and charitable. His house in the Rue Royale, which was called the Café de l'Europe, was a free academy of the freest thinkers; and of free-thinkers, domiciled and transient, d'Holbach was known as the *maître d'hôtel.* But d'Holbach was something more; he was one of the field-marshals of the little army of materialists who were the forerunners of the Revolution, and a lord in the literature of anti-theism. His erudition is said to have been practically unbounded. There was nothing of value written or suggested with which he was unfamiliar. "No matter what system I may imagine," said Diderot, "I am always sure that my friend d'Holbach can find me with facts and authorities to support it."

The doctrine which d'Holbach advocated was as liberal as the sea. It was a doctrine of freedom in all things—in speech, in thought, in politics and in religion. Its tenets are displayed at length in the *Système de la Nature*, a work published in Holland, and, through a literary trickery then not infrequent, attributed to a gentleman who, being dead, could not be prosecuted.

"Lost at nightfall in a forest, I have," said Diderot, "but a feeble light to guide me. A stranger happens along: 'Blow out your candle,' he says, 'and you will see your way the better.' That stranger is a theologian."

This squib might have served as epigraph to the *Système de la Nature.*

"Man," said d'Holbach, "is miserable, simply because he is ignorant. His mind is so infected with prejudices, that one might think him forever condemned to err. . . . It is error that has forged the chains with which tyrants and priests have manacled nations. . . . It is error that has evoked the religious fears which shrivel up men with fright, or make them butcher each other for chimeras. The hatreds, persecutions, massacres and tragedies of which, under pretext of the interests of Heaven, the earth has been the repeated theatre, are one and all the outcome of error."

These bold words were the prelude to the frankest exposition of anti-theism that France had ever read. Its audacity terrified, but its austerity repelled. Its paragraphs were as Cimmerian to the chamber-maids and hair-dressers of Paris, as the gayeties of Lamettrie had been shocking to the pedantry of Berlin. Then, too, it was rich and elaborate in its materialism. To-day it seems a trifle antiquated; the world has thought more deeply since; but with its general outlines contemporary thinkers have had no fault to find. In these outlines Nature is represented as the one-in-all, beyond which is nothing. The main propositions tend to show that throughout the length and breadth of space there is merely force and matter, the infinite interconnection of cause and effect; and that it is through an ignorance of natural laws that divinities have been imagined and made the objects of hope and fear.

On the subject of hope and fear, d'Holbach had much to say. The gist of it may be summarized in the fatalist axiom, Whatever will be, is. Everything that happens, happens necessarily, and in virtue of immutable laws. As to order or disorder, they are empty terms; like time and space, they belong to the categories of thought; there is nothing outside of us which corresponds to them. It is all very well for man to see order in that which is in conformity with his state of being, and disorder in that which is contrary to it; to call one the effect of an Intelligence acting toward a determined end, and the other the play of hazard. But order and disorder are but words used to designate certain states and conditions of being, which if permanent are called after the one, and if transitory after the other. Beside, Nature can have no aim, for there is nothing beyond it to which it can strive. As to hazard, it is meaningless, save in contradistinction to that Intelligence which man himself has conceived. Now man, d'Holbach explains, has always fancied himself the central fact in the universe. He has connected with himself everything that he has seen, and modelled everything after his own image. In this way he grew to believe that the universe is governed by an intelligence like unto his own; yet, being at the same time convinced of his individual incapacity to cause the multiform effects of which he stood a witness, he was forced to distinguish between himself and the invisible producer, and he thought to overcome the difficulty by attributing to that intelligence an aggrandizement of the prowess which he himself possessed.

The belief in the supernatural, which in man is inherent, d'Holbach regarded as a disease to which humanity's greatest misfortunes are attributable. Truth, he was fond of saying, can never harm. Nor can it. But that does not make it a welcome guest. The whole history of religion goes to prove that man would rather be wrong in his beliefs than have none at all. Then, too, the majority have never been provided with such leisure as would enable them to dispense with illusions. The thinker may wave them away, but his gestures leaves the masses unaffected. Perhaps if the world were merely learned, it would be anti-theistic; but fortunately, or unfortunately, as the actual status of affairs may be viewed, it is something more or something less;

there is an unstillable longing, an unconquerable expectation of better things, which so exalts the heart, that the serenest of atheists can never witness its effects without experiencing some sudden pang of envy.

In the polite society in which d'Holbach moved, disbelief was so prevalent that it is possible he had no occasion to experience a twinge. And if he did, the emotion has been unrecorded. He was squarely opposed to the idea of God, and at the same time a living contradiction to the theory that an atheist is necessarily a man of lax principles. Walmar, in the *Nouvelle Heloïse*, is the portrait which Rousseau took of him. Yet, as has been already intimated, it is the temperament, and not the point of view, that guides us into paths that are those of virtue or its opposite. And it was d'Holbach's temperament that made him shame the Jew devil as Satan had never been shamed before. On this point the testimony of his contemporaries is unanimous. The purity of his life, and that, too, in a century when immorality was less a vice than a grace, has never been questioned. He was a simple-mannered gentleman, warm of heart, sweet-tempered, endowed with great delicacy of sentiment, and possessed of such tact that even Rousseau, who would have quarrelled with an archangel, was unable to find in him any other cause of grievance than his wealth. "He is too rich for me," he said; but he added, "He is a better man, and one more really charitable than many a Christian. *He does good without the hope of reward.*"

The only immortality in which d'Holbach believed was fame. In life there is certainly nothing more exquisite. As Schopenhauer said, it is the Golden Fleece of the elect. But after death, and true glory comes but then, fame and ignominy are to the recipient equally unmeaning. And even were it otherwise, when it is remembered what are the limitations of fame, and when it is considered how small a value can be accorded to public opinion, the immortality in which d'Holbach believed does not seem worth an effort.

D'Holbach was one of the few writers that have had the courage to advocate suicide, and he advocated it as boldly to those who cowered at death, as he advocated virtue to a century whose vice is historic. His main argument in its favor is to the effect that the engagements between man and Nature are neither voluntary on the part of the one nor reciprocal on the part of the other. Man is therefore in nowise bound ; and should he find himself unsupported, he can desert a position which has become unpleasant and irksome. As to the citizen, he can hold to his country and associates only by the mortgage on his well-being. If the lien is paid off, he is free. "Would a man be blamed," he asks, "a man who, finding himself useless and without resources in his native place, should withdraw into solitude ? Well, then, with what right can a man be blamed who kills himself from despair? And what is death but an isolation?"

Maxims such as these are considered dangerous and provocative. But maxims have never caused a suicide. A man may cut his throat or hang himself to put an end to the agonies of grief or boredom, but not because he has happened on a suggestive quotation. He will look for the great quietus if he wants to, but not because it is recommended. In any case the contempt of death is a useful possession; and it is well for every one to understand that while virtue and happiness are supposed to go hand-in-hand, and that to do good is to receive it, yet after the loss of any one of us the world will go on in quite the same manner as before.

In the days when d'Holbach was giving dinner-parties in the Rue Royale, the flag of France was noticeably black. Some said that it was from the dye of the cassock; others, that it had caught the grime of mediæval institutions. At d'Holbach's dinner-table, however, in the salons of Madame Geoffrin—she who was so plain that Greuze exclaimed, "My God, if she annoys me I'll paint her!"—in the salons of Mesdames du Deffand, de Lespinasse and Necker, there assembled from time to time a handful of thinkers who were determined to give the flag of France another hue. These gentlemen were resolute and aggressive. The century they saw, was hungry for ideas, and it was in an effort to give it food of the right quality that the Encyclopædia was produced.

The Encyclopædia—a name coined by Rabelais—displayed the genealogy of thought. It was at once a storehouse of knowledge, an attack on ignorance, an appeal to common-sense, and a plea for liberty. It opposed every abuse, political, theological, ecclesiastical, industrial, fiscal, legal and penal. It sought to establish toleration, to abolish sacerdotal thaumaturgy, to banish the supernatural, and thwart the subornation of the understanding. It was in no sense free from error, and its erudition presents to-day a most mildewed appearance ; but it served its purpose, and from out its wide bindings burst the torrents of the Revolution.

In its opposition to everything that savored of the illiberal, the Encyclopædia encountered many an obstacle and not a few embarrassments ; indeed, the history of the government and literature of the third quarter of the last century is interwoven with that of its vicissitudes and final triumph. Every man of brains wrote for it, and those who had none and wanted some subscribed. The responsibility of its publication was assumed by Diderot and d'Alembert.

Diderot was a giant, whose head was in the clouds and whose feet were in the mud. He wrote obscene stories and anticipated Lamark, Darwin's precursor. History, art, science and philosophy he held in fee, and yet he was not erudite. He had drunk oft, not deep. " I know a great many things," he said, " but there is hardly a man that does not know some one thing better than I." In the activity of his mind may be found the reason of the admiration of his contemporaries and that of posterity's neglect. He has left us twenty volumes of essays and digressions, but not a single book. Yet no one was ever so prodigal with his pen as he. He gave it to any one that asked, to an enemy as readily as to a friend. Grimm asked his opinion on an exhibition of paintings; he gave it in an in-octavo. "I have written a satire against you," said a young man to him one day. "I am poor; will you buy it?" "Ah! sir," he exclaimed, "what a pitiable vocation is yours! but," he continued, "I will tell you what to do. The Duke of Orleans honors me with his dislike; dedicate your book to him; he will pay you well." "A good dedication is a difficult job," said the young black-mailer. "Well, sit down," Diderot answered, "and I will write it for you." And he did, and the youth received his pay.

Diderot being without ambition was known as the Philosopher, but he was so poor that he could hardly buy the cloak. When he wished to dower his daughter, he found that he had nothing except his library, and his library to him was life itself. Nevertheless, he determined to sell it. Catharine of Russia learned of the determination and bought the library; but with a true sense of what is royal, she left him the use of his books and made him their salaried custodian beside.

At the beginning of his literary career, Diderot was a sincere deist, which, as some one has said, is a proof of what education may do. It was not long, however, before he saw that scepticism is the first step to philosophy ; and when the step was taken, he descended without a compunction the precipitate stair of negation. The stages of his thought are well defined. "Aggrandize God," he shouted in his first enthusiasm ; "free Him from the captivity of temples and creeds. See Him everywhere, or say that he does not exist." Later—in the "Letter on the Blind for the Use of those who See"—he manifested a classic indifference on the whole subject. "Ask an Indian how the world is suspended in the air, and he will tell you that it rests on the back of an elephant. 'And the elephant?' 'On a turtle.' You pity the Indian, yet one might say to you as to him, 'Admit your ignorance, and don't bother me with a menagerie."

But his indifference was transient. "Among the difficulties (of believing in God), there is one," he noted, "which has been agitated since the world began. It is that men suffer without having deserved to do so. To this there has never been an answer. The existence of a Supreme Being is incompatible with evils, moral and physical. What, then, is the safest course? The one which we have taken. Whatever the optimist may say, we answer that if the world could not exist without sentient beings, and sentient beings without pain, the Almighty would have done better to keep quiet." Thereafter he became firmly anti-theistic. "It is," he said, "highly important not to mistake hemlock for parsley, but it is entirely unnecessary to believe in God." "The Christian religion," he added,

" is atrocious in its dogmas. It is unintelligible, metaphysical, intertwisted and obscure. It is mischievous to tranquillity, dangerous in its discipline, puerile and unsociable in its ethics, and in its ceremonial dreary, flat, Gothic and most gloomy. . . If my ideas please no one," he concluded, " it is possible that they are poor; but if they pleased everybody, I would consider them detestable." Yet as he preached tolerance, he practised it, and was never known to refuse a crutch to those who had no legs.

Among the Encyclopædists, where Diderot was king, d'Alembert was prime minister, a Mazarin, as one may say; but a Mazarin who grew faint-hearted, and, fearing the Bastille, left his monarch in the lurch.

D'Alembert was more a mathematician than a philosopher. His mistress was Algebra. History has given the same title to Mlle. de l'Espinasse; but if he was unfaithful, the lady in question appears to have paid him back in a better coin than his own. He was not a cheerful person, yet when alone with his books he was happy as though he were dead. " Qui est-ce qui est heureux?" some one asked him. " Quelque misérable," he replied. He was an invalid, too; but he hated medicine, and held a physician to be like a blind man who armed with a cudgel strikes at random, and, according as he strikes, annihilates the disease or—the patient.

As has been hinted, he was timid, or perhaps merely cautious, a trait which found little favor with Voltaire. " Philosophers are too lukewarm," he said ; "instead of shrugging their shoulders at the errors of mankind, they ought to wipe them out." But apparently d'Alembert did not agree with him. "Philosophers," he retorted, "should be like children, who, when they have done anything wrong, put the blame on the cat." But if for one reason or another he thought it best to keep his views from the public, he had no hesitation in whispering them to the sympathetic ear of Frederick the Great. The latter had written what he called a refutation of the naturalism conveyed in d'Holbach's *Système de la Nature.* The book had annoyed him ; but what probably annoyed him most was not its naturalism, but its attack on the sacred caste of royalty. At the same time, as he himself said, if d'Holbach were condemned to be burned, he would be the first to play the hose on the stake.

In the eyes of the liberal monarch, d'Alembert, when answering the refutation, brandished the historic doubt. "Montaigne's motto, What do I know ? seems to me," he wrote, "the answer that should be made to all questions in metaphysics. . . . Those who deny the existence of a Supreme Intelligence advance more than they can prove. In treating such a subject, scepticism is the only reasonable standpoint. No one, for instance, can deny that throughout the universe, and particularly in the formation of plants and animals, there are combinations which seem to reveal an Intelligence. That they prove it, as a watch proves a watch-maker, is incontestable. But supposing that one wishing to go further asks, What is this Intelligence? Did it create, or did it merely arrange matter? Is creation possible, or, if it be not, is matter eternal? And if matter is eternal and needed an Intelligence simply to arrange it, is that Intelligence united to matter, or is it distinct? If it is united, matter, properly speaking, is God, and God is matter. If it is distinct, how can that which is material be fashioned by that which is not? Besides, if this Intelligence is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, why is the world, which is its work, so filled with physical and moral imperfections? Why are not all men happy? Why are not all men just? Your Majesty assures me that this question is answered by the world's eternity. And so perhaps it is, but seemingly merely in this sense, that the world being eternal, and in consequence necessary, everything which is, must be as it is; and at once we enter into a system of fatality and necessity which does not in the least accord with the idea of a God infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. Sire, when these questions arise, we should repeat 'Que sais-je?' an hundred times. Then, too, there is a consolation for ignorance in the thought that, as we know nothing, it is unnecessary for us to know more."

To which Frederick, who gave a nickname as readily as a pension, answered:

"But, my dear Diagoras, if you fancy that I can give a detailed explanation of the Intelligence that I marry to Nature, you over-estimate my ability. I can say merely that I perceive it as I would an object of which I might happen to catch a glimpse through a mist."

D'Alembert, however, was not to be played with, and he returned to the charge and routed the fat king with a fresh arsenal of queries.

"With the exception of the animal kingdom, the realms of matter with which we are acquainted appear deprived of sentiency, volition and thought. Is it possible that intelligence resides in them without our knowledge? Of this there is no evidence, and I am inclined to think that the block of marble, as well as the plants that are the most delicately and ingeniously organized, are without thought and feeling. But, it is objected, the organization of these bodies discloses visible traces of an intelligence. This I do not deny; but I would be glad to know what has become of this intelligence since these bodies were organized. If it resided within them while they were being formed and in order to form them, and if, as it is supposed, this intelligence is not distinct from them, what has become of it since its work is done? Has the very perfection of the organization been annihilated? To me, such a supposition seems untenable. If, then, the intelligence whose effects we admire in man is merely a resultant of organization, why, in other realms of matter, may we not admit a structure and an arrangement as necessary and as natural as matter itself, and from which, without the intervention of any intelligence, would result the very effects which surround and surprise us? Lastly, in admitting the doctrine that an Intelligence presided over the formation of the world and still watches over its well-being, it is hard to reconcile the theory of that Intelligence with the idea of infinite wisdom and power. For, to the misfortune of humanity, this world of ours, is very far from being the best one possible. With the best of intentions, we are therefore unable to recognize any other God than one who, at most, is material, limited and dependent. I do not know whether this view is the correct one, but certainly it is not that of the Deity's partizans, who would much prefer to have us atheists than the Spinozists that we are. To mollify them, let us turn sceptic and repeat with Montaigne, Que sais-je ?"

This amiable agnosticism was shared by few of the Encyclopædists. To Naigeon, who would have nothing to do with half-way measures, it seemed little less than revolting. Naigeon was a Puritan without beliefs ; his atheism was as fervent as his life was austere. When he first sat, a stripling, at d'Holbach's table, he was largely ridiculed. He was a pretty boy, with fair skin and curled blonde hair. Diderot's monkey, La Harpe called him, for it was through Diderot that he was brought into notice. But with age the comely lad developed into a tiger. To him Diderot left the care of his unpublished manuscripts, and these Naigeon edited, together with the memoirs of the author. He, too, was a voluminous writer, and scattered essays and treatises with a prodigality which he had caught from his master. But the work which caused the greatest number of people to turn about and look after him in the street was the *Theologie portative.* In it the beliefs and tenets of Christendom were treated in a manner that reminds one of Col. Ingersoll. In the subsequent *Encyclopédie méthodique* he wrote again on these and adjacent subjects, though this time from a broader and more serious standpoint.

Politically, socially and morally untrammelled, he had, meanwhile, been keeping a finger on the public pulse, and he felt that some great, if undetermined; change was at hand. So soon, then, as the National Assembly got to work on its declaration of the rights of man, Naigeon issued an address, in which he prayed the Assembly to banish from the proclamation any suggestion of religion, and in its place to assert man's right to entire freedom of thought and speech. But the petition was unnoticed. It is possible that he made a second appeal to Robespierre; but if he did, it was as unsuccessful as the first. And there is an anecdote that one day during the Terror he looked so much alarmed, that some asked him if he were on the list of the condemned. "Worse than that," he cried. "That monster Robespierre has decreed the existence of a Supreme Being!" To Robespierre, an atheist was an aristocrat.

While Naigeon was addressing the Assembly, a young man named Sylvain Maréchal passed out of Saint-Lazare. A few months previous, he had published a little book entitled, *l'Almanach des honnêtes gens*, in which wise men were given precedence over saints. This disregard of etiquette procured for Maréchal an opportunity to meditate on the proprieties of life. When the prison-doors were opened, he passed his time in succoring the indigent and housing the pursued. He fed and sheltered priests and royalists alike, and even paid masses for the repose of the soul of an old woman because he knew that such had been her wish.

Yet Maréchal was one of the fanatics of atheism, and as proud of negation as though he had invented it. The devil, one may see, is rarely as red as he appears on the stage. The thinkers with whom this chapter has had to deal were fervent in their disbelief; but in their disbelief there was room for such charity, tolerance and broad good-will, that one looks in vain for a stone that shall hit them. Perhaps, as some one has said, it is only the just that have a right to be athiests. And yet they were not impeccable; with one exception, they were guilty of a grievous sin against good manners—they were dogmatic. One may fancy that their voices were seldom modulated; it is probable that they shouted, and there are few among us that care to be shouted at. Then, too, there was a confidence and an assurance in their atheism which is as unpleasant as bigotry. They forgot Montaigne, and they let Pyrrho fall asleep. Maréchal was not better than the others; one may even say that he was worse, for he was dogmatic in rhyme. Since Lucretius, atheism had been without a poet. Leopardi's father was then a bachelor, and Shelley was in the cradle. It was Maréchal that the irreverent muse first ordered to hold the lute. And Maréchal kissed the Muse full upon the mouth, and sang loudly in a strain of boyish bravado. Whether or not Maréchal's notes were listened to, is relatively a matter of small importance. A little later, the Being whose existence Robespierre had decreed was publicly deposed. The cathedral of Notre-Dame was consecrated to the worship of Reason, the crosier and the ring were trampled under foot, and an ass, crowned with a mitre, was led through exulting crowds.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROTESTS OF YESTERDAY.

THE lives of philosophers are dull. Descartes might figure as the hero of a romance, but Descartes is an exception. Fichte belongs to the rule. The story of his manhood is one of poverty which is not poignant, and of successes which were not great.

In a work on this thinker, Professor Adamson notes one fact which is palpitant in truth and lucidity; it is to the effect that Europe to-day does not hold ten students of that marvellous sophist. And yet Fichte is one of the most insolent of dissenters. To the ordinary reader his negations are inexplicable; they comprise the denial of the reality of the external world. This denial, which is known as akosmism, is pantheism's twin-sister. Pantheism admits no other reality than Nature; and akosmism, taking one step further, declines to admit any reality at all. Of the two, pantheism has been the more fruitful. It began with the Vedas; ran through Eleatic and Neo-platonic philosophy; was caught up by Scott Erigena and handed to Bruno, who passed it to Spinoza. Another thread or two runs through the Talmud, the Kabbala, the theories of Maimonides, Gerson and Chesdai Creskas; and there are tangles of it in the beliefs of mediæval communities, in the heresies of the Beghards and Beguines, the Turlupins and Adamites; but with their unravelment the reader need not be wearied. Akosmism has found fewer adherents. Like pantheism, it began with the Vedas, or, more correctly, with the Vedanta philosophy; left broad traces in Greece; revived for a moment during the Renaissance; and then sank back into obscurity until Fichte, Kant aiding, brought it to light anew. Between the two systems there is this cardinal distinction. Pantheism and science have never been other than the best of friends. There is nothing in the one that has ever been seriously opposed by the other. But akosmism and science look at each other askant. They have as much in common as have the poet and the mathematician.

The clearest idea of Fichte's akosmism, or rather the clearest idea of its charm and futility, is conveyed in a work entitled the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, the Vocation of Man. The work is divided into three parts: Doubt, Knowledge and Faith. The first part, Doubt, opens with an inquiry concerning that mystery within us that calls itself "I," and an examination of Nature that vaunts itself real. From this inquiry and from this examination, Fichte discovers that man is but a link in a chain of necessity, a part of that force which, amid the everlasting revolution and mutation of things, is the sum and substance of all that is.

And that chain of necessity! Was there ever anything more delicately interconnected? One has but to look at it to see that its rivets are so neatly joined that they make it impossible for anything to be other than it is. Take, for instance, a single grain of sand on the sea-shore, and fancy that it lies a few feet further inland than it actually does. The mental operation is, admittedly, most easy to perform; but note the consequences. For that grain of sand to be a few feet further inland, then must the wind which bore it have been stronger than it was; then must the state of the atmosphere which occasioned the wind have been different from what it was, and the previous changes different; in fact, it is necessary to presuppose an entirely different temperature from that which actually existed. We must also suppose a different constitution of the bodies which influence the temperature, the barrenness or fertility of countries, on which depend the health of man and the duration of life. Interfere, therefore, with that grain of sand, and it is within the range of possibilities that in such a state of weather as was necessary to move it but a few feet further inland, some one, long ago, may have died of cold or hunger—long ago, before the birth of that son from whom the sophist himself descended; and behold, Fichte would have been spared the trials of life, and prevented, too, from solving every problem, and leaving the student nothing to do but to bore himself to death.

From Fichte's logic, therefore, the necessity which compels everything to be precisely as it is, is amply demonstrated. Nevertheless, doubt is not yet banished. It is true he has proved the existence of man to be but a manifestation of a force whose operation is determined by the whole of the universe, but into the nature of that force he is unable to look. And even could he, of what use would it be? It would not help him to regulate his actions. Nature is the last one to contradict herself, and she allows no one to contradict her. The force that acts on us and in us makes us what we are; and to attempt to make ourselves otherwise than it has been appointed we should be, is a task which may be pleasant, but which assuredly is useless. In the chain of necessity we are all interlinked : fight free who may. They who have done so have reached that bourne from which no traveller returns.

We may rejoice and repent, we may form good resolutions; but the joy and the repentance and the good resolutions come to us of themselves, and not until it is appointed that they shall do so. When they do come, however sincere the repentance may be, however magnificent the resolutions, the course of things moves on unchanged and changeless as before. We lie in the lap of necessity. Should Nature destine one man to be wise and to be brave, wise and brave he will be. Should she destine another to be scatterbrained and imbecile, scatterbrained and imbecile will he become. There is no merit, no blame, to be ascribed to her or to them. The wishes that throb in our hearts may rebel, but the great Mother snuffs them out like a candle. She is governed herself. Her laws are ours.

It is in musings of this description that Fichte stretches his hand to Spinoza and denies that man is a free agent. At best he is a conscious automaton. But what if he were not even that? Is there any one thing of which he is certain?

> "Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?"

Fichte asks himself the same question, and looking with introspective eye for an answer, discovers the purely subjective character of all human knowledge. He sees that he has no consciousness of things in themselves, only a consciousness of a consciousness of them. Were he blind, what would he know of color? Were he deaf, what would he know of song? Were he without imagination, doubt, hope and fear would have no meaning. Such knowledge as man possesses is merely a knowledge of himself; beyond it, consciousness never goes. When it seems to do otherwise, when man assumes to be conscious of an object—the sun, for instance—he has merely the consciousness of a supposition of an object, which supposition he identifies with sensation and takes for the object itself.

It has been hinted that akosmism and science are at odds, but on this point they agree. As a matter of fact, and one admitted by all decorous scholars, we none of us see the sun. What we do see are certain modifications of light in immediate relation to our organ of vision. And in this connection it is not improper to note that no two persons see the same modifications of the same light, and that for the reason that each person sees a different complement of rays acting on his own individual retina.

But to return to Fichte, and to put his idea less technically, it is a self-evident proposition that we neither see our sight, feel our touch, nor yet have a higher sense by which things affecting the organs of sense are perceived. It is therefore not difficult to accept the axiom that our consciousness of external existence is merely the product of our presentative faculty. The difficulty lies in the application, for with it all reality vanishes. In that which we call intuitive knowledge, we contemplate only ourselves, and our consciousness is and can be only a consciousness of the modifications of our own existence. If, therefore, the external world arises before us only through our own consciousness, it follows that what is particular and multiform in the external world can arise in no other way; and if the connection between ourselves and what is external to us is simply a connection of thought, then is the connection of the multifarious objects of the external world simply this and no other.

The whole of the material world is, then, but a cerebral phenomenon. There is no being, no real existence. The only things that exist are pictures, and these pictures know themselves after the fashion of pictures. They are pictures which float past, without there being anything past which they float — pictures which picture nothing, images without significance and without an aim. Reality is a dream, without a world of which the dream might be, or a mind that might dream it. It is a dream which is woven together in a dream of itself. Intuition is the dream; thought, the source of fancied reality, is the dream of that dream.

In this charming manner, Fichte, after divesting himself of doubt and attaining perfect knowledge, mounts into a higher sphere which he terms Faith. Into the austerities of this abstraction it is unnecessary to follow him; and it will perhaps suffice to note that the conclusion amounts to the assertion that where the canaille believe that things are as they appear, because they must, the philosopher believes because he will. After a deduction such as that, one may well exclaim against the uselessness of philosophy in general, and the Fichtean branch in particular.

Fichte's metaphysical hysterics excited the wildest hilarity. His formula I = I, on which in an earlier work he had sounded all the changes, was popularly supposed to mean his own individual ego. Fichte, however, meant nothing of the sort. The "I" he used in the impersonal sense which is conveyed in such expressions as "it rains," "it snows." The "I" represented the force that pervades all things, and which in man arrives at a consciousness of self. But Fichte was not a clear writer—few Germans are; and if he was taken *au pied de la lettre*, the fault was his own. In any event, his philosophy was largely ridiculed. Heine is witness to the fact that a cartoon was circulated which represented a goose whose liver had become so big that the bird was undecided whether she was all goose or all liver. Across her Fichtean breast ran the legend I = I. The reality of his idealism, however, was not taken so easily. The Philistines waxed wroth. Heine represents a burgomeister as exclaiming, "That man thinks I don't exist, does he? Why, I'm stouter than he and his superior, too!" The ladies asked, "Doesn't he at least believe in the existence of his wife?" "Of course not." "And does Madame Fichte permit that?"

But with whatever facetiousness the matter may be viewed, the question of an external world has been, and is still, one of the great battle-fields of metaphysics. The realists clamor that their opponents are colossal in their errors; the idealists answer, "Tu quoque." Among the latter, few have been more vehement than Fichte. He defended his belief with all the heavy artillery of the German dictionary, and entrenched himself with logic. It was, however, merely on speculative principles that he contended that our knowledge of mind and matter is only a consciousness of what Sir William Hamilton has christened "various bundles of baseless appearances." He did not deny the veracity of consciousness; he denied the veracity of its testimony, a distinction as subtle as it is valid. For all practical purposes the material world—including Madame Fichte—was to him not only thoroughly real, but it went spinning through space at the rate of nineteen miles a second. And it was merely the certainty of uncertainty, the haunting conviction of the unreliability of the perceptions which in earlier days led Socrates to maintain that the only thing he knew was that he knew nothing, which caused Fichte to discriminate between what he believed and what he saw.

But however unreal the world might be in theory, he was quite sure that for every-day purposes it was the worst one possible. Indeed, Fichte was not only an akosmist, he was a pessimist too, a combination which seemed so alluring to Lammenais, that after a debauch in Fichteana he was pleased to describe the world as a shadow of that which is not, an echoless sound from nowhere, the chuckle of Satan in chaos.

Fichte's successor was Schelling. In place of the abstractions of his precursor, this gentleman presented an adventurous mysticism. Both were idealists ; but where the one extracted the real from the ideal, the other reversed the proceeding. The transcendentalism which they professed in common, is the history of consciousness to the highest degree of its development. Fichte tiara'd his system with faith ; Schelling crowned his own with æsthetics. To the latter, the universe was a poem whose strophes were writ in metaphysical formulas, a phrase which may be taken to mean that he was exquisitely alive to the beauties of Nature and yet unable to picture them in readable prose. His real master was Spinoza, and his philosophy in consequence presents some of the serenest forms of pantheistic belief.

The harmony to which he was alive prefigured to him the agency of a supreme Principle; of a Being eternally unconscious; veiled from the sight of man by the purity of enveloping light, and apprehensible only through intellectual intuition. On the skirts of this intuition he suspended knowledge. Above it he poised art—"the revelation of that Absolute in which subject and object coincide; in which the conscious and the unconscious unite."

"That which we call Nature," he said, "is a poem writ in mysterious hieroglyphics, but in which, were they decipherable, whoso lists might read the Odyssey of the Spirit, preyed upon by illusion, ever seeking, ever fleeing itself. . . . Nature is to the artist that which it is to the philosopher; the ideal world ceaselessly appearing in finite forms: the wan reflection of a universe which does not stretch beyond the mind, but rests within it."

The fundamental idea of the entire system amounts in brief to this: earth, sea and sky, and all that in them is, are, in their essence, emanations, or, as Leibnitz has it, fulgurations of an eternal and unconscious activity. Detached from the primordial matrix, these manifestations, though interconnected, are without permanent reality. The finite world is an illusion. The infinite alone exists.

This idea, while not unalluring, is passably vague. But vagueness has no terrors for those who wish to be mystified, and that there were many such is evident from contemporary accounts of the enthusiasm with which it was greeted. The enthusiasm, however, was as impermanent as Schelling's own reality. His disciples flocked to a rival teacher, to Hegel, whose name has the sound of a knell.

The doctrine which this gentleman advanced, and which to-day is to be sought for in seventeen massive in-octavos, may be regarded as the apotheosis of the arrière-pensée. Hegel was the chameleon of philosophy. He believed in nothing; and not only did he believe in nothing, but he possessed no fixity of disbelief. Whenever it is possible to pin him down, it is always on a contradiction that the pinning is accomplished. He was an anatomist of thought, a midwife of paradox. No phase, no flutter of consciousness, escaped his diagnostic. He analyzed and dissected, but he did not build, or at least only on negations. He created doubts, not convictions. He made disbelievers, not converts. It was he who should have said, "Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint."

It may be noted, parenthetically, that the proposition of which Plato caught a glimpse, and which Descartes dimly perceived, the proposition that man is the one centre of thought, formed the sum and substance of Kent's teaching. "Look," he admonished the reader, "look at time and at space. They are but categories of thought. Time is not, nor yet is space. They are appearances which the mind creates, and with which we envelope the universe." This idealism, which in Kant was partial, in Fichte subjective, and in Schelling objective, became absolute with Hegel. To-him, illusion was the one permanency, the one cause, and man but the shadow of its effects.

In its widest sense, Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to make the acquaintence of Schelling's primordial entity—the Absolute. As a necessary preparation he annihilated the finite, or, to use his own language, the categories of the finite which stood in his way ; and when he had done so, behold, the Absolute had crumbled with them. The heavens were void. There has been nothing, there is nothing, there will be nothing, save a constant evolution, a continuous development, with death for a goal. And, after all, what is the lesson that history conveys ? What, indeed, if it be not this, that whatever is born, is born to die.

The idolatry, the infatuation of Hegel's disciples was without precedent or parallel. The streets and beer-halls echoed with discussions on the identity of contradictories. The Idea, the Absolute, the Ich and the non-Ich, were every-night topics. Metaphysics hung over Berlin like a London fog. Hegel was not only a popular teacher, he was a national idol. His dialectic prestidigitations had all the charm which attaches to the unfathomable. That he was a charlatan is clear, but that he was revered is certain. Among the group of mourners that assembled about his tomb, one, a theologian, likened him to Jesus. More recently, Scherer compared him to Napoleon. Yet on his death-bed Hegel was heard to mutter, "Only one man understood my philosophy, and he only half-caught its import."

After such a confession, one might well offer him the viaticum and hum a requiem over his seventeen in-octavos. And yet in vain. Hegel's influence is too substantial to be quieted by any requiescat, however determined. In spite of the hilarity of the impolite, his spectre looms through the most rational forms of contemporary negation. In the core of his philosophy there broods a sphinx that still defies.

When the bewilderment which Hegel excited subsided, the faith which he had inculcated was questioned ; belief soon gave way to heresies, and the metaphysical assembly divided itself into dissenting camps. From one of these issued the philosophy which counted Emerson and Carlyle among its exponents. In the uproar of another, Strauss, Feuerbach, Bruno and Stirner have pointed to an eternal grave and taken the nimbus from a god. It is owing to the instruction of a third that Vacherot has occupied his time in showing that the idea of perfection is God, and that perfection does not exist ; and it was something of the original spirit that smoothed the way for the amiable fumisteries of Ernest Renan.

In the days when Hegelism was at its apogee, there appeared in Berlin a young man who declined to take any other part in the general intoxication than that of spectre at the feast. His contempt for the sophist, the pachyderm hydrocephali, and all the pedantic eunuchs who made up what he was wont to term the apocalyptic retinue of the bestia trionfante, was sumptuous in its magnificence. So sumptuous even, that he took counsel from an attorney as to the exact limit his contempt might reach without making him amenable to a suit for defamation. Then, reassured, he began an attack. "Hegel's philosophy," he said, "is sufficient to cause an atrophy of the intellect. It is a crystallized paralogism, an abracadabra, a puff of bombast, and a wishwash of phrases which in its monstrous construction compels the mind to form impossible contradictions." For its preparation he offered a receipt which is homeopathic in its simplicity. "Dilute a minimum of thought in five hundred pages of nauseous phraseology, and for the rest trust to the Teuton patience of the reader."

A few years before, this violent yet cautious young man had written a work which he signed in full letters, Arthur Schopenhauer, and entitled, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung.* This work, which he thought would shake the sophistry of all civilization, had been left unnoticed and neglected on the back book-shelves of its Leipzig publisher. It is said that he smarted at this inattention, and that his aggressiveness and contempt of Hegel, and not of Hegel alone, but of Fichte and Schelling, the three sophists, as he was pleased to call them, was the outcome of envy. Whether or not this statement is true, is a matter of small importance. The point to be noted is, that thirty years later Hegel was largely forgotten, and the works of his obscure opponent were welcomed with an enthusiasm which has been expanding ever since.

"The world as Will and Idea" is an atheology compounded of Buddhism, Tauism and Epicurism, a mosaic of Oriental and classic negations worked out by an original and brilliant thinker. If the seventeen in-octavos already alluded to may be regarded as the apotheosis of the arrière-pensée, then, in comparison, this philosophy, together with its complementary monographs, represents the renaissance of common-sense.

Schopenhauer was not a pantheist. Had he possessed any of the views of ordinary orthodoxy, the belief, for instance, in

> "L'univers
> Où règne un Jehovah dont Satan est l'envers,"

he might possibly have read the banns over Nature and Satan, but he never would have identified the former with God. Nor was Schopenhauer a materialist. He was a theorematist of force, but atoms found no place in his system. Yet if he must be catalogued, it will perhaps be safest to say that he was an idealist who saw the inutility of dream. Kant's *Kritik*, from which all German metaphysics proceeds, had shown him that reason must either be confined within the limits of experience, or else let loose into an absolute idealism. The three sophists had disgusted him with the supersensible, and yet he felt suffocated in the narrow limits of the real. There was yet a middle course, and that course he took. It was useless to ask whence the world comes or whither it tends, but it would not be impertinent to state *what it is;* and the statement which Schopenhauer made to the public was to the effect that the world is but the perception of a perceiver, a simple representation, a mere idea which man carries with him to the tomb, and which in the absence of a thinker to think it would not exist at all.

In the *Cogita*, a note-book of which extracts have been selected by Schopenhauer's literary executor,* is the following passage : "Two things were before me, two bodies, regularly formed, beautiful to see. One was a vase of jaspar, with a border and handles of gold. The other was an organism, a man. When I had admired them sufficiently from without, I begged the genie who accompanied me to let me visit within. This permission was accorded. In the vase I found nothing save the pressure of weight, and between the parts some obscure reciprocal tendency which I have heard designated as cohesion and affinity. But when I entered the other object, my surprise was so great as to be almost untellable : in legends and fairy-tales there is nothing more unbelievable than the spectacle which I beheld. In this object, or rather in its upper end, called the head, and which from without looks like anything else, I saw nothing less than the world itself ; I saw the immensity of space in which all is contained, the immensity of time in which everything moves, and therewith the prodigious variety of objects that fill both space and time; but, what is most astounding, I saw myself coming and going! That is what I discovered in this object that was barely larger than a large fruit; in this object which the headsman can dissever with a single blow, and that, too, in such wise as to plunge into sudden and eternal night the whole of the world that it contains. And the amusing part of it all is, that if objects of this sort did not sprout like mushrooms, continuously prepared to receive a universe that is ever ready to subside into chaos, and did not give and take like a ball the great idea (Vorstellung) which is identical in each, and of which the identity is expressed with the word objectivity, the world would no longer exist."

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* Arthur Schopenhauer. Von ihm Ueber ihn. Frauenstädt.

Schopenhauer was not far from agreeing with Berkeley that the world is a phantasmagoria, a transformation-scene existing in fancy, or, as the Brahmins declared, a mirage evoked for the entertainment of the Supreme. The source and origin of the exterior world lay in the representative faculty which creates it and with which it disappears. Matter, according to him, is a lie that is truth; it is not an illusion, it is correlative with the intelligence; the two rise and fall together; separated, they could not exist; one is a reflection of the other. Properly speaking, they are the same thing examined from different points. But what is this same thing? Schopenhauer answers with a word, It is Will.

This Will should not be taken to mean the conscious act of a higher Intelligence. It is a force, invariable, identical and equal, of which gravitation, electricity, heat—in fact, every form of activity from the fall of an apple to the founding of a monarchy, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, from the choir of planets to the invisible molecule—is merely a derivative and nothing more. In Nature, it is a blind, unconscious power; in man, it is the foundation of being.

This theory, which Schopenhauer expounded with a great luxuriance of vivid argument, and in a style that is crystal in its clarity, coincides in the aptest manner with the doctrine of evolution. During the early ages of the world's formation, the objectivity of this force was, he says, limited to inferior forms; but when the conflict of chemical forces had ended, and the granite, like a tombstone, covered the combatants, it irrupted in the world of plant and forest. The air, decarbonized, was then prepared for animal life, and the Will's objectivity realized a new form. Fish and crustaceans filled the sea, gigantic reptiles covered the earth, and gradually through innumerable forms, each more perfect than the last, the propulsion ascended to man.

Schopenhauer declined to believe that either here or in another planet a being superior to man could possibly exist; and that for the reason that with enlarged intelligence he would consider life too deplorable to be supported for a moment. As a consequence, the Will's objectivity can ascend no higher. Its latest manifestation is even the final term of its progress, for with it has come the possibility of its denial, the possibility that some day it may be throttled into extinction and choked back into the chaos from which it sprang.

In all the grades of its manifestations, Will, he taught, dispenses with any end or aim. It simply and ceaselessly strives, for striving is its sole nature. But as any hindrance of this striving, through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary aim, is called suffering, and the absence of any obstacle, satisfaction—it follows, if the obstacles it meets outnumber the facilities it encounters, that, having no final end or aim, there can be no end and no measure of suffering.

That pain does outbalance pleasure is a fact too well established to need discussion here. Pain begins with the lowest types of animal life, becomes acute with the nervous system of the vertebrates, increases in proportion to the development of the intelligence; and as intelligence attains distinctness, pain advances with it, until what Mr. Swinburne calls the gift of tears finds its supreme expression in man. And man is not a being to be envied. He is the concretion of a thousand necessities. His life, as Schopenhauer has it, is a fight for existence, with the certainty of defeat in the end; and even when his existence is assured, there comes a struggle with a shadowy burden, an effort to kill time, and a vain attempt to escape ennui.

Nor is ennui a minor evil. It is not every one who can get away from himself. Schopenhauer could, it is true; but in so doing he noted that its ravages depicted on the human countenance an expression of absolute despair, and made beings who love each other as little as men do, seek eagerly the society of each other. In this way, between effort and attainment, the life of man rolls on. The wish is in its nature pain, and satisfaction soon begets satiety. No matter what fortune may have done, no matter what a man may be or what he may possess, pain can never be avoided. Efforts to banish it effect, if successful, only a change of form. It may appear as want or care for the maintenance of life. If this preoccupation be removed, back it comes again in the mask of love, jealousy, hatred or ambition; and if it gain entrance through none of these avatars, it comes as simple boredom, against which we strive as best we may. Even in this latter case, if we get the upper hand, we shall hardly do so, Schopenhauer says, without letting pain in again in one of its earlier forms. And then the dance begins afresh; for life, like a pendulum, swings ever backward and forward between pain and ennui.

The one relief, a relief which at best is momentary and accidental, is in that impersonal contemplation in which the individual is effaced, and only the pure, knowing subject subsists. This condition Schopenhauer praises as the painless state which Epicurus described as the highest good, the bliss of the gods. Therein man is freed from the yoke of Will; the penal servitude of daily life ceases as for a Sabbath; the wheel of

Ixion stands still. The cause of this he was at no loss to explain, and he did so, it may be added, in a manner poetically logical and peculiar to himself.

"Every desire is born of a need, of a privation or of a suffering. When satisfied, it is lulled; but for one that is satisfied, how many are unappeased! Desire, moreover, is of long duration; its exigencies are infinite; while pleasure is brief and narrowly measured. Pleasure, too, is but an apparition that is destined to be succeeded by another. The first is a vanished illusion; the second an illusion that lingers still. Nothing is capable of appeasing Will, nor of permanently arresting it. The best we can do is like the alms tossed to a beggar, which, in preserving his life to-day, prolongs his misery to-morrow. While, then, we are dominated by desires and ruled by Will, so long as we give ourselves up to hopes that delude and fears that alarm, we have neither peace nor happiness. But when an accident, an interior harmony lifting us for the moment from out the torrent of desire, delivers the spirit from the oppression of Will, turns our attention from everything that solicits it, and all things seem as freed from the allurements of hope and personal interest, then repose, vainly pursued, yet ever intangible, comes to us of itself, bearing with open hands the plenitude of the gift of peace."

Contemplation is then an affranchisement. It delivers us for a moment from ourselves; it suspends the activity of Will; and in raising man out of misery into the pure world of ideas, brings him a foretaste of that repose which is the freedom of the non-existent. But the liberation from the trammels of Will which is found in art and disinterested contemplation, is a solace that is momentary and accidental. That which is more desirable is a complete and unfettered freedom. The cause of evil is known ; it is the affirmation of the Will-to-live. The remedy is its denial. The Will affirms itself when, after an acquaintance with life, it persists as much in willing as in the first moment when it was a mere blind necessity. The Will denies itself when it renounces life, when it frees itself through a persistent abdication, and abolishes itself of its own accord.

In this there is no question of suicide. For suicide, far from being a denial of the Will-to-live, is one of its strongest affirmations. The man who takes his own life really wants to live.

What he does not want are the miseries and trials attendant on his particular existence. He abolishes the individual, but not the race. The species continues, and pain with it. To be scientifically annihilated, life should be abolished not only in its suffering, but in its empty pleasures as well. Its entire inanity should be recognized, and the whole root cut once and for all. In explaining in what manner this is to be accomplished, Schopenhauer carried his reader far off into the shadows of the Orient. On the one side is the lethargy of the Rishis ; on the other, the Tauists drugged with opium ; while above all rises the phantasy of the East, the dogma of metempsychosis.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained,* Schopenhauer gives the name of Will to that force which in Indian philosophy is held to resurrect with man across successive lives, and with which the horror of ulterior existence reappears. It is from this nightmare that we are summoned to awake, but in the summons we are told that the awakening can only come with a recognition of the true nature of the dream. The work to be accomplished is therefore less physical than moral. We are not to strangle ourselves in sleep ; we are to rise out of it in meditation.

"In man," Schopenhauer says, "the Will-to-live advances to consciousness, to that point where it can choose between its continuance or abolition. Man is the Saviour. Nature awaits her redemption through him. He is at once the priest and the victim."

If, then, in the succeeding generations the appetite for liberty has been so highly cultivated that a widespread and united compassion is felt for all things, then through continence absolute and universal, that condition will be produced in which subject and object disappear, and—the sigh of the egotist Will once choked thereby into a death-rattle—the world, delivered from pain, will pass into that peace which passeth all understanding, into the Prajna-Paramita, the "beyond all knowledge," the Buddhist goal where nothing is.

"It is this," Schopenhauer exclaims in his concluding paragraph, " it is this that the Hindus have expressed in the empty terms of Nirvâna and re-absorption in Brahm. I am, of course, aware that what remains after the abolition of the Will, is without effect on those in whom it still works. But to those in whom it has been crushed, what is this world of ours, with its suns and stellar systems ? *Nothing.*"

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* The Philosophy of Disenchantment. Belford, Clarke & Co.

Among thinking people, Schopenhauer's admirers are to-day sufficiently frequent to defy enumeration. The theory of force, which was his chief originality, has found few serious adherents ; fewer still are they who pin any faith to his plan for the extinction of humanity ; it is his classic insistance on the immedicable misery of life, it is the pessimism which he expounded, but which was no more his own invention than is atheism, that has multiplied the translations and editions of his works. For thirty years these works were unnoticed. But Schopenhauer, who was very blithe in his misanthropy, snapped his fingers at the inattention of the public ; he knew that Time, who is at least a gentleman, would bring him his due unasked. " My death," he said, " will be a canonization, the extreme unction, a baptism." Yet before he died, fame and honors came and found him unsurprised. " Time has brought his roses at last," he said. " But see," he added, touching his silvered hair, " they are white."

The most prominent of Schopenhauer's successors is Dr. Eduard von Hartmann. On many points this gentleman separates widely from the master. In matters ontological and teleological there is a variance that is noticeably large. But their pessimism is the same ; if any difference is discernable, it is merely in this, that the tone of the later comer has gained from recent science the steadiness and assurance that comes of broader knowledge.

Dr. von Hartmann, who sits at the head of contemporary metaphysicians, is a transcendental realist. His doctrine is a pantheism, or, as he prefers to call it, a monism, in which nihilism and idealism are found in equal parts, and one which has given to Hegelism a new and unexpected activity. Nature to him is truly divine ; but the misery of existence is irremediable, or at least will continue to be so until advancing science has taught in what way the clamor of life may be quelled. That which the Hindu termed Atma, that which Spinoza designated as Substance—in short, the universal and indetectable force which has made all things what they are, is called by him the Unconscious. The Unconscious is sovereignly wise, and the world is admirable in every respect ; it is existence that is irreclaimable in its misery.

The originality of this philosophy consists in a theory of optimistic evolution as counterbalanced by a pessimistic analysis of life ; but the originality is not lost in its conclusion, in which it is argued that, as the world's progressus tends neither to universal nor individual happiness, the great aim of science should be to emancipate man from a love of life, and in this wise lead the world back to chaos. The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own. It is to our advantage not to live ; it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into a belief that life is a pleasant thing well worth the living. The instincts within us are the different forms beneath which the desire to live is at work, and with which the Unconscious moulds man to its profit. Hence the energy witlessly expended for the protection of an existence which is but the right to suffer ; hence the erroneous idea which is formed of the happiness derivable from life ; and hence, too, the modification of past disenchantments through the influence of fresh and newer hopes. But when in the old age of the world, when humanity has divested itself of the belief that happiness is obtainable in this life, when it has lost all faith in the promise of another —in fact, when every illusion has been dissipated, when hope, love, ambition and gold are recognized as chimeras, or at least as incentives to activity which cause more pain than pleasure —then, science aiding, humanity will perform its own execution, and Time at last will cease to be.

Such is Dr. von Hartmann's conception of life, and such is the idea he has formed of the destiny of the world. In regard to the latter, nothing need now be said ; but it may be noted that to the general public his theory of pleasure and pain has not seemed wholly satisfactory. There have been many attempts to confute his pessimism, and many attempts to show that life, so far from being immedicable in its misery, is a well-spring of delight. And to many, doubtless, it has so seemed. But a point of view is not an argument. Whether life is held to be valuable, or whether it is held to be valueless, its nature in either case remains unchanged. To the obtuse it is usually the one ; to the sensitive it is generally the other. But to the impersonal observer, the disinterested witness, to him who looks back through the shudders of history, and who gazes into a future that will be as inexplicable as the past, to him who feels some sympathy for the suffering, some compassion for the distressed and some pity for those in pain, life seldom seems other than an immense, an unnecessary affliction.

Why, asked Voltaire, with that leer which de Musset has made immortal, Why is there anything ? An answer often given to this question is, that the ultimate reason of things is discoverable only in matter and motion. In theological circles the advocates of this explanation are not in good repute. In polite society it is considered as bad form to hold such theories as it is to carve salad or guillotine asparagus. In fact, beyond the jurisdiction of the scientific world the materialist has a bad name. The pantheist, *passe encore.* Pantheism is vague and poetic, and apprehended with difficulty. But the materialist brings a different guitar. His conception of the universe demands but little study to seem tolerably clear. Besides, in his heart he seems to say, There is no God, and the appearance of that inward speech is not compatible with good manners. Society has a stronger leaning to affirmations than to negations; in fact as Rousseau has pointed out, the average intellect prefers to be wrong in its belief than to have none at all. The materialist, standing as he does in opposition to theological tenets, is therefore eyed askant, and what is more, is called an atheist when his back is turned.

Parenthetically it may be noted that the historical definition of an atheist is a citizen who refuses to worship the gods which the authorities of the state have appointed as worthy of worship. In modern parlance the word has acquired a sharper tone, and is generally used in reference to whomso disbelieves in the supernatural. In the coming centuries it is possible that it will cease to be a term of reproach. Indeed, its rehabilitation has in certain quarters already begun. But be this as it may, there are still few thinkers who hear themselves called atheists without experiencing some bewilderment. "Tell a philosopher," Heine said, "that his theories are atheistic, and he will be as much surprised as would a geometrician on learning that his triangles were red."

The denomination is as impertinent to the views of the one, as the color is to the triangles of the other. Not every one, however, has had the privilege of sitting at Heine's feet, and the expression continues to be flung, with more or less vigor, at all systems of rationalistic thought, though at none more virulently than at materialism.

As has been hinted in earlier chapters, materialism is as old as philosophy itself. In India, it was a precursor of Buddhism ; in China, it antedates Laou-tze. In classic antiquity, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius were among its advocates. Arrested by Christianity, it was imprisoned all through the middle ages ; but when, over a century ago, it at last escaped, thrones and altars fell before it. It is, however, only within recent years that materialism received the endorsements of science. The standard-bearer of this movement, a movement all the more significant in that it was a reaction against Hegelian abstractions, was Moleschott. His principal work, the *Krieslauf des Lebens*, awoke Germany from her stupor. It was attacked, applauded and abused. The thinking world, which since Hegel's death had been twirling its thumbs, turned toward it expectant eyes. The hypothesis of an indefinite circulation of matter passing ceaselessly from life to death and from death to life, was old enough to seem quite new, and the axiom, Without force, no matter ; without matter, no force, was listened to with grave attention.

The *Kreislauf des Lebens* inspired any number of affiliated works. Vogt, Lowenthal, Czolbe and Rudolphe Wagner made themselves prominent in its defence. Old-fashioned methods were abandoned. Psychology was put aside. Since there was no psyche, of what use could it be? Metaphysics was relegated to the night from which it had sprung. Modern materialism determined to support its dogmas with the sciences which are called exact. And Büchner, mailed with astronomy, chemistry, geology, physiology and natural history, produced in *Kraft und Stoff* the text-book of the new belief. Thereafter it only needed a hymnal to be complete. The deficiency has been supplied by Richepin's *Blasphèmes*.

The first principle of scientific materialism is the inseparability of matter and force. Matter is not a vague substance on which force grapples from without. In the absence of the one, the other is inconceivable, save perhaps by way of hypothesis. Without force, matter would enter at once into a formless void. Without matter, force would fade into a region of pure abstractions. Endeavor, for instance, to represent matter without force, that is, without the power of cohesion or affinity, attraction or repulsion, and, presto! the very idea of matter disappears. In like measure, an effort to represent force without matter results in a similar dénouement.

The second principle is that force and matter are indestructible. There are transformations, there are varieties in their manifestations, but in the sum of their effects the intensity is undiminished. Burn a log of wood, and the scales of a chemist will show that not a particle of matter has been destroyed. "Annihilate a particle of matter," said Spinoza, "and the world will crumble." Not an atom can lose itself in immensity, and to immensity not an atom can be added. The flux and reflux of things show beneath incessant variations the same persistent and invariable aggregate. There is a circulation of materials of which each fortuitous combination has its beginning and its end, but in some one form or another the materials meet again and interconnect anew.

As with matter, so with force. What disappears on one side re-appears on another. Friction produces fire, motion is obtained by steam. The amount of movement expended is recovered in the amount of heat; the amount of heat dissipated is recovered in the amount of motion. Force, then, like matter, is immortal. It may be transformed, but never destroyed. From these considerations, materialism concludes that, as that which is indestructible can have had no beginning, matter and force cannot have been created. Ex nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti. The transformation of something into nothing is as inconceivable, says Lebon, as is the creation of something from nothing. And Taine adds, "There is nothing but matter and motion. Space is the infinity of matter, as time is the eternity of motion." Matter and force are, then, eternal. But eternity is shared alone by them. Dust we are, to dust we shall return.

Matter and force being eternal, their laws are immutable. Were it otherwise, the properties of matter would change, and on the tablets of experience no change is recorded. Nature has never varied. Her laws are the mechanical relation of forces which, in disclosing no trace of a higher Will, turn superstition into a vagabond that has not where to lay its head. Time, in which all things unroll, is the great, the one creator.

The novelty of modern materialism, a novelty which distinguishes it from other systems, is that it claims to rest its affirmations on a basis which is strictly scientific. Its explanation of the universe by means of the action of natural forces, its reduction of natural forces to the variable modes of the force inherent in nature, are indeed supported by physics, chemistry and physiology. But into certain regions that it attempts to penetrate, it has not been preceded by any avant-courier that at all resembles exact knowledge.

The hypothesis that the attraction of all ponderable matter which maintains the planets in their orbits, must at one time have been in a condition to mould the universe from the cosmic dust spread through space, is the starting-point of materialistic cosmogony. This hypothesis, hazarded by Kant, signed by Laplace and attested by Herschel, is crowned by another, which is as opulent in vistas as is the retrospect of the first. It is to the effect that the earth, like her lost satellite whose fragments have deluged the globe, will in turn be disembowelled and tossed through space. Historically these hypotheses are not new. Entertaining as the conjunction may appear, they are part of Buddhist lore. But they are a part of Buddhism which is as vague as it is poetic. In materialism, if there is less vagueness, there is also less poetry. Materialism is nothing if not matter-of-fact. Starting, then, from the hypothesis that a mass of cosmic matter originally filled the space which our planetary system occupies, and that, in accordance with the laws of gravitation which draw the parts to the centre, the sun was formed by the gradual concentration of its elements, it is not difficult to fancy a fragment of nebulosity detached from the centre and shot through space, developing first in a collection of gases, then into molecules that the rotatory movement fused and ignited, and which in cooling formed a crust above an interior furnace. This flight of fancy accomplished, it is yet easier to imagine the condensation of vapors into rain, the growth of plants and the birth of the monera from which man descends.

And life? Is it then, as Marcus Aurelius in his sceptred melancholy suggested, but a halt between two eternities? Bah! Away with phrases! A bottle containing carbonate of ammonia, chloride of potassium, phosphate of soda, chalk, magnesia, sulphuric acid and silex, is life in its most ideal, in its completest expression.

Some sixty million years ago, when primitive man blinked at a brighter sky than ours, he thought of the archeolithic ape, if he thought at all, as an inferior animal. And, indeed, there could have been little in common between the shuddering orang-outang and the speechless yet ferocious troglodyte who with an uprooted tree crushed the skull of a lion and then sucked the fuming brain.

The link between the two was as undiscernible to him as to the theologian of to-day. And yet, as Huxley has pointed out, the anatomical difference between man and a gorilla is less than between a gorilla and an inferior ape. And, to pursue the same line of argument, the difference between a Shakespeare and a savage is infinitely greater than between a savage and a brute. Why, a magpie is cleverer than the aboriginal Australian; but at the same time the cleverness of a magpie is not a proof of the evolution of man.

The old coquette, this world of ours, conceals her age, but her biography is under our feet. As we read backwards through it, her years mount up into ten hundred millions. The date of that initial catastrophe, her birth, is yet unreached; but we know enough of her past to be sure that it has been long enough and sufficiently immoral for many things to happen of which our philosophy may dream though it cannot prove. Among these things are spontaneous generation and the descent of man. When these are substantiated, materialism will have proved its claims; its sway will be undisputed; but until then, its arguments have as much evidential value as so many astrogals.

In attempting to explain the organic by the inorganic, the main argument was the alleged birth of insects in putrefied matter. This argument was routed by Redi, who enveloped some meat in a light gauze, on which, a little later, eggs were found to have been deposited by passing flies, and at once the mystery was explained. The discovery of the microscope brought new hopes to the materialists. The animalculæ which were found in certain infusions appeared to have been produced without the assistance of antecedent germs. The falsity of this conclusion was demonstrated by Schwann, and the hypothesis of abiogenesis was abandoned, until Pouchet brought it again into fashion. But experiments recently made by M. Pasteur contradict those made by Pouchet; and so far as contemporary science is competent to give a decision, the arguments of the anti-vitalists are inadequate to support their case.

But though the theory of spontaneous generation must be abandoned, at least for the moment, the materialists are by no means at their wits'-end. Life has arisen in some manner, and why not from the interaction of molecular forces?

One of the most charming hypotheses on this subject was advanced a few years ago by Sir William Thomson. To this gentleman, life or perhaps it would be better to say a germ potentially alive, that is, having within itself the tendency to assume a definite living form, first visited the earth in a meteor. If it is proper to assume that meteors are fragments of shattered and once peopled worlds, it may be assumed with equal propriety that some of these fragments are partially intact. The moment, then, that it is admitted that beside our own there are a number of life-supporting worlds and that other worlds have existed in anterior epochs, it would not seem improbable that germ-bearing meteors have moved and do still move through space. As a consequence, any germ-bearing meteor which fell upon the earth during the time when it was destitute of life may have been the unconscious cause of the failure which we are now enjoying.

Dr. Zoellner, a German scientist trained in all the illiberalities of official optimism, attempted to refute this hypothesis on the ground that when a meteor enters our atmosphere, the friction of the air makes it incandescent and consequently incapable of preserving and transporting any germ, however potentially alive. To this refutation Helmholtz made answer, that only the surface of meteors becomes heated, and that germs might readily remain unharmed in interior crevices, or if on the surface might on reaching our atmosphere be blown from their conveyance by the wind, and that, too, before the heat was great enough to cause their destruction. But if this solution be accepted, the origin of life on other planets remains still to be explained. It may be then, as Helmholtz has suggested, that life is co-eternal with matter, and its germs, transported from one planet to another, develop wherever they find a propitious spot. But this, too, is merely an hypothesis, and one that has not the slightest evidence in its favor. The enigma of life is for the present a part of the unknowable. But whether it will always remain so is another question. The differences which once were supposed to constitute a barrier between the vertebrate and the non-vertebrate no longer exist. The modifications by which the quadrupedal reptile became a bipedal bird have been clearly shown. Forty years ago, there was no evidence that such a demonstration would ever be made. Forty years hence, who shall say but that the missing link may be discovered, or the manufacture of the organic from the inorganic begun ? As Professor Huxley has hinted, no one who has watched the gradual development of a complicated animal from the protoplasm which constitutes the egg of a frog or a hen, will deny that a similar evolution of the whole animal world from a like foundation is at least within the bounds of possibility.

Of the various creeds which man has been pleased to invent, the youngest is positivism. The position which this system of thought has acquired is due to its own merit. It cannot, like pantheism, look back through the terraces of time and claim the quarterings of race. Nor can it, like materialism, bedeck itself with Greek insignia. Among philosophies, positivism is a parvenu. As such, it is viewed with scorn, enthusiasm and indifference.

Positivism made its début a little over forty years ago. Its name was its fortune. There was in the sound of it an invitation to nearer acquaintance. But when the acquaintance was made, the name was found to partake of the nature of a lure. Relativism, if less attractive, would have been a clearer description. For positivism, if positive at all, is positive that there is nothing positive. Its sponsor was Auguste Comte.

If the realization of the ambitions of youth may be regarded as the criterion of a successful career, the life of this thinker cannot be considered a failure. At a comparatively early age the outlines of his doctrine appear to have been clearly defined. The outlines sprang of a suggestion of Saint-Simon, who was wont to declare that all knowledge should be co-ordinated into one vast and comprehensive synthesis, but their development was accomplished without material indebtedness. In synthetizing knowledge into a single system of thought, Comte proposed nothing less than the abolishment of theology and metaphysics, and the re-organization of the occident through a philosophy of his own manufacture. In 1842, the sixth and last volume of this philosophy was given to the public, and with it the knell of all religions was supposed to have been rung. Ten years later, to the utter bewilderment of his disciples, Comte proclaimed the necessity of founding a new religion, of which the sovereign pontiff was to be none other than himself.

In an earlier paragraph it has been hinted that positivism is positive that there is nothing positive, a phrase which, from a Comtist stand-point, may be taken to mean that the essence of things escapes us. We can understand the interconnection of facts—that is, their direct antecedents and immediate sequences—but the initial causes and ultimate results are inaccessible to the intellect. In a word, there is nothing except material phenomena and the laws thereof. As this principle is the pivot on which the entire philosophy turns, a momentary examination may not be without benefit.

Many a sceptic has filled his hours in showing that things are not what they seem, but none of them, however revolutionary, has disputed the reality of consciousness, or denied the phenomena that are manifest in thought, feeling and volition. In affirming, therefore, that the objects apprehended by the senses are the only apprehensible phenomena, positivism apparently displays a radicalism which is as audacious as it is novel. It is of course possible and even proper to regard thought, feeling and volition as products of the body, but it would be a misuse of language to assert that they are material phenomena; and, as positivism's first tenet is that there is nothing except material phenomena, it would seem that, like any other screw, the before-mentioned pivot is loose. On the other hand, it may be objected that the phenomena called internal are unobservable, and that any attempt to distinguish them from their external elements results merely in demonstrating the vainness of the endeavor. If this view be accepted, positivism is found less rickety than it first appeared, and the introductory statement may be welcomed at once and without further hesitation.

If, then, as positivism asserts, the essence of things escapes us, any speculation on the origin and purpose of the world is profitless. On such and kindred subjects the mind should be without conjecture. It is only natural that man should have been on the *qui vive* in his effort to discover efficient and final causes, but his effort has never been successful. "If God did not exist," said Voltaire, "the world would have invented him." "Which," a wit replied, "is precisely what the world has done."

The mobility of phenomena, the fugitiveness of sensations, the impermanency of the actual, the real which each moment ends and begins anew, have, in all ages, incited to a knowledge of the unknowable. But the knowledge has not been obtained, and it was in view of the impracticability of the attempt that Comte ventured to suggest what may be termed a middle course. In the effort to pierce the impenetrable, humanity, he said, has passed and is still passing through certain stages of thought which correspond to those of childhood, adolescence and maturity. The first is the age of theology; the second, of metaphysics; and the third, of science. This doctrine, which is known as the law of the three states, conveys the suggestion alluded to, together with a theory which is as liberal as the sea. It runs somewhat as follows:

In the infancy of thought, Nature is dowered with the same illusions to which man himself is subjected. Every object is animated, and the government of the universe is ascribed, not to invariable laws, but to sentient and intelligent beings. In everything that occurs is seen the manifestation of a direct intention, and each particular event is attributed to forces which are but the aggrandizements of those of man. In the advance of thought, these forces, whose prowess is discernible in effects which man is impotent to produce, become the gods, invisible yet multitudinous. Then, gradually, as arises the capacity of co-ordinating phenomena into separate groups, the number of divinities diminishes, until, through processes of generalization, they are reduced to one, and behold, man has passed out of fetishism into polytheism, and from thence to a belief in a unique Creator.

But there is a further advance of thought, and in its train comes the suggestion that the uniformity noticeable in the universe is incompatible with the theory of an arbitrary Will. The initial conceptions are dismissed, the celestial and inaccessible reason of things is banished, and realized abstractions are accepted instead. Nature is governed, not by an external power, but by internal and occult qualities. The reign of dryads and nymphs is passed, and their place is usurped by entities, by theories which deal with a plastic force and a vital principle. This is the second, or metaphysical state, which is of advantage in being a negation of the first and a preparation for the third, which latter is reached when men, weary of explanations that explain nothing, discover that what is necessary for the mind is not obligatory for things, and that a cause which is conceived by the one need not have a place among the others. Such is the positive, or scientific state of mind, to which, according to Comte, all humanity tends; and such, too, is the middle course which he recommended to thoughtful and decorous persons.

Stripped of its verbal husks, the law of the three states may be reduced to a truism. In seeking the reason of things, men look first above, then within, and finally confess themselves vanquished.

The law of the three states which Stuart Mill called the backbone of the entire philosophy, but which is not particularly new nor particularly convincing—not new, because sketched by Kant in outline, and not convincing, because Comte himself declined to be bound by it—is supplemented by a classification of sciences from out of which was drawn a fresh one, called sociology.

In the study of facts, the interpretation of the experience which is written between the lines of history, sociology was to be the lever in the substitution of science for religion. It was to terminate the conflict between theology, which demands order without progress, and metaphysics, which aims at progress and turns its back on order. It was to arrest the retrogression of the one, and still the anarchy of the other. In the government of life it was to replace religion with science, and give to intelligence the guiding-strings of the world.

In mapping this programme, Comte fancied that sociology could be raised to the level of an exact science, and that through its influence all enlightened nations would join hands in the profession of identical doctrines. In the utopias in which he then lost himself, he planned a reorganization of society on a basis which, if suggestive of Plato's Republic, is otherwise without value or allurement. There is, he pointed out, no such thing as liberalism in astronomy, physics or chemistry ; and if it be otherwise in ethics and politics, it is because neither of them possess established principles. When they acquire them, as they will do when positivism begins its sway, the force of public opinion will disappear. A corporation of philosophers, salaried by the State and treated with the greatest respect, will have the entire charge of education, together with the right to counsel and direct each citizen in his private and public life, and enjoy, moreover, such an amount of authority over students and thinkers as will enable them to prevent the latter from squandering their time and knowledge in speculations that are valueless to humanity, and oblige them to apply themselves to such investigations as may be deemed most important to general prosperity. The decrees which the corporation may formulate are not to be questioned, and, as the idea of the sovereignty of the people is one of the most pernicious that civilization has advanced, but slight attention will be paid to the inclinations of the masses. In each nation there will be a governing body and a body governed, in which latter the citizen will occupy the position for which his abilities have fitted him. Thereafter religion and metaphysics will disappear. Scientific dissidence will be effaced, and an invariable and uniform political dogma will at last be accepted by united and peaceful nations.

To the clear-headed and matter-of-fact audience which was Comte's, theories such as these were viewed with suspicion. The idea that there is no God had in it nothing that was alarming; the prophecy of the overthrow of superstition and the general adoption of positivist tenets seemed not unreasonable; the prohibition against idle speculations and the complimentary recommendation to treat only with the real were received with open favor; but the sturdiest could not look without terror on a future governed by philosophers.

When this horizon was disclosed, it is probable that Comte had already entered into what is known as his pathological period. In earlier years he suddenly lost his reason, and as suddenly recovered it. The border-lands of genius and insanity are never well defined, and it is not unlikely that before the *Cours de philosophie positive* was completed, something of that of which he had too much, something of that weight of thought which obscures the vision and tips the scales of common-sense, was again at work, though this time more dumbly and dimly than before. Thereafter the champion of the actual who had wished to lead God to the frontiers, and there thank him kindly for his provisory services, lapsed into a morbid mysticism. The sceptre of the world which he had given to intellect was transferred to sentiment. It was for the heart to rule and for the intellect to obey.

The *Philosophie politique*, in which his ideas on this subject are conveyed, shows, even amid the luxuriance of luminous thought, the same evidence of mental decadence as is noticeable in Kant's *Kritik der Practischen Vernunft*. Both belong to the senilia of great minds. During the year that intervened between its appearance and the publication of his chief work, Comte conceived what his biographers term a platonic affection for a lady whose influence over him was of such a nature, that, aided by the historical meditations in which his life had been passed, he dreamed of a happiness that should be universal, and of a world that should be ruled, not by a corporation of salaried philosophers, but by love in its purest and most disinterested form.

The pompous Religion of Humanity which he then evolved, and which has no more connection with positivism than an opera-bouffe has with logarithms, saddened the boldest among his adherents. It found adepts—what vagary has not? The altruism which it inculcated is certainly not without charm; but the deification of humanity past and future, the transformation of earth into a fetish, space into fate and numbers into virtues, are among the most deplorable instances of the aberrations of genius. After shutting out the unknowable, the door was opened to superstition; after banishing metaphysics, sentiment was beckoned in to occupy its place; religion was superseded by idolatry; and the heavens, that no longer told of the glory of God, were set ablaze with the memories of great men.

In its uncorrupted form, positivism is a modification of materialism. Among theologians there is a disposition to regard both in the same light. But no positivist likes to be called a materialist. He shows as much displeasure at the term as he would were he called a theist or a pantheist. And, indeed, the lines of demarcation, if not always broad, are none the less apparent. At the origin of things, theism places a personal and infinite Being; pantheism sees in all things the immanency of a Being that is infinite but impersonal; and materialism asserts that the cause of all things lies in the arrangement and properties of force and matter. Positivism, on the other hand, knows nothing of an infinite Being, whether personal or impersonal; in the spheres that are inaccessible to it, it recognizes nothing but matter and the properties of matter; but, unlike mateialism, it draws no conclusions. According to Littré, positivism is simply a methodical, hierarchic arrangement of the general facts of science, excluding every subjective element, and accepting nothing that is not drawn from experience.

A positivist, moreover, shows no evidence of delight at being called an atheist. As Littré has described him, an atheist is in a certain measure a theologian. He is not entirely emancipated. He has his explanations of things; he knows how they began. He believes in the chance clash of atoms, or in occult forces, or in a first cause. Of all this the positivist knows nothing. He ignores productive atoms as well as a creating and ordaining force. But whoso thinks that history follows a development that is obedient to a natural law—whoso thinks that the origin of societies, the establishment or mutation of religion, the founding of empires, cities, castes, aristocracies, governments, oracles, prophecies, revelations, theologies, arts and industries, are due, one and all, to the faculties of man—whoso accepts this view has fully accomplished the cycle of mental emancipation. The moment that he leaves no place for the supernatural either in the organic or the inorganic, either among cosmic phenomena or among those of history, that moment he passes initiate into the brotherhood of positivism.

The charm of positivism is the matter-of-fact position which it assumes before the insolvable. If it cuts no old knots, it brings no new tangles. It treats metaphysics with the respect which is due to all that is venerable ; in the presence of religion it puts the dialectic broadsword softly back in its sheath. It leaves the great query where it found it. And in this is its wisdom ; its agnosticism is its strength. Clamor as we may, there is no answer to our whys and wherefores. There is in us, about and beyond us, an enigma that will defy the Champollions of the future as it has routed the seers of the past. The reason of things lies beyond the sphere of knowledge, and the nearest approach that can be made is in a suspicion that all is relative.

CHAPTER VI.

A POET'S VERDICT.

THERE have been days in the history of the world when the poet was regarded with respect that approached veneration. He was considered the oracle of the gods, and his voice was listened to with reverence. This pleasant custom has fallen into disuse. The gods have disappeared and carried the divine afflatus with them. In an age like the present, the demand for poets is slight. Their titles have been examined, and it has been found that to be useless is their one patent of nobility. As a consequence, the poet's vocation has seemed to many a synonym of the ridiculous. And yet, as Gautier with a charming affectation of naïveté remarked, an inability to write in verse can scarcely be considered as constituting a special talent. But there is another inconvenience: a poet is never rightly appreciated save by his peers; and as his peers are infrequent, the majesty which resides within him often lacks the trumpetings of a herald. Then, too, in an era of remorseless activity, it is only quiet people who live in the country that find leisure to listen to the footfalls of the Muse. For the benefit of such as they, verse may be divided into three broad classes: that which pleases the author's enemies, that which pleases the author's contemporaries, and that which passes unobserved to pleasure the idlesse of posterity. Of these classes, the verse of Leconte de Lisle belongs to the third.

Any one who has taken an interest in French literature during the last decade can hardly have failed to notice the number of new writers that have come into being, and more particularly the inferiority of their work. In explanation of this surge of mediocrity, many theories might be advanced ; but perhaps the most palpable would be that the literature of our expiring century, after having passed from youth to virility, has begun to experience the maladies and garrulities of old age. But however the subject may be viewed, it is at least evident that the paladins of 1830, who were as revolutionary in literature as their ancestors were in religion, have passed away, and also that their methods have so far disappeared with them that the day before yesterday Victor Hugo seemed like a living anachronism. Readers latterly have refused to be interested in the phantasies of the romantics, and perhaps their pages were a trifle over-colored ; but their excuse lay in the fact that literature had become impoverished through conventionalities ; there were synonyms instead of words ; and in place of ample vocabularies there were small niceties of expression. All this the romantics did away with. They breathed health and vigor into an enervated dictionary, and startled Europe with the opulence of their adjectives.

It was in those victorious days that Gautier threw aside his brush and went in a famous red waistcoat to guy the philistines at the birth-night of Hernani. In graver years Gautier complained that in the eyes of the bourgeois he had never ceased to wear that crimson garment, and somehow, save among the liberal few, he has always been looked upon more or less askant. It has been said that it was his purpose to seek the hazardous and display it, but it must be admitted that what he had to say he told with a grace such as had been seldom heard before. He chose his words for their color, for their aroma, as one may say ; and it is related that he objected now and then to an accent because it took away something from the charm which the grouping of certain letters otherwise conveyed.

Through those days, too, Alfred de Musset passed with the indolence of a dissolute young god. He joined the ranks of the romantics, as did all men of talent, but he joined them more as an amateur than a professional : the familiar ballad in which the moon is represented as suspended over a steeple like a dot over an *i*, opened for him the doors of the cénacle without even giving him the trouble to knock. In a subsequent poem he asked forgiveness for that misdeed ; and though he boasted that his Muse went bare of foot like Truth, she might still have been pictured as shod with buskins of gold.

Another of the heroes of this epoch was Alfred de Vigny. Some one has said that the face of a poet is never known until years and sorrow have marred its original beauty; but to this rule de Vigny was an exception. He was famous when quite young, and his bust, as it stands to-day in the lobby of the Théâtre Français, arrests the attention even of the indifferent. At the time to which allusion is made, he mingled but little with his fellows, appearing only when the moral support of his presence was needed. In later years, in spite of his talent, his beauty and his position, de Vigny, devoured by melancholy, turned his back entirely upon the world, and retired into what Sainte-Beuve has termed his *tour d'ivoire.*

In the wake of these poets came the familiar figure of Charles Baudelaire. Recently he has been described as having had the appearance of a delicate prelate, a trifle depraved. This description might be suggested by the mere reading of his verse. In the work of every poet there is something of the individual, and it is probable that few have studied the chiselled lines which he worked up with even a shrewder eye for the Satanic than that which was given to Edgar Poe, without calling up some such picture of their author. Baudelaire entered the ranks when the battle was won, but nevertheless he managed to flaunt a standard that has troubled the vision of many an after-comer.

So swiftly does time go by, that of these writers little more than tradition now remains. In the eyes of contemporary critics, de Musset is a dislocator of Alexandrines, de Vigny is a memory, Baudelaire a curiosity, and Gautier a model. Yet each of them left a legacy that is still disputed. From de Musset descends the gift of eloquence; in Baudelaire's testament is the heirloom of lurid effect; de Vigny has devised his morbidity; while Gautier's bequest is perfection in form. Taken together, they were the poetic embodiment of the agitation of which Voltaire, Holbach and Diderot were the heralds. "Je ne crois pas, ô Christ, à ta parole sainte," cried de Musset, and the cry was echoed by his fellow-workers.

In a literary sense, these poets were, on their first appearance, very generally looked upon as impertinent innovators, and in their assault upon the classicists they caused much rage and rhetoric. Viewed at this distance, the disturbance seems unnecessary; for, after all, what is romanticism but the art of pleasing one's contemporaries, and what is classicism but the art which delighted earlier generations? Turn about is always fair play. In a little while Hugo will be a classic, precisely as Racine is beginning to be considered a romantic. But be this as it may, the seething passion which in 1830 seemed more alluring than the chill restrictions of former years, gradually disappeared, and its place was taken by the serene impassibility of another group of poets who were called the Parnassians.

The advent of this new school was necessarily less boisterous than that of their predecessors: for that matter, they excited more ridicule than anger; and it is related that a cabman in a street row, after having called his adversary everything that was unpleasant, hurled at him with withering contempt as last and supreme reproach, the unavengeable insult, "*Parnassien, va!*"

Of the poets who made up this group, the better known are MM. Sully-Prudhomme and François Coppée. Sully-Prudhomme is an avowed materialist and frankly pessimistic. His poems may be summarized as a series of very delicate impressions intermingled with a fair amount of philosophic suggestion. His repertory is not extensive. It consists in three or four themes and their variations—such, for instance, as the familiar aspiration toward the infinite, man's sentiment of nothingness before the immensity of the universe, the agony of doubt, and the usual communion with Nature. The limits of this range do not necessarily imply a lack of ability. The art in any form of verse consists merely in the skill with which one or more of half-a-dozen old-fashioned sentiments is rendered, and in this respect the work of Sully-Prudhomme is generally irreproachable. In his treatment of purely personal dramas, the mental and moral combats which we all of us wage with ourselves, he leaves little to be desired, and it would be difficult to mention a poet who has entered more deeply than he into the psychological developments of the century. For all this he has received much praise, and if his verse is ever criticised, it is because it is at times a trifle vague. Sully-Prudhomme has been as honestly puzzled by the discord between the real and the ideal as any writer of his class; but in his perplexity his thought floats away to uncertain heights, and there disappears with a flutter of restless inquietude. To put the matter briefly, Sully-Prudhomme very often seems as though he were about to say something well worth the telling, but before he has gotten it safely on paper the force of the idea has vanished.

François Coppée is another of the dispersed Parnassians. His negations, if more carefully veiled than those of Sully-Prudhomme, are none the less discernible. He is at times dramatic, but his sadness is always insistent. To be sad is admittedly the poet's privilege ; yet to be simply sad, and to express such a state of being as who should say, "I hunger" or "I thirst," is not necessarily poetic ; rather is it commonplace. To be worth the telling, grief should express a thought that is neither humdrum nor familiar ; it should lay bare fresh possibilities or set new limits to resignation : if it does not do this, then, however readily the tears may flow, however gracefully the grief be told, it is what a boulevardier would call *le vieux jeu*—the old story, of which we are most of us thoroughly tired. It is this old story that M. Coppée re-tells ; and though the telling is managed with much refinement, it is impossible to call it novel. M. Coppée has also much to say about his boredom. Boredom, however, is not a flexible topic ; indeed, unless it is handled with unusual dexterity, there is a danger that the reader will find it even more irritating than the writer, and thereupon withdraw his attention and support. Boredom also is more of a fine art than is generally supposed, and not to every one is it given to disentangle original ideas from that which is flat and unprofitable. Leopardi and Baudelaire have done so, it is true; but between them they managed to throttle the subject and share the booty. For a later comer like M. Coppeé, nothing was left.

MM. Prudhomme and Coppée have both sat at the feet of Leconte de Lisle. To-day they are better known than he, but neither of them has ventured to rate his work above that of the master. In this modesty much good taste is shown. He has none of their faults, and, moreover, he has genius, which both of them lack. In comparison with him they are as concettists to Dante.

Laconte de Lisle is perhaps the most perfect poet of France. It is he who is the rightful heir to the legacies of the romantics, and these possessions he has rounded and improved with an erudition which embraces history, philology, archæology, anthropology, and doubtless much more beside. In spite of this, or perhaps on that account, his literary luggage is scant. He has translated a few ancient authors, written a drama or two, and published three compact volumes of verse. In speaking of the latter, it is difficult to describe them in a phrase, though this perhaps may be accomplished in saying that they do not contain a commonplace line. The three volumes are respectively entitled, *Poèmes antiques*, *Poèmes barbares*, and *Poèmes tragiques*. The first division, which is largely made up of Vedic hymns and Greek idyls, is one in which the characteristics of the author are best displayed, and in color and yet with such austerity that the reader shudders as he reads and admires as he shudders. Beside them, the declamations of that dissolute Greuze of literàture, Alfred de Musset, sound cracked and thin—like a man's laughter, as Mr. Swinburne has it, heard in hell.

The *Poèmes tragiques* are not as satisfactory as are the others. They are made up of a dozen or more recitals which have much to do with the shedding of blood, a few ballads, villanelles, pantoums and sestines, together with a bar or two of pure harmony.

Leconte de Lisle is the Goya of verse, and yet, through a delicious contradiction, one of the most noteworthy characteristics of his work is its constant evocation and suggestion of the beautiful. No other modern poet, except perhaps Mr. Swinburne, has shown a better acquaintance with the road to Paphus. And it would be a task full of charm to follow him from the jungles of the Indian peninsula to the cool lakes of Norway, to fan Leïlah and kiss Glaucé. Unfortunately, the purpose of these pages will not permit of such pleasant digressions, and the beautiful must be neglected that the poet's anti-theism may be the more quickly understood. By way of introduction, a momentary examination of the poem *Qaïn* will not, it is imagined, cause any after reproach of time misspent.

The scenario is simple and audacious. The son of Elam, Thogorma the seer, a captive among the Assyrians, dreams of a night in the mysterious ages when the voice of God echoed through the universe, and in his dream he sees Henokhia, the city of giants, in whose highest tower is the tomb of Cain. Cain's descendants are wending their way homewards from the chase. Thogorma sees them disappear in the immense orb of the ramparts, while night, bringing a vague terror and dumb dread, mantles the great stairways that turn in red broad spirals to the winds. He hears the roar of lions, chained on the ascending steps, and beneath the porticos the clamors of crocodiles rise from the reservoirs. Then, abruptly, from the confines of the outlying desert, a spectre, loosed from Gehenna, surges through the shadows, and Thogorma hears the spirits anathematize Cain and all his race.

Cain awakened, stands upright in the granite sepulchre where for ten centuries he had slept with his face to the sky. His eyes, haunted by one supreme remembrance, contemplate through the preceding epochs the vanished days when the world was young; and with his thoughts rich with the memory of the earth's primal innocence and beauty, he calls to the phantom to be silent and narrates his sombre history. Conceived while his parents were laboring under the divine malediction, his mother, Eve, swooning in the brambles, gave birth with a shriek of horror to Jehovah's victim, to him who was Cain. Nursed with tears, his boyhood knew no smile. What had he done, he wondered, to be punished too? And so, later, in the knowledge of his exile he accosts the angel on guard at the gates of Eden, and learns that on the morrow he is to know the reason of his birth. On the morrow the reason is made apparent. Jehovah arms his hand against Abel, and incites him to kill the brother whom he tenderly loved.

Here ends Cain's account of his life ; but immediately, in his awakened thirst for vengeance, he prophesies that when Jehovah is wearied with the world and shall seek by means of the deluge to destroy it, he, Cain, will save the ark—which the poet represents as constructed in spite of Jehovah—whereupon man, no longer brave, but cowardly and envious, will rise from the flood with its mud in his heart. Cain, the avenger, continues :

“Dieu triste, Dieu jaloux qui dérobes ta face,
Dieu qui mentais, disant que ton œuvre était bon,
Mon souffle, ô Pétrisseur de l'antique limon,
Un jour redressera ta victime vivace.
Tu lui diras : Adore ! Elle répondra : Non !
. . . . . .

Afin d'exterminer le monde qui te nie,
Tu feras ruisseler le sang comme une mer,
Tu feras s'acharner les tenailles de fer,
Tu feras flamboyer, dans l'horreur infinie,
Près des bûchers hurlants le gouffre de l' Enfer :

Mais . . . .
. . . .

Je ressusciterai les cités submergées,
Et celles dont le sable a couvert les monceaux :
Dans leur lit écumeux j'enfermerai les eaux :
Et les petits enfants des nations vengées,
Ne sachant plus ton nom, riront dans leurs berceaux !

J'effonderai des cieux la voûte dérisoire.
Par delà l'épaisseur de ce sépulchre bas
Sur qui gronde le bruit sinistre de ton pas,
Je ferai bouillonner les mondes dans leur gloire :
Et qui t'y cherchera ne t'y trouvera pas.

> Et ce sera mon jour ! Et d'étoile en étoile,
> Le bienheureux Eden longuement regretté
> Verra renaître Abel sur mon cœur abrité;
> Et toi, mort et cousu sous la funèbre toile.
> Tu t'anéantiras dans ta stérilité."

. . . .

Apart from the wonder and majesty of the language, and apart, too, from the intuition which in earlier stanzas enabled the poet to call again into being the life of the past, *Qaïn*, on a first reading, seems to be merely a work of cultured and harmonious blasphemy, and, indeed, so far as the blasphemy is concerned, nothing more vehement has been penned since Æschylus ; but yet on a re-reading *Qaïn* is found to be little else than an allegory of the protestation of the intellect against the unintelligible, a revolt at the mystery of pain.

This protestation, which is as old as philosophy, and which in recent years seems to have increased in volume and significance, has been conveyed by Leconte de Lisle in other poems with great originality, and with particular power in the parable of the *Corbeau*. Through this poem, as through *Qaïn*, there is a running accompaniment of muffled discontent, which in other verses finds a clear and decided note. Something of this same dissatisfaction was expressed by de Vigny and Alfred de Musset, and yet in their case one is inclined to fancy that the grievance was less reasoned than instinctive ; they were at odds, so to speak, with the inevitable ; life failed to hold what it had seemed to promise, and in consequence their complaints were more or less personal. But in Leconte de Lisle there is no evidence of personal disappointment, and nothing that can be construed as the outcome of an individual grievance. It is a part of his doctrine that an expression of pleasure or pain deforms the human visage, that the poet's correct attitude is the one which most nearly approaches the impassibility of the statue, and it is this theory which he has carried into his work.

It is difficult to say to what category of antitheism Leconte de Lisle belongs. His pantheism is too evident to permit of his being called a materialist, and yet his materialism is so marked that it is difficult to suspect him of any other sympathies with the ideal than those which are purely poetic. He is too aggressive for an agnôstic, and yet there are moments when he might be taken for a positivist. Perhaps it will be safest to say that he is a theoretic pessimist, a denomination which is broad enough to include any of the others, and at the same time is serviceable in conveying the exact shade of his thought.

The pessimism which is manifest in the verse of Leconte de Lisle has nothing of Renan's serenity, and none of the calculations of Von Hartmann. In his case it is the formal protest against the enigma of grief which characterizes the philosophy of the earliest thinkers, but one which is entirely free from the shackles with which they delayed the hope of ultimate emancipation. It is not that the idea of absorption in Brahm, or the extinction in Pari-Nirvana, is disagreeable to him ; on the contrary, they are dreams through which he lovingly trails his verse, but they are dreams.

"Pleurez, contemplateurs ! Votre sagesse est veuve
Viçnou ne siege plus sur le lotus d'azur."

That of which he seems best convinced is the irremediable existence of what apparently has no reason for being. History is little else than the tale of an uninterrupted shudder ; chronicles of private life are merely accounts of combats that individuals have waged with fate : and Leconte de Lisle, who is a patient student, has noted compassionately in both the persistence of the law of evil. He should not, however, be considered a follower of Schopenhauer ; the majority of his poems were published before the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* had crossed the Rhine ; moreover, Schopenhauer did not invent pessimism ; Kapila was as much occupied with pain as was that Emerson in black ; indeed, it is curious to note that the first metaphysician as well as the latest of great poets are agreed that life is an affliction, and it is also curious to note that the tendency of modern thought is to an agreement with their views.

The soul, whose immortality Robespierre decreed in the law known as that of the 18th Floréal, year II. ; the soul, which all antiquity, Plato included, accorded to beasts, but whose possession Christianity has limited to man ; the soul, which is reported to come no one knows whence, and to depart no one knows whither, has for Leconte de Lisle a purely verbal existence. Robespierre, it is true, knew nothing about primitive man ; but Leconte de Lisle does, and he knows, too, that a gorilla to which a soul is refused to-day is not a whit more elevated than was man in the sylvan age—in that age, in fact, when he had no other weapons than the branches which he tore from a tree. And if a soul be refused to primitive man, at what epoch was the gift bestowed ? Is it a result of evolution, or, as certain theologasters have asserted, is it naturally one with the body, and only separable and capable of immortality through the influence of grace divine ? The last century combatted these theories with logic. Leconte de Lisle has at his disposal not alone the logic of yesterday, but the science of to-day, and to him the soul is a phantom evoked by the conscience.

"If you do not believe in a soul and in a future life," said some one to Goethe, "what do you consider to be the object of the present ?" To which Goethe, with Olympian egotism, answered tersely, "Self-improvement." One may fancy that to Leconte de Lisle the object of life is none other. He was born in the Isle de Bourbon something over sixty years ago, and came to Paris when quite young. From his early home he brought little else than memories of the beauty of Nature and the invincible immensity of her forces, memories that have since served as frames and backgrounds to his verse. In Paris he followed the developments of science, and studied history, religions and life. From them he learned that man has two antagonists, himself and the exterior world ; he found, too, that man is a prey to influences which mould him to their profit, and that humanity had aggravated its misfortunes by inventing explanations which it termed beliefs. Since then, in the quietest ways, he has passed his hours in satiating that vague curiosity which besets even the most indifferent, and in convincing himself not only of the nothingness of creeds, but of the nothingness of life. Life, he says :

"La vie est comme l'onde où tombe un corps pesant :
Un cercle étroit s'y forme et va s'élargissant,
Et disparait enfin dans sa grandeur sans terme.
La Māyā te séduit, mais, si ton cœur est ferme,
Tu verras s'envoler comme un peu de vapeur
La colère, l'amour, le désir et la peur,
Et le Monde illusoire aux formes innombrables
S'écroulera sous toi comme un monceau de sables."

Gibbon, who was fond of fine paragraphs, declared all religions to be equally true to the vulgar, equally false to the philosopher, and to the statesman equally useful. But Gibbon omitted the poet ; and to such an one as Leconte de Lisle no religion can be true, if for no other reason than that there is no criterion of truth ; no religion can be wholly false, for every religion has enjoyed an hour of undeniable actuality ; and no religion can be deemed useful if the need of it has disappeared. To his thinking, religions have served their purpose. Compounded of fables more or less absurd, and of ethics more or less wholesome, in their obscure origins they were intended to be explanations of natural phenomena with which to-day we are better acquainted. As to Christianity, it is to Leconte de Lisle an artistic creation, powerfully conceived, venerable in its antiquity, and one whose place is now marked in the museum of history.

It has been objected, that should this view be accepted, no one would turn to the Bible for instruction, and as a consequence the gateways to immorality would be opened wide. Now Plato said that we should esteem it of the greatest importance that the fictions which children first hear should be adapted in the most perfect manner to the promotion of virtue. There are, however, not a few grave thinkers who have asserted that the Bible is inapt to serve such an end. Admittedly the morality which is displayed in the Synoptic Gospels is admirable, but it is sometimes forgotten that it is an integral part of the teaching of Socrates and the Socratics. M. Havet has shown its sweetest precepts flowing from their lips. In other portions of the Bible there are verses that exalt the spirit like wine ; there are delicacies of thought and felicities of expression that both soothe and charm ; but one must needs be a paradoxist to claim either as an aid to the promotion of virtue. Beside, as has been hinted in earlier pages, morality is more a question of temperament than of instruction. For that matter, we are most of us well aware that the instruction sometimes defeats its aim. Mr. Froude relates that when St. Patrick preached the gospel on Tarah Hill, the Druids shook their heads. The king, Leoghaire, marked their disapproval wonderingly, and asked, "Why is it that that which the cleric preaches seems so dangerous to you?" "Because," they answered, "he preaches repentance, and the law of repentance is such that a man shall say, 'I may commit a thousand sins, and if I repent it will be not worse with me; I shall be forgiven; therefore will I continue to sin." Leconte de Lisle has therefore put the Bible reverently aside, and in looking back through the dreams from which it came and into the visions which it has evoked, he has murmured with the sadness of the tender-hearted:

"O songe, ô désirs vains, inutiles souhaits,
Ceci ne sera point, maintenant ni jamais."

There is no help there, nor is there any elsewhere. The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals. In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save perchance in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness which soon hide the tomb grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the just and of the unjust, of kings, of felons and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity, unsatisfied as before and yet impatient for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilize the furrows of space where worlds ferment.

On this vista the curtain may be drawn. Neither poet nor seer can look beyond. Nature, who is unconscious in her immorality, entrancing in her beauty, savage in her cruelty, imperial in her prodigality, and appalling in her convulsions, is not only deaf, but dumb. There is no answer to any appeal. The best we can do, the best that has ever been done, is to recognize the implacability of the laws that rule the universe, and contemplate as calmly as we can the nothingness from which we are come and into which we shall all disappear. The one consolation that we hold, though it is one which may be illusory too, consists in the belief that when death comes, fear and hope are at an end. Then wonder ceases; the insoluble no longer perplexes; space is lost; the infinite is blank; the farce is done.

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IN PREPARATION,

CIMMERIA.

THE ANATOMY OF NEGATION.

BY

EDGAR SALTUS.

> "Quoy qu'on nous presche, il fauldroit toujours se souvenir que c'est l'homme qui donne et l'homme qui reçoit."
>
> MONTAIGNE.

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Il est un jour, une heure, où dans le chemin rude,
Courbé sous le fardeau des ans multipliés,
L'Esprit humain s'arrête, et pris de lassitude,
Se retourne pensif vers les jours oubliés.

La vie a fatigué son attente inféconde;
Désabusé du Dieu qui ne doit point venir,
Il sent renaître en lui la jeunesse du monde;
Il écoute ta voix, ô sacré souvenir!

. . . .

Mais si rien ne répond dans l'immense étendue
Que le stérile écho de l'éternel désir,
Adieu, déserts, où l'âme ouvre une aile éperdue!
Adieu, songe sublime, impossible à saisir!

Et toi, divine Mort, où tout rentre et s'efface,
Accueille tes enfants dans ton sein étoilé;
Affranchis-nous du temps, du nombre et de l'espace,
Et rends-nous le repos que la vie a troublé!

LECONTE DE LISLE.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE accompanying pages are intended to convey a tableau of anti-theism from Kapila to Leconte de Lisle. The anti-theistic tendencies of England and America have been treated by other writers; in the present volume, therefore, that branch of the subject is not discussed.

To avoid misconception, it may be added that no attempt has been made to prove anything.

BIARRITZ, *15th September, 1886.*

THE

ANATOMY OF NEGATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLT OF THE ORIENT.

MAN, as described by Quatrefages, is a religious animal. The early naturalists said the same thing of the elephant; but while this statement, which contains all the elements of a libel, has fallen into disrepute, the former, little by little, has assumed the purple among accepted facts.

Man's belief in the supernatural antedates chronology. It was unfathered and without a mother. It was spontaneous, natural, and unassisted by revelation. It sprang into being with the first flight of fancy.

The characteristic trait of primitive man seems to have been that of intellectual passivity. He was never astonished: if he noticed anything, it was his own weakness; the power of the elements he accepted as a matter of course. The phenomena that he witnessed, the sufferings that he endured, were to him living enemies whose violence could be conjured by prayers and donations. Everything had its spectre; phantoms were as common as leaves. There was not a corner of the earth unpeopled by vindictive demons. In sleep he was visited by them all, and as his dreams were mainly nightmares, his dominant sensation was that of fright.

As his mind developed, frontiers were outlined between the imaginary and the real; the animate and the inanimate ceased to be identical. Instead of attributing a particular spirit to every object, advancing theology conceived a number of aggrandised forces. The earth, sea and sky were laid under contribution, and the phenomena of nature were timidly adored. In the course of time these open-air deities were found smitten by a grave defect—they were visible. The fear of the unseen demanded something more mysterious, a hierarchy of invisible divinities of whom much might be suspected and but little known. It was presumably at this point that the highroad to polytheism was discovered; and when man grew to believe that the phenomena which his ancestors had worshipped were but the unconscious agents of higher powers, the gods were born.

Consecutive stages of development such as these have evidently been far from universal. There are races whose belief in the supernatural is so accidental that any classification is impossible. There are others in whose creeds the transition from animism to broader views is still unmarked. In the equatorial regions of Africa, in Madagascar, Polynesia, and among certain Tartar tribes, animism and its attendant fetishism is reported to be still observable. The distinction between the palpable and the impalpable, the separation between what is known to be material and that which is conceived to be divine, does not necessarily exist even in countries that have reached a high degree of civilisation. In India, the dance of the bayaderes before the gilded statues, and the top-playing that is to amuse a stone Krishna, are cases in point. But these instances are exceptions to the general rule. It seems well established that man, in proportion to his intelligence, passed out of animism, loitered in polytheism, and drifted therefrom into monotheistic or pantheistic beliefs.

The race whose beliefs have held most steadfast from their incipiency to the present day is the Hindu. In their long journey these beliefs have encountered many vicissitudes; they have been curtailed, elaborated and degraded, but in the main they are still intact. At the contact with fresher faiths, the primitive religions of other lands have either disappeared abruptly or gradually faded away. It is India alone that has witnessed an autonomous development of first theories, and it is in India that the first denying voice was raised. To appreciate the denial it is necessary to understand what was affirmed. For this purpose a momentary digression may be permitted.

In the beginning of the Vedic period, Nature in her entirety was held divine. To the delicate imagination of the early Āryan, the gods were in all things, and all things were gods. In no other land have myths been more fluid and transparent. Mountains, rivers and landscapes were regarded with veneration; the skies, the stars, the sun, the dawn and dusk were adored, but particularly Agni, the personification of creative heat. Through lapse of time of which there is no chronology, this charming naturalism drifted down the currents of thought into the serenest forms of pantheistic beliefs.

The restless and undetermined divinities, omnipresent and yet impalpable, the wayward and changing phenomena, contributed one and all to suggest the idea of a continuous transformation, and with it, by implication, something that is transformed. Gradually the early conception of Agni expanded into a broader thought. From the spectacle of fire arose the theory of a deva, one who shines; and to this deva a name was given which signified both a suppliant and a supplication—Brahmā. In this metamorphosis all vagueness was lost. Brahmā became not only a substantial reality, but the creator of all that is. Later, the labour of producing and creating was regarded as an imperfection, a blemish on the splendour of the Supreme. It was thought a part of his dignity to be majestically inert, and above him was conceived the existence of a still higher being, a being who was also called Brahmâ;

yet this time the name was no longer masculine, but neuter and indeclinable—neuter as having no part in life, and indeclinable because unique.*

This conception of a neuter principle, eternal, inactive, and a trifle pale perhaps, was not reached during the period assigned to the Vedas. It was the work of time and of fancy, but it was unassisted. The religion of India is strictly its own; its systems were founded and its problems solved almost before the thinkers of other lands were old enough to reflect. In Greece, which was then in swaddling clothes, Anaxagorus was the first who thought of a pure Intelligence, and this thought he contented himself with stating; its development was left to other minds, and even then it remained unadorned until Athens heard the exultant words of Paul. Nor could the Hindus have gathered their ideas from other countries. Their brothers, the Persians, were watching the combat between Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman. With the Hebrews there was no chance nor rumour of contact: Elohim had not given way to Jehovah. Chaldea was celebrating with delirious rites the nuptials of Nature and the Sun; while far beyond was Egypt, and on her heart the Sphinx.

It seems, then, not unsafe to say that the Vedas and the theories that were their aftergrowth have no connection with any foreign civilisation. Beyond this particular, Brahmanism enjoys over all other religions the peculiar distinction of being without a founder. Its germ, as has been hinted, was in the Vedas; but it was a germ merely that the priests planted and tended, and watched develop into a great tree, which they then disfigured with unsightly engraftments.

---

* Burnouf: Essai sur le Veda. Taine: Essais.

Emerson recommended us to treat people as though they were real, and added, "Perhaps they are." But the doubt that lingered in the mind of the stately pantheist never entered into that of the Hindu. In its purest manifestation the creed of the latter was a negation of the actuality of the visible world. The forms of matter were held to be illusive, and the semblance of reality possessed by them was considered due to Māyā. Māyā originally signified Brahmâ's longing for something other than himself; something that might contrast with his eternal quietude; something that should occupy the voids of space; something that should lull the languors of his infinite ennui. From this longing sprang whatever is, and it was through Māyā, which afterwards became synonymous with illusion, that a phantom universe surged before the god's delighted eyes, the mirage of his own desire.

This ghostly world is the semblance of reality in which man dwells: mountains, rivers, landscapes, the earth itself, the universe and all humanity, are but the infinite evolutions of his fancy. The ringing lines that occur in Mr.

Swinburne's "Hertha" may not improperly be referred to him:

"I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me, God and man;
I am equal and whole.
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily.
I am the soul."

Familiarly, Brahmâ is the spider drawing from his breast the threads of existence; emblematically, a triangle inscribed in a circle; poetically, the self-existing supremacy that is enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold; and theologically, the one really existing essence, the eternal germ from which all things issue and to which all things at last return.

From man to Brahmâ, a series of higher forms of existence are traceable in an ascending scale till three principal divinities are reached. These, the highest manifestations of the First Cause, Brahmā the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer, constitute the Tri-murti, the Trinity, typified in the magically mystic syllable Om. To these were added a host of inferior deities and even local gods similar to those which the Romans recognised in later years. Such was and still is the celestial hierarchy. In the eyes of the Hindu, none of these gods are eternal. At the end of cycles of incommensurable duration, the universe will cease to be, the heavens will be rolled up like a garment, the Tri-murti dissolved; while in space shall rest but the great

First Cause, through whose instrumentality, after indefinite kalpas, life will be re-beckoned out of chaos and the leash of miseries unloosed.

This delicious commingling of the real and the ideal degenerated with the years. Like Olympus, it was too fair to last. Brahmā, Vishnu and Siva, once regarded as various manifestations of the primal essence, became in lapses of time concrete. Female counterparts were found for them, and the most poetic of the creeds of man was lowered into a sensuous idolatry. To-day there is nothing, however monstrous or grotesque, that is deemed unfit for worship. In Benares there is a shrine to small-pox; in Gaya there is one to the police; and it may be that somewhere between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas an altar has been raised to those who dull digestion with the after-dinner speech.

This, however, is the work of the priest. In earlier days the higher castes of man, the younger brothers of the gods, were thought capable of understanding the perfection that resides in Brahm. It was held that they might ascend to the rank of their elders, and with them at last be absorbed in the universal spirit. The one pathway to this goal was worship, and over it the priests constituted themselves the lawful guides.

The laws which they codified were numberless, and an infraction of any one of them was severely visited on the transgressor. For each fault, whether of omission or commission, there was an expiation to be undergone, and it was taught that the unatoned violation of a precept precipitated the offender into one of twenty-eight hells which their inflammable imaginations had created.

In the face of absurdities such as these, it is permissible to suppose that, like the Roman augurs, the educated Brahmans could not look at each other without laughing; yet, however this may be, it seems certain that many of the laity laughed at them. Already in the Rig-Veda mention was made of those who jeered at Agni. The question as to whether there is really another life seems to have been often raised, and that too in the Brahmanas. Yaska, a venerable sage, found himself obliged to refute the opinions of sages far older and more venerable than himself, who had declared the Vedas to be a tissue of nonsense. This scepticism had found many adherents. The name given to these early disbelievers was Nastikas—They who deny. Like other sects, they had aphorisms and slokas of their own, which with quaint derision they attributed to the tutor of the gods. The aphorisms appear to have been markedly anti-theistic, while the slokas were captivating invitations to the pleasures of life.

"Vivons, ouvrons nos cœurs aux ivresses nouvelles :
Dormir et boire en paix, voilà l'unique bien.
Buvons ! Notre sang brûle et nos femmes sont belles :
Demain n'est pas encore, et le passé n'est rien !"

Among those who laughed the loudest was Kapila. His life is shrouded in the dim magnificence of legends. There let it rest; yet if little can be said of the man, his work at least is not unfamiliar to students. The Sānkhya Kārika, which bears his name, is one of the most important and independent relics of Indian thought. In its broadest sense, Sānkhya means rationalism or system of rational philosophy. In India it is known as the philosophy Nirīswara, the philosophy without a god.

Kapila was the first serious thinker who looked up into the archaic skies and declared them to be void. In this there was none of the moderation of scepticism, and less of the fluctuations of doubt. Kapila saw that the idea of a Supreme Being was posterior to man; that Nature, anterior to her demiurge, had created him; and he resolutely turned his back on the Tri-murti, and denied that a deity existed, or that the existence of one was necessary to the order and management of the world. The motor-power he held to be a blind, unconscious force, and of this force life was the melancholy development. If he had disbelieved in transmigration, Schopenhauer would not have startled the world with a new theory.

Kapila's purpose was to relieve man from pain. There were no rites to be observed. Knowledge and meditation were alone required. He recognised but three things—the soul, matter and pain. Freedom from pain was obtainable, he taught, by the liberation of the soul from the bondage of matter. According to his teaching, the heavens, the earth and all that in them is, are made up of twenty-five principles, and of these principles matter is the first and the soul the last. Matter is the primordial element of universal life, the element that animates and sustains all things. The principles that succeed it are simply its developments. Of these, the soul is the chief. It is for matter to act and for the soul to observe. When its observations are perfect and complete, when it has obtained a discriminative knowledge of the forms of matter, of primeval matter and of itself, then is it prepared to enter into eternal beatitude.

On the subject of eternal beatitude, each one of the systems of Eastern thought has had its say. That which Kapila had in view is not entirely clear. He gave no description of it otherwise than in hinting that it was a state of abstract and unconscious impassability, and he appears to have been much more occupied in devising means by which man might be delivered from the evils of life than in mapping charts of a fantastic paradise.

The sentiment of the immedicable misery of life is as prominent in the preface of history as on its latest and uncompleted page. The problem of pain agitated the minds of the earliest thinkers as turbulently as it has those of the latest comers. In attempting to solve it, in endeavouring to find some rule for a law of error, the Hindu accepted an unfathered idea that he is expiating the sins of anterior and unremembered existences, and that he will continue to expiate them until all past transgressions are absolved and the soul is released from the chain of its migrations. According to the popular theory, the chain of migrations consists in twenty-four lakhs of birth, a lakh being one hundred thousand.

Apparently such beatitude as lay beyond the tomb consisted to Kapila in relief from transmigration, and this relief was obtainable by the ransomed soul, only, as has been hinted, through a knowledge acquired of matter and of itself. Garmented in the flesh of him that constitutes its individuality, the soul was to apply itself to an understanding of Nature, who, with the coquetry of a bayadere, at first resists and then unveils her beauties to the eyes of the persistent wooer. This knowledge once obtained, the soul is free. It may yet linger awhile on earth, as the wheel of the spinner turns for a moment after the impulse which put it in motion has ceased to act; but from that time the soul has fulfilled all the conditions of its deliverance, and is for ever affranchised from the successive migrations which the unransomed soul must still undergo.

In his attack on official theology, Kapila paid little attention to its rites and observances. He probably fancied that if the groundwork was undermined, the superstructure would soon totter. In this he was partially correct, though the result of his revolt was entirely different from what he had expected. The climax of his philosophy is a metaphysical paradox: "Neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor is there any I"—a climax which must have delighted Hegel, but one which it is difficult to reconcile with the report of the philosophy's present popularity. And that it is popular there seems to be no doubt. There is even a common saying in India that no knowledge is equal to the Sānkhya, and no power equal to the Yoga, which latter, a combination of mnemonics and gymnastics, is a contrivance for concentrating the mind intently on nothing.

But whatever popularity the Sānkhya may now enjoy, it is evident that, like other systems of Eastern thought, it was understood only by adepts; and even had the science which it taught been offered to the people, it was not of a nature to appeal to them. The masses to-day are as ignorant as carps, and at that time they were not a whit more intelligent. Besides, it was easier to understand the Tri-murti than twenty-five abstract principles. Brahmā was very neighbourly, and his attendant gods were known to tread the aisles of night. The languid noons and sudden dawns were sacred with their presence. What could be more reasonable? If life was an affliction, that very affliction carried the sufferer into realms of enchantment, where Brahmâ was enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold.

It is small wonder then that Kapila's lessons left the established religion practically unharmed. Kant's "Kritik" did not prevent the Königsbergians from listening to the *Pfarrer* with the same faith with which their fathers had listened before them. And Kant, it may be remembered, was not only a popular teacher, he was one that was revered. But aside from any influence that Kapila's philosophy may have exerted, it was evidently smitten by a grave defect. Concerning the soul's ultimate abiding-place it was silent. This silence enveloped the entire system in an obscurity which another and a greater thinker undertook to dissipate.

It has been said before, and with such wisdom that the saying will bear repetition, that revolutions are created, not by the strength of an idea, but by the intensity of a sentiment. In great crises there is a formula that all await; so soon as it is pronounced, it is accepted and repeated; it is the answer to an universal demand. Toward the close of the sixth century before the present era, at Kapilavastu, a city and kingdom situated at the foot of the mountains of Nepal, a prince of the blood, after prolonged meditations on the misfortunes of life, pronounced a watchword of this description.

The name of this early Muhammad was Siddārtha. He was the heir of the royal house of Sakya, and in later years, in remembrance of his origin, he was called Sakya-Muni, Sakya the Anchorite, to which was added the title of Buddha, the Sage. The accounts of his life are contained in the Lalita Vistâra, a collection of fabulous episodes in which the supernatural joins hands with the matter-of-fact. It is said, for instance, that he was born of an immaculate conception, and died of an indigestion of pork. Apart from the mythical element, his life does not appear to have been different from that of other religious reformers, save only that he is supposed to have been born in a palace instead of a hovel. To his twenty-ninth year Siddārtha is represented as living at court, surrounded by all the barbaric ease and gorgeousness of the Ind. Yet even in his youth his mind appears to have been haunted by great thoughts. He took no part in the sports of his companions, and was accustomed, it is said, to wander away into the solitudes of the vast forests of bamboo, and there to linger, lost in meditation.

In the course of time he was married to a beautiful girl, but even in her fair arms his thoughts were occupied with the destinies of the world. During the succeeding festivals and revels, amid the luxury of the palace and the enticements of love, he meditated on the miseries of life. In Brahmanism he found no consolation. At its grotesqueness he too smiled, but his smile was nearer to tears than to laughter. The melancholy residue of his reflections was with him even in dream, and one night—so runs the legend—he was encouraged in a vision to teach mankind a law which should save the world and establish the foundation of an eternal and universal rest.

A combination of fortuitous circumstances, the play of the merest hazard, appear to have strengthened the effect of this vision. On the high-roads about Kapilavastu he encountered a man bent double with age, another stricken by fever, and lastly a corpse. "A curse," he cried, "on youth that age must overcome; a curse on health that illness destroys; a curse on life which death interrupts! Age, illness, death, could they but be for ever enchained!" Soon after, he disappeared, and seeking the jungles, which at that time were peopled with thinkers of ken, he devoted himself to the elaboration of his thoughts. It was there that he seems to have acquired some acquaintance with the philosophy of Kapila. He divined its significance and saw its insufficiency. Thereafter for six years he gave himself up to austerities so severe that, in the naïve language of the legend, they startled even the gods. These six years are said to have been passed at Ouruvilva, a place as famous in Buddhist annals as Kapilavastu. In this retreat he arranged the principles of his system, and perfected the laws and ethics which were to be its accompaniment. Yet still the immutable truth that was to save the world escaped him. A little longer he waited and struggled. The Spirit of Sin, with all his seductive cohorts, appeared before him. The cohorts were routed and the Spirit overcome; the struggle was ended; and under a Bodhi-tree which is still shown to the pilgrim, Siddārtha caught the immutable truth, and thereupon presented himself as a saviour to his fellows.

Such is the popular legend. Its main incidents have been recently and most felicitously conveyed in *The Light of Asia*. As a literary contribution, Mr. Arnold's poem is simply charming; as a page of history, it has the value of a zero from which the formative circle has been eliminated. The kingdom of Kapilavastu, or rather Kapilavatthu, was an insignificant hamlet. The Buddha's father was a petty chieftain, the rājā of a handful of ignorant savages. Palaces he had none; his wealth was his strength; and could his concubine be recalled to life, she would, had she any sense of humour, which is doubtful, be vastly amused at finding that she had been given a rôle in the solar myth.

There can, however, be no doubt that the Buddha really lived. His existence is as well established as that of the Christ. To precisely what an extent he was a visionary is necessarily difficult of conjecture. Yet unless all belief in him be refused, it seems almost obligatory to assume that after years of reflection he considered himself in possession of absolute knowledge. The truth which he then began to preach was not a doctrine that he held as personal and peculiar to himself, but rather an eternal and changeless law which had been proclaimed from age to age by other Buddhas, of whom he fancied himself the successor.

To speak comparatively, it is only with recent years that the attention of Western students has been attracted to Buddhist literature. To-day, however, thanks to translations from the Pali and kindred tongues, it is possible for any one to study the doctrine from the sacred books themselves.

There are verses in the Vedas which when recited are said to charm the birds and beasts. Compared with them, the Buddhist Gospels are often lacking in beauty. To be the better understood, the priests, who addressed themselves not to initiates but to the masses, employed a language that was simple and familiar. There are in consequence many repetitions and trivial digressions, but there are also parables of such exquisite colour, that in them one may feel the influence of a bluer sky than ours, the odour of groves of sandal, the green abysses of the Himalayas, and the gem-like splendour of white Thibetian stars.

The Buddha believed neither in a personal nor an impersonal God. The world he compared to a wheel turning ceaselessly on itself. Of Brahman tenets he preserved but one, that of the immedicable misery of life. But the doctrine which he taught may perhaps best be summarised as resting on three great principles—Karma, Arahatship and Nirvāna. When these principles are understood, the mysteries of the creed are dissolved, and the need of esoteric teaching diminished.

It may be noted, by way of proem, that the theory of the transmigration of souls is not advanced in the Vedas. It is a part of Brahman teaching, but Brahmanism and Vedaism are not the same. The Vedas are claimed as the outcome of direct revelation, while all that part of post-Vedic literature in which Brahmanism is enveloped is held to be purely traditional. The origin of the theory of the transmigration is indiscoverable, but it is one which has been shared by many apparently unrelated races. It was a part of the creed of the Druids; the Australian savage, as well as some of the American aborigines, held to the same idea; thinkers in Egypt and in Greece advanced identical tenets; it is alluded to in the Talmud, and hinted at in the Gospel which bears the name of St. John. Possibly it was held by the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, and in that case it is equally possible that it was through them that the doctrine descended into Brahmanism. But whether or not its engraftment came about in this way is relatively a matter of small moment. The important point to be observed is that it was not received by the Buddhists. The popular idea to the contrary is erroneous.

Spinoza noted that there is in every man a feeling that he has been what he is from all eternity, and this feeling has not left the Buddhist unaffected. But between such a sentiment and a belief in transmigration the margin is wide. The popular error in which the two are confused has presumably arisen from a misunderstanding of the laws of Karma and Vipāka, the laws of cause and effect. The difference therein discoverable amounts in brief to this: in the theory of transmigration the soul is held to be eternal; in Buddhism the existence of the soul is denied. In the one, the ego resurrects through cycles of unremembered lives; in the other, nothing survives save the fruit of its actions. In the one, every man is his own heir and his own ancestor; in the other, the deeds of the ancestor are concentrated in a new individual. In each there is a chain of existences, but in the one they are material, in the other they are moral. One maintains the migration of an essence, the other the results of causality; one has no evidence to support it, the other accords with the law of the indestructibility of force. One is metempsychosis, the other palingenesis; one is beautiful, and the other awkward; but one is merely a theory, and the other is almost a fact.

From this chain the Hindu knew no mode of relief. Prior to the Buddha's advent, there was an unquestioned belief that man and all that encompasses him rolled through an eternal circle of transformation; that he passed through all the forms of life, from the most elementary to the most perfect; that the place which he occupied depended on his merits or demerits; that the virtuous revived in a divine sphere, while the wicked descended to a yet darker purgatory; that the recompense of the blessed and the punishment of the damned were of a duration which was limited; that time effaced the merit of virtue as well as the demerit of sin; and that the law of transmigration brought back again to earth both the just and the unjust, and threw them anew into a fresh cycle of terrestrial existences, from which they could fight free as best they might.

When the Buddha began to teach, he endeavoured to bring his new theories into harmony with old doctrines. Throughout life, man, he taught, is enmeshed in a web whose woof was woven in preceding ages. The misfortunes that he endures are not the consequences of his immediate actions; they are drafts which have been drawn upon him in earlier days—drafts which he still must honour, and against which he can plead no statute of limitations. Karma pursues him in this life, and unless he learns its relentless code by heart, the fruit of his years is caught up by revolving chains, and tossed back into the life of another. How this occurred, or why it occurred, is explainable only by a cumbersome process from which the reader may well be spared; and it may for the moment suffice to note that while the Buddha agreed with the Brahmans that life formed a chain of existences, it was the former who brought the hope that the chain might be severed.

The means to the accomplishment of this end consist in a victory over the lusts of the flesh, the desire for life and the veils of illusion. When these have been vanquished, the Arahat, the victor, attains Nirvāna.

Nirvāna, or Nibbāna as it stands in the Pali, is not a paradise, nor yet a state of post-mortem trance. It is the extinction of all desire, the triple victory of the Arahat, which precedes the great goal, eternal death. The fruit of earlier sins remain, but they are impermanent and soon pass away. Nothing is left from which another sentient being can be called into existence. The Arahat no longer lives; he has reached Para Nirvāna, the complete absence of anything, that can be likened only to the flame of a lamp which a gust of wind has extinguished.

The Buddha wrote nothing. It was his disciples who, in councils that occurred after his death, collected and arranged the lessons of their master. In these synods the canon of sacred scripture was determined. It consisted of three divisions, called the Tri-pitaka, or Three Baskets, and contained the Suttas, the discourses of the Buddha—the Dharmas, the duties enjoined on the masses—and lastly the Vinayas, the rules of discipline.

The Dharmas contain the four truths whose discovery is credited to the Buddha. The first is that suffering is the concomitant of life. The second, that suffering is the resultant of desire. The third, that relief from suffering is obtained in the suppression of desire. And fourth, that Nirvāna, which succeeds the suppression of desire, is attainable only through certain paths. These paths are eight in number; four of which—correctness in deed, word, thought and sight—were recommended to all men; the remainder—the paths of application, memory, meditation and proper life—are reserved for the eremites.

For the use of the faithful, the four truths have been condensed in a phrase: "Abstain from sin, practise virtue, dominate the flesh—such is the law of the Buddha." The recognition of the four truths and the observance of the eight virtues are obligatory to all who wish to reach Nirvāna. The neophyte renounces the world and lives a mendicant. Yet inasmuch as a society of saints is difficult to perpetuate, members are admitted from whom the usual vows of continence and poverty are not exacted.

The charm of primitive Buddhism was in its simplicity. The faithful assembled for meditation and not for parade. The practice of morality needed no forms and fewer ceremonies. But with time it was thought well to make some concession to popular superstitions; and although the Buddha had no idea of representing himself as a divinity, every moral and physical perfection was attributed to him. The rest was easy. Idolatry had begun. To the right and left of a saint elevated to the rank of God Supreme, a glowing Pantheon was formed of the Buddhas that had preceded him. A meaningless worship was established; virtues were subordinated to ceremonies; and to-day before a gilded statue a wheel of prayers is turned, while through the dim temples, domed like a vase, the initiates murmur, "Life is evil."

In attempting to convert the multitude, the Buddha made no use of vulgar seductions. From him came no flattery to the passions. The recompense that he promised was not of the earth nor material in its nature. To his believers he offered neither wealth nor power. The psychic force, the seemingly supernatural faculties, that knowledge and virtue brought to those who had reached superior degrees of sanctity, were shared by the Brahmans as well; they were an appanage, not a bait. The one reward of untiring efforts was an eternal ransom from the successive horrors of Karma. The paradise which he disclosed was the death of Death. In it all things ceased to be. It was the ultimate annihilation from which life was never to be re-beckoned.

It is not surprising that the captivating quiet of a goal such as this should forcibly appeal to the inclinations of the ascetic; the wonder of it is that it could be regarded for a moment as attractive to the coarse appetites of the crowd. Nor does it seem that the Christ of Chaos made this mistake. It was the after-comers who undertook to lift the commonplace out of the humdrum. The Buddha's hope of the salvation of all mankind was a dream extending into the indefinite future; the theory of immediate emancipation was never shared by him. For the plain man, he laid down a law which was a law of grace for all, that of universal brotherhood. If its practice was insufficient to lead him to Nirvana, it was still a preparation thereto, a paving of the way for the travellers that were yet to come.

The method which he employed to convert his hearers seems to have been a tender persuasion, in which there was no trace of the dogmatic. He did not contend against strength, he appealed to weakness, varying the insinuations of his parables according to the nature of the listener, and charming even the recalcitrant by the simplicity and flavour of his words. In these lessons there were no warnings, no detached maledictions; but there were exhortations to virtue, and pictures of the sweet and sudden silence of eternal rest. His struggle was never with creeds, but with man, with the flesh and its appetites; and from the memory of his victorious combat with himself there came to him precepts and maxims of incomparable delicacy and beauty. These were his weapons. His teaching was a lesson of infinite tenderness and compassion; it was a lesson of patience and resignation and abnegation of self, and especially of humility, which in its renouncement of temporal splendours opens the path to the magnificence of death.

In the ears of not a few modern thinkers, this promise of annihilation has sounded like a gigantic paradox. It has seemed inconceivable that men could be found who would strive unremittingly their whole lives through to reach a goal where nothing was. And yet there were many such, and, what is more to the point, their number is constantly increasing. On the other hand, it has been argued that to those who knew no prospect of supernal happiness and who had never heard of an eternity of bliss, the horror of life might be of such intensity that they would be glad of any release whatever. But the value of this argument is slight. The spectacle of a Buddhist converted to Christianity is the most infrequent that has ever gladdened the heart of a missionary. Per contra, the number of those who turn from other creeds to that of Buddhism is notoriously large. The number of its converts, however, is not a proof of its perfection. And Buddhism is far from perfect: its fantastic shackles may be alluring to the mystic, but they are meaningless to the mathematician. It may be charming to hold a faith which has put pessimism into verse, and raised that verse into something more than literature; but it is useless. The pleasure of utter extinction is one which we will probably all enjoy, and that too without first becoming Arahats; and yet, again, we may not. The veil of Māyā is still unraised. The most we can do to lift it is to finger feebly at the edges. Sakya-Muni taught many an admirable lesson, but in his flights of fancy, like many another since, he transcended the limits of experience. Let those who love him follow.

Charity is the New Testament told in a word. When it was preached on the Mount of Olives it must have brought with it the freshness and aroma of a first conception. Before that time, the Galileans had heard but of Justice and Jehovah; then at once they knew of Christ and Compassion; and ever since the name and the virtue have gone hand-in-hand. And yet five hundred years before, a sermon on charity was preached in Nepal.

The charity which Sakya-Muni taught was not the ordinary liberality which varies from a furtive coin to a public bequest. It was a boundless sympathy, a prodigality of abandonment in which each creature, however humble, could find a share, and which, once entered in the heart of man, extinguished every spark of egotism. This sentiment of universal compassion was one which the two greatest of the world's reformers sought alike to instil. Between the Prince of Kapilavastu and Jesus of Nazareth there are many resemblances, but none, it may be taken, more striking than this. Beyond the common legend of their birth, both were supposed to have been tempted by the devil; and by the Buddha, as the Christ, the devil was vanquished. Their lessons in ethics were nearly the same; both were nihilists; both held that the highest duty is to be at variance with self; both struck a blow at the virility of man, and neither of them wrote. About the lives of each the myth-makers have been at work; both were deified; and if to-day the believers in the Buddha largely outnumber those of the Christ, it is only fair to note that the former have enjoyed advantages which the latter have never possessed. Through none of their wide leisures have they ever held it a blasphemy to think.

Another religion without a God, and one which is a twin-sister to Buddhism, is that of the Gainas. Explanatory documents concerning it are infrequent, and in search of information the student is usually obliged to turn to Brahman sources. The Gainas are the believers in Gina, the Victorious, as the Buddhists are believers in Buddha, the Sage. A Gina—in Buddhism this term is one of the many synonyms of Sakya-Muni—is a prophet who, having attained omniscience, comes to re-establish the law of salvation when it has become corrupted through the march of time. There are said to have been twenty-four Ginas, including the most recent; and as the Gainas maintain that the Buddha was a disciple of the founder of their creed, the number corresponds to that of Siddārtha and his twenty-three predecessors. The Gainas, like the Buddhists, deny the authority of the Vedas; they consider them apocryphal, and oppose in their stead a collection of Angas of their own. No sect has been more rigorous than they in the respect of everything that lives. They eat no flesh; and it is reported that the stricter devotees filter their water, breathe through a veil, and as they walk sweep the ground before them, that no insect, however insignificant, may be destroyed. Among the customs in which they differ from Buddhism, suicide is the one worth noting. For a long period this rite seems to have been decorously observed. On most other points the two beliefs are in apparent agreement. The Gainas, too, are atheists. They admit of no Creator, and deny the existence of a perfect and eternal Being. The Gina, like the Buddha, has become perfect, but it is not thought that he has always been so. This negation has not prevented a particular division of the faith from affecting a kind of heretical and schismatic deism. Like the Nepalese, who have imagined an Adibuddha, a supreme Buddha, they also have invented a Ginapati, a perfect Gina, whom, in opposition to their canonical Angas, they regard as primordial creator. The Angas teach that man possesses a soul, and that this soul, although a pure and an immortal intelligence, is yet the prey of illusion, and for that reason condemned to bear the yoke of matter through an indefinite series of existences. In Gainism it is not existence that is an affliction, it is life; and the Nirvāna is less an annihilation than an entrance into eternal beatitude. To distinguish between the two faiths, the Brahmans called the Buddhists, "They who affirm," and the Gainas, "They who say, Perhaps."*

The Chinese, who are our elders in little else than corruption, feel as much need for a religion as a civilian does for a military uniform. From the threshold of history to the present day, the inhabitants of the Celestial Empire have had no term wherewith to designate a deity. The name of God has not entered into their philosophy. As a rule, then, when an educated Chinese is asked what his creed is, he answers, that not being a priest, he has none at all. The clergy have three: the official religion—originated by Confucius—Buddhism and Tauism. The latter faith was founded by Laou-tze.

The life of this early thinker has been as liberally interwoven with legends as that of the

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* Dictionnaire des sciences religieuses, art. Jainisme.

Buddha. The Orient seems to have had a mania for attributing the birth of reformers to immaculate conceptions; and one learns with the weariness that comes of a thrice-told tale, that the mother of Laou-tze, finding herself one day alone, conceived suddenly through the vivifying influence of Nature. But though the conception was abrupt, the gestation was prolonged, lasting, it is said, eighty-four years; and when at last the miraculous child was born, his hair was white—whence his name, Laou-tze, the Aged Baby. This occurred six hundred years before the present era.

The philosophy of this prodigy, contained in the Taou-tĕh-king, the Book of Supreme Knowledge and Virtue, is regarded by Orientalists as the most profound and authentic relic of early Chinese literature. The most profound, as rivalling the works of Confucius and Mencius; and the most authentic, in that it was the only one said to have been exempt from the different edicts commanding the destruction of manuscripts.

Laou-tze was probably the first thinker who established the fact that it is not in the power of man to conceive an adequate idea of a First Cause, and the first to show that any efforts in that direction result merely in demonstrating human incompetence and the utter vainness of the endeavour. When, therefore, he was obliged to mention the primordial essence in such a manner as to be understood by his hearers, the figurative term which he employed was Tau. "Tau," he said, "is empty, in operation exhaustless. It is the formless mother of all things." And to this description Spinoza found little to add.

Laou-tze appears to have dipped into all the philosophies then in vogue, and after taking a little eclectic sip from each, elaborated a system so cleverly that he may safely be regarded as the earliest moralist. His doctrine was thoroughly pantheistic. Man, he taught, is a passing and inferior phase of the Great Unity which is the beginning and end of all things, and into which the soul is absorbed. Happiness, he added, is like paradise, an imaginary Utopia, a fiction of the non-existent extending beyond the borderlands of the known. And on the chart which he drew of life, he set up a monitory finger-post, warning men that the only real delights were those that consist in the absence of pain. Enterprise, effort and ambition, were so many good, old-fashioned words which to this early pessimist represented merely a forethought for a future generation. And of a future generation he saw little need. The one laudable aim was in the avoidance of suffering. After all, what was there in life? Nothing save a past as painful as the present, with hope to breed chimeras and the future for a dream.

Like Buddhism, the doctrine of Laou-tze degenerated with the years. Their common simplicity was too subtle for the canaille, and to each gaudy superstitions have been added. Yet in their primal significance they are as ushers of negation, the initial revolt at the supernatural, the first reasoned attempts to rout the spectres from the mind of man.

In earlier Hinduism, life was a nightmare, and the universe a phantasm that vaunted itself real. In an effort to escape, Kapila lost himself in abstractions, the Buddha ordered Death to stand a lackey at the door of Peace, while Laou-tze turned his almond eyes within and descended the stair of Thought. To the first, salvation lay in metaphysics; to the second, in virtue; to the third, in indifference. Had their theories been fused, the revolt might not have been so vain.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEGATIONS OF ANTIQUITY.

The clamour of life and thought entered Greece through Asia Minor. Quinet has called the itinerary of the tribes that took possession of her hills and vales, an itinerary of the gods. That somnambulist of history has seen, as in a vision, their passage marked, here by a temple, there by a shrine. While the tribes dispersed, the gods advanced. Orpheus has told the story of their youth; but now Orpheus is indiscoverable, and the days of which he sang are as vague as the future. When the gods entered folk-lore, they had already ascended Olympus, and the divinity of Jupiter was attested in traditions out of which Homer formed another Pentateuch. The name of the Ionian Moses is as unsubstantial as that of Orpheus; but if his personality is uncertain, it is yet a matter of common knowledge that his epics formed the articles of an indulgent creed, and that from them the infant Greece first learned the pleasures that belong to dream. At this time the mysteries of the archaic skies were dissolved. Dread had vanished; in its place was the Ideal.

Throughout the mellow morns and languid dusks there was an unbroken procession of the gayest, the most alluring divinities; their fare was ambrosia, their laughter was inextinguishable. Virtue was rewarded on earth, and Nemesis pursued the wrong-doer. The dower of men and maidens was beauty; love was too near to nature to know of shame; religion was more æsthetic than moral, more gracious than austere. The theologians were poets: first Orpheus, Musæus and Linus, then Homer and Hesiod; mirth, magnificence and melancholy they gave in fee.

Homer was not only a poet, he was an historian as well; and it is a fact amply demonstrated that he believed as little in the sacerdotal legends as Tennyson in the phantom idyls of Arthur. At that time no semblance of revealed religion was affected: the people, however, like all others before and since, would have gods, and gods they got; yet in displaying them to the infant race, Homer laughed at the divinities, and predicted that their reign would some day cease.

This prescience of the incredulity that was to come is significant. The history of Greece is one of freedom in art, in action, but particularly in thought. The death of Socrates, the flight of Aristotle, are among the exceptions that make the rule. In its broad outlines, the attitude of Hellenic thought was one of aggressive scepticism. This attitude may have been due to the fact that there was nothing which in any way resembled a national faith; each town, each hamlet, each upland and valley, possessed myths of its own, and such uniformity as existed appears to have been ritualistic rather than doctrinal. But perhaps the primal cause is best attributable to that nimble spirit of investigation which was at once a characteristic of the Greek intellect and a contrast to the cataleptic reveries of the Hindu.

It goes without the need of telling that the philosophers put Jupiter aside much as one does an illusion of childhood, and possibly with something of the same regret. But this leniency on their part was not universally imitated. The story of Prometheus, the most ancient of fables, traces of which have been discovered in the Vedas, became in the hands of Æschylus a semi-historical, semi-cosmological legend, in which the Titan, as representative of humanity, mouths from the escarpolated summits of Caucasus his hatred and defiance of Jove. Euripides, too, was well in the movement. There was not an article of Hellenic faith that he did not scoff at. Then came the farce. Aristophanes found nothing too sacred for his wit; with the impartiality of genius he joked at gods and men alike.

While the poets and dramatists were pulling down, the philosophers were building up. If the belief in an eternal fancy ball on Olympus was untenable, something, they felt, should be suggested in its place. In lieu, therefore, of the theory that Jupiter was the first link in the chain of the universe, Thales announced that the beginning of things was water; Anaximenes said air; Heraclitus preferred fire. Anaximinder held to an abstraction, the Infinite. Pythagoras, who, like all his countrymen, dearly loved a quibble, declared that the First Cause was One. This One, Xenophanes asserted, was a self-existent Mind. Empedocles gave as definition a sphere whose centre was everywhere and circumference nowhere, a definition which Pascal revived as an attribute of the Deity. Anaxagoras, who was banished for his pains, believed in a pure Intelligence. This pure Intelligence was not a deity, except perhaps in the sense of a *deus ex machinâ;* it was an explanation, not a god. But even so, it looked like one; there were already too many unknown gods, and the idea was not received with enthusiasm. Among those who opposed it with particular vehemence was Diagoras, he who first among the Greeks received the name of atheist. This reasoner chanced one day to be at sea during a heavy storm. The sailors attributed the storm to him. All that they were enduring was a punishment for conveying such an impious wretch as he. "Look at those other ships over there," said Diagoras. "They are in the same storm, aren't they? Do you suppose that I am in each of them?"

Diagoras had learned his lessons from Democritus, a thinker who in certain schools of thought holds to-day a position which, if not superior, is at least equal to that of Plato. The reason of this admiration is not far to seek. Democritus is the grandsire of materialism. Materialism is out of fashion to-day, but to-morrow it may come in again. During a long and continually rejuvenated career, it has been a veritable hydra. Every time its head seemed severed for all eternity, there has sprouted a new one, and one more sagacious than the last.

The theory of atoms announced in the remote past and repeated in recent years underwent a baptism of fire at the beginning of the present century. Dalton applied it to the interpretation of chemical laws, and a little later a band of German erudites embellished it with the garlands of new discoveries. Contemporary science treats it with scant respect; but all who are of a liberal mind admit that its conclusions have been useful implements of progress. Its originator, Democritus, was a contemporary of Sakya-Muni. It is even possible that he sat at the Buddha's feet; he is said to have wandered far into the East; and it is also recorded that he visited Egypt, whither he had been preceded by Pythagoras, and where his questioning eyes must have met the returning stare of the Sphinx.

At that time travelling was not necessarily expensive, yet in his journeys Democritus squandered his substance with great correctness; and when after years of absence he returned to his home, he found himself amenable to a law of the land which deprived of the honours of burial those who had dissipated their patrimony. A statute of this description was not of a nature to alarm such a man as Democritus. He invited all who cared to do so, to meet him in the public square, and there, through the wide leisures of Thracian days, he recited passages from Diakosmos, his principal work. This procedure, together with the novelty of the ideas which he announced, so impressed his hearers, that they made for him a purse of five hundred talents, and after his death erected statues in his honour. Those indeed were the good old days.

In the system which Democritus suggested to his countrymen, matter was pictured as the union of an infinite number of indivisible elements, which in the diversity of their forms represent the phenomena of nature. Beyond these indivisible elements, space held but voids. Atoms and emptiness is the theory in a phrase. The voids are the absence of obstacles, and the atoms continually passing through them are the constituents of all that is. In their eternal voyage through space, these atoms meet, unite and separate, unruled save by the laws of unconscious and mechanical necessity. To their chance clash is due the world; the universe is one of their fortuitous combinations, and the hazard which presided at its formation will some day see it again dissolved. The word hazard, it may be noted, is used from lack of a better term. In exact speech there seems to be nothing which at all resembles it. The accident that occurs in the street, the rambles of the ball on the roulette-table, may seem the play of chance; but were the predisposing causes understood, the accident would be recognised as the result of a cause in which chance had no part, and in the rambles of the ball the operations of consistent laws would be discerned. Dubois Reymond has noted that if, during a short though determined space of time, an intelligent man were able to mark the exact position and movement of every molecule, he could, in accordance with the laws of mechanics, foresee the whole future of the world. In the same manner that an astronomer can foretel the date on which a comet, after years of remote wanderings, will re-visit our heavens, so in his equations could this imaginary individual read the precise day when England shall burn her last bit of coal, and Germany brew her last keg of beer.

Beyond this theory, which as a matter of course includes the denial that man is a free agent, Democritus was accustomed to assert that out of nothing, nothing comes—an axiom which one does not need to be a mathematician to agree with, though it is one that somewhat impairs the scientific value of the first chapter of Genesis. And were it otherwise, if things sprang from nothing, the producing cause would be limitless; men might issue from the sea, and fish from the earth. In the fecundity of chaos, everything, even to the impossible, would be possible. But in a system such as this, in which the operations of nature are represented as effected by invisible corpuscles which possess in themselves the laws of all their possible combinations, there is room only for the actual; the universe explains itself more or less clearly, and that too without recourse to a First Cause or an over-watching Providence.*

Democritus was one of the first quietists, but he was quietist without leanings to mysticism. He was among the earliest to note that it is the unexpected that occurs; and he barricaded himself as best he might against avoidable misfortune by shunning everything that was apt to be a source of suffering or annoyance. Beyond mental tranquillity, he appears to have praised nothing except knowledge; and it is stated that he hunted truth not so much for the pleasure of the chase as for the delight which the quarry afforded.

The negations of Democritus had been well ventilated when the stage of history was abruptly occupied by a band of charlatan nihilists, who personified the spirit of doubt with ingenious effrontery. These were the sophists. To be called a sophist was originally a compliment. It meant one who was a master in wisdom and eloquence. But when Greece found herself imposed upon by a company of mental gymnasts, who in any argument maintained the pros and cons with equal ease, who made the worst appear the best, who denied all things even to evidence, and affirmed everything even to the absurd, and who took sides with the just and the unjust with equal indifference—then the title lost its lustre and degenerated into a slur. This possibly was a mistake. A disapproval of the paradoxes of these dialecticians is almost a praise of the commonplace. Yet the sophists deserve small approbation. Their efforts to show that all is true and all is false, and, above all, the brilliancy of their depravity, undermined thought and morals to such an extent that philosophy, which had taken wings, might have flown for ever away, had it not been re-beckoned to earth by the familiar reform instituted by Socrates.

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* Nolen: La philosophie de Lange. Wurtz: La théorie atomique.

Socrates was as ungainly as a satyr, but the suppleness of his tongue was that of a witch. At the hands of this insidious Attic, the sophists fared badly. He brought their versatilities into discredit; and in reviewing and enlarging a forgotten theory of Anaxagoras, purified thought with new lessons in virtue. This reaction seems to have been of advantage to moral philosophy, but detrimental to metaphysics; so much so, in fact, that his hearers turned their backs on theory, and devoted themselves to ethics. "Give me wisdom or a rope," cried Antisthenes, presumably to appreciative ears; and when Diogenes lit his dark lantern in broad daylight, he found every one eager to aid him in the ostentatious bizarrerie of that immortal farce.

In the midst of these pre-occupations there appeared a thinker named Pyrrho, to whom every sceptic is more or less indebted. Pyrrho was born at Elis. His people were poor, and doubtless worthy; but their poverty compelled him to seek a livelihood, which for a time he seems to have found, with the brush. By nature he was sensitive, nervous, as are all artists, and passionately in love with solitude. From some reason or another, but most probably from lack of success, he gave up painting, and wandered from one school to another, until at last a sudden introduction to Democritus turned the whole current of his restless thought. For this introduction he was indebted to Anaxarchus, a philosopher who went about asserting that all is relative, and confessing that he did not even know that he knew nothing. But in this there was possibly some little professional exaggeration. He was a thorough atomist, and very dogmatic on the subject of happiness, which, with broad good sense, he insisted was found only in the peace and tranquillity of the mind.

In Alexander's triumphant suite, Pyrrho went with this scholar to Asia, and together they visited the magi and the reflective gymnosophists. The abstracted impassability of these visionaries caused him, it is said, an admiration so intense that he made from it a rule of daily conduct; and one day when his master, with whom he was walking, fell into a treacherous bog, Pyrrho continued calmly on his way, leaving Anaxarchus to the mud and his own devices. It may be that in this there was some prescience of the modern aphorism that any one is strong enough to bear the misfortunes of another; but even so, Pyrrho, when it was necessary, could be brave in his own behalf, and one of the few anecdotes that are current represent his unmurmuring endurance of an agonising operation. This occurred before any one was aware of the imperceptibility of pain: the stoics were yet unborn.

During his long journey, Pyrrho acquired all, or nearly all, that the East had to teach. He listened to Brahman and Buddhist, and took from each what best they had to give. The impassability of the one appealed to him forcibly, the ethics of the other seemed to him most admirable; and with these for luggage, packed together with an original idea of his own, he returned to his early home, where his fellow-citizens, as a mark of their appreciation, elevated him to the rank of high-priest, a dignity which may have caused him some slight, if silent, amusement.

At that time Greece was rent by wars and revolutions. In the uncertainty of the morrow and the instability of all things, there was a general effort to enjoy life while enjoyment was yet to be had, and to make that enjoyment as thorough as possible. When, therefore, Pyrrho announced his intention to teach the science of happiness, he found his audience ready-made.

The doctrine which he then unfolded was received at first with surprise, but afterwards with sympathetic attention; it gained for him wide praise, and also fervent followers. These followers, to whom the thanks of posterity are due, took to themselves the duty of preserving his teaching; for, like Socrates, Pyrrho wrote nothing.

It has been hinted that Pyrrho accepted the materialism of Democritus, admired the hedonism of Anaxarchus, and practised the impassability of the Hindus. These elements, which formed what may be termed the angles of his system, were rounded and completed by an original doctrine, which represented doubt as an instrument of wisdom, moderation and personal welfare. Before this time there had been much scepticism, but it had been of a vacillating and unordered kind, the indecision of the uncertain, and no one had thought of making it a stepping-stone to happiness. This Pyrrho did, and in it lies his chief originality.

The scepticism which Pyrrho instituted was an unyielding doubt, and one, paradox as it may seem, which was highly logical. In it Kant found the outlines of his Criticism traced in advance, and that too by a master-hand. Pyrrho admitted no difference between health and illness, life and death. He expected nothing, asked for nothing, believed in nothing. If he ever struggled with himself, the struggle was a silent combat, of which his heart was the one dumb witness. He was not simply a sceptic, nor yet merely a cynic; he was a stoic, with a leaven of both. To the eternal question, "What am I?" he answered, "It matters not." He had but one true successor—Montaigne. The everlasting refrain, *Que sçay ie?* is an echo, faint it may be, but still an echo, of his own unperturbed indifference. The only refuge in the midst of the uncertainties to which man is ever a prey, lay, Pyrrho held, in an entire suspension of judgment. Between assertion and denial he did not so much as waver; he balanced his opinion in a perfect equipoise. As there is no criterion of truth, his position was impregnable.

"There is," he taught, "nothing that is inherently beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, and hence nothing that can be defined as an absolute truth. Things in themselves," he added, "are diverse, uncertain and undiscernible. Neither sensation nor thought is capable of teaching the difference between what is true and what is false. As a consequence, the verdict of mind and of senses should be equally distrusted; an opinionless impassability should be observed; nothing should be denied, nothing should be affirmed; or if one of the two seems necessary, let the affirmation and the denial be concurrent."

And happiness? some one may ask. But that is happiness. Where there is indifference and apathy, there too is ataraxia, the perfect and unruffled serenity of the mind. If in act, word and thought, an entire suspension of judgment be maintained,—if men, and women too, and events and results and causes, concerning all of which we may have our fancies and our theories, but whose reality escapes us, are treated with complete indifference,—then do we possess an independent freedom, an unroutable calm. Once freed from beliefs and prejudices, an exterior influence is without effect; perfect impassability is obtained; and with it comes the passionless serenity, the ataraxia, which is the goal of the sage.

Such in its broad outlines was Pyrrho's doctrine. Confute it who may. For the details the reader must turn to back book-shelves where speculative spiders are the only hosts, and there thumb the mildewed pages of Sextus Empiricus, Aristocles and Diogenes Laertius. It should be noted that Pyrrho's scepticism did not extend to virtue, which he was fond of saying is the one thing whose possession is worth the gift. At an advanced age he died, greatly esteemed by his townsmen, who to do him honour exempted all philosophers from taxation. But elsewhere he was forgotten, and at the time of his death his brilliancy was eclipsed by the rising glories of Epicurus.

When Epicurus addressed the public, he was no longer a young man. His early life had been an unbroken journey. No sooner was he settled in one place, than circumstances compelled him to seek another. These inconveniences did not prevent him from cultivating philosophy, for which from boyhood he evidenced a marked predilection. "In the beginning was chaos," his first tutor announced. "And where did chaos come from?" asked Epicurus. But to this the tutor had no answer, and the boy turned to Democritus.

To this master much of his subsequent philosophy is attributable, but his personal success was due to the charm of his manner and the seduction of his words. Syrians and Egyptians flocked to Athens to hear him speak, and few among them went away dissatisfied.

At that time the riot of war had demoralised society. The echoes from a thousand battle-fields had banished all sense of security. Greece, moreover, was as tired of speculations as of conflicts; the subtleties of the Lyceum had out-wearied the most intrepid. In the midst of the general enervation, Epicurus came, like another Pyrrho, to tell the secret of Polichinelle, to paint pleasure and describe happiness. In the telling he made no mysteries; his hearers approached him without effort. Pleasure, he held, was too simple and unaffected to need logical demonstrations; and to make her acquaintance, common-sense was a better letter than mathematics. But pleasure should not be sought merely for pleasure's sake. It should be regarded as a means to an end. Between pleasure and pleasure there is always a choice. There are pleasures that should be shunned, and there are trials that should be endured. There is the pleasure that is found in the satisfaction of the flesh, and there is the pleasure which is found in the tranquillity of the mind. The one lasts but a moment, and wanes in repetition; the other endures through life, and increases with the years. All this Epicurus thoroughly understood. He had a maxim to the effect that wealth does not consist in the vastness of possessions, but in the limitation of desires. He did not restrict his hearers to scanty enjoyments; on the contrary, he preached their multiplication, but it was a multiplication which was both a lure and a prohibition. He wished men to live so simply that pleasure, when it came, might seem even more exquisite than it is. Of all the high-roads to happiness, he pointed to prudence as the surest and most expeditious. The prudent are temperate in all things, unambitious and of modest requirements, and through this very prudence maintain the health of mind and body which in itself is the true felicity of the wise.

The Epicurean doctrine was one long lesson in mental tranquillity. Anything that ministered to contentment was welcomed, and all things that disturbed it were condemned. Among the latter were the gods.

> "Ces dieux que l'homme a fait, et qui n'ont pas fait
> l'homme."

The proper way to treat them was a difficult question. Epicurus had no taste for hemlock, and he found his garden very pleasant. He had no wish to flee, like Aristotle, in the night, nor mope, like Anaxagoras, in a dungeon. He was a teacher, not a martyr. His position, therefore, was one of extreme delicacy. On the one hand, he was obliged to consider his personal inconvenience; on the other, the superstitions of the masses. To respect the former and banish the latter, Epicurus took the gods and juggled with them, and in the legerdemain they mounted to such altitudes that from them the vulgar had nothing left to hope or to fear. Their existence was openly admitted, and their intervention as openly denied. In words of devout piety he took from them the reins of government, and pictured their idleness as an ideal impassability. After that, Olympus was to let.

The early legends say that the first created thing was fear. After routing the gods, Epicurus undertook to banish dread; *il timor della paura*, as the Italians have it in their insidious tongue—the fear of fright, or at least that particular form with which hallucinated antiquity was accustomed to terrify itself into repentant spasms. Aided by the materialism of his master, Epicurus looked across the tomb, and announced that there no tormenting phantoms lurked in ambush. The dissolution of the atoms composing the body was also a dissolution of the atoms composing the soul. This affirmation of nothing divested life of a constant anxiety. It took from it one more care. It made the tranquillity of the mind easier, and assured it against an idle pre-occupation.

This doctrine, far from giving free play to the passions, held them well in check. Epicurus could see two sides to a question as well as another. Morality and temperance even to abstinence were praised. His hearers were enjoined to limit their desires, and at all times to be just and to be charitable. The virtues, too, were praised; and this not so much perhaps on account of their inherent beauty, as because they were safeguards against mental disturbance.

In disclosing his ideas, Epicurus necessarily refuted other theories; but his candour, his unalterable placidity and his luminous good faith, disconcerted his adversaries, whose infrequent reprisals he answered, if at all, with an epigram.

In disinteresting his adherents from all things and even from themselves, it was the wish of Epicurus to create, not a school of thought, but a something whose status should approach that of a general disbelief. It was to be a religion whose one dogma was repose. In this purpose he very nearly succeeded. By the terms of his will, his garden, his writings and authority descended from one disciple to another in perpetuity. There was then no statute of mortmain, and the terms of the testament remained in force for seven hundred years—in fact, down to the last gasp of classic antiquity.

The continuity which it enjoyed is perhaps less attributable to its dogmas than to a sentiment of great delicacy which pervaded it. Christianity teaches that all men are brothers, but Epicurism practised the lesson before it was taught. Its bonds were those of friendship. Cicero has given it to history that the Epicureans had one to another the most unselfish sentiments. There was no community of goods. Friendship gave its own from a sense of pleasure and not from constraint.

During its long reign, Epicurism attracted many converts from other sects, but lost none of its own adherents. This singularity was explained by a wit of the baths, who, adjusting his toga, noted with the light banter of the day that it was easy enough to make a eunuch of a man, but another matter to make a man of a eunuch. It is possible that this *bel esprit* had grasped the doctrine better than his hearers. Certainly it has not always been thoroughly understood. Montesquieu accused it of corrupting Rome; but the accusation is groundless, for at its advent the Eternal City was one vast lupanar.

Seneca said of Epicurus that he was a hero disguised as a woman, and it is in this disguise that he is usually represented. The doctrine which he gave to the world seemed to praise sensuality where in reality it preached repose. Idlers in all times have halted at the appearance and omitted to go further. For this reason, if for none that is better, there has always been a false and a true Epicurism. Unhappily, the bastard has been best received, and in its reception it has managed to discredit both the philosopher and the philosophy.

Over the gateway to his olive-gardens Epicurus had written: "Enter, stranger; here all is fair; Pleasure lords the day." The sign was a bait, and of a flavour far different from the repellent severity of the notice which swung from the Academe. There admittance was refused to those who did not know geometry. But when the stranger, attracted by the proffered allurement, entered the gardens, he found that the lording of pleasure meant health of body and of mind.

There were some who entered, and who, delighted at the teaching, remained. There were others who entered at one gate and passed out discomfited at another; and there was also a third class, who, noting the tenor of the invitation, and knowing that the host was a philosopher, passed on charmed with the idea that the gratification of the senses possessed the sanction of metaphysics. These latter necessarily compromised Epicurus; and when his doctrine passed from Athens to Rome, it had been preceded by a bad reputation. For this the excuse is, seemingly, small. Epicurus was as voluminous a writer as Voltaire; and if the Romans misunderstood him, it is either because their knowledge of Greek was slight, or else because they were content to accept his teaching on hearsay. Toward the close of the republic, the system—such little at least as was generally known—became largely the fashion; and the elegance of Rome, like the indolence of Athens, cloaked its corruption with a mind-woven mantle of imaginary philosophy.

In descending the centuries, its reputation has not improved. Epicurism is not now synonymous, as it once was, with refined debauchery; yet at the dinner-tables of contemporary club-land there are many still unaware that he who is claimed as patron-saint had tastes so simple that his expense for food was less than an obolus a day, while Metrodorus, his nearest friend, expended barely a lepton more. Now and then, on high-days and festivals, a bit of cheese was eaten with sensual relish; but it is a matter of history that the ordinary fare of these voluptuaries was bread dipped in water.

The national divinity of the Romans is unknown. To all but the hierophants his name was a secret. Cicero has admitted that to him it was undisclosed. A tribune was even put to death for having pronounced it. If, in such a matter, conjectures were worth anything, it would not be irrational to fancy that the deity who ranked as Jupiter's superior was Pavor, Fright.

The hardiest and foremost conquerors in the world, the descendants of a she-wolf's nursling, were timid as children before the unintelligibility of the universe. Their earliest gods were revealed in the thunder; their belief was a panic; and when the panic subsided, it was succeeded by a dull, unreasoning dread.

No other land has seen a vaster Pantheon. There were so many divinities that Petronius said it was easier for the traveller to meet a god than a man. The more there were, the less insecure they felt. When they conquered a country, they took the gods as part of the spoils, but they treated them with great reverence; the temples were left standing and the altars unharmed. This moderation was probably due less to a sense of duty than to fear. They were afraid of their own gods; they were afraid of those of other nations; and those of whom they knew the least seem to have frightened them most.

In those days there was no iconoclasm, nor was there any attempt to make proselytes. The whole sentiment of Roman antiquity was opposed to the suppression of a creed, and such an idea as supplanting one religion by another was unknown. This liberality was particularly manifest during the latter part of the republic. At that time a statue to Isis was erected vis-à-vis to Jupiter. Sylla escorted a Syrian goddess to Rome, and Mithra, who had been lured from the East, became very popular among the lower classes. But all this occurred after triumphant campaigns. When Rome was young, her gods, if equally numerous, were less concrete.

The religion of the Sabines and the Latins was the naturalism of their Aryan ancestors. In it the gods, if emblematic, were unimaged; they were manifestations of the divine, but not actual divinities. Each new manifestation was a fresh revelation, to which the early Italiot was quick to give a name and found a worship; but in the worship there was more of dread than of hope, the dread of the unknown and the invisible.

Gradually the gods became less abstract, but, as M. Boissier has hinted, they were probably as lack-lustre as the imagination of the labourers that conceived them, and so remained dully and dimly perceived until peddlers from Cumæ and Rhegium came over with wares and legends. To their tales the Romans listened with marveling surprise. Their gods, like themselves, were poor and prosaic; they had no history, no myths; and with a pleasant and liberal sense of duty, they robed them with the shreds and tatters of Ionian verse.

At precisely what epoch this occurred is uncertain; but as the art of writing was familiar to the Romans in very ancient times, and as it has been shown that the Roman alphabet was drawn from Eolo-Dorian characters, it is not unreasonable to infer that relations between the two races were established at a comparatively early date.

The gods to whom the freedom of the city was thus unwarily granted, grew and expanded with it, but their native charm had been lost in crossing the sea. The serene mythology in which they were nursed was supplanted by gloomy superstitions; the gay and gracious fictions were dulled with grave chronicles; and the gods, who at home were cordial and indulgent, developed under the heavy hand of their adopters into an inquisitive and irritable police.

Instead of being loved, they were feared, and the fear they inspired was the heartrending fright of a child pursued.

To the untrained minds of their supplicants they lurked everywhere, even in silence. They were cruel and vindictive; they tormented the Roman out of sheer wantonness, and for the mere pleasure of seeing him writhe. Plutarch has confided to posterity that in those days a man could not so much as sneeze without exposing himself to their anger. Under such circumstances, worship was not merely a moral obligation, it was a matter of business, a form of insurance against divine risks, in which the worshipper with naïve effrontery tried to bargain with the gods that they should hold him harmless. This effort was solemnised by a religious ceremony whose meaning had been forgotten, and during which the priests mumbled prayers in a jargon which they did not understand.

With a retrospect even of two thousand years, it is a little difficult to fancy that the Romans pinned their faith to these mummeries, yet such seems to have been the case. In Greece there was much incredulity, but it was the laughing incredulity of a boy who has disentangled himself from the illusions of the nursery. That of the Romans took a different form; it was an irritated scepticism which vacillated between defiant negation and fervent belief. Doubtless there were enlightened men who took it all easily and with several grains of Attic salt; but they were infrequent; incredulity seems to have been the exception and in no wise the rule.

When the Roman, angered to exasperation, braved the gods with a sacrilege, at the first sign of impending danger he was quick to implore their protection. Sylla, feeling in the humour, sacked Delphos and insulted Apollo; all of which, Plutarch says, did not prevent him, the first time he was frightened, from praying to the very god whose temple he had pillaged. And Sylla, it may be remembered, was the last one to harbour any unnecessary superstitions. If remorse was felt by such an accomplished ruffian as he, what could be expected of the mass of his compatriots, who, if equally ruffian, were far less accomplished?

In reading back through history, it seems as though the Romans hated their divinities and yet were afraid to show their hatred; and it seems too that had one of them met a god alone, that god would have fared badly. Indeed, it is probable that the majority were animated with a feeling of displeasure like to that of the Norse warrior who ardently wished to meet Odin that he might attack and slay him. Nevertheless, they attended to their religious ceremonies; though they did so, perhaps, very much as most people pay their taxes. Of two evils, they chose the least. But when it was found that Evemerus had announced that the gods were ordinary bullies, who had been deified because every one was afraid of them, it was very generally thought that the right nail had been struck full on the head. In any event the idea was highly relished; and when in a certain play an individual was introduced who denied that there was such a thing as a Providence, the applause of the audience was appreciatively eruptive. It was like the sight of a sail to shipwrecked sailors.

This, however, was all very well in comedy, where any little blasphemy brought with it the thrill and flavour of forbidden fruit; but tragedy was a different matter. There, it is said, when the hero announced his escape from the infernal regions, children screamed and women shuddered. And indeed the contemporary pictures of the land of shades seem well calculated to terrify even the valiant. In the imagination of the people, any life beyond the tomb was nearly synonymous with an eternal nightmare. Of actual and physical torture there was none, or at least none, they believed, for them. The vengeance of Jupiter descended only on Titans and insurgent kings; it disdained the insignificance of the vulgar.

Nor was there any hope of happiness. The beatitude of the Elysian Fields was only for the anointed. The common mortal received neither reward nor punishment. The just and the unjust were plunged into the grotesque horrors of a fantastic night, from which, save on the stage, there was no escape.

The poets, admittedly, gave pictures of after-life that were other and more alluring than this, but their pictures were discredited; and besides, between the conceptions of the dreamer and the opinions of the masses there is a chasm that is never bridged. To the general public the idea of immortality does not seem to have been a consolation. Probably it partook something of the character of an embarrassing dilemma. On the one hand was the liberty to accept it for what it was worth ; on the other was the privilege to disbelieve in it entirely. There were doubtless not a few who took the latter course, and whose consequent freedom of thought must have been a cause of shuddering envy to the orthodox ; but so inextinguishable is the love of life, that the majority seem to have preferred to believe that existence, however miserable, was continued beyond the tomb, to adopting any theory which savoured of extinction. They were afraid, Seneca said, to go to Hades, and equally afraid not to go anywhere.

Toward the latter part of the republic, the credulity of the masses was somewhat impaired. Echoes of the *obita dicta* of the enlightened reached their ears. Besides, there was then little time for devotional exercises. Rome was in a ferment ; the tramp of soldiery was continuous ; cities were up at auction ; nations were outlawed ; institutions were falling ; laws were laughed at ; might was right, and magnificent vice triumphant. The field, then, was prepared for nothing if not a moralist, and Nature, who is often beneficent, produced one in the nick of time.

The annals of literature are harmonious with the name of Rome, yet Rome was the mother of but two men of letters—Cæsar and this moralist who was called Lucretius. Concerning the latter, history has been niggardly. It is said that he was born when Cæsar was a child, and died when Vergil was putting on the *toga virilis;* but beyond these dates history is dumb.

Lucretius is known to be the author of a poem, the most exquisite perhaps in the Latin tongue; but after that is recorded there are no anecdotes to help the sentence out. "Veil thy days," Epicurus had said, and the passionate Roman took the maxim for a motto. How he lived or why he lived, has been and now always will be purely conjectural. Yet if there is no diary to tell of the poet's incomings and outgoings, it is not a difficult matter to familiarise oneself with his train of thought and to picture the circumstances that directed it.

During his childhood, Sylla and Marius were playing fast-and-loose with their armies and with Rome. As a boy he could have witnessed a massacre beside which St. Bartholomew's was a street row—the massacre of fifty thousand allies at the gates of Rome—and on the morrow he may have heard the cries of eight thousand prisoners who were being butchered in the circus; while Sylla, with the air of one accounting for a trivial incident, explained to the startled Senate that the uproar came from a handful of insurgents bellowing at the whip. Later came the revolt of Spartacus, the conspiracy of Cataline, the flight of the coward Pompey, and finally the passing and apotheosis of Cæsar. If such things are not enough to give impressions to a poet, then one may well wonder what are.

In a monograph on this subject,* to which, it should be said in passing, the present writer is much indebted, M. Martha has noted that Lucretius believed in but one god. That god was Epicurus. "Deus ille fuit, deus," he exclaimed; and if the words sound exuberant, they may perhaps find an excuse in the fact that the Romans were very ignorant and Epicurus very wise. How he became acquainted with the works of the grave Athenian is unrecorded. In Rome, as has been hinted, contemporary acquaintance with them was scant and consisted of hearsay. At that time some fragmentary translations of Greek physics had been made, and it is possible that through them his attention was directed to materialism in general and Epicurism in particular. There is even a legend which represents him studying in Athens at the fountain-head. But however this may be, it is clear that Lucretius gave Rome her first real lesson in philosophy.

The doctrine which Lucretius preached to his compatriots was one of renunciation—renunciation of this world and renunciation of any hope of another. He was fanatical in his disbelief, and he expounded it with a vehemence and with an emphasis which, while convincing enough in its way, was yet in striking contrast to the apathy of Epicurus, who, serenely consistent to his principles, saw, as M. Martha says, no need to get excited when admonishing others to be quiet. But their tasks were dissimilar. Epicurus addressed himself to those who were already indifferent, while those who listened to Lucretius were still among the horrors of their original faith.

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* Le Poème de Lucrèce.

It was these horrors that Lucretius set about to dissipate. His imagination had caught fire on the dry materialism of Greece, and it was with the theory of atoms that he sought to rout the gods. The undertaking was not a simple matter. The abolition of the divine was an abolition of every tenet, political as well as devotional. The moment the atomistic theory was accepted, away went the idea that the phenomena of nature were dependent on the will of the gods; the whole phantasmagoria of religion faded, and with it the elaborate creed of centuries evaporated into still air. There was nothing left; even death was robbed of its grotesqueness.

To those who objected that in devastating the skies a high-road was opened to crime, Lucretius, pointing to the holocausts, the hecatombs and the sacrifices, answered, "It is religion that is the mother of sin."

> "Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta."

Other teachers had tried to purify religion, but Lucretius wished nothing short of its entire suppression; it had been without pity for Rome, and he was without pity for it. He hacked and hewed it with all his strength, and with a strength that was heightened by irony and science. The irony was not new to Rome, but the science was. Against the panic of superstition he opposed the tranquillity of common sense; against Pavor, Veritas, or at least that which seemed truth to him.

There is nothing classic about Lucretius except his materialism. The value of that is slight, but contemporary readers have found themselves startled at the modernity of his sentiments. The cry of disgust which came from him is identical with that which the latest singers have uttered. Their common pessimism has been echoed across the centuries. In many ways Lucretius may be considered Pyrrho's heir as well as that of Epicurus. Between the testators the difference is not wide. One addressed the mind, the other the heart; the ultimate object, the attainment of happiness, was the same. If their dual influence has been unimportant, it is perhaps because the goal is fabulous. In this respect Lucretius may then be considered their direct successor, and one, moreover, who had his own views regarding the possible improvement of the possessions which descended to him. Lucretius not only denied the existence of the gods, he denied the existence of happiness. There was none in this life, and in his negation of an hereafter there could be none in another. As for ambition, what is it but a desire for an existence in the minds of other people—a desire which when fulfilled is a mockery, and unfulfilled a tomb? And besides, to what does success lead? To honour, glory and wealth? But these things are simulachres, not happiness. Any effort, any aspiration, any struggle, is vain.

> "Nequidquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum
> Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."

Nequidquam! In vain, indeed! How vain, few knew better than Alfred de Musset, when he paraphrased that immortal, if hackneyed, distich in lines like these:

> "Au fond des vains plaisirs que j'appelle à mon aide,
> Je sens un tel dégout que je me sens mourir."

But Lucretius' *nequidquam* applied not only to empty pleasures; it applied to all the illusions that circle life, and to all that drape the grave. His disenchantment needed but one thing to be complete, a visit from that thought which was afterwards to haunt De Vigny:

> "Seul, le silence est grand, tout le reste est faiblesse."

Whether or not the influence of Lucretius was great enough to effect a revolution, is difficult to determine. But this at least is certain: he was a popular poet, and the appearance of his work coincided with a great decline of superstition. The dread which had been multiplying temples subsided. Among the educated classes, atheism became the fashion. Those who were less indifferent occupied themselves in cooling their indignation, but believers were infrequent. Varro declared that religion was perishing, not from the attacks of its enemies, but from the negligence of the faithless. The testimony of Lucilius is to the effect that no respect was shown to laws, religion, or to gods. To Cicero the latter were absurd; and the immortality of the soul, which Cæsar denied in the open senate, was to him a chimera. "In happiness," he said, "death should be despised; in unhappiness it should be desired. After it there is nothing." Cornelius Nepos looked back and saw temples in ruins, unvisited save by archaic bats. Religion was a thing of the past. Here and there it received that outward semblance of respect which is the due of all that is venerable, but faith had faded and fright had ceased to build. The Romans, some one has suggested, were not unlike those fabled denizens of the under-earth, who suddenly deserted their subterranean palaces, left their toys, their statues and their gods to the darkness, and, emerging into the light, saw for the first time the pervasive blue of the skies and the magnificent simplicity of nature.

Later, there was a revival. The restoration of religion was undertaken as a governmental necessity. The Senate proclaimed the divinity of Augustus, and thereafter the Cæsars usurped what little worship was left. That there was much faith in their divinity is doubtful. Valerius Maximus appears to have had no better argument than that they could be seen, which was more than could be said of their predecessors. Vespasian seems to have taken the whole thing as a joke. "I am becoming a god," he said with a smile as he died. Meanwhile, in the general incredulity, the earlier deities lost even the immortality of mummies. Under Diocletian a pantomime was given with great success. It was called, *The Last Will and Testament of Defunct Jupiter.*

CHAPTER III.

THE CONVULSIONS OF THE CHURCH.

THE earliest barbarian that invaded Rome was a Jew. He did not thunder at the gates; he went unheralded to the Taberna Meritoria—a squalid inn on the Tiber that reeked with garlic—broke his fast, and then sauntered forth, as any modern traveller might do, to view the city. His first visit was to his compatriots at the foot of the Janiculum. To them he whispered something, went away, returned and whispered again. After a while he spoke out loud. Some of his hearers contradicted him; he spoke louder. The peddlers, the rag-pickers, the valets-de-place and hook-nosed porters grew tumultuous at his words. The ghetto was raided, and a complaint for inciting disorder was lodged against a certain Christus, of whom nothing was known and who had managed to elude arrest.

Who was this Christus? Apart from the Gospels, canonical and apocryphal, history gives no answer. He is not mentioned by Philo or Justus. Other makers of contemporary chronicles are equally silent. Josephus makes a passing allusion to him, but that passing allusion is very generally regarded as the interpolation of a later hand. It may be added, that while Justus and Josephus say nothing of Jesus, they yet describe Essenism, and in those days many of the tenets of the early Church were indistinguishable from it. It seems, therefore, not unfair to suppose that either these historians knew nothing of the teaching of the Christ, or else that they considered it too unimportant to be deserving of record.

An early legend has, however, been handed down from Celsus, a Jew who lived about the time of Hadrian. The work containing this legend has been lost, and is known only through fragments which Origen has preserved. In substance it amounts to this. A beautiful young woman lived with her mother in a neglected caphar. This young woman, whose name was Mirjam—Mary—supported herself by needlework. She became betrothed to a carpenter, broke her vows in favour of a soldier named Panthera, and wandering away gave birth to a male child called Jeschu,—Jeschu being a contraction of the Hebrew Jehoshua, of which Jesus is the Greek form. When Jeschu grew up, he went as servant into Egypt, which was then the head-quarters of the magicians. There he learned the occult sciences, and these gave him such confidence that on his return he proclaimed himself a god.

The story of Mirjam and Panthera is repeated in the Gemaras—the complements and commentaries of the Talmud—and also in the Toledoth Jeschu, an independent collection of traditions relative to the birth of the Christ. These later accounts differ from that of Celsus merely in this, that Mirjam is represented as a hairdresser, while Panthera or Pandira is described as a freebooter and a ruffian. It may be noted that, in a work on this subject, Mr. Baring-Gould states that St. Epiphanius, when giving the genealogy of Jesus, brings the name Panthera into the pedigree.*

The importance of these legends is slight, and the question of their truth or falsity is of small moment. That which it is alone important to consider is the individuality of the Saviour; and the point whose conveyance has been sought is simply this, that beyond a restricted circle nothing was known of it during the first century of the present era.

Jesus, the Anointed, the Christ, was the flower of the Mosaic Law. The date of his birth is uncertain, and the story of his early years is vague. The picture of his boyhood, in which he is represented as questioning the Darschanim, the learned men, is, however, familiar to us all. In the schools—the houses of Midrasch, as they were called—he heard the sacred books of his race expounded, and learned such lessons in ethics as were obtainable from the moralists of the day. Meanwhile the dream of Israel, the forecast of a triumphant future, the advent of a Messiah, the abrupt upheaval which was to be both the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctification of the faithful, the remission of sins and the magnificence that was to be, were constantly discussed before him. As he grew older, he seems to have placed little credence on these prophecies; he waived them aside, retaining only the lessons in ethics, to which, in advancing years, as his own ministry began, he added an idea which he had gathered from one preaching in the wilderness, an idea which his own originality heightened with a newer force and flavour, and which formed the subsequent corner-stone of the Christian Church.

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* The Lost and Hostile Gospels.

At that time his belief in himself appears to have been slight. To the title of Messiah he made no claim. It was given to him unsought by his earliest adherents, who later imagined a genealogy which certain factions of Christianity declined to accept. Among these, the Ebionites and Docetæ are the more noteworthy. To the one he was an ordinary individual; to the other, a phantasm.

The story of his birth is one which is common to many religions. In a fragment of Irenæus it is stated that the Gospel according to St. Matthew was written to the Jews, who earnestly desired a Messiah of the royal line of David. To satisfy them that their wish was fulfilled was not an easy matter. The Aramaic Gospel to the Hebrews, as well as the Gospel according to St. Mark, offered no evidence that Jesus was the one they sought. But the early Church had the boldness of youth. Against the existing Gospels she opposed a new evangel, one which was more complete and convincing than its predecessors, and one, moreover, which bore the revered and authoritative name of Matthew. St. Matthew, however, had then long been dead, and his ability to write in Greek does not appear to have been suspected.

The Gospel which the Church attributed to him is to-day very generally regarded as a compilation of its predecessors, with the addition of a genealogy. The Messiah, it had been prophesied, would be of the house of David, and accordingly an effort was made to show that Jesus was of the royal race. The royal race seems then to have been extinct; but that is a side issue. The one point to be noted is that the descent of Jesus is claimed through Joseph, who, it is stated, was not his father.

The genealogy completed, the historian turned his attention to two passages in what is known to-day as the Old Testament. The first of these passages occurs in Isaiah (vii. 14—16), the second in Micah (v. 2). The first relates to a child that the Lord was to give as a sign, and the second designates Bethlehem as his future birthplace. It may be noted that the term in Isaiah which refers to the child's mother, and which was afterwards rendered into παρθένος, is *olme*, and *olme* means young woman. The pseudo-Matthew, however, preferred a narrower description, and represented the mother as a virgin. In regard to the second passage, there is doubtless some mistake, as all impartial commentators are agreed that the nativity of Jesus took place, not at Bethlehem, but at Nazareth.

There are, however, few great events which have been handed down through history unswathed in fables and misconceptions. The Gospel according to St. Matthew—and the remark holds true of the others—was written without any suspicion that it would be subjected to the scrutiny of later ages; it was written to prepare man for the immediate termination of the world. Such misstatements as it contains may therefore be regarded with a lenient eye.

But to return to the point. However slight was the belief of Jesus in himself, it is tolerably clear that the pretensions of his adherents angered the Nazarenes. They declined to admit the royal and supernatural claims that were advanced in favour of one whose kinsmen were of the same clay as themselves. To them he was merely a a graceful rabbi. Yet when he addressed the wondering fishers of Galilee, his success was both great and immediate. His electric words thrilled their rude hearts; they were both charmed and coerced by the grave music which he evoked from the Syro-Chaldaic tongue; their belief in him was spontaneous; they regarded him as dwelling in a sphere superior to that of humanity; gladly would they have proclaimed him king; and it was from their unquestioning confidence that Jesus drew a larger trust in himself. Certainly his personal magnetism must have been very great. There is a legend which represents him as being far from well-favoured, and this legend, like the others, is doubtless false. It is probable that he possessed that exquisite, if effeminate, type of beauty which is not infrequent in the East. One may fancy that his tiger-tawny hair glistened like a flight of bees, and that his face was whiter than the moon. In his words, his manner and appearance, there must have been a charm which was both unusual and alluring. Indeed, there were few who were privileged to come into direct contact with him that did not love him at once; but the multitude stood aloof. It refused to recognise the son of David in the mystic anarchist who had not where to lay his head.

The ministry of Jesus did not extend over three years. M. Renan thinks it possible that it did not extend much over one. But the time, however short, was well filled. On its lessons, races and nations have subsisted ever since. The pity of it is that the purport of the instruction should have been misunderstood.

It has been already hinted that the corner-stone of the Christian Church was formed of an idea which Jesus gathered from John the Baptist. When, therefore, he sent forth his disciples, he gave them no other message than that which he had himself received: "Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he added: "Verily, I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before the Son of Man be come." "All these things shall come upon this generation," were his explicit words to his hearers and disciples. After the episodes in the wilderness, Jesus went into Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." And a little later he addressed his auditors in these words: "Verily, I say unto you that there be some of them that stand by which shall in nowise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Citations of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely. If the testimony of the Gospels is to be believed, it is evident that the disciples were convinced that the fulfilment of the prophecy was a matter of months or at most of a few years. They lived, as M. Renan has noted, in a state of constant expectation. Their watchword was *Maran atha*, The Lord cometh. In fancy they saw themselves enthroned in immutable Edens, dwelling among realised ideals amid the resplendent visions which the prophets had evoked.

It was this error that formed the corner-stone of the Christian Church. When later it was recognised as such, the Church interpreted the "kingdom of God" as the establishment of the Christian religion.

But Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion, and still less of substituting a personal doctrine for the Mosaic Law. He came to prepare men, not for life, but for death. The virtues which he praised most highly were those of renunciation and abnegation of self. His one thought was centred in the approaching end of the world. It was on this belief that the value of his teaching rested; viewed in any other light, his continual condemnation of labour would be inexplicable; while his prohibition against wealth, his adjuration to forsake all things for his sake, the blow which he struck at the virility of man, his praise of celibacy, his disregard of family ties, his abasement of marriage, and his contempt even of the dead, would be without meaning.

The faith which he inculcated was a necessary preparation for the event then assumed to be near at hand. It was exacted as a means of grace. In it the reason, the understanding, had no part. It was the complete submission of the intelligence, a resolution to accept dogmas without question. In the moral certainty which his believers possessed of the immediate realisation of their hopes, it is not surprising that this faith should have been readily accorded. The enigma lies in the faith of the subsequent centuries. It may be, however, that the doctrine which has descended to us was merely the exoteric teaching. Of at least fifty Gospels that were written, four only have been recognised by the Church. Of these, the originals do not exist, and their supposed texts have been so frequently re-touched, that more than thirty thousand variations are said to have been discovered. It may be, then, that there was another doctrine, an esoteric teaching, which was never fully disclosed, or else has been lost in the dust-bins of literature. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Valentine is recorded as asserting that he had received an esoteric doctrine which Jesus imparted only to the most spiritual among his disciples; and the possibility is further heightened by the incongruity between the sublimity of the genius which was the Christ's and the tenancy of a belief in the realisation of the visions of Daniel.

Jesus was in no sense a scientist, but his insight was piercing and his intuitions clairvoyant. He was the most transcendent of rebels, but he was possessed of a comprehension too unerring to be deluded by the utopias of dream. It may be, then, that in the solitudes of the desert he conceived some such system as that which was taught by his predecessor in Nepal. To him, as to the Buddha, life was a tribulation. And what fairer paradise could there be than the infinite rest of chaos? Let the sullen rumble of accursed life once be quelled, and God's kingdom would indeed be come with power. What save this could have been that peace which passeth all understanding?

It may be remembered that according to the Hebrew sages man survived only in his children. The doctrine of resurrection, and the attendant theory of rewards and punishments, was unknown to them. But at the time of the advent of the Christ, these ideas were part of the teaching of the Pharisaic party. Where they were gathered is uncertain. They may have been acquired through acquaintance with the Parsis—and certainly Satan bears an astonishing resemblance to Ahriman—or they may have merely represented the natural development of Messianic hopes. In any event they seem to have pre-occupied Jesus greatly; and when questioned about them, he gave answers which, while delicate in their irony, are seldom other than vague.

It is probable that at the time when the questions were addressed to him, his system, which owing to his sudden death was perhaps never fully elaborated, was then merely in germ. But that he reflected deeply over the views of the patriarchs there can be no doubt, and it is equally indubitable that he considered the high-road to salvation to be discoverable, if anywhere, through them. The logic of it amounted to this: Life is evil; the evil subsists through procreation; ergo, abolish procreation and the evil disappears.

Many texts from the canonical Gospels might be given in support of this statement, but to cultivated readers they are doubtless too familiar to need repetition here. For the moment, therefore, it will suffice to quote two passages from the lost Gospel according to the Egyptians, a chronicle which was known to exist in the second half of the second century, and was then regarded as authoritative by certain Christian sects. The passages are to be found in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, iii. 6—9. In one, the Saviour speaks as follows: "I am come to destroy the work of the woman: of the woman, that is, of concupiscence, whose works are generation and death." In the other passage, Salome, having asked how long men should live, the Lord answered, "So long as you women continue to bear children."

These passages, if authentic, and there is little reason to think them otherwise, seem tolerably conclusive. In any event, it was this idea that peopled with hermits the deserts of Nitria and Scete, and it was this same idea which in its weakened force filled those bastilles of God, the convents and monasteries of pre-mediæval days. Cerdo, Marcion, and others of lesser note, advocated a doctrine of which it was evidently the starting-point; in many religious communities its influence is still distinguishable; but the question as to whether or not the idea as here represented was really the one on which the thoughts of the Saviour were turned, seems best answerable in the affirmative, if for no other reason than that it is less extravagant and more logical to regard the Christ as a practical philosopher than as an alluring visionary. And if he was not the one, he must have been the other. Certainly no one can claim for him any higher originality than that which was manifested in the form and flavour of his parables. He was the most entrancing of nihilists, but he was not an innovator. Others before him had instituted a reaction against the formalism of the Judaic creed. The austerity of his ethics, the communism which he preached, his contempt of wealth, and his superb disdain of everything which was of this world, were integral parts of the doctrine of the Essenes. The conception of a Supreme Being, differing in benignity from the implacable terrorism which Jehovah exerted, had been already begun by the prophets. Jesus unquestionably amplified the Father of Israel into the God of Humanity, but he did not invent Him. It may be further noted that Jesus had no thought of representing himself as an incarnation or descendant of the Deity. To such a title he made no claim, nor, except in certain passages inserted in the fourth Gospel, is he ever represented as using it. If Son of God at all, he was so in the sense that might apply to all men, and of which the address beginning, "Our Father who art in heaven," is a fitting example.

Yet this at least may be said. He created pure sentiment, the love of the ideal. He gave the world a fairer theory of æsthetics, a new conception of beauty, and he brought to man a dream of consolation which has outlasted centuries and taken the sting from death. So singular and powerful was the affection which he inspired, that after the crucifixion, Mary of Magdala, in the hallucinations of her love, asserted that he had arisen. He arose, indeed, but, as elsewhere suggested, it was in the adoring hearts of his disciples. And had it been otherwise, had their natures been less vibrant, their sympathies less exalted, less susceptible to psychological influences, the world would have lost its suavest legend, and the name of the pale Nazarene would have faded with those of the Essenes of the day.

M. Renan says that Rome, through relations with Syria, was probably the first occidental city that learned of the new belief. There were then, he has noted, many Jews there. Some were descendants of former prisoners of war, others were fugitives; but all were poor, miserable and down-trodden. To this abject colony Christianity brought an unexpected hope. The ideal, it is true, had fled from earth; but was it not possible to find it again above?

Many there were that accepted the new creed unquestioningly, but some of their more conservative brethren, disturbed at its dissidence with their orthodox tenets, denounced their compatriots to the government. It is possible that a certain amount of suppression was then exercised, but it appears to have been accidental and momentary. The Romans were familiar with too many deities to be alarmed at the advent of a new one. Their polytheistic tendencies made it quite easy for them to believe in a god, made man, and the suppressions which ensued were ordered in the interest of the public peace. The Christians were evidently regarded as seditious;

in denying the divinity of the Cæsars they were guilty of nothing less than high-treason. They were punished accordingly, but their punishment had no religious signification. The Epicureans might easily have been subjected to analogous treatment, but the Epicureans were philosophers, and as such saw no reason for pulling a wry face at harmless mummeries.

Then, too, the early Christians seem to have made themselves extremely unpopular. The Pantheon was most hospitable; its niches were free to every comer. But the believers in the Nazarene would have none of it. They not only refused any allegiance to Olympian potentates, but they would not permit their own God to consort with them. It was tantamount to saying that Jupiter's society was pernicious. There were few indeed that pinned much faith to that opulent divinity; but the open show of respect which was demanded as a governmental necessity was generally accorded, and nothing else was asked. The Christians, moreover, gave offence by their mode of life. They appear to have been a quiet, silent and possibly inoffensive sect, who avoided the forum and the circus, and passed their hours in sullen seclusion. Added to this, they predicted the approaching end of the world, which was obstinate enough to continue to revolve through spacious voids of which they were utterly ignorant; and this prophecy on their part could not have been regarded otherwise than as an open slur on the imperial optimism of the day.

It was doubtless about this time that the edict, *Non licet esse Christianos*, was passed—an edict which with curious clairvoyance appears to have been directed mainly against those Romans who were tempted to embrace the new belief. It is one of the platitudes of history that Rome fell through her rottenness. Yet, as M. Renan has been at no loss to show, Rome fell when her soldiery became converted. The spirit of peace which pervaded the early Church enervated a nation; the virility of the most belligerent of races was sapped. But this is a digression. During its infancy, Christianity was smitten by a disease which has been likened to croup. This croup was endemic in Alexandria, and from there floated over to Rome. It was called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a compound of corrupt Platonism, Hinduism and charlatanism. To abandon M. Renan's simile and take another, it was the bridge over which the world passed from paganism. Gnosticism gathered up theosophy, mysticism, rites, ceremonials and art—everything, in fact, which seemed worth the gathering—and passed them all to Christianity, which, thus equipped, set out on its triumphant career. But not at once. The populace, as has been hinted, was not favourably disposed. Tertullian says that a Christian was defined as an enemy of gods, emperors, laws, customs, and Nature itself. To the believers in Jesus was ascribed the influence of that which the modern Roman calls the jettatura. They were held to be connected with every calamity; and after each disaster the Eternal City echoed with shrieks from uncounted throats, *Christianos ad leonem!* To the circus with the Christians; let them camp with the beasts! It was then that Christianity learned to hate.

Meanwhile, the Ghetto mounted like a flood. Its ascension was favoured by many things. The atmosphere of Rome dripped with metaphysics, and through it had passed a new and pervading sense of lassitude. Nero was dead; and Nero, it may be noted, was paradox incarnate. He was an imperial nightmare that was far from unpopular; a drama of the horrible, with a joke for finale; a caricature of the impossible in a crimson frame; a Cæsar whose follies were laws and whose laws were follies; a maniac whose cell was the world and whose delirium was fame; a sceptred acrobat, with a throne for spring-board; an emperor jealous of a tenor; and a cabotin jealous of the gods; in fact, the antithesis of the humdrum. Under him, Rome saw luxury and ferocity hand-in-hand; cruelty married to pleasure. Christians mantled in flame illuminated the gardens of a prince. Intoxication had no frontiers. Life itself was a breathless chase after impossible delights. But now all was quite different, and it was with something of that lassitude which succeeds an orgy that the Romans found themselves tired even of themselves. They could not all have the moon for mistress. What was there left for them to do? Christianity offered itself, and as often as not Christianity was accepted.

After Constantine had used the new belief as a masquerade, its spread was rapid. Julian, indeed, threatened to prevent such of the Galileans from wearing their heads as refused to aid him in the reconstruction of polytheism, but the halt under him was momentary. The impulsion continued unchecked; the intermediate persecutions had made it notorious; the advance continued, but in the advance the watchword, *Maran atha*, had lost its meaning. The end of the world was no longer expected. Fortune favouring, Christianity turned optimist. Yet paganism was not dead; it had merely fallen asleep. Isis gave way to Mary; apotheosis was replaced by canonization; the divinities were succeeded by saints; and, Africa aiding, the Church surged from mythology with the Trinity for tiara.

At the close of the fourth century, the Church was practically mistress of civilization. Her sway was immense and uncontested. And what a sway it was! Temples, statues and manuscripts were destroyed. Bands of monks went about pillaging and demolishing whatever they could. The Bishop Theophilus, after destroying the temple of Serapis, set fire to the Alexandrian library, which contained nearly all the literary treasures of the past. But the power of the Church, though magnificent, was brief. At the moment when her glory was most brilliant, when Julian was forgotten and persecution had ceased, a mixed multitude of barbarians beat at the gates of Rome, and in their victorious onslaught swept antiquity away.

When the Church found herself surrounded by unfamiliar kings and chieftains—a set of fair, proud, honest and brutal ignoramuses, who wandered from place to place, or shut themselves up and got drunk in their strongholds, and with whom she had nothing in common—her dominant idea was to govern them. In this she succeeded: strength, however great, is defenceless against cunning, and the Church then was the depository of all the intelligence of the age. But her first act was to save herself from the violence to which society fell a prey. To save herself, she announced the principle of the separation of spiritual and temporal power. This accepted, she announced as corollary the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal. The rest was easy. Free inquiry was condemned; belief was forced; heretics were persecuted; and out of the ashes of imperial Rome a mitred prelate dragged a throne. *L'Eglise, c'était lui.* Through his influence the barbarians were led to baptism like brutes to the slaughter. Those who objected were baptised by force. Dagobert had all Gaul baptised in this way. Thereafter the Church presided over an eclipse of the intellect that lasted a thousand years. During that thousand years it was blasphemy to think; yet over those ages that are known as dark there hovered that prescience of fairer things which is the accompaniment of night.

Meanwhile, in a corner of the Orient whither some of the flotsam and jetsam of civilization had drifted, a college of charlatans wearied the centuries with abstractions and discussions on words. Their earlier disputes are legendary. One of them concerned the soul. Was the soul round or oblong? This question was never satisfactorily determined. Another proposition which was much discussed concerned the Saviour. Was he, or was he not, co-eternal with God? The Council at Nicæa, to which appeal was made, decided that he was both; and the Church anathematised all those who disagreed with its decision. In spite of the anathema, certain erudites suggested a compromise which involved the acceptance or rejection of an iota: *ὁμοούσιος* signified consubstantial, *ὁμοιούσιος* signified like as to the substance. If the one term were replaced by the other, the difficulty, it was argued, would be removed. But this solution was too easy to be well received, and the absence of that iota caused the death of many thousand dissenters.

Later, Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, asserted that Mary, being of the earth earthy, could not rightly be considered the mother of a God. This assertion was condemned as heretical by the General Council of Ephesus, and it was ordered that those who accepted it should be exterminated at once. Eutyches the archimandrite announced the contrary of that which Nestorius had advanced. He was excommunicated; the true doctrine being that Jesus was both a perfect divinity and a perfect man. Then suddenly the Orient became peopled with heretics; some held to Nestorius, others to Eutyches. In the second quarter of the sixth century, Justinian, an emperor who is said to have been so illiterate that he could not write his own name, and who in consequence was easily bored by subtleties, confiscated the property of all who were suspected either of Nestorian or Eutychian sympathies. In spite of these efforts, heresy was not suppressed; or perhaps it would be more exact to say that when one was suppressed, its place was immediately filled by another. At last, Heraclitus in utter exasperation issued an edict forbidding any one to speak of the single or double nature of Jesus the Christ. This edict itself was regarded as heretical, and continued to be so regarded until Constant published another which forbade any theological discussion, no matter of what kind, nature or description. To this edict, which the Pope Theodore qualified as an abominable subtlety, no one paid any attention. Constant, however, refused to be idle. He tried to check the spread of monachism, which at that time was enormous, and failing, went to Rome and sacked it.

In the eighth century appeared the heresy known as that of the iconoclasts. The Church, as has been hinted, adopted much of the pomp of paganism, and with advancing years made herself gorgeous with crosses, images and tapers; but a particular predilection was manifested in favour of big dolls, whether of marble, bronze or precious metals. To this the iconoclasts objected; with the Emperor Leo for chief, they destroyed the statues of Jesus, of Mary, of the saints and angels, wherever such statues were to be found; and for many years persecuted and massacred the worshippers. Yet when the Empress Irene assumed the purple, the iconoclasts were at once pursued with a vigour that was riotous and avenging. It is just possible that this terrible lady perceived that the destruction of images was the destruction of art. But be this as it may, the Beautiful had been sadly frightened, and thereafter remained invisible until lured to view again by the enticements of the Renaissance.

In Europe, matters were even worse. There was a continual panic, a ceaseless fear. There was no security, either civil or ecclesiastical. Diseases of the mind and body were omnipresent; famine at times was so ruthless that anthropophagy was openly practised. The only theory of right was might, and of this the Church held the reins. Many of the bishops were little better than bandits. They passed their days in wandering from place to place and in pillaging right and left. In a forgotten tale of Cervantes, one amiable scoundrel hails another, "Does your Grace happen to be a highwayman?" "Yes," the other answers, "in the service of God and honest people." Eliminate the courtesy and replace it with a blow from a bludgeon, and the question and answer may be represented as repeated indefinitely for five centuries.

Those of the clergy whose tastes were less adventurous devoted themselves to study and were looked upon as magicians; others, in the dim recesses of undrained monasteries, weary of all things, and most of life, gave themselves up unresistingly to acedia, the delirious pessimism of the cloister, and shrieked for death.

It was in those days that a demon of uncommon ugliness flitted through the gloom of the abbeys, whispering gaily to the cowering monks, "Thou art damned, and thou, and thou art damned for all eternity!" In the cathedrals, maidens had seen a beckoning fiend, who through shudders of song had called them down to swell the red quadrilles of hell. These visitors of course were legates of Satan. And who was Satan? His biography, though well filled, need not be long.

Satan was Jew from horn to hoof. The registry of his birth is contained in the evolution of Hebraic thought. In early ages, when sabaism, the primitive polytheism of the Semitic tribes, narrowed into monotheism, Jehovah was worshipped as the one real divinity. In his hands were the springs of all that is, of good and evil as well. But this idea was transient. About the Eternal were grouped a number of spirits whose duty it was to supervise the works of man. Among these celestials was one whose rôle was limited to that of accuser. This rôle appears to have been gradually expanded into one of general hostility. Above was Jehovah, below was man; while between the two were the inimical eyes of

Satan. In the younger books of the Old Testament, Satan is little more than a detective; in the New Testament he is an inciter to evil. But during the intervening period two things seem to have happened. The Hebrews had communicated with the Parsis, and Satan, banished from heaven, had assumed all the powers and attributes of Ahriman. Thereafter he was hatred incarnate, the spirit that *stets verneint*, the fallen son of a mighty father, a disinherited prince who had founded another monarchy and called it Hell.

It is in this guise that he appears in the New Testament, and the delicate moral of the Synoptic Gospels is perhaps little more than the prefigurement of the endless conflict between right and wrong. But be this as it may, it is evident that after Satan and the Saviour had met, the apparitions of the former became a matter of frequent occurrence. Did not his minions the sucubes and incubes haunt with lascivious lips the sleep of holy men and holier women? Was it not through his artifices that St. Victor was seduced by a beautiful girl? Did he not personally menace and threaten St. Maur? The stone which he flung at the inflexible St. Dominick is a matter too well attested to be susceptible of doubt. See how he tempted St. Anthony. In fact, unvisited by him it was difficult to be considered a saint at all. In the middle ages he was everywhere. The atmosphere was so heavy with his legions, that the Messalians made spitting a part of their devotions. From encountering him at every turn, the world at last became used to his ways, and thereupon imagined that pact in which the devil agrees, in exchange for the soul, to furnish whatever is desired. The case of Gerbert is one in point. According to the gossip of the day,* Gerbert, once a Spanish student, afterwards Archbishop of Ravenna, and subsequently Pope, entered into an agreement of this kind, and one night the devil came in person to claim him. It was the agreement they had made together long before in Cordova, where Gerbert, finding his studies too arduous, had signed the bond in exchange for the royal road. It was the devil who had taught him all he knew—algebra, clock-making, and how to become a Pope. It was clear as day that he would have known none of these things without infernal assistance. Gerbert resists, but Mephisto proves his claim. "You did not think me a logician, did you?" are said to have been his historic words, and, presto! Gerbert disappears in a fork of lambent flame.

When Christianity first raised its head, it viewed the pagan gods as part of the cohorts of Satan. These cohorts Tertullian divided into two classes—the rebels who had been banished from heaven in Satan's train, and the angels who in antediluvian days had fallen in love with the daughters of men. Their queen was Lili Abi

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* Michelet: Histoire de France.

(Lilith), Adam's first wife, from whose name our lullaby is said to be derived. The Dusii, a later subdivision who have given us the deuce, were so well known to St. Augustine that he declared it an impertinence to deny their existence. These latter appear to have been a malignant set of incubi who made a prey of women. Mr. Lecky says that but little over a hundred years ago an annual mass was given in the abbey of Poissey that the nuns might be preserved from their wiles.

Satan, meanwhile, lost much of his dignity. Mice, wolves and toads became his symbols, his auxiliaries, and even his momentary incarnations. Throughout the middle ages no sorcerer was considered well equipped without a sleek black cat, an animal to which, like many a sensible mortal, the devil appears to have been greatly attached. It was in the company of the cat that the sabbat was attended. The sabbat was popularly held to be a mass offered to Satan, and any one suspected of attending it, or being in any wise affiliated with Mephisto, was burned. The first punishment for this offence occurred in Toulouse in 1275. During the next fifty years over four hundred people were burned in the neighbourhood. In the fifteenth century all Christianity joined in a hunt for witches; and the hunt continued for three hundred years, until every sorcerer had disappeared and Salem put out her bonfires. In each country the warmth of the chase was in direct proportion to the power of the clergy. To spare a witch was considered an insult to the Almighty. Luther was particularly vehement on this point; so, too, was Calvin; and Wesley was as great a fanatic as any. Montaigne was one of the first to laugh at witchcraft; but Montaigne, like all advanced thinkers, was wickedly incredulous. The hunt, as has been hinted, was continued, and it was kept up not only until all the witches had disappeared, but until all belief in the devil had gone with them. Persecution subsided when scepticism began. The history of the Inquisition is exactly analogous. When the world began to think, intolerance ceased.

During this time Satan was not otherwise idle. He continued to appear in the most unexpected and surprising manner, and that, too, up to within comparatively recent dates. His last historical appearance is in a pleasant anecdote in which he is represented as visiting Cuvier. He enters the great man's study with his usual *quærens quem devoret* air. "What do you wish of me?" Cuvier asks curtly, for he is annoyed at the intrusion. "I've come to eat you." But Cuvier's shrewd eye had already examined him. "Horns and hoofs!" he retorts; "granivorous! You can't do it." Whereupon, outfaced by science, Satan vanished through an in-quarto, never to appear again save when, in the garb and aspect of a policeman, he visits the conscience of the misdemeanant.

But to return to the middle ages. The chronicles of Cassien, Vincent de Beauvais and Raoul Glaber, are filled with lurid pictures of those dark days. Disasters followed one another with the regularity of the seasons. The desolation which the Church had sought to stay had increased to terrific proportions. The empire of Karl the Great had been swept away as utterly as that of the Cæsars. Throughout Europe there was a hideous fear, a breathless expectation. The Antichrist had come. His presence was signalled from the pulpit. Churches, monasteries, donjons and burgs, echoed and thrilled with the rumour of his sacrileges. Now he was the son of the Popess Johanna, conceived during a pontifical procession; now he was a ruffian marauder, burning basilicas and violating the tombs of the saints. In the ninth century there was an eclipse of the sun which frightened a king to death. In 945, while a cyclone swept over Paris, monsters armed with battle-axes dropped from the skies, and, rushing into a church, tore down the pulpit, which they used as a battering-ram to destroy a neighbouring house. In 988, a wolf entered the cathedral of Orleans, and, seizing the bell-rope in his mouth, rang out the knell of the world. It was evident to every one that the trumpets of the last judgment were soon to be heard. At once there was a frantic effort to make peace with God; there was a rush for the monasteries, and a general donation of property to the Church. The *dies iræ* was at hand. The exact date was known. It was to come on the 25th of March, A.D. 1000. An hysterical rictus passed over the face of Christendom; the forgotten hope was to be realized! At last the *dies illa* arrived. In the Holy See the Pope sat, enervated and impatient, counting the minutes and awaiting the climax through the succeeding fractions of each hour. In the churches, the crowd, with heads bowed to the ground, felt time limp by and yet saw no sign. The expectation lasted four days and four nights. Then, so runs the chronicle, an immense dragon rushed through the open skies. In an abbey the eyes of a Christ were seen to weep. Yet still the earth remained unsundered and humanity unclaimed.

When the panic subsided, the Church found that her wealth had been largely increased. Her power, too, had developed. The cowl was everywhere, and everywhere it was dreaded. This dread was not unmingled with disgust; the fanaticism, asceticism and illiteracy of the clergy resulted as often as not in delirium and satyrisis. Indeed, their customs were neither amiable nor cleanly. The different bulls which the Popes launched at them make it easy to see of what they were capable, and difficult to fancy of what they were not. But their manners and morals are relatively unimportant; the terrorism that the Church exerted is more to the point.

The chief instruments of coercion of which the Church disposed were excommunication and the confessional. Without confession, no absolution; and without absolution, eternal torture.

There is a quaint little anecdote about the Curé of Mendon, in which that immortal jester is represented face to face with Clement VII. His Holiness having graciously permitted him to ask a favour, Rabelais begged to be excommunicated. Exclamation-points and question-marks shot from the Pontiff's eyes. "Holy Father," said the apostate, "I am a Frenchman. I come from a little town called Chinon, where the stake is often seen. A good many fine people have been burned there: some of my relatives, among others. But if your Holiness would excommunicate me, I fancy that I would never be burned. And my reason is this. Journeying lately with the Bishop from Paris to Rome, we passed through the Tarantaises, where the cold is bitter. Having reached a hut where dwelled an old woman, we besought her to make a fire. She took a faggot and tried to light it, but did not succeed; then she took some straw from her bed, and, being still unable to make it burn, she began cursing, and said, 'Since the faggot won't burn, it must have been excommunicated by the Pope's own jaw.'" This of course occurred after the Reformation, and relates to a man who was a notorious sceptic. It is even probable that the story is a fabrication; but as an anecdote it is serviceable in pointing the moral of the decadence of great things. In the primitive days of the Church, excommunication amounted merely to expulsion. Those against whom it was addressed were shut out of a limited circle; but when that circle expanded until it circumscribed all society, the potency of excommunication was prodigious. If the anathema was launched at a king, his entire monarchy fell under the ban. When Philippe Auguste was excommunicated, neither baptism, marriage nor burial was permitted in the realm. Corpses rotted in the highways. The people became wild with terror. This state of affairs lasted for eighteen months—in fact, until the interdict was removed. But with time, as has been hinted, its potency waned; like other good things, it was overdone; and early in the fifteenth century all those who had the heart to laugh must have been hugely amused at the spectacle of three rival popes excommunicating each other.

During the dark ages, however, amusement was rare. The masses were a prey to all the delusions and depressions that come of poor nourishment. They were ignorant and credulous; their minds were filled with fables and legends; they were terrorised by the dead as well as the living; agonised in this life, they were threatened with everlasting torture in another. It is, therefore, but small wonder that they shuddered at the viaticum and trembled before the priest. It was through his ministrations alone that salvation was obtainable.

At first the priest was merely an intercessor. In return for his good offices, he asked of the penitent little else than fasting, prayer and contrition; but gradually he discovered that these canonical penances were without advantage to himself, and he began to exact payment for the divine forgiveness which it was his privilege to declare. In the course of time, this custom was found so profitable that plenary indulgences were granted. In 1300, pilgrims from far and near flocked to Rome and covered the altars with gold. Every sin, every penalty, was remitted. The claims of purgatory were obliterated. The joy was so great, that the pilgrimage was called a jubilee.

The jubilee was instituted by Boniface VIII., the author of the bull *Ausculata fili*, in which he declared that, as representative of God, he had the right and the power to uproot, tear down, destroy, dissipate, rebuild and raise up in His name. In spite of this fine language, the Avignon Consistory established that he had asserted that the Trinity was an absurdity; that it was fatuous to believe in it; that religion was all a lie; that there was no harm in adultery; and that he, the pope, who could humble kings, was mightier than Christ.

The success of the first jubilee was so great that Urban VI. held another; only instead of summoning the pilgrims to Rome, he allowed his absolution to be hawked about wherever sinners most did congregate. It had been said that the riches of man are his redemption, and the clergy were very ready to put the saying into practice. Indulgences were not only sold, they appear to have been forced on those who refused them. A dominican, Johan Tetzel, took charge of the sale in Germany of those granted by Leo X. He announced that he had power to deliver a full discharge from the penalties of sin, even *si quis Virginem vitiasset ac gravidam fecisset.* His tariff is still exhibited.

Meanwhile, the General Councils had moved from Constantinople to Rome. The heresies which they were called upon to consider were mainly protestations against the despotism of the Church. First came the heresies of the Petrobusians and the Arnoldists—unimportant, but vexatious; so vexatious, in fact, that their respective founders, Petrus de Brueys and Arnold de Bresse, were burned at the stake. The Petrobusians were followed by the Vaudois, who, although pursued, proscribed and anathematised, maintained a secret continuity until Calvinism offered them a harbour. Another heresy was that of the Albigenses. The Albigenses, who came from a village in Languedoc, at a time Michelet has noted, when Languedoc was a Babel, professed a mixture of Gnosticism and Manicheism. They considered the Saviour to have been a man, like any other, who had suffered the just punishment of his sins. But, what was more serious, they questioned the prerogatives of the Holy See. Innocent III. determined to exterminate them. At his commands the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy set out for Languedoc. The query was, how the heretics were to be distinguished from the orthodox. "Kill them all," said Armand, the pope's legate; "kill them all; God will know His own." Sixty thousand are reported to have been killed; and of these, seven thousand were slaughtered in a cathedral that was ringing with a Te Deum. The whole of Provence was devastated; vines were uprooted, harvests destroyed, and houses torn down. As this seemed insufficient, the bishops received orders to visit personally or by delegate any portion of their diocese in which they suspected that heretics might lurk. When this decretal was made, the Inquisition was established. "Et ardet," said the pseudo St. John; and those two words were sufficient to send over half-a-million of human beings to the stake.* Yet still heresies continued to appear. There was the heresy of the Dulcinists, the heresy of John Wicliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague. J'en passe et des plus exquises.

From the Crusades, in which nations wrangled over a sepulchre, sprang a new heresy, or rather an apostasy—that of the Templars, whose office it had been to protect pilgrims on their way to the East. It was claimed that, instead of attending to their duties, they had become believers in Muhammad; and, moreover, that they held Salahaddin to be a valiant and courteous knight, which he probably was. Muhammad, who had long been turned to dust, was a well-intentioned visionary, afflicted with what is known to pathology as hysteria muscularis—the only disease that ever founded a religion. Now if the Templars were apostates, they at least were logical. The Papacy had pitted Christianity against Muhammadanism, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. The result was that the latter proved its claim. This point, however, does not seem to have been advanced in their favour. They were tried, convicted, and many of them were burned.

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* Michelet: Histoire de France. Llorente: Histoire de l'Inquisition.

Meanwhile, the popes and princes of the Church had lost faith, and decency as well. Petrarch, in his letters *Sine titulo*, speaks of the papal court as follows:

"There is here (in Avignon) everything imaginable in the way of confusion, darkness and horror. Avignon is the sewer of every vice, the gully of every wickedness. I know from personal experience that in this place there is neither piety nor charity. Faith is absent; there is nothing holy, nothing just, nothing human. Friendship, modesty and decency are unknown. Houses, squares, temples, courts and pontifical palaces drip with lies. The hope of a future life is considered an illusion; Jesus Christ is looked upon as a useless invention; virtue is regarded as a proof of stupidity, and prostitution leads to fame."

Such is Petrarch's account; but Petrarch was possibly annoyed because his sister had been seduced by the pope.

The Abbé Guyot, author of the "Dictionary of Heresies," says, though alluding this time to Rome: "The luxury of the bishops, their scandalous mode of life, their ignorance, which is on a par with their vices, have furnished heretics with excellent grounds for violent rhetoric."

Of Sextus IV., Infessura says, in words that are best left untranslated, "Puerum amator et sodomita fuit." And it would appear, not only that he was guilty of these charming practices, but that he granted indulgences for their general commission. Innocent VIII., his successor, by way of setting a good example to future pontiffs, made public acknowledgment of four sons and three daughters. He established an agency where the remission of sins could be bought as readily as a railway ticket to-day. Of Alexander VI., the father and lover of Lucretia Borgia, little that is favourable can be said, except perhaps that he was the most magnificent ruffian that Rome had seen since the days when Nero, with a concave emerald for monocle, watched the rape of Christian girls.

If the popes were a bad lot, the clergy do not seem to have been much better. Gerson says that the cloisters were like markets, the convents like lupanars, and that the churches and cathedrals were lairs of bandits and thieves. But the mediæval priest was not only a voluptuary and a freebooter, he appears to have been a jocular blasphemer as well. It is a part of history that when Luther reached Rome he heard more than one of them consecrate the Eucharist with a jeer: "Panis es et panis manebis, vinum es et vinum manebis." There cannot have been two hells; and, granting that there was one, the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church seems to have been built on it.

In the year 1500 the world was very old. The Renaissance had lied. It had promised and not fulfilled. A few years before, Savonarola had sought to reform Christianity, and particularly the pope. He was burned. In words that rise and greet and kiss the eye, Dante had rejuvenated hell. Petrarch had poured the newest of wine into a cup that was gothic. Across the centuries an unterrified spirit of beauty had called to Boccaccio, and he had repeated the message to inattentive ears. There seemed to be no one that cared to blow away the dust of ages. Every germ that promised fruit was neutralised. Yet Italy was peopled with atheists. The jurisdiction of the Orient was lost; England was no longer a vassal. A tottering pontiff anathematised in vain, and, seeing the uselessness of his maledictions, filled Europe with the uproar of his debauches. The world was very old, but in the printing-press it had found the waters of youth. The earth was larger, and soon the skies were to be unveiled.

It was in those days that a German monk threw an ink-bottle at the devil and defied the pope. A little later, Bohemia seceded. Germany followed in the wake, and with her went Switzerland and the Northern States. Luther's heresy became orthodoxy. And yet the newest thing about it was so old that it had been forgotten. Everywhere it was welcomed. The question of its youth or age had nothing to do with it. It was in opposition to the existing order of things, and as such it was a success. Catholicism was a twilight, Lutherism a dawn. Christ said, Prepare; the Church said, Sleep; the Reformation called upon the world to awake. Luther's aim was to lead belief back to the starting-point, but for the time being his aim was overlooked. The heresy which bore his name was considered merely a quarrel between monks. "Bravo!" Hutten said; "let them eat each other up!"

Luther, who was a courageous blunderer and sincere in all his endeavours, did something more than try to change the current of affairs. He created German as Dante had created Italian. It was he who caught and tamed the ringing tongue of the Niebelungen. From the resisting heroes of the Rhine he lured a secret, and, first of his race, gave to a nation a language for birthright.

Barbarism, meanwhile, had not absorbed itself. Pyrrho still slept. The reform which Luther instituted aggravated the evils which it proposed to correct. The Protestantism which followed was as intolerant as the mother Church; more so perhaps, for it had the intolerance of youth, and as it broke and scattered into countless creeds, each of the brood, save the Quakers, arrogated to itself the right to persecute and destroy. To Luther, persecution seemed not only lawful but necessary. Calvin, who was as intolerant as the Inquisition and every whit as fanatical, made it a prop of his church. And Knox, to whom one mass was more frightful than ten thousand insurgents, declared that an idolater merited nothing less than death.

But persecution, however endorsed, was not of a nature to resist the influence of advancing thought. As scepticism arose, intolerance declined; and as belief in future punishment passed away, so did the torture of the recalcitrant. It may be noted that the lamented Ranke estimates the number of human beings destroyed by Christianity as surpassing ten million. And yet there are people who think that Justice merely limps. During ten centuries it sat motionless in a cul de-jatte.

Among the first to break a lance in the Lutheran tragedy was Erasmus. No one that has read "The Cloister and the Hearth" will need to be reminded that the story of Gerard and Marguerite is the history of his parentage. As a knight-errant of free thought he went about combating intolerance. In the last pages of the ever-famous "Praise of Folly," he showed, with exquisite felicity of diction, the folly of creeds and sects. We are wiser now; but the world then was learning the alphabet. Erasmus received his full share of abuse, and, what is more to the point, saw his enemies exhaust twenty-seven editions of his work. Unpopularity has its advantages.

In spite of his intrepidity, Erasmus was as a small boy in comparison to that *abstracteur de quinte essence*, Master Alcofrybas Nasier. Where Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had looked into the past, the author of the exceedingly horrifying life of the Great Gargantua pointed to unexplored horizons. The "Praise of Folly" was cold as a rapier; the biography which Rabelais gave to the public was as exuberant, as prodigal and as turbulent as the sea. It was a new praise of Nature. Its appearance marked the beginning of another Renaissance; in all its pantagruelism there was not a single tear. Its philosophy was a commingling of science and satire; it was unexampled in boldness, but it was not dogmatic. Rabelais, who had been educated in a monastery, where the vows were those of ignorance and not of religion, was too wise to be an atheist. He objected mightily to tyranny, but he did not meddle with the unknowable. If he was anything, he was an agnostic. "I am going in search of the great Perhaps," he said on his death-bed. His obscenity is compromising, but it is not blasphemous. The nakedness of his thought extended only to the material.

Another thinker who refused to take a step beyond the real was Montaigne. Where Rabelais hesitated, Montaigne doubted. He had caught the Isostheneia of Pyrrho, and balanced his thought in a perfect equilibrium. He neither affirmed nor denied. If he fancied that the universe was a foundling, his good taste prevented him from openly questioning the parentage. In this respect his silence is admirable and well worthy of imitation. Christianity he looked upon as a decadence. He noted with mild regret that the high-roads of civilisation were moss-grown and abandoned, and that the compass which the Greeks had used was buried under the dust of centuries. But he waived conclusions; his thought was too volatile to convey a decision. Stella said that had Swift so desired, he could have written beautifully about a broomstick. Montaigne wrote about nothing at all with a charm that has never been excelled.

When Montaigne put a question-mark, Charron shrugged his shoulders; the *Que sçay ie?* the What do I know? became, What does it matter? And yet, like many another that affected indifference, Charron was ardent and prone to indignation. In his chief work, *De la Sagesse,* a work undeservedly forgotten, he said many smart things to the orthodox, and he said them, too, in a language which, if antiquated to-day, was then very virile. He was among the first to note that ideas of right and wrong vary with the latitude. "That which is impious, unjust and abominable in one place, is piety, justice and honour in another. There is not a law, a custom or a belief, that is everywhere received or rejected." Religion, too, he held to be a question of latitude. "Our religion is that of the country in which we are born and educated; we are circumcised and baptised, we are Jews, Muhammadans or Christians, before we know that we are men." To which he added: "A strange thing it is that the Christian religion, which, being the only belief true and revealed of God, ought to be extremely one and united, because there is but one God and one truth, is, on the contrary, torn into many parts and divided into many conflicting sects, to such an extent even, that there is not an article of faith or point of doctrine which has not been diversely argued and agitated, and given rise to heresies and dissensions. But what makes it seem still more strange is, that in the false and bastard religions, whether Gentile, Pagan, Jewish or Muhammadan, the like divisions do not appear." And much more to the same effect; concluding that truth is intangible, religions are equally *estranges et horribles au sens commun*, and that the sovereign remedy for the ills of life is *de se prester à aultruy et de ne se donner qu'à soy.*

While Charron in this manner was foreshortening Pyrrho, Sanchez, a Spaniard, was laying the foundations of agnosticism in a work entitled, *Tractus de multum nobile et prima universali Scientia, quod non scitur*—"Treatise on the very noble and extremely universal Science, to wit, that we know nothing." This contribution to literature appears to have created quite a little commotion; but, strange as it may seem, the commotion subsided, and to-day, outside the covers of a dictionary of philosophy, Sanchez, like Charron, is hard to find.

In the course of these international attacks, Rome had heard Bruno announce that the universe was a living organism whose soul was God. He was sent to the stake. Vanini had refused to discuss the immortality of the soul before he was old, rich and a German. He was burned at Toulouse. Campanella wrote a book against heresies, and was tortured at Naples seven times for his pains.

But the fangs of Romanism were being drawn. The Pope Urban VIII. had written on his brother's tomb, *Hic jacet pulvis et cinis*, *postea nihil*, and announced that the world governed itself. Decidedly the influence of the Church was on the wane, and yet the time was still far away when thought was to be disenthralled.

Were it not for a handful of thinkers, the seventeenth century might be catalogued among the dark ages. The intellectual fecundity which was the characteristic of the sixteenth gave way to an era which was largely one of mental stagnation. The world seemed tired of disputes, and inclined, too, to accept old beliefs unquestioned. The hand of scholasticism was still upon it. It viewed speculation with uneasy dread, and kept its anxious eyes fixed upon the past.

And yet there were a few whose instincts invited to other vistas. In Holland was Spinoza; in England, Bacon and Hobbes; in Germany, Kepler and Leibnitz; while in France was Gassendi, Bayle, but first Descartes. "Give me force and matter," he cried, "and I will refurbish the world." Force and matter were not forthcoming, but in that magnificent boast was the accouchement of modern thought. One may even say that its layette was already prepared. A few years before, Europe had listened to Galileo recanting his heresy; but when, before the assembled prelates, the prisoner muttered, *E pur si muove*, a page of history was turned down, and across it was written, Farewell to Rome.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISSENT OF THE SEERS.

In one of the forgotten plays of Laberius, a jester is represented as recommending a smug-faced companion to get a foretaste of philosophy in the latrinæ. In one sense the jester was wise in his generation and clairvoyant too. About philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, the impolite have always discerned a bad odour. And this not without reason. In literature there is nothing more unpleasant than an attempt to prove something; indeed, if ever a proper penal code is devised, the dietary products of logic will be declared contraband, and every ergo banished the realm. In the absence of any criterion of truth, such a word as therefore has seemingly no *raison d'être.* The sum of all the angles of a triangle may be equal to two right-angles, but however amply that fact or any other be demonstrated, it cannot lift the inquisitive beyond the limits of an experience which in itself may be erroneous. Who shall say but that in some other sphere, where perhaps there are now such commodities as square fluids and moral substances,—who shall say but that there the sum of all the angles of a triangle may not be equal to two right-angles; or, as Mill has suggested, who shall say but that there is a land where two and two make five? Yet, waiving such magnificent hypotheses, and granting that deductions which follow from experience are not erroneous, it must be admitted that they bring us no nearer the truth; the essence, the reason of things is as intangible as before.

And metaphysics has yet another defect. The eternal questions, What am I? What can I know? —questions which it purports to answer—are left for all response as vague as the enveloping scholia. But the good that comes of evil is ever re-nascent, and out of the questions and answers have sprung the three foremost systems of modern anti-theistic thought. Of these, Pantheism takes the precedence, which is the due of age. Its nominal founder is Spinoza.

The life of Baruch Spinoza should be taught to every school-boy. It is not only as uninteresting as the ordinary studies of average youth, but it holds a lesson of such gentleness, modesty and abnegation of self, that in a search for a better one the whole parade of history might be reviewed in vain.

Like certain other notabilities, Spinoza was a Jew. His parents were descendants of Portuguese Israelites, who had fled from the Inquisition and unfolded their tents behind the dykes of the Netherlands. To-day, in Amsterdam, any valet-de-place will designate the early home of the philosopher, and every valet-de-place will point to a different house. But when the sight-seer is tired into satisfaction, discrepancies are of small moment. Moreover, after exhausting his imagination on the Burgwal, any valet-de-place is competent to show the exact spot near the synagogue where a fanatic believer aimed a dagger at the thinker's heart. The aim was unsuccessful, though it rent the coat; and this coat the guide, if he is clever, will tell you that Spinoza kept ever after by way of memorabilium. But, clever or not, give him a louis and let him go. Spinoza's life is not such an one as should be listened to in the streets.

In the library at Wolfenbeütel there is a portrait of a grave, olive-skinned Hebrew, who stands in the upright idleness which is peculiar to portraits in oil. The hair falls back and over the shoulders in an expanding flood. The face is nearly oval, and the eyes are large and patient. This portrait, which is of Spinoza, was probably painted toward the close of his life. He died, it may be noted, at the age of forty-four, in the year 1677. As has been hinted, his life is without interest. If there was a tragedy in it, it was, as Mr. Wilde would say, that there was none at all. There is some mention of a little romance with the daughter of his teacher. But Spinoza was poor, and it is said that a wealthier student made diamonds of indifferent water fall in miniature cascades before the maiden's unresisting eyes.

It is possible that this legend, out of which Auerbach has weaved one of his charming tales, is not untrue. There is a quotation to the effect that Mammon can win his way where angels might despair; and if an angel, then, *à fortiori*, a philosopher. In any event, Spinoza appears to have been jilted, which probably was the best thing that could have happened. A thinker should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Spinoza was educated to be a rabbi, but with increasing years he grew too big for Jewish theology and declined to visit the synagogue. It was then that some zealot tried to stab him. This argument being insufficient, the elders offered him an annual pension of a thousand florins, on condition that now and then he would appear in the synagogue and keep his opinions to himself. Spinoza was very poor, but his opinions were to him more precious than money. He refused therefore, and was excommunicated at once. The great ban, the Schammatha, was publicly pronounced upon him. For half-an-hour, to the blare of trumpets, he was cursed in the name which contains forty-two letters; in the name of Him who said, *I am that I am and who shall be;* in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Tetragrammation; in the name of the Globes, the Wheels, Mysterious Beasts and Ministering Angels; in the name of the great Prince Michael; in the name of Metateron, whose name is like that of his master; in the name of Achthariel Jah. The Seraphim and Ofanim were called upon to give mouth to the malediction. Jehovah was supplicated never to forgive his sin, to let all the curses in the Book of the Law fall upon and blot him from under the heavens. Then, as the music swooned in a shudder of brass, the candles were reversed, and through the darkness the whole congregation chanted in unison, Amen!

After that, Spinoza, being no longer a Jew, changed his name from Baruch to Benedictus, and turned his thoughts from the Kabbala to Descartes. The life he thereafter led was one of extreme simplicity. He earned his bread by polishing lenses, and expended on it but a trifle more than the traditional obolus of Epicurus. When his father died, his sisters, arguing that a heretic had no right nor title to the property of the faithful, tried to keep from him his inheritance. Spinoza, however, appealed against them, won his suit, and then gave back as free gift all the contested property except one bed, which his biographer Colerus says, *était en verité fort bon.* A few other instances of his magnanimity might be given, and a few anecdotes of his gentleness related; but when they were told, the reader would find himself as unacquainted with the man as before. Properly speaking, he had no biography; his life was one of solitude; its essence was meditation; and the Wolfenbeütel portrait would have served its purpose better, had it represented the sombre face of one whose eyes were lost in thought, and whose patient hand polished a concave lens.

Spinoza's fame rests principally on two works which shortly after his death were proscribed as profane, atheistic and blasphemous. These works are the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* and the *Ethica.* The first is the key-note of rationalism, the second is the basis of modern philosophy. The rationalism of the first and the philosophy of the second stand in the closest connection. In both, Nature is shown to be an omnipotent ruler, in whose court such a parvenu as the supernatural is not received.

Spinoza's negations are three-fold. He denied the existence of an extra-mundane Deity; he denied that man is a free agent; and he denied the doctrine of final causes.

His negation of the existence of an extra-mundane Deity is not always clearly understood. The term *Deus* is strewn through his pages, and its repetition has often misled the unwary. There is, he taught, but one substance, and in this substance all things live, move and have their being. It is at once cause and effect; it is God. But the term thus used has nothing in common with the theistic idea of a Creator, who, having fashioned the world, "sits aloft and sees it go." On the contrary, God and the universe were to Spinoza one and identical; they were correlatives; the existence of the one made that of the other a logical necessity. To him the primordial entity, the *fons et origo rerum*, was God; but God was

Nature, and Nature, Substance. The three terms he used interchangeably; the former predominate in his earlier writings, the third in the Ethics. His reason for making use of the first is not entirely apparent, unless it be, as Dr. Martineau has suggested, that even when the sun of Israel had set, he still loved to linger in the mystical penumbra of an earlier faith. But be this as it may, and however his use of the term may be interpreted, it is tolerably clear that Spinoza, far from lowering the Deity to Nature, exalted Nature to a God. God was everywhere, and every region was filled with the Divine.

Spinoza has been frequently blamed for reading the banns over the unknowable and the known, and perhaps the blame is not altogether undeserved. But in this connection it may not be amiss to call Goethe to his rescue. And Goethe, it may be remembered, is the Spinoza of verse. "To discuss God apart from Nature," said the poet, "is both difficult and dangerous. It is as though we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the medium of the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity of accusing of absurdity those who philosophically unite the world with God." Voltaire, however, took a different view, the view of an inconsequent historian who relies on his wit. Now wit is little else than the commonplace in fine clothes; and Voltaire, who treated the humdrum with the skill of a modiste, drew the threads of fancy, and worked an elaborate hemstitch:

"Alors un petit Juif, au long nez, au teint blême,
Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,
Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,
Caché sous le manteau de Descartes son maître,
Marchant à pas comptés, s'approcha du grand Etre:
'Pardonnez moi,' dit-il, 'en lui parlant tout bas,
Mais je crois entre nous, que vous n'existez pas.'"

That which is called Free-will had to Spinoza a purely verbal existence. To him, the state of mind at any given moment is the effect of some definite cause, which itself is the effect of a preceding cause, and so on without end. His argument is to the point: "Imagine that a stone which has been set in motion becomes conscious, and, so far as it is able, endeavours to persist in its motion. This stone, since it is conscious of and interested in its endeavour, will believe that it is free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wills. Now such is the freedom of man, which every one boasts of possessing, and which consists but in this, that men are aware of their own desires, and ignorant of the causes by which those desires are determined."*

This apt negation of free-will in man, Spinoza extended to broader spheres; and in showing that the force which moves the world acts because it exists and as it exists—that it has no alternatives, no standards of comparison of better or worse, and no appreciation of antitheses, of right or of wrong—in fact, in showing that everything occurs in virtue and in accordance with eternal laws which could not be otherwise—arrived at the consoling deduction that he who understands that everything which happens, happens necessarily, will find nothing worthy of hatred, mockery or contempt, but rather will endeavour, so far as human power permits, to do well, and, as the phrase goes, to be of good cheer.

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* Lettre 62. Traduction de Emile Saisset.

There is something in the foregoing theory that seems to savour of Calvinistic predestination. But it is only a savour. To the Calvinist, predestination is made endurable by the belief that everything is ordained by the highest wisdom ; while to the Pantheist, man is never the subject of fate. The laws of necessity are identical with his own nature, and it is through an understanding of them that he finds himself at peace with all the world.

Spinoza held the doctrine of Final Causes to be untenable, because inconsistent with the perfection that resides in God. His argument, which is advanced in the *Ethica*, has the charm which attaches to brevity : "If God acts for a designed end, it must be that He desireth something which He hath not."

Spinoza was neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He neither laughed at life nor grieved over it. It is possible that he understood it. Like many another before him, he had looked about for happiness ; and in the search he saw that such simulachres as wealth, distinction and pleasure, even to that *grande dame* whose name is Glory, were smitten with one and the same defect. The desire for them sprang from an archaic source, the love of the transitory. But happiness to be real, he argued, should be imperishable. And where could such happiness be found?—where, indeed, save in the love of the eternal and the unending, in the love of truth, which in purifying and exalting the heart shields it from vain desires? If Spinoza had not been a geometrician, he would have been a poet.

In the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, Spinoza noted, with great good sense, that a plain man who does not enter upon philosophy may without harm and even with profit believe whatever he finds most edifying, provided he believes it sincerely. And it is related that his hostess, a simple-minded Lutheran, having asked him whether the religion she professed was capable of assuring her salvation, he advised her to seek no other, nor to doubt of its efficiency. "Do but good works," he said, "and endeavour so far as it is possible to lead a peaceful and virtuous life."

As Heine has well said, wherever a great mind gives utterance to its thoughts, there too is Golgotha. Spinoza was persecuted during his lifetime, and after death his works were condemned as profane, blasphemous and atheistic. And yet it is probable that few men more sincerely religious than he have ever lived and taught. His doctrine was one of abnegation of self and patient devotion to the eternal. He was in love with the Infinite; it was Nature that fluttered his pulse; it was the Spirit of the universe that filled his heart with living springs. Nevertheless, there are to-day many warm-hearted and accomplished gentlemen whose views on Spinoza are a trifle more than two hundred years behind the age. To them he is still the blasphemer. But in all sincerity one may ask which is the more blasphemous, nay, which is the more vulgar, the mind that pictures the Deity as a jealous tyrant who keeps the world as a separate establishment, or the thinker who seeks to banish the dream that veils the part from the whole, and who shows the soul of man and of the universe to be the same?

In attempting to convey the higher view, Spinoza admittedly transcended the limits of experience. Indeed, there are contemporary free-thinkers who are ready to assert that he was sunk in the grossest superstitions. Perhaps he was; yet his superstitions were so refined, that in them there was room for nothing but the ideal.

A few years after Spinoza's death, on the 22nd day of November, 1694, François Arouet and Marie-Marguerite Daumart, his wife, caused to be baptised at the church of St. André des Arcs in Paris, a male child, who, born dying six months before, lived long enough to christen himself Voltaire.

The heart of the eighteenth century was like a veilliebchen. As Michelet, who dissected it, announced, it was double. One half was Diderot, the other Voltaire; but Rousseau was wedged between. Voltaire wished superstition abolished and the throne preserved; Rousseau wanted the monarchy abolished and the altar upheld. Diderot sought the overthrow of both.

The united works of Diderot and Voltaire form a library of ninety volumes. But much of their labour is uncatalogued. Their ninety-first achievement is the French Revolution, their ninety-second is Modern Thought. If they are little read to-day, it is because their ideas have become common property, their daring seems less bold. Concerning Diderot, a word will be said later on; but no conjunction of phrases is rich enough to paint Voltaire. His figure is as familiar as the moon, yet the currents of his thought are almost as intangible. Nature, who, as Malebranche has said, speaks neither Latin nor Greek nor Hebrew, had taught him the nothingness of creeds. He had but one dogma, Reason. When he preached God and liberty, the liberty was freedom of thought, and God the deification of common-sense. In his vague deism there was room for many things. "Believe in God," he said to a questioning rhymster; "believe in God; there is nothing more poetic." But to Madame du Deffand, in whom he confided, he admitted his acquaintanceship with a man who thoroughly believed that when a bee died it ceased to hum. That man was none other than himself. In those days there were not a few who believed as he did. Among them was that most anti-christian of monarchs, the fat Frederick, who played badly on the flute, wrote verses that limp after him through history, but who possessed an enchanted sword, a nimble wit, and a great fund of appreciation for those whose views coincided with his own.

From this monarch there came to Voltaire an invitation requesting the pleasures of his society, and this invitation Voltaire accepted. Voltaire was never young. When he reached Berlin his hair was white, and he looked, Madame de Staël has said, like a wicked old monk come back from another world to visit this; but such a fascinating pagan was he, that in winning him from the fifteenth Louis of France, Frederick valued the gain more highly than a province.

At the historic suppers of the king, Voltaire likened the symposiasts to the seven sages of Greece in a lupanar. "In no corner of the globe," he said, "has liberty of speech been greater, or have superstitions been treated with keener contempt." Beside Voltaire and Frederick, the usual guests were the Marquis d'Argens, Lamettrie, Maupertuis, Algarotti and d'Armand. The last-named gentlemen are relatively unimportant, but the others should not pass unnoticed.

D'Argens was not only the king's guest, he was his nearest friend, a sort of dignified Triboulet. He was a Provençal, an ex-free lance, handsome and dissipated, who after a riotous career, during which he had explored most of the side scenes of life, made love in five languages, and fought over the better part of Europe, retired suddenly to Holland and burned the midnight oil. It was the old story of the devil turned hermit. In Holland in those days, thought was almost untrammelled. When a foreign author was afraid of the printers in his own country, he set those of the Netherlands at work, very much as the ultra-naturalists of contemporary France obtain to-day the assistance of Belgian publishers. D'Argens therefore went to the Hague, hired an apartment, shut himself up for six months, and then walked out with the *Lettres Juives* in his pockets.

The *Lettres Juives*, which are nothing if not liberal, were read and appreciated by the Crown Prince of Prussia, who at once asked d'Argens to pay him a visit. But d'Argens sent a regret. The throne was occupied by Frederick Wilhelm, and that monarch was not an agreeable person. If he took a walk, everybody took to their heels. Voltaire has given it to history that whenever he met a woman in the street, he sent her about her business: "Get thee hence, thou trull, thou trollope; thy place is at home!"—a remonstrance which was accompanied as often as not by a blow or a kick; and Voltaire adds that whenever a minister of the gospel took it into his head to view a parade, he was, if caught, treated in precisely the same manner.

D'Argens knew him by reputation, and declined his son's invitation with thanks. "To reach Potsdam," he wrote to the prince, "I should have to pass three battalions; and as I am tall, well-built, and not altogether bad-looking, I don't dare." But when the prince became king, there was nothing to fear, and Potsdam counted another guest.

It was not long before d'Argens became the chamberlain, and, as has been hinted, the friend of the king. He was a brilliant conversationalist, epigrammatic, paradoxical, and possessed of great opulence of imagination. And Frederick, who at that time was possibly the only German in Berlin who knew how to talk, knew, too, how to appreciate that ability in another. The intimacy increased with years. When the king, overcome by public and private misfortunes, doubtful of the morrow and uncertain even of the day, reflected on the advantages which a bare bodkin can procure, d'Argens hurried to the rescue with comforting maxims. The King listened, but would have his say: "Philosophy, my dear Marquis, is an excellent remedy against the ills of the past or of the future, but it is powerless against those of the present." "And what about the impassability that Zeno taught?" "Zeno," answered the king, "was the philosopher of the gods, and I am a man." Nevertheless, he took heart again, and all thoughts of the bodkin were dismissed. But d'Argens was not always so comforting. On the eve of the battle of Rosbach, Frederick happening to remark that if he lost it he would go and practise medicine in

Venice, Triboulet steadied himself against a table and hissed, "Toujours assassin."

D'Argens and Frederick grew old together. They had disputes which made them faster friends. They played practical jokes on one another, and quarrelled noisily over trifles. The king often acted like a school-boy, and d'Argens not infrequently forgot that he was a philosopher. He remembered, however, that he was not born in Berlin. About Sans-Souci there circled at times an icy wind that made him dream of Provence. One day he asked for his passport. Frederick was vexed; he did not like to be deserted; it diminished him in his own esteem. "Bah!" he exclaimed, "what is a prince born for, unless it be to cause ingratitude?" But he gave the exeat, and d'Argens returned to his early home. Soon after he died—a convert, so it was said. When Frederick heard the rumour, he laughed; he knew d'Argens too well to believe any such gossip as that. "If he received the Last Sacrament," he said, "it is because it was given to him by main strength."

"D'Argens," said Voltaire, "has the wit of Bayle and the charm of Montaigne." The doctrine which he displayed in the *Philosophie du bon sens* is a half-hearted Pyrrhonism. He, too, saw that there was no criterion of truth, but he could not always keep his eyes on the fact. "How," he asked, "can men pretend to know the essence of things when they are ignorant of their own?" That they cannot may be readily admitted, unless it be that they are willing to supersede judgment with faith, which proceeding is the one that d'Argens recommended. He was deeply purposeful, but he was circumspect. What he shook with one hand, he steadied with the other. When he showed the advantages of belief, he was not in a greater hurry to do anything else than to show its disadvantages. First he honeycombed it with doubt and toppled it over completely. Then he set to work and built it up anew. After which he gave it another shake, and so on indefinitely, until his ink blushed and his pen refused its office. The method employed by M. Renan is not dissimilar.

There are few lands in Europe that have been more fecund in myths than Brittany. The belief in that lost city of Is, whose spires the fishers sometimes saw, whose bells, rung by the waves, clang through the winter nights, and whose magnificence was such that for the capital of France no better name could be found than Par-Is, equal to Is—the belief in that lost city was the origin of many beautiful legends. In few other lands has the faith in the weird and the supernatural been preserved with greater simplicity. Yet through one of those paradoxes of which Nature alone holds the secret, Brittany has been as fertile of doubt as of credulity. Many of the foremost of French anti-theists claim it as their home. Between Maupertuis and Renan there is a parade of familiar names, and of these names few are more significant than that of Lamettrie.

Lamettrie appears to have been an unprincipled saint, a rake without vices. He was brilliant and whimsical, an excellent purveyor of the entremets of the imagination; and as it is the individual and not the topic that makes or unmakes conversation, the great Frederick held him in high favour. Some years before Voltaire appeared in Berlin, Lamettrie had written a book, *l'Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, which had created such a stir that he had been obliged to leave France and seek refuge in Holland. There he published another book, *l'Homme machine*, which created even a greater stir; and while he was wondering where he should hide, Frederick, who had read his writings, and who never let slip an opportunity of adding another philosopher to his collection, invited him to Berlin. "He is a victim of theologians and fools," said the monarch; "let him come here and write what he pleases. I am always sorry for a philosopher in difficulties; were I not born a prince, I would be one myself."

Lamettrie was quite willing to accord to a king the pleasures of his company, and took a seat at the royal supper-table without delay. Frederick was so charmed with him that he made him his salaried reader. "I am delighted with my acquisition," he said; "Lamettrie is as light-hearted and clever as any one can be. He is a sound physician and hates doctors; he is a materialist and not material. He says scandalous things now and then, but we weaken his Epicurean wine with the water of Pythagoras."

Like some other gentlemen of a sceptical turn, Lamettrie announced that vice and virtue were purely relative—a platitude which has been running about the book-shelves ever since books were shelved. But he added something which is worth larger attention : "Away with remorse !" he exclaimed ; "it is a weakness, an outcome of education." And if virtue and vice are merely questions of surroundings, it is indeed difficult to view remorse otherwise than as a pre-mediæval emotion. But virtue, to say nothing of vice, is something more. According to the Buddha, virtue is the agreement of the will and the conscience, a definition which would be matchless if the will were free. Marcus Aurelius called it a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature ; but if the boundless immorality of Nature be conceded, as it should, the fine words of the emperor are as empty as the wind. Virtue, said one who had eyed it narrowly, virtue is a name. Perhaps. Yet virtue declines to be dismissed with a phrase ; there is a disturbing magnificence about it which routs the most skilful. In describing it, Raphael is a better lexicographer than Shakespeare, though even Raphael, for all his cunning, could not paint a temperament. And virtue is little else than a question of disposition. It may be sunned and watered by a thousand influences, it may be hedged and fortified, but in its essence it is temperamental. However great the outward success may appear, the lessons and precepts of ages will not suffice to keep it unspotted if the inner spirit be adverse. And as with virtue, so too with vice. Standards may differ with the climate, but in each case it is the conscience that elects itself judge. It is the heart, memory aiding, that gives us a paradise or a hell. If we could hush the conscience and still the heart, we might afford to listen to Lamettrie; and perhaps in future ages, when through the progress of evolution man will lose the lobes of his ears as he has already lost his tail, when he will be as completely bald as he was once entirely hirsute, perhaps then the conscience will go the way of useless possessions; but meanwhile to declaim against it is as profitable as asking alms of statues. We are perfectly free to enjoy our remorse undisturbed.

Lamettrie admitted no other life than this, and not unnaturally sought to make the most of the worst. His ideas are contained in a treatise on Happiness, which he prefixed to a translation of Seneca's thoughts on the same subject. "Our organs," he said, "are susceptible of sensations which render life agreeable. When the impression which a sensation conveys is brief, it is pleasure that we experience; prolonged, it is bliss; permanent, it is happiness. But in every case it is the same sensation, differing merely in intensity and duration. The absence of fear and desire is happiness in its privative state; but to possess all that one wishes—to have beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory—that is a happiness which is real and perfect."

The spectacle of a eudæmonist is as charming as that of a ballerine. Both belong to the category of the Delightful. But even though one be pleasured by a Taglioni, there comes a moment when the pleasure palls. Lamettrie, who was fond of adventurous flights and incursions—not perhaps to the unknowable, but to that which he might have known and did not—was wont to please his readers with the *entrechats* of a lawless imagination. As a consequence, his views, if entertaining, are valueless. The real and perfect happiness of which he speaks is a will-o'-the-wisp of fancy. The possession of all that one wishes, whether the possession is concomitant, as in fairy tales, with the wish, or obtained after years of striving, does not and never will constitute happiness. In its essence, happiness is intangible; the desire for it is insatiable; and consequently, and despite every possession, it is ever unsatisfied. There may be a happiness which is transitory and fugitive, but there is none that is permanent. To say to the contrary is to announce one of the most insolent absurdities that has ever been proclaimed in the privileged aisles of the insane. For the sake of example, let it be supposed that in some one person are united all the factors which Lamettrie mentions—beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory; if these possessions are what may be termed congenital, as in the case of a poet-prince, they are taken by their possessor as a matter of course, and have never served as preservatives from discontent; on the other hand, if their re-union is accomplished after more or less prolonged endeavours, their possessor, in obtaining them, finds himself as poor as before; he might be able to call the world his own, and yet not know what happiness is. The honours, the riches and glory to which he aspired, are as empty as the hands of the dead. If they are magnificent, it is only from afar. The best that can be, the best that ever has been, is in the discovery and maintenance of contentment. Its factors are two-fold—the first is health; the second, indifference.

Lamettrie's chief titles to recognition rest on the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme* and the *Homme machine*. The first-mentioned work is an argument against the belief in the immortality of the soul. With this doctrine ancient philosophy had little to do. With the exception of Pythagoras and Plato, the thinkers of classic antiquity agreed in one particular—the soul was material. Even to Tertullian its immateriality was unestablished. "Animam nihil est," he said, "sed corpus non sit;" and not a few of the fathers of the Church held the same opinion. The masses of course thought differently. The belief in a future life was by them unquestioned. It probably arose from the re-appearance of the dead in the dreams of the living. But in Greece, as in the Roman Empire, the life prefigured was one in which there was little charm. The neglect of funeral rites turned it into a dull and restless torture.

In this particular the observances of believers were little else than precautionary safeguards, and the *Requiescat in pace* which is to be seen on contemporary tomb-stones is but a forlorn survival of their naïve superstitions. Later, when it was taught that the soul was imperishable, not through an inherent indestructibility, but through the influence of grace divine, its materiality was still undoubted. The soul and the body were considered inseparable. There were casuists who thought otherwise, and their disputes are legendary; but their disputes occurred in an era when faith was well-nigh universal. When the distinction between the soul and the body was at last satisfactorily established—that is, to those who were interested in the establishment of a satisfactory distinction—the believer found himself turning back to Plato. The soul was represented as a resultant of the forces of the body, very much as harmony is known to be won from the strings of the lyre. Yet, as Simmias queried, when the strings are broken and the wood reduced to dust, from what shall the harmony be produced?

In the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, little is said on this subject. It was not Lamettrie's intention to narrate what had been thought; what he wished to do was to paint the soul's development, and he put forth his best efforts to show that that which is termed soul is but the outcome of the perfectionment and education of the senses.

In *l'Homme machine* it is again a question of the soul, and the conclusion of course is the same. In spite of Descartes, who taught of two substances precisely as though he had seen and counted them; in spite of Leibnitz, who spiritualised matter instead of materialising the spirit; in spite of every one and everything to the contrary, Lamettrie, in broad paragraphs, proved to his own satisfaction that to think, to feel, to distinguish right from wrong as readily as blue from yellow, and to be but an animal, superior perhaps, but still a brute, is not a bit more contradictory than it is for a parrot or a monkey to be able to distinguish pleasure from pain.

"Man is a machine," he said, "wound up and kept running by digestion. The soul is the mainspring. Both, of course, are material. As to thought, it is as much a property of matter as is electricity, motricity, impenetrability and breadth. To query with Locke whether matter can think, is tantamount to wondering whether it can tell time. In brief, man is a machine, and throughout the universe there is but one substance diversely modified. Such," he concluded, "is my idea, or rather such is the truth. *Dispute qui voudra.*"

Another Breton who found a seat at the royal supper-table was Maupertuis. Before he found it, there had been some discussion among the erudite concerning the sphericity of the globe, and two separate expeditions were sent from France to measure different degrees of longitude. One went to Lapland, the other to Peru.

Maupertuis, who was a geometrician, was placed at the head of the Polar expedition. He set out at once for Sweden, and after sixteen months of fatiguing adventures, returned to Paris to find himself the hero of the day. But in a city like Paris, a knowledge of the meridian, however exact, is not an attainment apt to make a man ceaselessly admired; and Maupertuis, who had taken the admiration quite seriously, and had had himself painted, mantled in fur, in the act of flattening the globe, soon found that his glory was so much vapour. Now Maupertuis was not only a geometrician, he was a philosopher, and the occupant of the Prussian throne was, as has been hinted, ever ready to add a new one to his collection; consequently, while Maupertuis was wondering at the inconstancy of his compatriots, a note was brought to him from Frederick. "Come to Berlin," it ran. "You have taught the world the form of the earth; you shall learn from a king how much you are appreciated."

The king at that time, however, happened to be in a battle-field; and to the battle-field Maupertuis, with the true spirit of a courtier, directed his steps. Unfortunately for him, Frederick was obliged to retreat, and Maupertuis was taken prisoner. At first it was thought that he had been killed; but when it was learned that he had been conducted to Vienna and there fêted at court, Voltaire took occasion to say a few smart things, and the world smiled with amusement and relief.

At Vienna, the Queen asked him what his philosophy taught him to think of two princes who wrangled over patches of a planet which he had measured. "I have no right," he answered sedately, "to be more philosophic than kings." To change the subject, her Majesty deigned to inquire whether the Queen of Sweden was not the most beautiful princess in Europe. To which Maupertuis, who was nothing if not régence, answered, with his best bow, "I had always thought so until now." After that, he was returned unransomed to Frederick.

At Berlin, a young Pomeranian lady fell in love with him. His conversation, it appears, was so lively, that women never suspected him of being a savant. The young Pomeranian became his bride; while he, through the king's good offices, was made President of the Berlin Academy,—a sort of Minister of Literature, much as d'Argens was Minister of the Stage. Voltaire, meanwhile, was lounging at Sans-Souci. Maupertuis had not forgotten the smart things he had said, and Voltaire was perhaps a little jealous of the favour shown to a rival. But, be this as it may, it is a part of history that no love was lost between them. When Voltaire had the king's ear, he poured into it scurrilous anecdotes about his compatriot; and when Maupertuis enjoyed a similar privilege, the tale of his grievances never tarried. "They take me for a sewer," said Frederick, with the indulgent smile of a man who has said a good thing.

Frederick sided with Maupertuis. It is possible that in some kingly fashion he, too, was jealous, though in his case the jealousy was of one whose royalty threatened at times to overshadow his own. Voltaire was irascible; he was annoyed at the preference; and after brooding over his discontent, he composed and published a pamphlet entitled *Docteur Akakia.*

In this trifle Maupertuis was lampooned as no one had ever been before; his pet theories—to wit, that there is no other proof of God than an algebraic formula, and that nothing which we see is as we see it—were held up to the laughter of the world. Frederick caused the edition to be seized and burned by the headsman. Voltaire, however, was not easily circumvented. A few copies escaped the auto-da-fé and went careering over Europe. Maupertuis was for ever ridiculous, but Voltaire was still unsatisfied. He kept pricking him with his pen, until Maupertuis, outwearied with his struggle with an ogre, took to his bed and died of mortification—"between two monks," said the relentless Arouet. "What do you think of him?" he asked d'Alembert; "he has been suffering for a long time from a repletion of pride, but I did not take him either for a hypocrite or an imbecile."

Maupertuis was one of the first of the modern thinkers that have ventured to add up the balance-sheet of pleasure and pain, and also one of the first to discover that the latter largely exceeds the former; indeed, so large did the excess seem, that he had no hesitation in announcing that were all that is painful in life suppressed and only the pleasurable moments counted, the duration of the happiest existence would not exceed a few hours.

He had scanned the *paysages de tristesse* as carefully as another, and the fairest vista that he saw was behind the delinquent hands of death. "Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil,"—After death is nothing; death itself is naught,—said Seneca; and Maupertuis, who agreed with him thoroughly, advocated suicide, and praised the stoics for teaching that it was a permissible remedy, and one that was most useful, against the ills of life. "If," he argued, "a man believes in a religion which offers eternal rewards to those that suffer, and which threatens with eternal punishment those that die to avoid suffering, it is not bravery on his part to commit suicide, nor is it cowardice, it is idiocy. On the other hand, a man who has no belief in a future life, and who is solely occupied in making this one as little unpleasant as possible, sees neither rhyme nor reason in submitting to misfortunes from which he can free himself in a trice." Nevertheless, Maupertuis died a natural death, and, as Voltaire said, between two monks at that.

Maupertuis, Lamettrie, d'Argens, even to the philosopher king himself, were dominated and overshadowed by Voltaire. Though purposeful, their influence was slight; it had barely strength enough to cross the Rhine. But on the other side of that muddy river there was then a group of thinkers whose influence can be felt in some of the currents of contemporary thought, and concerning whom a word or two may now be said.

When the foremost of England's sceptics, David Hume, visited Paris, he found a warm welcome at the house of the Baron d'Holbach. It was there, Burton says, that professing he had never met an atheist, Hume was told that he was in the company of seventeen. Of these, the more noteworthy were Diderot, d'Alembert, Naigeon and the host.

The Baron d'Holbach was a German who had been educated in France. He was a man of large wealth, wise, liberal and charitable. His house in the Rue Royale, which was called the Café de l'Europe, was a free academy of the freest thinkers; and of free-thinkers, domiciled and transient, d'Holbach was known as the *maître d'hôtel.* But d'Holbach was something more; he was one of the field-marshals of the little army of materialists who were the forerunners of the Revolution, and a lord in the literature of anti-theism. His erudition is said to have been practically unbounded. There was nothing of value written or suggested with which he was unfamiliar. "No matter what system I may imagine," said Diderot, "I am always sure that my friend d'Holbach can find me with facts and authorities to support it."

The doctrine which d'Holbach advocated was as liberal as the sea. It was a doctrine of freedom in all things—in speech, in thought, in politics and in religion. Its tenets are displayed at length in the *Système de la Nature*, a work published in Holland, and, through a literary trickery then not infrequent, attributed to a gentleman who, being dead, could not be prosecuted.

"Lost at nightfall in a forest, I have," said Diderot, "but a feeble light to guide me. A stranger happens along: 'Blow out your candle,' he says, 'and you will see your way the better.' That stranger is a theologian."

This squib might have served as epigraph to the *Système de la Nature.*

"Man," said d'Holbach, "is miserable, simply because he is ignorant. His mind is so infected with prejudices, that one might think him for ever condemned to err. . . . It is error that has forged the chains with which tyrants and priests have manacled nations. . . . It is error that has evoked the religious fears which shrivel up men with fright, or make them butcher each other for chimeras. The hatreds, persecutions, massacres and tragedies of which, under pretext of the interests of Heaven, the earth has been the repeated theatre, are one and all the outcome of error."

These bold words were the prelude to the frankest exposition of anti-theism that France had ever read. Its audacity terrified, but its austerity repelled. Its paragraphs were as Cimmerian to the chamber-maids and hair-dressers of Paris, as the gaieties of Lamettrie had been shocking to the pedantry of Berlin. Then, too, it was rich and elaborate in its materialism. To-day it seems a trifle antiquated; the world has thought more deeply since; but with its general outlines contemporary thinkers have had no fault to find. In these outlines Nature is represented as the one-in-all, beyond which is nothing. The main propositions tend to show that throughout the length and breadth of space there is merely force and matter, the infinite interconnection of cause and effect; and that it is through an ignorance of natural laws that divinities have been imagined and made the objects of hope and fear.

On the subject of hope and fear, d'Holbach had much to say. The gist of it may be summarised in the fatalist axiom, Whatever will be, is. Everything that happens, happens necessarily, and in virtue of immutable laws. As to order or disorder, they are empty terms; like time and space, they belong to the categories of thought; there is nothing outside of us which corresponds to them. It is all very well for man to see order in that which is in conformity with his state of being, and disorder in that which is contrary to it; to call one the effect of an Intelligence acting toward a determined end, and the other the play of hazard. But order and disorder are but words used to designate certain states and conditions of being, which if permanent are called after the one, and if transitory after the other. Beside, Nature can have no aim, for there is nothing beyond it to which it can strive. As to hazard, it is meaningless, save in contradistinction to that Intelligence which man himself has conceived. Now man, d'Holbach explains, has always fancied himself the central fact in the universe. He has connected with himself everything that he has seen, and modelled everything after his own image. In this way he grew to believe that the universe is governed by an intelligence like unto his own; yet, being at the same time convinced of his individual incapacity to cause the multiform effects of which he stood a witness, he was forced to distinguish between himself and the invisible producer, and he thought to overcome the difficulty by attributing to that intelligence an aggrandisement of the prowess which he himself possessed.

The belief in the supernatural, which in man is inherent, d'Holbach regarded as a disease to which humanity's greatest misfortunes are attributable. Truth, he was fond of saying, can never harm. Nor can it. But that does not make it a welcome guest. The whole history of religion goes to prove that man would rather be wrong in his beliefs than have none at all. Then, too, the majority have never been provided with such leisure as would enable them to dispense with illusions. The thinker may wave them away, but his gesture leaves the masses unaffected. Perhaps if the world were merely learned, it would be anti-theistic; but fortunately, or unfortunately, as the actual status of affairs may be viewed, it is something more or something less; there is an unstillable longing, an unconquerable expectation of better things, which so exalts the heart, that the serenest of atheists can never witness its effects without experiencing some sudden pang of envy.

In the polite society in which d'Holbach moved, disbelief was so prevalent that it is possible he had no occasion to experience a twinge. And if he did, the emotion has been unrecorded. He was squarely opposed to the idea of God, and at the same time a living contradiction to the theory that an atheist is necessarily a man of lax principles. Wolmar, in the *Nouvelle Heloïse*, is the portrait which Rousseau took of him. Yet, as has been alrready intimated, it is the temperament, and not the point of view, that guides us into paths that are those of virtue or its opposite. And it was d'Holbach's temperament that made him shame the Jew devil as Satan had never been shamed before. On this point the testimony of his contemporaries is unanimous. The purity of his life, and that, too, in a century when immorality was less a vice than a grace, has never been questioned. He was a simple-mannered gentleman, warm of heart, sweet-tempered, endowed with great delicacy of sentiment, and possessed of such tact that even Rousseau, who would have quarrelled with an archangel, was unable to find in him any other cause of grievance than his wealth. "He is too rich for me," he said; but he added, "He is a better man, and one more really charitable, than many a Christian. *He does good without the hope of reward.*"

The only immortality in which d'Holbach believed was fame. In life there is certainly nothing more exquisite. As Schopenhauer said, it is the Golden Fleece of the elect. But after death, and true glory comes but then, fame and ignominy are to the recipient equally unmeaning. And even were it otherwise, when it is remembered what are the limitations of fame, and when it is considered how small a value can be accorded to public opinion, the immortality in which d'Holbach believed does not seem worth an effort.

D'Holbach was one of the few writers that have had the courage to advocate suicide, and he advocated it as boldly to those who cowered at death, as he advocated virtue to a century whose vice is historic. His main argument in its favour is to the effect that the engagements between man and Nature are neither voluntary on the part of the one nor reciprocal on the part of the other. Man is therefore in nowise bound; and should he find himself unsupported, he can desert a position which has become unpleasant and irksome. As to the citizen, he can hold to his country and associates only by the mortgage on his well-being. If the lien is paid off, he is free. "Would a man be blamed," he asks, "a man who, finding himself useless and without resources in his native place, should withdraw into solitude? Well, then, with what right can a man be blamed who kills himself from despair? And what is death but an isolation?"

Maxims such as these are considered dangerous and provocative. But maxims have never caused a suicide. A man may cut his throat or hang himself to put an end to the agonies of grief or boredom, but not because he has happened on a suggestive quotation. He will look for the great quietus if he wants to, but not because it is recommended. In any case the contempt of death is a useful possession; and it is well for every one to understand that while virtue and happiness are supposed to go hand-in-hand, and that to do good is to receive it, yet after the loss of any one of us the world will go on in quite the same manner as before.

In the days when d'Holbach was giving dinner-parties in the Rue Royale, the flag of France was noticeably black. Some said that it was from the dye of the cassock; others, that it had caught the grime of mediæval institutions. At d'Holbach's dinner-table, however, in the salons of Madame Geoffrin—she who was so plain that Greuze exclaimed, "My God, if she annoys me I'll paint her!"—in the salons of Mesdames du Deffand, de Lespinasse and Necker, there assembled from time to time a handful of thinkers who were determined to give the flag of France another hue. These gentlemen were resolute and aggressive. The century, they saw, was hungry for ideas, and it was in an effort to give it food of the right quality that the Encyclopædia was produced.

The Encyclopædia—a name coined by Rabelais—displayed the genealogy of thought. It was at once a storehouse of knowledge, an attack on ignorance, an appeal to common-sense, and a plea for liberty. It opposed every abuse, political, theological, ecclesiastical, industrial, fiscal, legal and penal. It sought to establish toleration, to abolish sacerdotal thaumaturgy, to banish the supernatural, and thwart the subornation of the understanding. It was in no sense free from error, and its erudition presents to-day a most mildewed appearance; but it served its purpose, and from out its wide bindings burst the torrents of the Revolution.

In its opposition to everything that savoured of the illiberal, the Encyclopædia encountered many an obstacle and not a few embarrassments; indeed, the history of the government and literature of the third quarter of the last century is interwoven with that of its vicissitudes and final triumph. Every man of brains wrote for it, and those who had none and wanted some subscribed. The responsibility of its publication was assumed by Diderot and d'Alembert.

Diderot was a giant, whose head was in the clouds and whose feet were in the mud. He wrote obscene stories and anticipated Lamark, Darwin's precursor. History, art, science and philosophy he held in fee, and yet he was not erudite. He had drunk oft, not deep. "I know a great many things," he said, "but there is hardly a man that does not know some one thing better than I." In the activity of his mind may be found the reason of the admiration of his contemporaries and that of posterity's neglect. He has left us twenty volumes of essays and digressions, but not a single book. Yet no one was ever so prodigal with his pen as he. He gave it to any one that asked, to an enemy as readily as to a friend. Grimm asked his opinion on an exhibition of paintings; he gave it in an in-octavo. "I have written a satire against you," said a young man to him one day. "I am poor; will you buy it?" "Ah! sir," he exclaimed, "what a pitiable vocation is yours! but," he continued, "I will tell you what to do. The Duke of Orleans honours me with his dislike; dedicate your book to him; he will pay you well." "A good dedication is a difficult job," said the young black-mailer. "Well, sit down," Diderot answered, "and I will write it for you." And he did, and the youth received his pay.

Diderot being without ambition was known as the Philosopher, but he was so poor that he could hardly buy the cloak. When he wished to dower his daughter, he found that he had nothing except his library, and his library to him was life itself. Nevertheless, he determined to sell it. Catharine of Russia learned of the determination and bought the library; but with a true sense of what is royal, she left him the use of his books and made him their salaried custodian beside.

At the beginning of his literary career, Diderot was a sincere deist, which, as some one has said, is a proof of what education may do. It was not long, however, before he saw that scepticism is the first step to philosophy; and when the step was taken, he descended without a compunction the precipitate stair of negation. The stages of his thought are well defined. "Aggrandise God," he shouted in his first enthusiasm; "free Him from the captivity of temples and creeds. See Him everywhere, or say that He does not exist." Later—in the "Letter on the Blind for the Use of those who See"—he manifested a classic indifference on the whole subject. "Ask an Indian how the world is suspended in the air, and he will tell you that it rests on the back of an elephant. 'And the elephant?' 'On a turtle.' You pity the Indian, yet one might say to you as to him, 'Admit your ignorance, and don't bother me with a menagerie.'"

But his indifference was transient. "Among the difficulties (of believing in God), there is one," he noted, "which has been agitated since the world began. It is that men suffer without having deserved to do so. To this there has never been an answer. The existence of a Supreme Being is incompatible with evils, moral and physical. What, then, is the safest course? The one which we have taken. Whatever the optimists may say, we answer that if the world could not exist without sentient beings, and sentient beings without pain, the Almighty would have done better to keep quiet." Thereafter he became firmly anti-theistic. "It is," he said, "highly important not to mistake hemlock for parsley, but it is entirely unnecessary to believe in God." "The Christian religion," he added, "is atrocious in its dogmas. It is unintelligible, metaphysical, intertwisted and obscure. It is mischievous to tranquillity, dangerous in its discipline, puerile and unsociable in its ethics, and in its ceremonial dreary, flat, Gothic and most gloomy. . . . If my ideas please no one," he concluded, "it is possible that they are poor; but if they pleased everybody, I would consider them detestable." Yet as he preached tolerance, he practised it, and was never known to refuse a crutch to those who had no legs.

Among the Encyclopædists, where Diderot was king, d'Alembert was prime minister, a Mazarin, as one may say; but a Mazarin who grew faint-hearted, and, fearing the Bastille, left his monarch in the lurch.

D'Alembert was more a mathematician than a philosopher. His mistress was Algebra. History has given the same title to Mlle. de l'Espinasse; but if he was unfaithful, the lady in question appears to have paid him back in a better coin than his own. He was not a cheerful person, yet when alone with his books he was happy as though he were dead. "Qui est-ce qui est heureux?" some one asked him. "Quelque misérable," he replied. He was an invalid, too; but he hated medicine, and held a physician to be like a blind man who armed with a cudgel strikes at random, and, according as he strikes, annihilates the disease or—the patient.

As has been hinted, he was timid, or perhaps merely cautious, a trait which found little favour with Voltaire. "Philosophers are too lukewarm," he said; "instead of shrugging their shoulders at the errors of mankind, they ought to wipe them out." But apparently d'Alembert did not agree with him. "Philosophers," he retorted, "should be like children, who, when they have done anything wrong, put the blame on the cat." But if for one reason or another he thought it best to keep his views from the public, he had no hesitation in whispering them to the sympathetic ear of Frederick the Great. The latter had written what he called a refutation of the naturalism conveyed in d'Holbach's *Système de la Nature.* The book had annoyed him; but what probably annoyed him most was, not its naturalism, but its attack on the sacred caste of royalty. At the same time, as he himself said, if d'Holbach were condemned to be burned, he would be the first to play the hose on the stake.

In the eyes of the liberal monarch, d'Alembert, when answering the refutation, brandished the historic doubt. "Montaigne's motto, What do

I know? seems to me," he wrote, "the answer that should be made to all questions in metaphysics. . . . Those who deny the existence of a Supreme Intelligence advance more than they can prove. In treating such a subject, scepticism is the only reasonable standpoint. No one, for instance, can deny that throughout the universe, and particularly in the formation of plants and animals, there are combinations which seem to reveal an Intelligence. That they prove it, as a watch proves a watch-maker, is incontestable. But supposing that one wishing to go further asks, What is this Intelligence? Did it create, or did it merely arrange matter? Is creation possible, or, if it be not, is matter eternal? And if matter is eternal and needed an Intelligence simply to arrange it, is that Intelligence united to matter, or is it distinct? If it is united, matter, properly speaking, is God, and God is matter. If it is distinct, how can that which is material be fashioned by that which is not? Besides, if this Intelligence is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, why is the world, which is its work, so filled with physical and moral imperfections? Why are not all men happy? Why are not all men just? Your Majesty assures me that this question is answered by the world's eternity. And so perhaps it is, but seemingly merely in this sense, that the world being eternal, and in consequence necessary, everything which is, must be as it is; and at once we enter into a system of fatality and necessity which does not in the least accord with the idea of a God infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. Sire, when these questions arise, we should repeat 'Que sais-je?' an hundred times. Then, too, there is a consolation for ignorance in the thought that, as we know nothing, it is unnecessary for us to know more."

To which Frederick, who gave a nickname as readily as a pension, answered:

"But, my dear Diagoras, if you fancy that I can give a detailed explanation of the Intelligence that I marry to Nature, you over-estimate my ability. I can say merely that I perceive it as I would an object of which I might happen to catch a glimpse through a mist."

D'Alembert, however, was not to be played with, and he returned to the charge and routed the fat king with a fresh arsenal of queries.

"With the exception of the animal kingdom, the realms of matter with which we are acquainted appear deprived of sentiency, volition and thought. Is it possible that intelligence resides in them without our knowledge? Of this there is no evidence, and I am inclined to think that the block of marble, as well as the plants that are the most delicately and ingeniously organised, are without thought and feeling. But, it is objected, the organisation of these bodies discloses visible traces of an intelligence. This I do not deny; but I would be glad to know what has become of this intelligence since these bodies were organised. If it resided within them while they were being formed and in order to form them, and if, as it is supposed, this intelligence is not distinct from them, what has become of it since its work is done? Has the very perfection of the organisation been annihilated? To me, such a supposition seems untenable. If, then, the intelligence whose effects we admire in man is merely a resultant of organisation, why, in other realms of matter, may we not admit a structure and an arrangement as necessary and as natural as matter itself, and from which, without the intervention of any intelligence, would result the very effects which surround and surprise us? Lastly, in admitting the doctrine that an Intelligence presided over the formation of the world and still watches over its well-being, it is hard to reconcile the theory of that Intelligence with the idea of infinite wisdom and power. For, to the misfortune of humanity, this world of ours is very far from being the best one possible. With the best of intentions, we are therefore unable to recognise any other God than one who, at most, is material, limited and dependent. I do not know whether this view is the correct one, but certainly it is not that of the Deity's partisans, who would much prefer to have us atheists than the Spinozists that we are. To mollify them, let us turn sceptic and repeat with Montaigne, Que sais-je?"

This amiable agnosticism was shared by few of the Encyclopædists. To Naigeon, who would have nothing to do with half-way measures, it seemed little less than revolting. Naigeon was a Puritan without beliefs; his atheism was as fervent as his life was austere. When he first sat, a stripling, at d'Holbach's table, he was largely ridiculed. He was a pretty boy, with fair skin and curled blonde hair. Diderot's monkey, La Harpe called him, for it was through Diderot that he was brought into notice. But with age the comely lad developed into a tiger. To him Diderot left the care of his unpublished manuscripts, and these Naigeon edited, together with the memoirs of the author. He, too, was a voluminous writer, and scattered essays and treatises with a prodigality which he had caught from his master. But the work which caused the greatest number of people to turn about and look after him in the street was the *Theologie portative*. In it the beliefs and tenets of Christendom were treated in a manner that reminds one of Col. Ingersoll. In the subsequent *Encyclopédie méthodique* he wrote again on these and adjacent subjects, though this time from a broader and more serious standpoint.

Politically, socially and morally untrammelled, he had, meanwhile, been keeping a finger on the public pulse, and he felt that some great, if undetermined, change was at hand. So soon, then, as the National Assembly got to work on its declaration of the rights of man, Naigeon issued an address, in which he prayed the Assembly to banish from the proclamation any suggestion of religion, and in its place to assert man's right to entire freedom of thought and speech. But the petition was unnoticed. It is possible that he made a second appeal to Robespierre; but if he did, it was as unsuccessful as the first. And there is an anecdote that one day during the Terror he looked so much alarmed, that some asked him if he were on the list of the condemned. "Worse than that," he cried. "That monster Robespierre has decreed the existence of a Supreme Being!" To Robespierre, an atheist was an aristocrat.

While Naigeon was addressing the Assembly, a young man named Sylvain Maréchal passed out of Saint-Lazare. A few months previous, he had published a little book entitled, *l'Almanach des honnêtes gens*, in which wise men were given precedence over saints. This disregard of etiquette procured for Maréchal an opportunity to meditate on the proprieties of life. When the prison-doors were opened, he passed his time in succouring the indigent and housing the pursued. He fed and sheltered priests and royalists alike, and even paid masses for the repose of the soul of an old woman because he knew that such had been her wish.

Yet Maréchal was one of the fanatics of atheism, and as proud of negation as though he had invented it. The devil, one may see, is rarely as red as he appears on the stage. The thinkers with whom this chapter has had to deal were fervent in their disbelief; but in their disbelief there was room for such charity, tolerance and broad good-will, that one looks in vain for a stone that shall hit them. Perhaps, as some one has said, it is only the just that have a right to be atheists. And yet they were not impeccable; with one exception, they were guilty of a grievous sin against good manners—they were dogmatic. One may fancy that their voices were seldom modulated; it is probable that they shouted, and there are few among us that care to be shouted at. Then, too, there was a confidence and an assurance in their atheism which is as unpleasant as bigotry. They forgot Montaigne, and they let Pyrrho fall asleep. Maréchal was not better than the others; one may even say that he was worse, for he was dogmatic in rhyme. Since Lucretius, atheism had been without a poet. Leopardi's father was then a bachelor, and Shelley was in the cradle. It was Maréchal that the irreverent Muse first ordered to hold the lute. And Maréchal kissed the Muse full upon the mouth, and sang loudly in a strain of boyish bravado. Whether or not Maréchal's notes were listened to, is relatively a matter of small importance. A little later, the Being whose existence Robespierre had decreed was publicly deposed. The cathedral of Notre-Dame was consecrated to the worship of Reason, the crosier and the ring were trampled under foot, and an ass, crowned with a mitre, was led through exulting crowds.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROTESTS OF YESTERDAY.

The lives of philosophers are dull. Descartes might figure as the hero of a romance, but Descartes is an exception. Fichte belongs to the rule. The story of his manhood is one of poverty which is not poignant, and of successes which were not great.

In a work on this thinker, Professor Adamson notes one fact which is palpitant in truth and lucidity; it is to the effect that Europe to-day does not hold ten students of that marvellous sophist. And yet Fichte is one of the most insolent of dissenters. To the ordinary reader his negations are inexplicable; they comprise the denial of the reality of the external world. This denial, which is known as akosmism, is pantheism's twin-sister. Pantheism admits no other reality than Nature; and akosmism, taking one step further, declines to admit any reality at all. Of the two, pantheism has been the more fruitful. It began with the Vedas; ran through Eleatic and Neo-platonic philosophy; was caught up by Scott Erigena and handed to Bruno, who passed it to Spinoza. Another thread or two runs through the Talmud, the Kabbala, the theories of Maimonides, Gerson and Chesdai Creskas; and there are tangles of it in the beliefs of mediæval communities, in the heresies of the Beghards and Beguines, the Turlupins and Adamites; but with their unravelment the reader need not be wearied. Akosmism has found fewer adherents. Like pantheism, it began with the Vedas, or, more correctly, with the Vedanta philosophy; left broad traces in Greece; revived for a moment during the Renaissance; and then sank back into obscurity until Fichte, Kant aiding, brought it to light anew. Between the two systems there is this cardinal distinction. Pantheism and science have never been other than the best of friends. There is nothing in the one that has ever been seriously opposed by the other. But akosmism and science look at each other askant. They have as much in common as have the poet and the mathematician.

The clearest idea of Fichte's akosmism, or rather the clearest idea of its charm and futility, is conveyed in a work entitled the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, the Vocation of Man. The work is divided into three parts: Doubt, Knowledge and Faith. The first part, Doubt, opens with an inquiry concerning that mystery within us that calls itself "I," and an examination of Nature that vaunts itself real. From this inquiry and from this examination, Fichte discovers that man is but a link in a chain of necessity, a part of that force which, amid the everlasting revolution and mutation of things, is the sum and substance of all that is.

And that chain of necessity! Was there ever anything more delicately interconnected? One has but to look at it to see that its rivets are so tight that they make it impossible for anything to be other than it is. Take, for instance, a single grain of sand on the sea-shore, and fancy that it lies a few feet further inland than it actually does. The mental operation is, admittedly, most easy to perform; but note the consequences. For that grain of sand to be a few feet further inland, then must the wind which bore it have been stronger than it was; then must the state of the atmosphere which occasioned the wind have been different from what it was, and the previous changes different; in fact, it is necessary to presuppose an entirely different temperature from that which actually existed. We must also suppose a different constitution of the bodies which influenced the temperature, the barrenness or fertility of countries, on which depend the health of man and the duration of life. Interfere, therefore, with that grain of sand, and it is within the range of possibilities that in such a state of weather as was necessary to move it but a few feet further inland, some one, long ago, may have died of cold or hunger—long ago, before the birth of that son from whom the sophist himself descended; and behold, Fichte would have been spared the trials of life, and prevented, too, from solving every problem, and leaving the student nothing to do but to bore himself to death.

From Fichte's logic, therefore, the necessity which compels everything to be precisely as it is, is amply demonstrated. Nevertheless, doubt is not yet banished. It is true he has proved the existence of man to be but a manifestation of a force whose operation is determined by the whole of the universe, but into the nature of that force he is unable to look. And even could he, of what use would it be? It would not help him to regulate his actions. Nature is the last one to contradict herself, and she allows no one to contradict her. The force that acts on us and in us makes us what we are; and to attempt to make ourselves otherwise than it has been appointed we should be, is a task which may be pleasant, but which assuredly is useless. In the chain of necessity we are all interlinked: fight free who may. They who have done so have reached that bourne from which no traveller returns.

We may rejoice and repent, we may form good resolutions; but the joy and the repentance and the good resolutions come to us of themselves, and not until it is appointed that they shall do so. When they do come, however sincere the repentance may be, however magnificent the resolutions, the course of things moves on unchanged and changeless as before. We lie in the lap of necessity. Should Nature destine one man to be wise and to be brave, wise and brave he will be. Should she destine another to be scatterbrained and imbecile, scatterbrained and imbecile will he become. There is no merit, no blame, to be ascribed to her or to them. The wishes that throb in our hearts may rebel, but the great Mother snuffs them out like a candle. She is governed herself. Her laws are ours.

It is in musings of this description that Fichte stretches his hand to Spinoza and denies that man is a free agent. At best he is a conscious automaton. But what if he were not even that? Is there any one thing of which he is certain?

> "Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live dreams?"

Fichte asks himself the same question, and looking with introspective eye for an answer, discovers the purely subjective character of all human knowledge. He sees that he has no consciousness of things in themselves, only a consciousness of a consciousness of them. Were he blind, what would he know of colour? Were he deaf, what would he know of song? Were he without imagination, doubt, hope and fear would have no meaning. Such knowledge as man possesses is merely a knowledge of himself; beyond it, consciousness never goes. When it seems to do otherwise, when man assumes to be conscious of an object—the sun, for instance—he has merely the consciousness of a supposition of an object, which supposition he identifies with sensation and takes for the object itself.

It has been hinted that akosmism and science are at odds, but on this point they agree. As a matter of fact, and one admitted by all decorous scholars, we none of us see the sun. What we do see are certain modifications of light in immediate relation to our organ of vision. And in this connection it is not improper to note that no two persons see the same modifications of the same light, and that for the reason that each person sees a different complement of rays acting on his own individual retina.

But to return to Fichte, and to put his idea less technically, it is a self-evident proposition that we neither see our sight, feel our touch, nor yet have a higher sense by which things affecting the organs of sense are perceived. It is therefore not difficult to accept the axiom that our consciousness of external existence is merely the product of our presentative faculty. The difficulty lies in the application, for with it all reality vanishes. "In that which we call intuitive knowledge, we contemplate only ourselves, and our consciousness is and can be only a consciousness of the modifications of our own existence. If, therefore, the external world arises before us only through our own consciousness, it follows that what is particular and multiform in the external world can arise in no other way; and if the connection between ourselves and what is external to us is simply a connection of thought, then is the connection of the multifarious objects of the external world simply this and no other."

The whole of the material world is, then, but a cerebral phenomenon. There is no being, no real existence. The only things that exist are pictures, and these pictures know themselves after the fashion of pictures. They are pictures which float past, without there being anything past which they float—pictures which picture nothing, images without significance and without an aim. Reality is a dream, without a world of which the dream might be, or a mind that might dream it. It is a dream which is woven together in a dream of itself. Intuition is the dream; thought, the source of fancied reality, is the dream of that dream.

In this charming manner, Fichte, after divesting himself of doubt and attaining perfect knowledge, mounts into a higher sphere which he terms Faith. Into the austerities of this abstraction it is unnecessary to follow him; and it will perhaps suffice to note that the conclusion amounts to the assertion that where the canaille believe that things are as they appear, because they must, the philosopher believes because he will. After a deduction such as that, one may well exclaim against the uselessness of philosophy in general, and the Fichtean branch in particular.

Fichte's metaphysical hysterics excited the wildest hilarity. His formula I = I, on which in an earlier work he had sounded all the changes, was popularly supposed to mean his own individual ego. Fichte, however, meant nothing of the sort. The "I" he used in the impersonal sense which is conveyed in such expressions as "it rains," "it snows." The "I" represented the force that pervades all things, and which in man arrives at a consciousness of self. But Fichte was not a clear writer—few Germans are; and if he was taken *au pied de la lettre*, the fault was his own. In any event, his philosophy was largely ridiculed. Heine is witness to the fact that a cartoon was circulated which represented a goose whose liver had become so big that the bird was undecided whether she was all goose or all liver. Across her Fichtean breast ran the legend I = I. The reality of his idealism, however, was not taken so easily. The Philistines waxed wroth. Heine represents a burgomeister as exclaiming, "That man thinks I don't exist, does he? Why I'm stouter than he and his superior too!" The ladies asked, "Doesn't he at least believe in the existence of his wife?" "Of course not." "And does Madame Fichte permit that?"

But with whatever facetiousness the matter may be viewed, the question of an external world has been, and is still, one of the great battle-fields of metaphysics. The realists clamour that their opponents are colossal in their errors; the idealists answer, "Tu quoque." Among the latter, few have been more vehement than Fichte. He defended his belief with all the heavy artillery of the German dictionary, and entrenched himself with logic. It was, however, merely on speculative principles that he contended that our knowledge of mind and matter is only a consciousness of what Sir William Hamilton has christened "various bundles of baseless appearances." He did not deny the veracity of consciousness; he denied the veracity of its testimony, a distinction as subtle as it is valid. For all practical purposes the material world—including Madame Fichte—was to him not only thoroughly real, but it went spinning through space at the rate of nineteen miles a second. And it was merely the certainty of uncertainty, the haunting conviction of the unreliability of the perceptions which in earlier days led Socrates to maintain that the only thing he knew was that he knew nothing, which caused Fichte to discriminate between what he believed and what he saw.

But however unreal the world might be in theory, he was quite sure that for every-day purposes it was the worst one possible. Indeed, Fichte was not only an akosmist, he was a pessimist too, a combination which seemed so alluring to Lammenais, that after a debauch in Fichteana he was pleased to describe the world as a shadow of that which is not, an echoless sound from nowhere, the chuckle of Satan in chaos.

Fichte's successor was Schelling. In place of the abstractions of his precursor, this gentleman presented an adventurous mysticism. Both were idealists; but where the one extracted the real from the ideal, the other reversed the proceeding. The transcendentalism which they professed in common, is the history of consciousness to the highest degree of its development. Fichte tiara'd his system with faith; Schelling crowned his own with æsthetics. To the latter, the universe was a poem whose strophies were writ in metaphysical formulas, a phrase which may be taken to mean that he was exquisitely alive to the beauties of Nature and yet unable to picture them in readable prose. His real master was Spinoza, and his philosophy in consequence presents some of the serenest forms of pantheistic belief.

The harmony to which he was alive prefigured to him the agency of a supreme Principle; of a Being eternally unconscious; veiled from the sight of man by the purity of enveloping light, and apprehensible only through intellectual intuition. On the skirts of this intuition he suspended knowledge. Above it he poised art—"the revelation of that Absolute in which subject and object coincide; in which the conscious and the unconscious unite."

"That which we call Nature," he said, "is a poem writ in mysterious hieroglyphics, but in which, were they decipherable, whoso lists might read the Odyssey of the Spirit, preyed upon by illusion, ever seeking, ever fleeing itself. . . . Nature is to the artist that which it is to the philosopher; the ideal world ceaselessly appearing in finite forms; the wan reflection of a universe which does not stretch beyond the mind, but rests within it."

The fundamental idea of the entire system amounts in brief to this: earth, sea and sky, and all that in them is, are, in their essence, emanations, or, as Leibnitz has it, fulgurations of an eternal and unconscious activity. Detached from the primordial matrix, these manifestations, though interconnected, are without permanent reality. The finite world is an illusion. The infinite alone exists.

This idea, while not unalluring, is passably vague. But vagueness has no terrors for those who wish to be mystified, and that there were many such is evident from contemporary accounts of the enthusiasm with which it was greeted. The enthusiasm, however, was as impermanent as Schelling's own reality. His disciples flocked to a rival teacher, to Hegel, whose name has the sound of a knell.

The doctrine which this gentleman advanced, and which to-day is to be sought for in seventeen massive in-octavos, may be regarded as the apotheosis of the arrière-pensée. Hegel was the chameleon of philosophy. He believed in nothing; and not only did he believe in nothing, but he possessed no fixity of disbelief. Whenever it is possible to pin him down, it is always on a contradiction that the pinning is accomplished. He was an anatomist of thought, a midwife of paradox. No phase, no flutter of consciousness, escaped his diagnostic. He analysed and dissected, but he did not build, or at least only on negations. He created doubts, not convictions. He made disbelievers, not converts. It was he who should have said, "Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint."

It may be noted, parenthetically, that the proposition of which Plato caught a glimpse, and which Descartes dimly perceived, the proposition that man is the one centre of thought, formed the sum and substance of Kant's teaching. "Look," he admonished the reader, "look at time and at space. They are but categories of thought. Time is not, nor yet is space. They are appearances which the mind creates, and with which we envelop the universe." This idealism, which in Kant was partial, in Fichte subjective, and in Schelling objective, became absolute with Hegel. To him, illusion was the one permanency, the one cause, and man but the shadow of its effects.

In its widest sense, Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to make the acquaintance of Schelling's primordial entity—the Absolute. As a necessary preparation he annihilated the finite, or, to use his own language, the categories of the finite which stood in his way; and when he had done so, behold, the Absolute had crumbled with them. The heavens were void. There has been nothing, there is nothing, there will be nothing, save a constant evolution, a continuous development, with death for a goal. And, after all, what is the lesson that history conveys? What, indeed, if it be not this, that whatever is born, is born to die.

The idolatry, the infatuation of Hegel's disciples was without precedent or parallel. The streets and beer-halls echoed with discussions on the identity of contradictories. The Idea, the Absolute, the Ich and the non-Ich, were every-night topics. Metaphysics hung over Berlin like a London fog. Hegel was not only a popular teacher, he was a national idol. His dialectic prestidigitations had all the charm which attaches to the unfathomable. That he was a charlatan is clear, but that he was revered is certain. Among the group of mourners that assembled about his tomb, one, a theologian, likened him to Jesus. More recently, Scherer compared him to Napoleon. Yet on his death-bed Hegel was heard to mutter, "Only one man understood my philosophy, and he only half-caught its import."

After such a confession, one might well offer him the viaticum and hum a requiem over his seventeen in-octavos. And yet in vain. Hegel's influence is too substantial to be quieted by any requiescat, however determined. In spite of the hilarity of the impolite, his spectre looms through the most rational forms of contemporary negation. In the core of his philosophy there broods a sphinx that still defies.

When the bewilderment which Hegel excited subsided, the faith which he had inculcated was questioned; belief soon gave way to heresies, and the metaphysical assembly divided itself into dissenting camps. From one of these issued the philosophy which counted Emerson and Carlyle among its exponents. In the uproar of another, Strauss, Feuerbach, Bruno and Stirner have pointed to an eternal grave and taken the nimbus from a god. It is owing to the instruction of a third that Vacherot has occupied his time in showing that the idea of perfection is God, but that perfection does not exist; and it was something of the original spirit that smoothed the way for the amiable fumisteries of Ernest Renan.

In the days when Hegelism was at its apogee, there appeared in Berlin a young man who declined to take any other part in the general intoxication than that of spectre at the feast. His contempt for the sophist, the pachyderm hydrocephali, and all the pedantic eunuchs who made up what he was wont to term the apocalyptic retinue of the bestia trionfante, was sumptuous in its magnificence. So sumptuous even, that he took counsel from an attorney as to the exact limit his contempt might reach without making him amenable to a suit for defamation. Then, reassured, he began an attack. "Hegel's philosophy," he said, "is sufficient to cause an atrophy of the intellect. It is a crystallised paralogism, an abracadabra, a puff of bombast, and a wishwash of phrases which in its monstrous construction compels the mind to form impossible contradictions." For its preparation he offered a receipt which is homeopathic in its simplicity. "Dilute a minimum of thought in five hundred pages of nauseous phraseology, and for the rest trust to the Teuton patience of the reader."

A few years before, this violent yet cautious young man had written a work which he signed in full letters, Arthur Schopenhauer, and entitled, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. This work, which he thought would shake the sophistry of all civilisation, had been left unnoticed and neglected on the back book-shelves of its Leipzig publisher. It is said that he smarted at this inattention, and that his aggressiveness and contempt of Hegel, and not of Hegel alone, but of Fichte and Schelling, the three sophists, as he was pleased to call them, was the outcome of envy. Whether or not this statement is true, is a matter of small importance. The point to be noted is, that thirty years later Hegel was largely forgotten, and the works of his obscure opponent were welcomed with an enthusiasm which has been expanding ever since.

"The World as Will and Idea" is an atheology compounded of Buddhism, Tauism and Epicurism, a mosaic of Oriental and classic negations worked out by an original and brilliant thinker. If the seventeen in-octavos already alluded to may be regarded as the apotheosis of the arrière-pensée, then, in comparison, this philosophy, together with its complementary monographs, represents the renaissance of common-sense.

Schopenhauer was not a pantheist. Had he possessed any of the views of ordinary orthodoxy, the belief, for instance, in

> "L'univers
> Où règne un Jehovah dont Satan est l'envers,"

he might possibly have read the banns over Nature and Satan, but he never would have identified the former with God. Nor was Schopenhauer a materialist. He was a theorematist of force, but atoms found no place in his system. Yet if he must be catalogued, it will perhaps be safest to say that he was an idealist who saw the inutility of dream. Kant's *Kritik*, from which all German metaphysics proceeds, had shown him that reason must either be confined within the limits of experience, or else let loose into an absolute idealism. The three sophists had disgusted him with the supersensible, and yet he felt suffocated in the narrow limits of the real. There was yet a middle course, and that course he took. It was useless to ask whence the world comes or whither it tends, but it would not be impertinent to state *what it is;* and the statement which Schopenhauer made to the public was to the effect that the world is but the perception of a perceiver, a simple representation, a mere idea which man carries with him to the tomb, and which in the absence of a thinker to think it would not exist at all.

In the *Cogita*, a note-book of which extracts have been selected by Schopenhauer's literary executor,* is the following passage: "Two things were before me, two bodies, regularly formed, beautiful to see. One was a vase of jaspar, with a border and handles of gold. The other was an organism, a man. When I had admired them sufficiently from without, I begged the genie who accompanied me to let me visit within. This permission was accorded. In the vase I found nothing save the pressure of weight, and between the parts some obscure reciprocal tendency which I have heard designated as cohesion and affinity. But when I entered the other object, my surprise was so great as to be almost untellable : in legends and fairy-tales there is nothing more unbelievable than the spectacle which I beheld. In this object, or rather in its upper end, called the head, and which from without looks like anything else, I saw nothing less than the world itself; I saw the immensity of space in which all is contained, the immensity of time in which everything moves, and therewith the prodigious variety of objects that fill both space and time; but, what is most astounding, I saw myself coming and going! That is what I discovered in this object that was barely larger than a large fruit; in this object which the headsman can dissever with a single blow, and that, too, in such wise as to plunge into sudden and eternal night the whole of the world that it contains. And the amusing part of it all is, that if objects of this sort did not sprout like mushrooms, continuously prepared to receive a universe that is ever ready to subside into chaos, and did not give and take like a ball the great idea (Vorstellung) which is identical in each, and of which the identity is expressed with the word objectivity, the world would no longer exist."

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* Arthur Schopenhauer. Von ihm. Ueber ihn. Frauenstädt.

Schopenhauer was not far from agreeing with Berkeley that the world is a phantasmagoria, a transformation-scene existing in fancy, or, as the Brahmans declared, a mirage evoked for the entertainment of the Supreme. The source and origin of the exterior world lay in the representative faculty which creates it and with which it disappears. Matter, according to him, is a lie that is truth; it is not an illusion, it is correlative with the intelligence; the two rise and fall together; separated, they could not exist; one is a reflection of the other. Properly speaking, they are the same thing examined from different points. But what is this same thing? Schopenhauer answers with a word, It is Will.

This Will should not be taken to mean the conscious act of a higher Intelligence. It is a force, invariable, identical and equal, of which gravitation, electricity, heat—in fact, every form of activity from the fall of an apple to the founding of a monarchy, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, from the choir of planets to the invisible molecule—is merely a derivative and nothing more. In Nature, it is a blind, unconscious power; in man, it is the foundation of being.

This theory, which Schopenhauer expounded with a great luxuriance of vivid argument, and in a style that is crystal in its clarity, coincides in the aptest manner with the doctrine of evolution. During the early ages of the world's formation, the objectivity of this force was, he says, limited to inferior forms; but when the conflict of chemical forces had ended, and the granite, like a tombstone, covered the combatants, it irrupted in the world of plant and forest. The air, decarbonised, was then prepared for animal life, and the Will's objectivity realised a new form. Fish and crustaceans filled the sea, gigantic reptiles covered the earth, and gradually through innumerable forms, each more perfect than the last, the propulsion ascended to man.

Schopenhauer declined to believe that either here or in another planet a being superior to man could possibly exist; and that for the reason that with enlarged intelligence he would consider life too deplorable to be supported for a moment. As a consequence, the Will's objectivity can ascend no higher. Its latest manifestation is even the final term of its progress, for with it has come the possibility of its denial, the possibility that some day it may be throttled into extinction and choked back into the chaos from which it sprang.

In all the grades of its manifestations, Will, he taught, dispenses with any end or aim. It simply and ceaselessly strives, for striving is its sole nature. But as any hindrance of this striving, through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary aim, is called suffering, and the absence of any obstacle, satisfaction,—it follows, if the obstacles it meets outnumber the facilities it encounters, that, having no final end or aim, there can be no end and no measure of suffering.

That pain does outbalance pleasure is a fact too well established to need discussion here. Pain begins with the lowest types of animal life, becomes acute with the nervous system of the vertebrates, increases in proportion to the development of the intelligence; and as intelligence attains distinctness, pain advances with it, until what Mr. Swinburne calls the gift of tears finds its supreme expression in man. And man is not a being to be envied. He is the concretion of a thousand necessities. His life, as Schopenhauer has it, is a fight for existence, with the certainty of defeat in the end; and even when his existence is assured, there comes a struggle with a shadowy burden, an effort to kill time, and a vain attempt to escape ennui.

Nor is ennui a minor evil. It is not every one who can get away from himself. Schopenhauer could, it is true; but in so doing he noted that its ravages depicted on the human countenance an expression of absolute despair, and made beings who love each other as little as men do, seek eagerly the society of each other. In this way, between effort and attainment, the life of man rolls on. The wish is in its nature pain, and satisfaction soon begets satiety. No matter what fortune may have done, no matter what a man may be or what he may possess, pain can never be avoided. Efforts to banish it effect, if successful, only a change of form. It may appear as want or care for the maintenance of life. If this preoccupation be removed, back it comes again in the mask of love, jealousy, hatred or ambition; and if it gain entrance through none of these avatars, it comes as simple boredom, against which we strive as best we may. Even in this latter case, if we get the upper hand, we shall hardly do so, Schopenhauer says, without letting pain in again in one of its earlier forms. And then the dance begins afresh; for life, like a pendulum, swings ever backward and forward between pain and ennui.

The one relief, a relief which at best is momentary and accidental, is in that impersonal contemplation in which the individual is effaced, and only the pure, knowing subject subsists. This condition Schopenhauer praises as the painless state which Epicurus described as the highest good, the bliss of the gods. Therein man is freed from the yoke of Will; the penal servitude of daily life ceases as for a sabbath; the wheel of Ixion stands still. The cause of this he was at no loss to explain, and he did so, it may be added, in a manner poetically logical and peculiar to himself.

"Every desire is born of a need, of a privation or of a suffering. When satisfied, it is lulled; but for one that is satisfied, how many are unappeased! Desire, moreover, is of long duration;

its exigencies are infinite; while pleasure is brief and narrowly measured. Pleasure, too, is but an apparition that is destined to be succeeded by another. The first is a vanished illusion; the second an illusion that lingers still. Nothing is capable of appeasing Will, nor of permanently arresting it. The best we can do is like the alms tossed to a beggar, which, in preserving his life to-day, prolongs his misery to-morrow. While, then, we are dominated by desires and ruled by Will, so long as we give ourselves up to hopes that delude and fears that alarm, we have neither peace nor happiness. But when an accident, an interior harmony lifting us for the moment from out the torrent of desire, delivers the spirit from the oppression of Will, turns our attention from everything that solicits it, and all things seem as freed from the allurements of hope and personal interest, then repose, vainly pursued, yet ever intangible, comes to us of itself, bearing with open hands the plenitude of the gift of peace."

Contemplation is then an affranchisement. It delivers us for a moment from ourselves; it suspends the activity of Will; and in raising man out of misery into the pure world of ideas, brings him a foretaste of that repose which is the freedom of the non-existent. But the liberation from the trammels of Will which is found in art and disinterested contemplation, is a solace that is momentary and accidental. That which is more desirable is a complete and unfettered freedom. The cause of evil is known; it is the affirmation of the Will-to-live. The remedy is its denial. The Will affirms itself when, after an acquaintance with life, it persists as much in willing as in the first moment when it was a mere blind necessity. The Will denies itself when it renounces life, when it frees itself through a persistent abdication, and abolishes itself of its own accord.

In this there is no question of suicide. For suicide, far from being a denial of the Will-to-live, is one of its strongest affirmations. The man who takes his own life really wants to live.

What he does not want are the miseries and trials attendant on his particular existence. He abolishes the individual, but not the race. The species continues, and pain with it. To be scientifically annihilated, life should be abolished not only in its suffering, but in its empty pleasures as well. Its entire inanity should be recognised, and the whole root cut once and for all. In explaining in what manner this is to be accomplished, Schopenhauer carried his reader far off into the shadows of the Orient. On the one side is the lethargy of the Rishis; on the other, the Tauists drugged with opium; while above all rises the phantasy of the East, the dogma of metempsychosis.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained,* Schopenhauer gives the name of Will to that force which in Indian philosophy is held to resurrect with man across successive lives, and with which the horror of ulterior existences reappears. It is from this nightmare that we are summoned to awake, but in the summons we are told that the awakening can only come with a recognition of the true nature of the dream. The work to be accomplished is therefore less physical than moral. We are not to strangle ourselves in sleep; we are to rise out of it in meditation.

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* The Philosophy of Disenchantment. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston

"In man," Schopenhauer says, "the Will-to-live advances to consciousness, to that point where it can choose between its continuance or abolition. Man is the saviour. Nature awaits her redemption through him. He is at once the priest and the victim."

If, then, in the succeeding generations the appetite for liberty has been so highly cultivated that a widespread and united compassion is felt for all things, then through continence absolute and universal, that condition will be produced in which subject and object disappear, and—the sigh of the egotist Will once choked thereby into a death-rattle—the world, delivered from pain, will pass into that peace which passeth all understanding, into the Prajna-Paramita, the "beyond all knowledge," the Buddhist goal where nothing is.

"It is this," Schopenhauer exclaims in his concluding paragraph, "it is this that the Hindus have expressed in the empty terms of Nirvâna and re-absorption in Brahm. I am, of course, aware that what remains after the abolition of the Will, is without effect on those in whom it still works. But to those in whom it has been crushed, what is this world of ours, with its suns and stellar systems? *Nothing.*"

Among thinking people, Schopenhauer's admirers are to-day sufficiently frequent to defy enumeration. The theory of force, which was his chief originality, has found few serious adherents; fewer still are they who pin any faith to his plan for the extinction of humanity; it is his classic insistance on the immedicable misery of life, it is the pessimism which he expounded, but which was no more his own invention than is atheism, that has multiplied the translations and editions of his works. For thirty years these works were unnoticed. But Schopenhauer, who was very blithe in his misanthropy, snapped his fingers at the inattention of the public; he knew that Time, who is at least a gentleman, would bring him his due unasked. "My death," he said, "will be a canonisation, the extreme unction, a baptism." Yet before he died, fame and honours came and found him unsurprised. "Time has brought his roses at last," he said. "But see," he added, touching his silvered hair, "they are white."

The most prominent of Schopenhauer's successors is Dr. Eduard von Hartmann. On many points this gentleman separates widely from the master. In matters ontological and teleological there is a variance that is noticeably large. But their pessimism is the same; if any difference is discernible, it is merely in this, that the tone of the later comer has gained from recent science the steadiness and assurance that comes of broader knowledge.

Dr. von Hartmann, who sits at the head of contemporary metaphysicians, is a transcendental realist. His doctrine is a pantheism, or, as he prefers to call it, a monism, in which nihilism and idealism are found in equal parts, and one which has given to Hegelism a new and unexpected activity. Nature to him is truly divine; but the misery of existence is irremediable, or at least will continue to be so until advancing science has taught in what way the clamour of life may be quelled. That which the Hindu termed Atma, that which Spinoza designated as Substance—in short, the universal and indetectable force which has made all things what they are, is called by him the Unconscious. The Unconscious is sovereignly wise, and the world is admirable in every respect; it is existence that is irreclaimable in its misery.

The originality of this philosophy consists in a theory of optimistic evolution as counterbalanced by a pessimistic analysis of life; but the originality is not lost in its conclusion, in which it is argued that, as the world's progressus tends neither to universal nor individual happiness, the great aim of science should be to emancipate man from a love of life, and in this wise lead the world back to chaos. The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own. It is to our advantage not to live; it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into a belief that life is a pleasant thing well worth the living. The instincts within us are the different forms beneath which the desire to live is at work, and with which the Unconscious moulds man to its profit. Hence the energy witlessly expended for the protection of an existence which is but the right to suffer; hence the erroneous idea which is formed of the happiness derivable from life; and hence, too, the modification of past disenchantments through the influence of fresh and newer hopes. But when in the old age of the world, when humanity has divested itself of the belief that happiness is obtainable in this life, when it has lost all faith in the promise of another—in fact, when every illusion has been dissipated, when hope, love, ambition and gold are recognized as chimeras, or at least as incentives to activity which cause more pain than pleasure—then, science aiding, humanity will perform its own execution, and Time at last will cease to be.

Such is Dr. von Hartmann's conception of life, and such is the idea he has formed of the destiny of the world. In regard to the latter, nothing need now be said; but it may be noted that to the general public his theory of pleasure and pain has not seemed wholly satisfactory. There have been many attempts to confute his pessimism, and many attempts to show that life, so far from being immedicable in its misery, is a well-spring of delight. And to many, doubtless, it has so seemed. But a point of view is not an argument. Whether life is held to be valuable, or whether it is held to be valueless, its nature in either case remains unchanged. To the obtuse it is usually the one; to the sensitive it is generally the other. But to the impersonal observer, the disinterested witness, to him who looks back through the shudders of history, and who gazes into a future that will be as inexplicable as the past, to him who feels some sympathy for the suffering, some compassion for the distressed and some pity for those in pain, life seldom seems other than an immense, an unnecessary affliction.

Why, asked Voltaire, with that leer which de Musset has made immortal, Why is there anything? An answer often given to this question is, that the ultimate reason of things is discoverable only in matter and motion. In theological circles the advocates of this explanation are not in good repute. In polite society it is considered as bad form to hold such theories as it is to carve salad or guillotine asparagus. In fact, beyond the jurisdiction of the scientific world the materialist has a bad name. The pantheist, *passe encore.* Pantheism is vague and poetic, and apprehended with difficulty. But the materialist brings a different guitar. His conception of the universe demands but little study to seem tolerably clear. Besides, in his heart he seems to say, There is no God, and the appearance of that inward speech is not compatible with good manners. Society has a stronger leaning to affirmations than to negations; in fact, as Rousseau has pointed out, the average intellect prefers to be wrong in its belief than to have none at all. The materialist, standing as he does in opposition to theological tenets, is therefore eyed askant, and, what is more, is called an atheist when his back is turned.

Parenthetically it may be noted that the historical definition of an atheist is a citizen who refuses to worship the gods which the authorities of the state have appointed as worthy of worship. In modern parlance the word has acquired a sharper tone, and is generally used in reference to whoso disbelieves in the supernatural. In the coming centuries it is possible that it will cease to be a term of reproach. Indeed, its rehabilitation has in certain quarters already begun. But be this as it may, there are still few thinkers who hear themselves called atheists without experiencing some bewilderment. "Tell a philosopher," Heine said, "that his theories are atheistic, and he will be as much surprised as would a geometrician on learning that his triangles were red."

The denomination is as impertinent to the views of the one, as the colour is to the triangles of the other. Not every one, however, has had the privilege of sitting at Heine's feet, and the expression continues to be flung, with more or less vigour, at all systems of rationalistic thought, though at none more virulently than at materialism.

As has been hinted in earlier chapters, materialism is as old as philosophy itself. In India, it was a precursor of Buddhism; in China, it antedates Laou-tze. In classic antiquity, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius were among its advocates. Arrested by Christianity, it was imprisoned all through the middle ages; but when, over a century ago, it at last escaped, thrones and altars fell before it. It is, however, only within recent years that materialism received the endorsements of science. The standard-bearer of this movement, a movement all the more significant in that it was a reaction against Hegelian abstractions, was Moleschott. His principal work, the *Krieslauf des Lebens*, awoke Germany from her stupor. It was attacked, applauded and abused. The thinking world, which since Hegel's death had been twirling its thumbs, turned toward it expectant eyes. The hypothesis of an indefinite circulation of matter passing ceaselessly from life to death and from death to life, was old enough to seem quite new, and the axiom, Without force, no matter; without matter, no force, was listened to with grave attention.

The *Kreislauf des Lebens* inspired any number of affiliated works. Vogt, Lowenthal, Czolbe and Rudolphe Wagner made themselves prominent in its defence. Old-fashioned methods were abandoned. Psychology was put aside. Since there was no psyche, of what use could it be? Metaphysics was relegated to the night from which it had sprung. Modern materialism determined to support its dogmas with the sciences which are called exact. And Büchner, mailed with astronomy, chemistry, geology, physiology and natural history, produced in *Kraft und Stoff* the text-book of the new belief. Thereafter it only needed a hymnal to be complete. The deficiency has been supplied by Richepin's *Blasphèmes*.

The first principle of scientific materialism is the inseparability of matter and force. Matter is not a vague substance on which force grapples from without. In the absence of the one, the the other is inconceivable, save perhaps by way of hypothesis. Without force, matter would enter at once into a formless void. Without matter, force would fade into a region of pure abstractions. Endeavour, for instance, to represent matter without force, that is, without the power of cohesion or affinity, attraction or repulsion, and, presto! the very idea of matter disappears. In like measure, an effort to represent force without matter results in a similar dénouement.

The second principle is that force and matter are indestructible. There are transformations, there are varieties in their manifestations, but in the sum of their effects the intensity is undiminished. Burn a log of wood, and the scales of a chemist will show that not a particle of matter has been destroyed. "Annihilate a particle of matter," said Spinoza, "and the world will crumble." Not an atom can lose itself in immensity, and to immensity not an atom can be added. The flux and reflux of things show beneath incessant variations the same persistent and invariable aggregate. There is a circulation of materials of which each fortuitous combination has its beginning and its end, but in some one form or another the materials meet again and interconnect anew.

As with matter, so with force. What disappears on one side re-appears on another. Friction produces fire, motion is obtained by steam. The amount of movement expended is recovered in the amount of heat; the amount of heat dissipated is recovered in the amount of motion. Force, then, like matter, is immortal. It may be transformed, but never destroyed. From these considerations, materialism concludes that, as that which is indestructible can have had no beginning, matter and force cannot have been created. Ex nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti. The transformation of something into nothing is as inconceivable, says Lebon, as is the creation of something from nothing. And Taine adds, "There is nothing but matter and motion. Space is the infinity of matter, as time is the eternity of motion." Matter and force are, then, eternal. But eternity is shared alone by them. Dust we are, to dust we shall return.

Matter and force being eternal, their laws are immutable. Were it otherwise, the properties of matter would change, and on the tablets of experience no change is recorded. Nature has never varied. Her laws are the mechanical relation of forces which, in disclosing no trace of a higher Will, turn superstition into a vagabond that has not where to lay its head. Time, in which all things unroll, is the great, the one creator.

The novelty of modern materialism, a novelty which distinguishes it from other systems, is that it claims to rest its affirmations on a basis which is strictly scientific. Its explanation of the universe by means of the action of natural forces, its reduction of natural forces to the variable modes of the force inherent in nature, are indeed supported by physics, chemistry and physiology. But into certain regions that it attempts to penetrate, it has not been preceded by any avant-courier that at all resembles exact knowledge.

The hypothesis that the attraction of all ponderable matter which maintains the planets in their orbits, must at one time have been in a condition to mould the universe from the cosmic dust spread through space, is the starting-point of materialistic cosmogony. This hypothesis, hazarded by Kant, signed by Laplace and attested by Herschel, is crowned by another, which is as opulent in vistas as is the retrospect of the first.

It is to the effect that the earth, like her lost satellite whose fragments have deluged the globe, will in turn be disembowelled and tossed through space. Historically these hypotheses are not new. Entertaining as the conjunction may appear, they are part of Buddhist lore. But they are a part of Buddhism which is as vague as it is poetic. In materialism, if there is less vagueness, there is also less poetry. Materialism is nothing if not matter-of-fact. Starting, then, from the hypothesis that a mass of cosmic matter originally filled the space which our planetary system occupies, and that, in accordance with the laws of gravitation which draw the parts to the centre, the sun was formed by the gradual concentration of its elements, it is not difficult to fancy a fragment of nebulosity detached from the centre and shot through space, developing first in a collection of gases, then into molecules that the rotatory movement fused and ignited, and which in cooling formed a crust above an interior furnace. This flight of fancy accomplished, it is yet easier to imagine the condensation of vapours into rain, the growth of plants and the birth of the monera from which man descends.

And life? Is it then, as Marcus Aurelius in his sceptred melancholy suggested, but a halt between two eternities? Bah! Away with phrases! A bottle containing carbonate of ammonia, chloride of potassium, phosphate of soda, chalk, magnesia, sulphuric acid and silex, is life in its most ideal, in its completest expression.

Some sixty million years ago, when primitive man blinked at a brighter sky than ours, he thought of the archeolithic ape, if he thought at all, as an inferior animal. And, indeed, there could have been little in common between the shuddering orang-outang and the speechless yet ferocious troglodyte who with an uprooted tree crushed the skull of a lion and then sucked the fuming brain.

The link between the two was as undiscernible to him as to the theologian of to-day. And yet, as Huxley has pointed out, the anatomical difference between man and a gorilla is less than between a gorilla and an inferior ape. And, to pursue the same line of argument, the difference between a Shakespeare and a savage is infinitely greater than between a savage and a brute. Why, a magpie is cleverer than the aboriginal Australian; but at the same time the cleverness of a magpie is not a proof of the evolution of man.

The old coquette, this world of ours, conceals her age, but her biography is under our feet. As we read backwards through it, her years mount up into ten hundred millions. The date of that initial catastrophe, her birth, is yet unreached; but we know enough of her past to be sure that it has been long enough and sufficiently immoral for many things to happen of which our philosophy may dream though it cannot prove. Among these things are spontaneous generation and the descent of man. When these are substantiated, materialism will have proved its claim; its sway will be undisputed ; but until then, its arguments have as much evidential value as so many astrogals.

In attempting to explain the organic by the inorganic, the main argument was the alleged birth of insects in putrefied matter. This argument was routed by Redi, who enveloped some meat in a light gauze, on which, a little later, eggs were found to have been deposited by passing flies, and at once the mystery was explained. The discovery of the microscope brought new hopes to the materialists. The animalculæ which were found in certain infusions appeared to have been produced without the assistance of antecedent germs. The falsity of this conclusion was demonstrated by Schwann, and the hypothesis of abiogenesis was abandoned, until Pouchet brought it again into fashion. But experiments recently made by M. Pasteur contradict those made by Pouchet ; and so far as contemporary science is competent to give a decision, the arguments of the anti-vitalists are inadequate to support their case.

But though the theory of spontaneous generation must be abandoned, at least for the moment, the materialists are by no means at their wits'-end. Life has arisen in some manner, and why not from the interaction of molecular forces ?

One of the most charming hypotheses on this subject was advanced a few years ago by Sir William Thomson. To this gentleman, life, or perhaps it would be better to say a germ potentially alive, that is, having within itself the tendency to assume a definite living form, first visited the earth in a meteor. If it is proper to assume that meteors are fragments of shattered and once peopled worlds, it may be assumed with equal propriety that some of these fragments are partially intact. The moment, then, that it is admitted that beside our own there are a number of life-supporting worlds and that other worlds have existed in anterior epochs, it would not seem improbable that germ-bearing meteors have moved and do still move through space. As a consequence, any germ-bearing meteor which fell upon the earth during the time when it was destitute of life may have been the unconscious cause of the failure which we are now enjoying.

Dr. Zoellner, a German scientist trained in all the illiberalities of official optimism, attempted to refute this hypothesis on the ground that when a meteor enters our atmosphere, the friction of the air makes it incandescent and consequently incapable of preserving and transporting any germ, however potentially alive. To this refutation Helmholtz made answer, that only the surface of meteors become heated, and that germs might readily remain unharmed in interior crevices, or if on the surface might on reaching our atmosphere be blown from their conveyance by the wind, and that, too, before the heat was great enough to cause their destruction. But if this solution be accepted, the origin of life on other planets remains still to be explained. It may be then, as Helmholtz has suggested, that life is co-eternal with matter, and its germs, transported from one planet to another, develop wherever they find a propitious spot. But this, too, is merely an hypothesis, and one that has not the slightest evidence in its favour. The enigma of life is for the present a part of the unknowable. But whether it will always remain so is another question. The differences which once were supposed to constitute a barrier between the vertebrate and the non-vertebrate no longer exist. The modifications by which the quadrupedal reptile became a bipedal bird have been clearly shown. Forty years ago, there was no evidence that such a demonstration would ever be made. Forty years hence, who shall say but that the missing link may be discovered, or the manufacture of the organic from the inorganic begun? As Professor Huxley has hinted, no one who has watched the gradual development of a complicated animal from the protoplasm which constitutes the egg of a frog or a hen, will deny that a similar evolution of the whole animal world from a like foundation is at least within the bounds of possibility.

Of the various creeds which man has been pleased to invent, the youngest is positivism. The position which this system of thought has acquired is due to its own merit. It cannot, like pantheism, look back through the terraces of time and claim the quaterings of race. Nor can it, like materialism, bedeck itself with Greek insignia. Among philosophies, positivism is a parvenu. As such, it is viewed with scorn, enthusiasm and indifference.

Positivism made its début a little over forty years ago. Its name was its fortune. There was in the sound of it an invitation to nearer acquaintance. But when the acquaintance was made, the name was found to partake of the nature of a lure. Relativism, if less attractive, would have been a clearer description. For positivism, if positive at all, is positive that there is nothing positive. Its sponsor was Auguste Comte.

If the realisation of the ambitions of youth may be regarded as the criterion of a successful career, the life of this thinker cannot be considered a failure. At a comparatively early age the outlines of his doctrine appear to have been clearly defined. The outlines sprang of a suggestion of Saint-Simon, who was wont to declare that all knowledge should be co-ordinated into one vast and comprehensive synthesis, but their development was accomplished without material indebtedness. In synthetising knowledge into a single system of thought, Comte proposed nothing less than the abolishment of theology and metaphysics, and the re-organisation of the occident through a philosophy of his own manufacture. In 1842, the sixth and last volume of this philosophy was given to the public, and with it the knell of all religions was supposed to have been rung. Ten years later, to the utter bewilderment of his disciples, Comte proclaimed the necessity of founding a new religion, of which the sovereign pontiff was to be none other than himself.

In an earlier paragraph it has been hinted that positivism is positive that there is nothing positive, a phrase which, from a Comtist standpoint, may be taken to mean that the essence of things escapes us. We can understand the interconnection of facts—that is, their direct antecedents and immediate sequences—but the initial causes and ultimate results are inaccessible to the intellect. In a word, there is nothing except material phenomena and the laws thereof. As this principle is the pivot on which the entire philosophy turns, a momentary examination may not be without benefit.

Many a sceptic has filled his hours in showing that things are not what they seem, but none of them, however revolutionary, have disputed the reality of consciousness, or denied the phenomena that are manifest in thought, feeling and volition. In affirming, therefore, that the objects apprehended by the senses are the only apprehensible phenomena, positivism apparently displays a radicalism which is as audacious as it is novel. It is of course possible and even proper to regard thought, feeling and volition as products of the body, but it would be a misuse of language to assert that they are material phenomena; and, as positivism's first tenet is that there is nothing except material phenomena, it would seem that, like any other screw, the before-mentioned pivot is loose. On the other hand, it may be objected that the phenomena called internal are unobservable, and that any attempt to distinguish them from their external elements results merely in demonstrating the vainness of the endeavour. If this view be accepted, positivism is found less rickety than it first appeared, and the introductory statement may be welcomed at once and without further hesitation.

If, then, as positivism asserts, the essence of things escapes us, any speculation on the origin and purpose of the world is profitless. On such and kindred subjects the mind should be without conjecture. It is only natural that man should have been on the *qui vive* in his effort to discover efficient and final causes, but his effort has never been successful. "If God did not exist," said Voltaire, "the world would have invented him." "Which," a wit replied, "is precisely what the world has done."

The mobility of phenomena, the fugitiveness of sensations, the impermanency of the actual, the real which each moment ends and begins anew, have, in all ages, incited to a knowledge of the unknowable. But the knowledge has not been obtained, and it was in view of the impracticability of the attempt that Comte ventured to suggest what may be termed a middle course. In the effort to pierce the impenetrable, humanity, he said, has passed and is still passing through certain stages of thought which correspond to those of childhood, adolescence and maturity. The first is the age of theology; the second, of metaphysics; and the third, of science. This doctrine, which is known as the law of the three states, conveys the suggestion alluded to, together with a theory which is as liberal as the sea. It runs somewhat as follows:

In the infancy of thought, Nature is dowered with the same illusions to which man himself is subjected. Every object is animated, and the government of the universe is ascribed, not to invariable laws, but to sentient and intelligent beings. In everything that occurs is seen the manifestation of a direct intention, and each particular event is attributed to forces which are but the aggrandisements of those of man. In the advance of thought, these forces, whose prowess is discernible in effects which man is impotent to produce, become the gods, invisible yet multitudinous. Then, gradually, as arises the capacity of co-ordinating phenomena into separate groups, the number of divinities diminishes, until, through processes of generalisation, they are reduced to one, and behold, man has passed out of fetishism into polytheism, and from thence to a belief in a unique Creator.

But there is a further advance of thought, and in its train comes the suggestion that the uniformity noticeable in the universe is incompatible with the theory of an arbitrary Will. The initial conceptions are dismissed, the celestial and inaccessible reason of things is banished, and realised abstractions are accepted instead. Nature is governed, not by an external power, but by internal and occult qualities. The reign of dryads and nymphs is passed, and their place is usurped by entities, by theories which deal with a plastic force and a vital principle. This is the second, or metaphysical state, which is of advantage in being a negation of the first and a preparation for the third, which latter is reached when men, weary of explanations that explain nothing, discover that what is necessary for the mind is not obligatory for things, and that a cause which is conceived by the one need not have a place among the others. Such is the positive, or scientific state of mind, to which, according to Comte, all humanity tends; and such, too, is the middle course which he recommended to thoughtful and decorous persons.

Stripped of its verbal husks, the law of the three states may be reduced to a truism. In seeking the reason of things, men look first above, then within, and finally confess themselves vanquished.

The law of the three states which Stuart Mill called the backbone of the entire philosophy, but which is not particularly new nor particularly convincing—not new, because sketched by Kant in outline, and not convincing, because Comte himself declined to be bound by it—is supplemented by a classification of sciences from out of which was drawn a fresh one, called sociology.

In the study of facts, the interpretation of the experience which is written between the lines of history, sociology was to be the lever in the substitution of science for religion. It was to terminate the conflict between theology, which demands order without progress, and metaphysics, which aims at progress and turns its back on order. It was to arrest the retrogression of the one, and still the anarchy of the other. In the government of life it was to replace religion with science, and give to intelligence the guiding-strings of the world.

In mapping this programme, Comte fancied that sociology could be raised to the level of an exact science, and that through its influence all enlightened nations would join hands in the profession of identical doctrines. In the utopias in which he then lost himself, he planned a re-organisation of society on a basis which, if suggestive of Plato's Republic, is otherwise without value or allurement. There is, he pointed out, no such thing as liberalism in astronomy, physics or chemistry; and if it be otherwise in ethics and politics, it is because neither of them possess established principles. When they acquire them, as they will do when positivism begins its sway, the force of public opinion will disappear. A corporation of philosophers, salaried by the State and treated with the greatest respect, will have the entire charge of education, together with the right to counsel and direct each citizen in his private and public life, and enjoy, moreover, such an amount of authority over students and thinkers as will enable them to prevent the latter from squandering their time and knowledge in speculations that are valueless to humanity, and oblige them to apply themselves to such investigations as may be deemed most important to general prosperity. The decrees which the corporation may formulate are not to be questioned, and, as the idea of the sovereignty of the people is one of the most pernicious that civilisation has advanced, but slight attention will be paid to the inclinations of the masses. In each nation there will be a governing body and a body governed, in which latter the citizen will occupy the position for which his abilities have fitted him. Thereafter religion and metaphysics will disappear. Scientific dissidence will be effaced, and an invariable and uniform political dogma will at last be accepted by united and peaceful nations.

To the clear-headed and matter-of-fact audience which was Comte's, theories such as these were viewed with suspicion. The idea that there is no God had in it nothing that was alarming; the prophecy of the overthrow of superstition and the general adoption of positivist tenets seemed not unreasonable; the prohibition against idle speculations and the complementary recommendation to treat only with the real were received with open favour; but the sturdiest could not look without terror on a future governed by philosophers.

When this horizon was disclosed, it is probable that Comte had already entered into what is known as his pathological period. In earlier years he suddenly lost his reason, and as suddenly recovered it. The border-lands of genius and insanity are never well defined, and it is not unlikely that before the *Cours de philosophie positive* was completed, something of that of which he had too much, something of that weight of thought which obscures the vision and tips the scales of common-sense, was again at work, though this time more dumbly and dimly than before. Thereafter the champion of the actual who had wished to lead God to the frontiers, and there thank him kindly for his provisory services, lapsed into a morbid mysticism. The sceptre of the world which he had given to intellect was transferred to sentiment. It was for the heart to rule and for the intellect to obey.

The *Philosophie politique*, in which his ideas on this subject are conveyed, shows, even amid the luxuriance of luminous thought, the same evidence of mental decadence as is noticeable in Kant's *Kritik der Practischen Vernunft.* Both belong to the senilia of great minds. During the year that intervened between its appearance and the publication of his chief work, Comte conceived what his biographers term a platonic affection for a lady whose influence over him was of such a nature, that, aided by the historical meditations in which his life had been passed, he dreamed of a happiness that should be universal, and of a world that should be ruled, not by a corporation of salaried philosophers, but by love in its purest and most disinterested form.

The pompous Religion of Humanity which he then evolved, and which has no more connection with positivism than an opera-bouffe has with logarithms, saddened the boldest among his adherents. It found adepts—what vagary has not? The altruism which it inculcated is certainly not without charm; but the deification of humanity past and future, the transformation of earth into a fetish, space into fate and numbers into virtues, are among the most deplorable instances of the aberrations of genius. After shutting out the unknowable, the door was opened to superstition; after banishing metaphysics, sentiment was beckoned in to occupy its place; religion was superseded by idolatry; and the heavens, that no longer told of the glory of God, were set ablaze with the memories of great men.

In its uncorrupted form, positivism is a modification of materialism. Among theologians there is a disposition to regard both in the same light. But no positivist likes to be called a materialist. He shows as much displeasure at the term as he would were he called a theist or a pantheist. And, indeed, the lines of demarcation, if not always broad, are none the less apparent. At the origin of things, theism places a personal and infinite Being; pantheism sees in all things the immanency of a Being that is infinite but impersonal; and materialism asserts that the cause of all things lies in the arrangement and properties of force and matter. Positivism, on the other hand, knows nothing of an infinite Being, whether personal or impersonal; in the spheres that are inaccessible to it, it recognises nothing but matter and the properties of matter; but, unlike materialism, it draws no conclusions. According to Littré, positivism is simply a methodical, hierarchic arrangement of the general facts of science, excluding every subjective element, and accepting nothing that is not drawn from experience.

A positivist, moreover, shows no evidence of delight at being called an atheist. As Littré has described him, an atheist is in a certain measure a theologian. He is not entirely emancipated. He has his explanations of things; he knows how they began. He believes in the chance clash of atoms, or in occult forces, or in a first cause. Of all this the positivist knows nothing. He ignores productive atoms as well as a creating and ordaining force. But whoso thinks that history follows a development that is obedient to a natural law—whoso thinks that the origin of societies, the establishment or mutation of religion, the founding of empires, cities, castes, aristocracies, governments, oracles, prophecies, revelations, theologies, arts and industries, are due, one and all, to the faculties of man—whoso accepts this view has fully accomplished the cycle of mental emancipation. The moment that he leaves no place for the supernatural either in the organic or the inorganic, either among cosmic phenomena or among those of history, that moment he passes initiate into the brotherhood of positivism.

The charm of positivism is the matter-of-fact position which it assumes before the insolvable. If it cuts no old knots, it brings no new tangles. It treats metaphysics with the respect which is due to all that is venerable; in the presence of religion it puts the dialectic broadsword softly back in its sheath. It leaves the great query where it found it. And in this is its wisdom; its agnosticism is its strength. Clamour as we may, there is no answer to our whys and wherefores. There is in us, about and beyond us, an enigma that will defy the Champollions of the future as it has routed the seers of the past. The reason of things lies beyond the sphere of knowledge, and the nearest approach that can be made is in a suspicion that all is relative.

CHAPTER VI.

A POET'S VERDICT.

THERE have been days in the history of the world when the poet was regarded with a respect that approached veneration. He was considered the oracle of the gods, and his voice was listened to with reverence. This pleasant custom has fallen into disuse. The gods have disappeared and carried the divine afflatus with them. In an age like the present, the demand for poets is slight. Their titles have been examined, and it has been found that to be useless is their one patent of nobility. As a consequence, the poet's vocation has seemed to many a synonym of the ridiculous. And yet, as Gautier with a charming affectation of naiveté remarked, an inability to write in verse can scarcely be considered as constituting a special talent. But there is another inconvenience: a poet is never rightly appreciated save by his peers; and as his peers are infrequent, the majesty which resides within him often lacks the trumpetings of a herald. Then, too, in an era of remorseless activity, it is only quiet people who live in the country that find leisure to listen to the footfalls of the Muse. For the benefit of such as they, verse may be divided into three broad classes: that which pleases the author's enemies, that which pleases the author's contemporaries, and that which passes unobserved to pleasure the idlesse of posterity. Of these classes, the verse of Leconte de Lisle belongs to the third.

Any one who has taken an interest in French literature during the last decade can hardly have failed to notice the number of new writers that have come into being, and more particularly the inferiority of their work. In explanation of this surge of mediocrity, many theories might be advanced; but perhaps the most palpable would be that the literature of our expiring century, after having passed from youth to virility, has begun to experience the maladies and garrulities of old age. But however the subject may be viewed, it is at least evident that the paladins of 1830, who were as revolutionary in literature as their ancestors were in religion, have passed away, and also that their methods have so far disappeared with them that the day before yesterday Victor Hugo seemed like a living anachronism. Readers latterly have refused to be interested in the phantasies of the romantics, and perhaps their pages were a trifle over-coloured; but their excuse lay in the fact that literature had become impoverished through conventionalities; there were synonyms instead of words; and in place of ample vocabularies there were small niceties of expression. All this the romantics did away with. They breathed health and vigour into an enervated dictionary, and startled Europe with the opulence of their adjectives.

It was in those victorious days that Gautier threw aside his brush and went in a famous red waistcoat to guy the philistines at the birth-night of Hernani. In graver years Gautier complained that in the eyes of the bourgeois he had never ceased to wear that crimson garment, and somehow, save among the liberal few, he has always been looked upon more or less askant. It has been said that it was his purpose to seek the hazardous and display it, but it must be admitted that what he had to say he told with a grace such as had been seldom heard before. He chose his words for their colour, for their aroma, as one may say; and it is related that he objected now and then to an accent because it took away something from the charm which the grouping of certain letters otherwise conveyed.

Through those days, too, Alfred de Musset passed with the indolence of a dissolute young god. He joined the ranks of the romantics, as did all men of talent, but he joined them more as an amateur than a professional: the familiar ballad in which the moon is represented as suspended over a steeple like a dot over an *i*, opened for him the doors of the cénacle without even giving him the trouble to knock. In a subsequent poem he asked forgiveness for that misdeed; and though he boasted that his Muse went bare of foot like Truth, she might still have been pictured as shod with buskins of gold.

Another of the heroes of this epoch was Alfred de Vigny. Some one has said that the face of a poet is never known until years and sorrow have marred its original beauty; but to this rule de Vigny was an exception. He was famous when quite young, and his bust, as it stands to-day in the lobby of the Théâtre Français, arrests the attention even of the indifferent. At the time to which allusion is made, he mingled but little with his fellows, appearing only when the moral support of his presence was needed. In later years, in spite of his talent, his beauty and his position, de Vigny, devoured by melancholy, turned his back entirely upon the world, and retired into what Sainte-Beuve has termed his *tour d'ivoire.*

In the wake of these poets came the familiar figure of Charles Baudelaire. Recently he has been described as having had the appearance of a delicate prelate, a trifle depraved. This description might be suggested by the mere reading of his verse. In the work of every poet there is something of the individual, and it is probable that few have studied the chiselled lines which he worked up with even a shrewder eye for the Satanic than that which was given to Edgar Poe, without calling up some such picture of their author. Baudelaire entered the ranks when the battle was won, but nevertheless he managed to flaunt a standard that has troubled the vision of many an after-comer.

So swiftly does time go by, that of these writers little more than tradition now remains. In the eyes of contemporary critics, de Musset is a dislocator of Alexandrines, de Vigny is a memory, Baudelaire a curiosity, and Gautier a model. Yet each of them left a legacy that is still disputed. From de Musset descends the gift of eloquence; in Baudelaire's testament is the heirloom of lurid effect; de Vigny has devised his morbidity; while Gautier's bequest is perfection in form. Taken together, they were the poetic embodiment of the agitation of which Voltaire, Holbach and Diderot were the heralds. "Je ne crois pas, ô Christ, à ta parole sainte," cried de Musset, and the cry was echoed by his fellow-workers.

In a literary sense, these poets were, on their first appearance, very generally looked upon as impertinent innovators, and in their assault upon the classicists they caused much rage and rhetoric. Viewed at this distance, the disturbance seems unnecessary; for, after all, what is romanticism but the art of pleasing one's contemporaries, and what is classicism but the art which delighted earlier generations? Turn about is always fair play. In a little while Hugo will be a classic, precisely as Racine is beginning to be considered a romantic. But be this as it may, the seething passion which in 1830 seemed more alluring than the chill restrictions of former years, gradually disappeared, and its place was taken by the serene impassibility of another group of poets who were called the Parnassians.

The advent of this new school was necessarily less boisterous than that of their predecessors: for that matter, they excited more ridicule than anger; and it is related that a cabman in a street row, after having called his adversary everything that was unpleasant, hurled at him with withering contempt as last and supreme reproach, the unavengeable insult, "*Parnassien, va!*"

Of the poets who made up this group, the better known are MM. Sully-Prudhomme and François Coppée. Sully-Prudhomme is an avowed materialist and frankly pessimistic. His poems may be summarised as a series of very delicate impressions intermingled with a fair amount of philosophic suggestion. His repertory is not extensive. It consists in three or four themes and their variations—such, for instance, as the familiar aspiration toward the infinite, man's sentiment of nothingness before the immensity of the universe, the agony of doubt, and the usual communion with Nature. The limits of this range do not necessarily imply a lack of ability. The art in any form of verse consists merely in the skill with which one or more of half-a-dozen old-fashioned sentiments is rendered, and in this respect the work of Sully-Prudhomme is generally irreproachable. In his treatment of purely personal dramas, the mental and moral combats which we all of us wage with ourselves, he leaves little to be desired, and it would be difficult to mention a poet who has entered more deeply than he into the psychological developments of the century. For all this he has received much praise, and if his verse is ever criticised, it is because it is at times a trifle vague. Sully-Prudhomme has been as honestly puzzled by the discord between the real and the ideal as any writer of his class; but in his perplexity his thought floats away to uncertain heights, and there disappears with a flutter of restless inquietude. To put the matter briefly, Sully-Prudhomme very often seems as though he were about to say something well worth the telling, but before he has gotten it safely on paper the force of the idea has vanished.

François Coppée is another of the dispersed Parnassians. His negations, if more carefully veiled than those of Sully-Prudhomme, are none the less discernible. He is at times dramatic, but his sadness is always insistent. To be sad is admittedly the poet's privilege; yet to be simply sad, and to express such a state of being as who should say, "I hunger" or "I thirst," is not necessarily poetic; rather is it commonplace. To be worth the telling, grief should express a thought that is neither humdrum nor familiar; it should lay bare fresh possibilities or set new limits to resignation: if it does not do this, then, however readily the tears may flow, however gracefully the grief be told, it is what a boulevardier would call *le vieux jeu*—the old story, of which we are most of us thoroughly tired. It is this old story that M. Coppée re-tells; and though the telling is managed with much refinement, it is impossible to call it novel. M. Coppée has also much to say about his boredom. Boredom, however, is not a flexible topic; indeed, unless it is handled with unusual dexterity, there is a danger that the reader will find it even more irritating than the writer, and thereupon withdraw his attention and support. Boredom also is more of a fine art than is generally supposed, and not to every one is it given to disentangle original ideas from that which is flat and unprofitable. Leopardi and Baudelaire have done so, it is true; but between them they managed to throttle the subject and share the booty. For a later comer like M. Coppée, nothing was left.

MM. Prudhomme and Coppée have both sat at the feet of Leconte de Lisle. To-day they are better known than he, but neither of them have ventured to rate their work above that of their master. In this modesty much good taste is shown. He has none of their faults, and, moreover, he has genius, which both of them lack. In comparison with him they are as concettists to Dante.

Leconte de Lisle is perhaps the most perfect poet of France. It is he who is the rightful heir to the legacies of the romantics, and these possessions he has rounded and improved with an erudition which embraces history, philology, archæology, anthropology, and doubtless much more beside. In spite of this, or perhaps on that account, his literary luggage is scant. He has translated a few ancient authors, written a drama or two, and published three compact volumes of verse. In speaking of the latter, it is difficult to describe them in a phrase, though this perhaps may be accomplished in saying that they do not contain a commonplace line. The three volumes are respectively entitled, *Poèmes antiques*, *Poèmes barbares*, and *Poèmes tragiques*. The first division, which is largely made up of Vedic hymns and Greek idyls, is one in which the characteristics of the author are best displayed, and in which his impersonality is most strongly marked. Many of the poems in this series bring with them a haunting impression that they are translations from some unknown Valmiki, while others might be taken for the work of Max Müller turned poet.

When these poems were first published, they created among the lettered an intense admiration. It was admitted that lines of such splendour and impersonal serenity had never been hewn before; and certainly, after the ardour of the romantics, their impassibility could not have been other than a refreshing change. It was, however, the fortune of the book to appeal only to scholars; to the newspaper public it was unintelligible; the author had made no effort to please; and, moreover, he had declined to make any concessions to the ordinary reader. The result might have been foreseen; Brahmā was declared to lack actuality; and it was held to be tiresome to construe a modern poet with a Greek dictionary. What, it was asked, has Juno done to be called Héré, and why must the sky be ouranos?

As was the case with the series just mentioned, the *Poèmes barbares* found favour only with the few. To the general public they seemed very subversive. They displayed a pessimism which was new to France, and which, being new, was eyed with suspicion. Then, too, Leconte de Lisle was calmly anti-theistic. The bravado of Maréchal is boyish in comparison to his grave disdain of things celestial. In the *Poèmes barbares* there are lines that startle and coerce, lines in which the horrible is expressed with such colour and yet with such austerity that the reader shudders as he reads and admires as he shudders. Beside them, the declamations of that dissolute Greuze of literature, Alfred de Musset, sound cracked and thin—like a man's laughter, as Mr. Swinburne has it, heard in hell.

The *Poèmes tragiques* are not as satisfactory as are the others. They are made up of a dozen or more recitals which have much to do with the shedding of blood, a few ballads, villanelles, pantoums and sestines, together with a bar or two of pure harmony.

Leconte de Lisle is the Goya of verse, and yet, through a delicious contradiction, one of the most noteworthy characteristics of his work is its constant evocation and suggestion of the beautiful. No other modern poet, except perhaps

Mr. Swinburne, has shown a better acquaintance with the road to Paphus. And it would be a task full of charm to follow him from the jungles of the Indian peninsula to the cool lakes of Norway, to fan Leïlah and kiss Glaucé. Unfortunately, the purpose of these pages will not permit of such pleasant digressions, and the beautiful must be neglected that the poet's antitheism may be the more quickly understood. By way of introduction, a momentary examination of the poem *Qaïn* will not, it is imagined, cause any after reproach of time misspent.

The scenario is simple and audacious. The son of Elam, Thogorma the seer, a captive among the Assyrians, dreams of a night in the mysterious ages when the voice of God echoed through the universe, and in his dream he sees Henokhia, the city of giants, in whose highest tower is the tomb of Cain. Cain's descendants are wending their way homewards from the chase. Thogorma sees them disappear in the immense orb of the ramparts, while night, bringing a vague terror and dumb dread, mantles the great stairways that turn in red broad spirals to the winds. He hears the roar of lions, chained on the ascending steps, and beneath the porticos the clamours of crocodiles rise from the reservoirs. Then, abruptly, from the confines of the outlying desert, a spectre, loosed from Gehenna, surges through the shadows, and Thogorma hears the spirit anathematise Cain and all his race.

Cain awakened, stands upright in the granite sepulchre where for ten centuries he had slept with his face to the sky. His eyes, haunted by one supreme remembrance, contemplate through the preceding epochs the vanished days when the world was young; and with his thoughts rich with the memory of the earth's primal innocence and beauty, he calls to the phantom to be silent and narrates his sombre history. Conceived while his parents were labouring under the divine malediction, his mother, Eve, swooning in the brambles, gave birth with a shriek of horror to Jehovah's victim, to him who was Cain. Nursed with tears, his boyhood knew no smile. What had he done, he wondered, to be punished too? And so, later, in the knowledge of his exile he accosts the angel on guard at the gates of Eden, and learns that on the morrow he is to know the reason of his birth. On the morrow the reason is made apparent. Jehovah arms his hand against Abel, and incites him to kill the brother whom he tenderly loved.

Here ends Cain's account of his life; but immediately, in his awakened thirst for vengeance, he prophesies that when Jehovah is wearied with the world and shall seek by means of the deluge to destroy it, he, Cain, will save the ark—which the poet represents as constructed in spite of Jehovah—whereupon man, no longer brave, but cowardly and envious, will rise from the flood with its mud in his heart. Cain, the avenger, continues:

"Dieu triste, Dieu jaloux qui dérobes ta face,
Dieu qui mentais, disant que ton œuvre était bon,
Mon souffle, ô Pétrisseur de l'antique limon,
Un jour redressera ta victime vivace.
Tu lui diras : Adore ! Elle répondra : Non !
. . . .

Afin d'exterminer le monde qui te nie,
Tu feras ruisseler le sang comme une mer,
Tu feras s'acharner les tenailles de fer,
Tu feras flamboyer, dans l'horreur infinie,
Près des bûchers hurlants le gouffre de l'Enfer :

Mais . . . .
. . . .

Je ressusciterai les cités submergées,
Et celles dont le sable a couvert les monceaux :
Dans leur lit écumeux j'enfermerai les eaux :
Et les petits enfants des nations vengées,
Ne sachant plus ton nom, riront dans leurs berceaux !

J'effonderai des cieux la voûte dérisoire.
Par delà l'épaisseur de ce sépulchre bas
Sur qui gronde le bruit sinistre de ton pas,
Je ferai bouillonner les mondes dans leur gloire :
Et qui t'y cherchera ne t'y trouvera pas.

Et ce sera mon jour ! Et d'étoile en étoile,
Le bienheureux Eden longuement regretté
Verra renaître Abel sur mon cœur abrité ;
Et toi, mort et cousu sous la funèbre toile.
Tu t'anéantiras dans ta stérilité."
. . . .

Apart from the wonder and majesty of the language, and apart, too, from the intuition which in earlier stanzas enabled the poet to call again into being the life of the past, *Qaïn*, on a first reading, seems to be merely a work of cultured and harmonious blasphemy, and, indeed, so far as the blasphemy is concerned, nothing more vehement has been penned since Æschylus; but yet on a re-reading *Qaïn* is found to be little else than an allegory of the protestation of the intellect against the unintelligible, a revolt at the mystery of pain.

This protestation, which is as old as philosophy, and which in recent years seems to have increased in volume and significance, has been conveyed by Leconte de Lisle in other poems with great originality, and with particular power in the parable of the *Corbeau.* Through this poem, as through *Qaïn*, there is a running accompaniment of muffled discontent, which in other verses finds a clear and decided note. Something of this same dissatisfaction was expressed by de Vigny and Alfred de Musset, and yet in their case one is inclined to fancy that the grievance was less reasoned than instinctive; they were at odds, so to speak, with the inevitable; life failed to hold what it had seemed to promise, and in consequence their complaints were more or less personal. But in Leconte de Lisle there is no evidence of personal disappointment, and nothing that can be construed as the outcome of an individual grievance. It is a part of his doctrine that an expression of pleasure or pain deforms the human visage, that the poet's correct attitude is the one which most nearly approaches the impassibility of the statue, and it is this theory which he has carried into his work.

It is difficult to say to what category of antitheism Leconte de Lisle belongs. His pantheism is too evident to permit of his being called a materialist, and yet his materialism is so marked that it is difficult to suspect him of any other sympathies with the ideal than those which are purely poetic. He is too aggressive for an agnostic, and yet there are moments when he might be taken for a positivist. Perhaps it will be safest to say that he is a theoretic pessimist, a denomination which is broad enough to include any of the others, and at the same time is serviceable in conveying the exact shade of his thought.

The pessimism which is manifest in the verse of Leconte de Lisle has nothing of Renan's serenity, and none of the calculations of Von Hartmann. In his case it is the formal protest against the enigma of grief which characterises the philosophy of the earliest thinkers, but one which is entirely free from the shackles with which they delayed the hope of ultimate emancipation. It is not that the idea of absorption in Brahm, or the extinction in Pari-Nirvana, is disagreeable to him; on the contrary, they are dreams through which he lovingly trails his verse, but they are dreams.

"Pleurez, contemplateurs! Votre sagesse est veuve
Viçnou ne siege plus sur le lotus d'azur."

That of which he seems best convinced is the irremediable existence of what apparently has no reason for being. History is little else than the tale of an uninterrupted shudder; chronicles of private life are merely accounts of combats that individuals have waged with fate; and Leconte de Lisle, who is a patient student, has noted compassionately in both the persistence of the law of evil. He should not, however, be considered a follower of Schopenhauer; the majority of his poems were published before the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* had crossed the Rhine; moreover, Schopenhauer did not invent pessimism; Kapila was as much occupied with pain as was that Emerson in black; indeed, it is curious to note that the first metaphysician as well as the latest of great poets are agreed that life is an affliction, and it is also curious to note that the tendency of modern thought is to an agreement with their views.

The soul, whose immortality Robespierre decreed in the law known as that of the 18th Floréal, year II.; the soul, which all antiquity, Plato included, accorded to beasts, but whose possession Christianity has limited to man; the soul, which is reported to come no one knows whence, and to depart no one knows whither, has for Leconte de Lisle a purely verbal existence. Robespierre, it is true, knew nothing about primitive man; but Leconte de Lisle does, and he knows, too, that a gorilla to which a soul is refused to-day is not a whit more elevated than was man in the sylvan age—in that age, in fact, when he had no other weapons than the branches which he tore from a tree. And if a soul be refused to primitive man, at what epoch was the gift bestowed? Is it a result of evolution, or, as certain theologasters have asserted, is it naturally one with the body, and only separable and capable of immortality through the influence of grace divine? The last century combatted these theories with logic. Leconte de Lisle has at his disposal not alone the logic of yesterday, but the science of to-day, and to him the soul is a phantom evoked by the conscience.

"If you do not believe in a soul and in a future life," said some one to Goethe, "what do you consider to be the object of the present?" To which Goethe, with Olympian egotism, answered tersely, "Self-improvement." One may fancy that to Leconte de Lisle the object of life is none other. He was born in the Isle de Bourbon something over sixty years ago, and came to Paris when quite young. From his early home he brought little else than memories of the beauty of Nature and the invincible immensity of her forces, memories that have since served as frames and backgrounds to his verse. In Paris he followed the developments of science, and studied history, religions and life. From them he learned that man has two antagonists, himself and the exterior world; he found, too, that man is a prey to influences which mould him to their profit, and that humanity had aggravated its misfortunes by inventing explanations which it termed beliefs. Since then, in the quietest ways, he has passed his hours in satiating that vague curiosity which besets even the most indifferent, and in convincing himself not only of the nothingness of creeds, but of the nothingness of life. Life, he says:

> "La vie est comme l'onde où tombe un corps pesant:
> Un cercle étroit s'y forme et va s'élargissant,
> Et disparait enfin dans sa grandeur sans terme.
> La Māyā te séduit, mais, si ton cœur est ferme,
> Tu verras s'envoler comme un peu de vapeur
> La colère, l'amour, le désir et la peur,
> Et le Monde illusoire aux formes innombrables
> S'écroulera sous toi comme un monceau de sables."

Gibbon, who was fond of fine paragraphs, declared all religions to be equally true to the vulgar, equally false to the philosopher, and to the statesman equally useful. But Gibbon omitted the poet; and to such an one as Leconte de Lisle no religion can be true, if for no other reason than that there is no criterion of truth; no religion can be wholly false, for every religion has enjoyed an hour of undeniable actuality; and no religion can be deemed useful if the need of it has disappeared. To his thinking, religions have served their purpose. Compounded of fables more or less absurd, and of ethics more or less wholesome, in their obscure origins they were intended to be explanations of natural phenomena with which to-day we are better acquainted. As to Christianity, it is to Leconte de Lisle an artistic creation, powerfully conceived, venerable in its antiquity, and one whose place is now marked in the museum of history.

It has been objected, that should this view be accepted, no one would turn to the Bible for instruction, and as a consequence the gateways to immorality would be opened wide. Now Plato said that we should esteem it of the greatest importance that the fictions which children first hear should be adapted in the most perfect manner to the promotion of virtue. There are, however, not a few grave thinkers who have asserted that the Bible is inapt to serve such an end. Admittedly the morality which is displayed in the Synoptic Gospels is admirable, but it is sometimes forgotten that it is an integral part of the teaching of Socrates and the Socratics. M. Havet has shown its sweetest precepts flowing from their lips. In other portions of the Bible there are verses that exalt the spirit like wine; there are delicacies of thought and felicities of expression that both soothe and charm; but one must needs be a paradoxist to claim either as an aid to the promotion of virtue. Beside, as has been hinted in earlier pages, morality is more a question of temperament than of instruction. For that matter, we are most of us well aware that the instruction sometimes defeats its aim. Mr. Froude relates that when St. Patrick preached the gospel on Tarah Hill, the Druids shook their heads. The king, Leoghaire, marked their disapproval wonderingly, and asked, "Why is it that that which the cleric preaches seems so dangerous to you?" "Because," they answered, "he preaches repentance, and the law of repentance is such that a man shall say, 'I may commit a thousand sins, and if I repent it will be not worse with me; I shall be forgiven; therefore will I continue to sin.'" Leconte de Lisle has therefore put the Bible reverently aside, and in looking back through the dreams from which it came and into the visions which it has evoked, he has murmured with the sadness of the tender-hearted:

> "O songe, ô désirs vains, inutiles souhaits,
> Ceci ne sera point, maintenant ni jamais."

There is no help there, nor is there any elsewhere. The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals. In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save perchance in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness which soon hide the tomb grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the just and of the unjust, of kings, of felons and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity, unsatisfied as before and yet impatient for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilize the furrows of space where worlds ferment.

On this vista the curtain may be drawn. Neither poet nor seer can look beyond. Nature, who is unconscious in her immorality, entrancing in her beauty, savage in her cruelty, imperial in her prodigality, and appalling in her convulsions, is not only deaf, but dumb. There is no answer to any appeal. The best we can do, the best that has ever been done, is to recognise the implacability of the laws that rule the universe, and contemplate as calmly as we can the nothingness from which we are come and into which we shall all disappear. The one consolation that we hold, though it is one which may be illusory too, consists in the belief that when death comes, fear and hope are at an end. Then wonder ceases; the insoluble no longer perplexes; space is lost; the infinite is blank; the farce is done.

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THE PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF EDGAR SALTUS
WITH A FOREWORD BY CHIP SMITH

The Philosophy of Disenchantment. & The Anatomy of Negation.

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WITH A FOREWORD BY
CHIP SMITH

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Foreword.

FOREWORD.

EDGAR SALTUS WAS BORN IN 1855. HE DIED IN 1921. HE WROTE quite a few books during the years intervening, and it seems there is a percolating consensus—among vested scholars, in any case—that his oeuvre has since been woefully neglected. I won't argue with that appraisal. I'm a reasonably well-read plebe, yet Saltus had escaped my notice until a couple of years ago when I caught a passing reference to his work in Thomas Ligotti's pessimistically pitched lit-crit treatise, *The Conspiracy against the Human Race*. And the truth is I might never have followed the lead had I not been contacted by Kevin Slaughter in late 2012 with the news that he planned to reprint two "nonfiction Saltus books" under his (also woefully neglected) Underworld Amusements publishing venture. When Kevin asked if I would consider writing an introduction, I reasonably suggested that the task should fall on someone familiar with the literature. I was disposed to reconsider, however, when I began reading *The Philosophy of Disenchantment* and found myself wanting to throw the thing across the room because it's just that fucking good. Scholarly introductions tend to be stuffy and overwrought, anyway. With no academic reputation to secure or uphold, I am at liberty to share a catechumen's enthusiasm for the double-shot on offer.

If you want the full effect, read *Anatomy of Negation* first. It's a solid book—a surefooted, if somewhat idiosyncratic, study of the antitheistic impulse as expressed and developed from antiquity to modernity. Tracing the roots of worldly skepticism to the Vedic sage Kapila ("the first serious thinker who looked up into the archaic skies and declared them to be void"), Saltus provides a deftly ornamented account of such atheistic rumblings that may be descried in the texture of Buddhist and Epicurean thought, turning his sights in course on those pre- and post-Enlightenment "slayers of superstition" who endeavored to break the spell of Christian mysticism. Montaigne figures prominently as one who "refused to take a step beyond the actual," and Spinoza receives due favor for his "three-fold" negations ("He denied the existence of an extra-mundane Deity; he denied that man is a free agent; and he denied the doctrine of final causes").

While modern readers may register disappointment that Saltus' curatorial labors would never be updated to account for the philosophical turn signaled by Nietzsche's rise, his contextual discussion of the ever-ascendant Arthur Schopenhauer serves just as well to distinguish his project from that of a lesser contrarian. Describing the great pessimist as "an idealist who saw the inutility of dream," Saltus correctly apprehends Schopenhauer's concept of Will as an antecedent expression of the central tenet of Darwinian theory. More important, Saltus grasped the deeper implications for the cause of human well-being in a universe at once disenchanted and governed by inchoate force. Paraphrasing the philosopher Eduard von Hartmann in relevant context, Saltus writes—not for the first time—in anticipation of contemporary antinatalism:

> The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own. It is to our advantage not to live; it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into a belief that life is a pleasant thing well worth the living.

While *Negation* proceeds as an episodically paced, biographically annotated intellectual history that plots and, by internecine turns, celebrates the dethronement of the transcendental temptation in its various and sundry cross-cultural guises, the author's editorial investment is made clearest in the book's closing chapter, "The Poet's Verdict," where Saltus captures the human predicament with apposite measures of resignation and flair:

> There is no answer to any appeal. The best we can do, the best that has ever been done, is to recognize the implacability of the laws that rule the universe, and contemplate as calmly as we can the nothingness from which we are come and into which we shall all disappear.

It is instructive, I think, to contrast what dim solace Saltus summons before the void with the cheery—and frankly credulous—optimism incessantly being trumpeted in contemporary iterations of what has recently been branded the "New Atheism." Examples of such rose-tinted sentiment are amply supplied in the writings of the movement's chief expositor, Richard Dawkins, whose fast and loose atheistic polemics come adorned with curiously exultant paeans to the life-affirming wonders of

the natural universe into which we are assuredly and emphatically privileged to have been cast. Dawkins' bestseller, *The God Delusion*, is so littered with awestruck Panglossianism that the philosopher David Benatar (whose signature work, *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence*, Saltus might have relished) was motivated to pen an incisive demurral* taking the New Atheist doyen to task for embracing the "gospel of secular optimism without feeling the need to engage seriously with philosophical pessimism–the ultimate delusion buster."
Saltus, of course, suffered no such delusion. Time to flip your bookmark to *The Philosophy of Disenchantment.*

Disenchantment was Published in 1885, only a year before *The Anatomy of Negation* (which it resembles in its formal trajectory). Saltus would later describe it–one assumes with a self-effacing wink–as "the gloomiest and worst book ever published." Like its deicidal counterpart, *Disenchantment* proceeds as a richly embellished study of a perennial species of heterodoxy, in this instance: the case of pessimism, or such deep or cosmic pessimism as that bearing on the grim conclusion that–again anticipating philanthropic strains of contemporary antinatalism–"the world is a theatre of misery in which, were the choice accorded, it would be preferable not to be born at all."

Saltus evinces competence and grace throughout, charting and amplifying the minor chords of miserablism that have been sounded in terms philosophical and poetic for millennia. We are reminded of the public disturbance aroused by Hegesias of Cyrene, who may have been the first Western thinker to consign happiness to the rank of "pure illusion" and who rejoined the Socratic exaltation of knowledge with a plaintive echo of Buddhist resignation, declaring "Contentment is not to be relied on, and even wisdom cannot preserve us from the treachery and insecurity of the perceptions." We are introduced anew to the poet and essayist Giacomo Leopardi, whose contemptuous indictments of the "sinister and terrible mystery of life" gave shape to the "muffled discontent" of ages, transforming the restive churn of a formless pessimistic sensibility into "one clear note of eloquent arraignment."

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* BENATAR, D. 2008. The optimism delusion. Think, 16 (Winter) : 19-22

Prominence of stature is perforce accorded to Arthur Schopenhauer, "The High Priest of Pessimism," to whom Saltus devotes expansive biographical attention and in whose philosophy he locates the conception of life as "a motiveless desire, a constant pain and continued struggle, followed by death, and so on, in *secula seculorum*, until the planet's crust crumbles to dust." As if to flirt with the endgame, Saltus appends his treatment of Schopenhauerian negation with a discursive—and desultorily critical—account of the proto-extinctionist ideas of his personal contemporary, Eduard von Hartmann, an evolutionary pessimist who held "the idea that happiness is obtainable in this life" to be "the first and foremost of illusions" and who blackly averred that the ascent of human consciousness would—and should—ultimately resolve in the (presumably voluntary) cessation of "every form of existence."

Considered as discrete works, *The Philosophy of Disenchantment* and *Anatomy of Negation* stand as valuable contributions to the literature of philosophical pessimism and supernatural skepticism respectively. Taken together, the effect is alchemic—and volatile. For the outspoken modern atheist who feels an abiding need to promote his pet disbelief as sport, cosmic pessimism is a jagged shard that threatens to blunt the only salve he has yet on offer. However it may be qualified, the enthronement of meaning is today tacitly encouraged by self-imagined freethinkers who, in their effusive appeals to reason, disdain to consider that the vaunted sense of life's purpose could in the next breath be revealed as yet another paper-thin conceit—or, in deeper acid, as the final precious article of phantom nonsense that pulses after the armor of so many impotent spooks has been penetrated and dismantled. In what wreckage remains, every boast and sneer will ring hollow.

Saltus dwelled in that wreckage. Understanding what was at stake, he stood atop the corpse mound of fallen gods and he sifted through the rot to unlay the deep nest of demons still asquirm in the minds of mortals who once dreamed of angels. He dissected and exploded every cherished myth and he burned what hope remained. The char of deflagrated hope now resides at the margins of a sprawling disquisition that may finally be considered as intellectual backdrop to the shadow inquest that has continued apace, whether in the amoral perturbations of the natural sciences or in the outcast voices of those who have since staged protest against the reigning chorus of optimism. You can compile a list where Zapffe and Lovecraft and Cioran hold place, or you can go all in, settling at the grimly extrapolated declaration of Ligotti (the contemporary nihilist who, from a century's distance, Saltus most resembles), *videlicet*, "The universe is *malignantly useless*."

Saltus did well enough for his time. He limned the dreariest sentiments of the ages in crystalline prose that fairly scintillates with lyrically inflected insight. He was an entrancing writer. And though his work may remain to languish in obscurity along with the work of so many other forgotten thinkers and litterateurs, what's sure is that a dreadful thrill awaits those intrepid truth seekers who venture beyond the lonely footnote to receive the bleak verdict of an overlooked miserablist, and perhaps, a kindred spirit.

CHIP SMITH
January, 2014

The Philosophy of Disenchantment.

In Arkadien geboren sind wir Alle...

—**Schiller**

CHAPTER ONE.

The Genesis of Disenchantment.

THE TRITE AND COMMONPLACE QUESTION OF CONTENTMENT and dissatisfaction is a topic which is not only of every-day interest, but one which in recent years has so claimed the attention of thinkers, that they have broadly divided mankind into those who accept life off-hand, as a more or less pleasing possession, and those who resolutely look the gift in the mouth and say it is not worth the having.

Viewed simply as systems of thought, the first of these two divisions is evidently contemporaneous with humanity, while the second will be found to be of purely modern origin; for from the earliest times man, admittedly and with but few exceptions, has been ever accustomed to regard this world as the best one possible, and through nearly every creed and sect he has considered happiness somewhat in the light of an inviolable birthright.

Within the last half century, however, there has come into being a new school, which, in denying the possibility of any happiness, holds as first principle that the world is a theatre of misery in which, were the choice accorded, it would be preferable not to be born at all.

In stating that this view of life is of distinctly modern origin, it should be understood that it is so only in the systematic form which it has recently assumed, for individual expressions of discontent have been handed down from remote ages, and any one who cared to rummage through the dust-bins of literature would find material enough to compile a dictionary of pessimistic quotation.

For these pages but little rummaging will be attempted, but as the proper presentation of the subject demands a brief account of the ideas and opinions in which it was cradled, a momentary examination of general literature will not, it is believed, cause any after-reproach of time misspent.

To begin, then, with Greece, whose literature has precedence over all others, it will be remembered that in former days, when the citizen expended the greater part of his activity for the common good, the poets in like manner sang of national topics, the gods, the heroes, and the charms of love. There was, therefore, little opportunity for the expression of purely personal ideas, and the whole background of the poetry of antiquity is in consequence brilliant with optimistic effect. Nevertheless, here and there, a few complaints crop out from time to time. Homer, for instance, says that man is the unhappiest wight that ever breathed or strutted, and describes his ephemeral existence in a wail of gloomy hexameters.

Then, too, there is the touching Orphean distich, which runs:—

> "From thy smile, O Jove, sprang the gods,
> But man was born of thy sorrow."

Pindar in one of his graceful odes compared men to the shadows of a dream, while the familiar quotation, "Whom the gods love die young," comes to us straight from Menander.

With the peculiar melancholy of genius, that in those favored days seems more a presentiment than the expression of a general conception, Sophocles, in his last tragedy, says that not to be born at all is the greatest of all possible benefits, but inasmuch as man has appeared on earth, the very best thing he can do is to hurry back where he came from.

In spite, too, of the general tendency of thought, sentiments not dissimilar are to be found in Æschylus and Euripides, while something of this instinctive pessimism was expanded into a quaint and national custom by the Thracians, who, according to Herodotus, met birth with lamentations, but greeted death with salvos and welcoming festivals.

With but few exceptions the early philosophers considered death not as a misfortune, but as an advantage. Empedocles taught that the sojourn on earth was one of vexatious torment, an opinion in which he was firmly supported by Heraclitus, and even Plato, whose general drift of thought was grandly optimistic, said in the *Apology*, "If death is the withdrawal of every sensation, if it is like a sleep which no dream disturbs, what an incomparable blessing it must be! for let any one select a night passed in undisturbed and entire rest, and compare it with the other nights and days that have filled his existence, and then from his conscience let him answer how many nights and days he has known which have been sweeter and more agreeable than that. For my part I am sure that not the ordinary individual alone, but even the great King of Persia would find such days and nights most easy to enumerate."

The doctrine of Epicurus held, in substance, that the moment it was no longer possible to delight the senses death became a benefit, and suicide a crowning act of wisdom. The teaching of the Socratic school and its offshoots amounted, in brief, to the idea that the only admissible aim of life was the pursuit and attainment of absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge, however, being found unattainable, the logical culmination of their doctrine was delivered by Hegesias, in Alexandria, in the third century before the Christian era. This disciple of Socrates argued that as there was a limit to the knowable, and happiness was a pure illusion, a further prolongation of existence was useless. "Life seems pleasing only to the fool," he stated; "the wise regard it with indifference, and consider death just as acceptable." "Death," he added, "is as good as life; it is but a supreme renunciation in which man is freed from idle complaints and long deceptions. Life is full of pain, and the pangs of the flesh gnaw at the mind and rout its calm. In countless ways fate intercepts and thwarts our hopes. Contentment is not to be relied on, and even wisdom cannot preserve us from the treachery and insecurity of the perceptions. Since happiness, then, is intangible we should cease to pursue it, and take for our goal the absence of pain; this condition," he explained, "is best obtained in making ourselves indifferent to every object of desire and every cause of dislike, and above all to life itself. In any event," he concluded, "death is advantageous in this, it takes us not from blessings but from evil."*

This curious mixture of pessimism and theology was, it is said, delivered with such charm of persuasive grace and eloquence that several of his listeners put his ideas into instant practice, and that the city might be preserved from the contagion of suicide, King Ptolemy felt himself obliged to prevent this seductive misanthrope from delivering any further harangues.

Literature has the same tendency to repeat itself as history, and as the Romans took much of their culture and many of their ideas from Greece, the tone of their principal writers is only dissimilar to those already quoted in that with the fall of their religion, the decline of the empire and the universal intoxication of the senses, the pessimist element became somewhat accentuated. It would be an idle task, however, to attempt to cite even a fraction of the cheerless distress which pervades the Roman classics, and it will perhaps suffice for the moment to note but a passage or two, which bear directly upon the subject.

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* Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen.*

Seneca, for instance, whose insight was as clear and whose understanding was as unclouded as any writer with whom the world is acquainted, sent his letters down the centuries freighted with such ideas as these: "Death is nature's most admirable invention." "There is no need to complain of particular grievances, for life in its entirety is lamentable." "No one would accept life were it not received in ignorance of what it is."

Pliny, also, is very quotable. "Nature's most pleasing invention," he says, "is brevity of life." And he adds, "No mortal is happy, for even if there is no other cause for discontent there is at least the fear of possible misfortune."

Then, too, Petronius, the poet of the Roman orgy, opening and closing his veins, toying with death, as with a last and supreme delight, is of familiar, if repulsive, memory.

English literature is naturally as well stocked with individual expressions of distaste for existence as that of Rome. The poets, nearly one and all, from Chaucer to Rossetti, have told their sorrow in a variety of more or less polished metre, and even Macpherson was careful, in dowering his century with another bard, to put thoughts into Ossian's verse which would not have been unfitting in a Greek chorus.

In speaking of the world, Chaucer had already said,—

"Here is no home, here is but a wilderness,"

when Sir Thomas Wyatt, enlarging on the theme, repeated,—

"Wherefore come death and let me dye."

The delicate muse of Samuel Fletcher found—

"Nothing's so dainty sweet, as lovely melancholy,"

and Shakespeare's depressing lines on the value of life are familiar to every schoolboy.

Dryden wrote,—

"When I consider life, 't is all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit,
Trust on and think to-morrow will repay;
To-morrow's falser than the former day."

All of which was afterwards summed up in the well-known line,—

"Man never *is* but always *to be* blessed,"

while Thomson noted—

… "all the thousand, nameless ills
That one incessant struggle render life."

Keats, and especially Byron, wrote stanza after stanza of enervating sadness. Moore's dear gazelle is nowadays a familiar comparison. Shelley's tremulous sensibility forbade his finding any charm in life, and we none of us need to be reminded that Poe's soul was sorrow-laden.

But the poets are not alone in their tale of the deceptions of life; the moralists and essayists, too, have added their quota to the general budget, and it is not simply the value of life that has been questioned by many of the best writers; there has been also a certain surprise expressed that man should care to live at all. Indeed, the "I see no necessity" of the wit, to the beggar imploring aid that he might live, is the epigram of the thoughts of a hundred scholars.

In France, pessimism cannot be said to have been ever regarded otherwise than as an intellectual curiosity. The Frenchman, it is true, not infrequently lapses into a cynical indifference; yet the value of life is as a rule so evident to him, that he seldom vouchsafes more than a passing shrug to any theory of disparagement. In the first place, death, to which the hat is gravely raised, has never been in France a polite or welcome topic; moreover, French literature, while lawless enough in other respects, has left its readers generally unprepared to view the world as a fiasco, in which misery is the one immense success. The trouvères and troubadours sang to the mediæval châtelaine little else than the praise of love, with here and there the account of some combat, to show what they might do were they put to the test. Later, Villon told gently of the *neiges d'antan*, Ronsard aimed a dart or two at fate, and Rabelais's laugh was sometimes very near to tears; but, broadly speaking, the French asked of their writers little else than wit,—if they could not give them that, then should they hold their peace.

The delicate irony of *Candide* had, therefore, when appreciated, something almost novel in its savor; and, indeed, it may fairly be said that it was not until the blight of Byron had been cheerfully translated, that the French were in any measure prepared to understand Rolla and the pathetic beauties of De Musset's verse. Pascal, Helvetius, and other writers of desultory depression had of course already appeared. Maupertuis had found no difficulty in showing that life held more pain than pleasure, while Chamfort's conclusions on the same subject were as luminous as they were gloomy; and yet it is difficult to say that the gall with which these authors dashed their pages served otherwise than as a condiment to fresher and less flavored works. Baudelaire, the poet of boredom, praying for a new vice that should wrest life into some semblance of reality, was in consequence almost a novelty, and not a perfectly satisfactory one at that. It is therefore only within the last ten years or so that pessimism has in any wise attracted the notice of French thinkers, and the attention which has recently been paid to it is due partly to Leconte de Lisle, and partly to a surge of German thought.

During the eighteenth century the majority of the scholars who represented the culture of Germany were faithfully following the optimist theories of Leibnitz and Wolf. The doctrine that the world was the best one possible, supported as it was by official theology and strictly in accord with the deism of Pope and Paley, was very generally and unhesitatingly accepted. Indeed, there is no apparent reason why it should not have been. The Minnesingers doubtless had formulated some few complaints, but then these literary vagrants had already begun to form part of mythology, and besides, poets are all more or less prone to discontent and voluble of sorrow. Beyond the classics of Greece and Rome there was, therefore, no precedent for pessimistic thought. German literature, strictly speaking, did not begin until Lessing's advent, and before that the theatre, with its Hans Wurst and its Pickleherring, had offered only a succession of the broadest farce.

The calm and quiet which the Germans then enjoyed was ruffled, if at all, only by some confused echoes of the *obiter dicta* which Voltaire's royal disciple was pleased to disseminate, but it is probable that the better part of this ferocious gayety was drowned in crossing the Rhine, and, in any event, it was too delicately pungent to do more than disturb the placid current of their thought.

Later, when Kant appeared, the effect of his philosophy was very much like a successful treatment of cataract on the eyes of the whole nation. "Happiness," he insisted in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, "has never been attained by man, for he is unable to find contentment in any possession or enjoyment, ...and were he called upon to fashion a system of happiness for his fellows he would be unable to do so, for happiness is in its essence intangible." "No one," he added elsewhere, "has a right conception of life who would care to prolong it beyond its natural duration, for it would then be only the continuation of an already tiresome struggle."

After this the teaching of Leibnitz slowly disappeared, and though a certain amount of optimism necessarily subsisted, the tendency of thought veered to the opposite direction. Fichte, Kant's immediate successor, declared, in direct contradiction to Leibnitz, that this world was the worst one possible, and was only consoled by thinking he could raise himself by the aid of pure thought into the felicity of the "supersensible." "Men," he says, "in the vehement pursuit of happiness grasp at the first object which offers to them any prospect of satisfaction, but immediately they turn an introspective eye and ask, 'Am I happy?' and at once from their innermost being a voice answers distinctly, 'No, you are as poor and as miserable as before.' Then they think it was the object that deceived them, and turn precipitately to another. But the second holds as little satisfaction as the first.... Wandering then through life, restless and tormented, at each successive station they think that happiness dwells at the next, but when they reach it happiness is no longer there. In whatever position they may find themselves there is always another one which they discern from afar, and which but to touch, they think, is to find the wished delight, but when the goal is reached discontent has followed on the way and stands in haunting constancy before them."*

Schelling expressed himself more guardedly. As professional pantheist, he seemed to think that anything not rigidly vague and inaccessible was inconsistent with his philosophy. Still there was probably a secret revolt, some propelling impulse to deny his own syllogisms, and to bathe for once in some clear stream of common sense. In the *Nachtwachen*, which he published under the pseudonym of Bonaventura, this incentive is evidently, though unsuccessfully, at work. It may be that the force of habit was too strong, but at any rate this rhapsody, which was intended to be a confession of the combat that he had waged with his belief, and a recognition of the immedicable misery of life, brings with it something of that impression of delirium which Poe and Doré not infrequently suggest.

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* *Werke, v.* p. 408, *et seq.*

Nor was Hegel hostile to pessimism; he regarded it as an inevitable phase of universal evolution, and indeed its dawn as a science had then already broken.

Meanwhile the poets had not been idle. Herder and Schiller had already attested the bitterness of life to unreluctant ears, and the number of suicides that were directly traceable to the appearance of Werther and his sorrows was instructively large. This phase of sentimentalism, which immediately preceded the riotous rebirth of the Romantic school, was not without its influence on Heine's verse, and in some measure affected the literary tone of the day.

It would, however, be erroneous to suppose that the poets of this epoch were more agitated by the impression of universal worthlessness of life than were their classic predecessors. The distress of Werther, as that of Lara and of Rolla, was not the pain of suffering humanity; it was in each case merely the poet's complacent analysis of his own exceptional nature and personal grievances; it was the expression of the inevitable surprise of youth, which notes for the first time reality's unsuspected yet yawning indifference to the ideal, and the stubborn disaccord between aspiration and fact. It was indeed very beautiful and elegiac, and yet so fluent in its polished melancholy that somehow it did not at all times seem to have been really felt. In any case, it was not a theory of common woe, and lacked that clear conception of the universality of suffering, which the less exalted minds of the philosophers had already signaled, but for which no one as yet had been able to suggest a remedy.

It was about this time that an action was being instituted against humanity by a young Italian, the Count Giacomo Leopardi, and the muffled discontent which for centuries had been throbbing through land and literature was raised by his verse into one clear note of eloquent arraignment.

Now, in most countries there is a provision which inhibits a judge from hearing a cause which is pleaded by one of his connections, for it is considered that the scales of justice are so delicately balanced, that their holder should be preserved from any biasing influence, however indirect; for much the same reason, there are few communities that permit a man to sit in judgment on his own case. Some knowledge of Leopardi himself, therefore, will be of service in deciding whether the verdict which he brought against the world should be accepted without appeal, or returned as vitiated by extraneous circumstances.

Leopardi passed a joyless boyhood at Recanti, one of those maddeningly monotonous Italian towns whose unspeakable dreariness is only attractive when viewed through the pages of Stendhal. The unrelaxing severity of an austere and pedant father curbed, as with a bit, every symptom of that haphazard gayety which is incident to youth. At once precocious and restive, deformed yet inflammable, he was necessarily enervated by the exasperating dullness of his life, and chafed, too, by the rigid poverty to which his father condemned him. As he grew up, his mind, richly stored with the wealth of antiquity, rioted in a turbulency of imagination which, unable to find sympathetic welcome without, consumed itself in morbid distrust within, and led him at last from fervid Catholicism down the precipitate steps of negation.

He was not much over twenty before excessive study had well-nigh ruined such health as he once possessed. The slightest application was wearisome both to eye and brain. He wandered silently about the neighboring forests, seeking solitude not only for the sake of solitude, but also perhaps for the suggestions, at once soothing and rebellious, which solitude always whispers to him who courts her truly. At other times he sat hour by hour in a state as motionless as that of catalepsy. "I am so much overcome," he wrote to a friend, "by the nothingness that surrounds me, that I do not know how I have the strength to answer your letter. If at this moment I lost my reason, I think that my insanity would consist in sitting always with eyes fixed, open-mouthed, without laughing or weeping, or changing place. I have no longer the strength to form a desire, be it even for death."

The Muse, however, would have none of this; she flaunted her peplum so seductively before him that, a little later, when he had been visited by some semblance of returning health, he resisted no longer, and delivered himself up to her, heart and soul.

The present century, especially during its earlier decades, has been racked with a great glut of despondent verse; but no batch of poets, however distressed, has been able, at any time, to catch and cling to such a persistent monotone of complaint as that which runs through every line of Leopardi's verse. To quote De Musset:—

"Les plus désespérés sont les chants les plus beaux,
Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots."

His odes, his adjurations to Italy, and his elegies are, one and all, stamped with such unvarying and changeless despair, that their dominant motive seems not unlike that tower which René, finding alone in the desert, compared to a great thought in a mind ravaged by years and by grief. His theory of life never altered; he resumed it in a distich,—

..."Arcano é tutto
Fuor che il nostro dolor."

It may be said, and with justice perhaps, that it was the invalid body, aggravating and coexisting with a mind naturally morbid, that afterwards wrote of the *gentilezza del morir*, but it was the thinker, conquering the ills of the flesh, who later whispered to the suffering world the panacea of patience and resignation.

In Leopardi there is none of the vapid elegance and gaudy vocabulary of French verse; technically, he wrote in what the Italians call *rime sciolte*, and he charms the reader as well through a palpitant sincerity as evident and continuous inspiration. Now, the educated Italian turns naturally to rhyme; any incident holds to him the germ of a sonnet, and there is perhaps no other country in the world so richly dowered with patriotic *canzoni* as this joyously unhappy land. But of all who have sounded this eloquent chord, not one has done so with the masculine originality and fervor of expression that Leopardi reached in his ode to Italy, in which, in a resounding call to arms, he exclaims:—

> "Let my blood, O gods! be a flame to Italian hearts."

Italian hearts, however, had other matters to attend to, and Leopardi's magnificent invocation was barely honored with a passing notice. For that matter, his poetry, in spite of its resonant merit, has, through some inexplicable cause, been generally ignored; and while it resembles no other, it has never, so to speak, been in vogue.

As has been seen, he was a lover of solitude; indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that he was glued to it; and in the isolation which he partly made himself, and which was partly forced upon him, he watched the incubation of thought very much as another might have noted the progress of a disease. A life of this description, even at best, is hardly calculated to awaken much enthusiasm for every-day matters, and it was not long before Leopardi became not only heartily sick of the commonplace aspects of life, but contemptuous, too, of those who lived in broader and more active spheres.

Poetically untrammeled, and of advanced views on all subjects, he regarded erudition as the simple novitiate of the man of letters, or in other words, as a preparation which renders the intelligence supple and pliant; and in one of those rare moments, when the timid approach of ambition was seemingly unnoticed, he caressed the pleasing plan of attacking Italian torpor with reason, passion with laughter, and of becoming, in fact, the Plato, the Shakespeare, and the Lucian of his epoch. To Giordani, his mentor, he wrote: "I study night and day, so long as my health permits; when it prevents me from working, I wait a month or so, and then begin again. As I am now totally different from that which I was, my plan of study has altered with me. Everything which savors of the pathetic or the eloquent wearies me beyond expression. I seek now only the true, the real, which before was so repulsive. I take pleasure in analyzing the misery of men and things, and in shivering as I note the sinister and terrible mystery of life. I see very clearly that when passion is once extinguished, there subsists in study no other source of pleasure save that of vain curiosity, whose satisfaction, however, is not without a certain charm."

But Leopardi was so essentially the poet that, in spite of his growing disdain of the pathetic and the eloquent, he became not infrequently the dupe of his own imagination. That which he took for the fruit of deduction was probably little more than ordinary hypochondria, and in turning as he did to other work, he was never able to free himself entirely from the jealous influence of the muse.

He was, from a variety of causes, very miserable himself, and his belief in universal misery amounted very nearly to a mania. His logic reduced itself to the paraphrase of an axiom, "I am, therefore I suffer," and the suffering which he experienced was not, he was very sure, limited solely to himself. It was, he considered, the garment and appanage of every sentient being. In this he was perfectly correct, but his error consisted in holding all cases to be equally intense, and in imagining that means might be devised which would at once do away with or, at least, lessen the evil. Patience and resignation he had already suggested, but naturally without appreciable success; indeed, the regeneration of man, he clearly saw, was not to be brought about through verse, and he turned therefore to philosophy with a fixity of purpose, which was strengthened by the idea that he could work therein another revolution. This was in 1825. Leopardi at that time was in his twenty-seventh year, and the task to which he then devoted himself was, he said, to be the sad ending of a miserable life. His intention was to run the bitter truth to earth, to learn the obscure destinies of the mortal and the eternal, to discover the wherefore of creation, and the reason of man's burden of misery. "I wish," he said, "to dig to the root of nature and seek the aim of the mysterious universe, whose praises the sages sing, and before which I stand aghast."

Forthwith, then, in the *Operette Morale*, Leopardi began a resolute, if poetic, siege against every form of illusion. His philosophy, however, provoked no revolution, nor can it be even said that he discovered any truth more bitter than the old new ones, which antiquity had unearthed before him. His work, nevertheless, sent the old facts spinning into fresh and novel positions, and is to be particularly admired for the artistic manner in which it handles the most stubborn topics. The starting point of each of his arguments is that life is evil; to any objection, and the objections that have been made are countless, Leopardi has one invariable reply, "All that is advanced to the contrary is the result of illusion." "But supposing life to be painless," some one presumably may interject, whereupon Leopardi, with the air of an oracle, too busy with weighty matters to descend to chit-chat on the weather, will answer tersely, "Evil still."

It is useless for the practical man of the day, who knows the price of wheat the whole world over before he has tasted his coffee, and who digests a history of the world's doings and misdoings each morning with his breakfast,—it is useless for him to say, as he invariably does:—Why, this is rubbish, look at modern institutions, look at progress, look at science; for if he listens to Leopardi he will learn that all these palpable advantages have, in expanding activity, only aggravated the misery of man. In other words, that the sorrows of men and of nations develop in proportion to their intelligence, and the most civilized are in consequence the most unhappy.

Indeed, Leopardi's philosophy is nothing if not destructive; he does not aim so much to edify as to undermine. According to his theory the universe is the resultant of an unconscious force, and this force, he teaches, is shrouded in a vexatious mystery, behind which it is not given to man to look. In one of his dialogues, certain mummies resurrect for a quarter of an hour and tell in what manner they died. "And what follows death?" their auditor asks, eagerly. But the quarter of an hour has expired and the mummies relapse into silence.

In another fantastic scene, an Icelander, convinced that happiness is unattainable, and solely occupied in avoiding pain, has, in shunning society, found himself in the heart of the Sahara, face to face with Nature. This Icelander, who, by the way, singularly resembles Leopardi, had found but one protection against the ills of life, and that was solitude; but wherever he wandered he had been pursued by a certain malevolence. In spite of all he could do, he had roasted in summer and shivered in winter. In vain he had sought a temperate climate: one land was an ice-field, another an oven, and everywhere tempests or earthquakes, vicious brutes or distracting insects. In short, unalloyed misery. Finding himself, at last, face to face with Nature he took her to task, demanding what right she had to create him without his permission, and then, having done so, to leave him to his own devices? Nature answers that she has but one duty, and that is to turn the wheel of the universe, in which death supports life, and life death. "Well, then," the obstinate Icelander asks, "tell me at least for whose pleasure and for what purpose this miserable universe subsists?" But before Nature can enlighten her embarrassing questioner, he is surprised by two famished lions and conveniently devoured.

The moral of all this is not difficult to find. Life, such as it is, is all this is accorded. Beyond it there is only an impenetrable silence. The blue of the heavens is pervasive, but void. The hope of ultramundane felicity is, therefore, an illusion, and man is to seek such happiness as is possible only in this life. But if it be asked what the possibilities of earthly happiness are, Leopardi is quick to tell his reader that there are none at all.

As has been seen, he regarded life as an evil; and he insisted in so regarding it, not only as a whole, but in each of its fractional divisions. This idea is quaintly expressed in a dialogue between a sorcerer and a demon, the latter having been presumably summoned with an incantatory blue flame. The demon is somewhat sulky at first, and asks why he has been disturbed. Is it wealth that the sorcerer wishes? Is it glory or grandeur? But the sorcerer has neither greed nor ambition.

"Do you wish me to procure for you a woman as captiously capricious as Penelope?"

The sorcerer probably smiles, for he answers wittily:—

"Do you think I need the aid of a devil for that?"

Thus outfaced, the demon begs to know in what manner he may be of service.

"I simply want one moment of happiness," the sorcerer answers.

But Mephisto declares, on his word as a gentleman, that such a thing is impossible, because the desire for happiness is insatiable, and no one can be happy so long as it is unsatisfied.

"Well, then?" the sorcerer asks, moodily querulous.

"Well, then," answers the demon, "if you think it worth while to give me your soul before the time, behold me ready to oblige you."

Since happiness, then, is intangible, the wisest thing to do is to try to be as little unhappy as possible. One of the chief opponents to such a state of being is evidently discontent, and this, Leopardi hints, should be routed at any cost, and the yawning spectre of ennui flung with it into fettered exile. In the warmth of these instructions it is curious to note how Leopardi turns on himself, so to speak, and recommends as cure-all the very activity which he had before proscribed. In his dialogue between Columbus and Gutierrez, the navigator admits to his discouraged companion that the success of the undertaking is far from certain; "but," he adds, "even if no other benefit accrue from our voyage, it will be an advantage at least in this; it has for a certain time delivered us from boredom; it has made us love life, and appreciate, moreover, many things of which otherwise we would have thought nothing."

It should not, however, be supposed that Leopardi had no higher rule of life than that which is circumscribed in the narrow avoidance of discontent. That man has certain duties to perform, he frequently admitted, but he denied that he owed any to the unconscious and tyrannical force which had given him life. "I will never kiss," he said, "the hand that strikes." Any obligation to society was equally out of the question. "Society," he noted in the *Pensieri*, "is a league of blackguards against honest men." Man's duties are to himself alone; and the essence of Leopardi's ethics (as, indeed, of all other ethics) is held simply in the recommendation that virtue and self-esteem be preserved. "To thine own self be true," Polonius had said long before, and to this Leopardi had nothing to add.

The illusions which hamper life have been so clearly and thoroughly analyzed by other thinkers, whose conclusions will be found to constitute the groundwork of the subsequent part of this monograph, that it will be unnecessary at this stage to examine any of Leopardi's theories on this subject, save such, perhaps, as may seem to contain original views. He had, as has been intimated, a thorough contempt for life: "It is," he said, "fit but to be despised." *Nostra vita a che val, sola a spregiarla.* He was, in consequence, well equipped to combat the illusion which leads so many to imagine that were their circumstances different, they would then be thoroughly content. This idea is presented with vivacious ingenuity in a dialogue between a man peddling calendars and a passer-by.

It runs somewhat as follows:—

"Calendars! New calendars!"

"For the coming year?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think the year will be a good one?"

"Yes, indeed, sir."

"As good as last year?"

"Better, sir,—better."

"As year before last?"

"Much better, sir."

"But wouldn't you care to have the next year like any of the past years?"

"No, sir, I would not."

"For how long have you been selling calendars?"

"Nearly twenty years, sir."

"Well, which of these twenty years would you wish to have like the coming one?"

"I? I really don't know, sir."

"Can't you remember any one year that seemed particularly attractive?"

"I cannot, indeed, I cannot."

"And yet life is very pleasant, isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, sir, we all know that."

"Would you not be glad to live these twenty years over again?"

"God forbid, sir."

"But supposing you had to live your life over again?"

"I would not do it."

"But what life would you care to live? mine, for instance, or that of a prince, or of some other person?"

"Ah, sir, what a question!"

"And yet, do you not see that I, or the prince, or any one else, would answer precisely as you do, and that no one would consent to live his life over again?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose so."

"Am I to understand, then, that you would not live your life over again?"

"No, sir, truly, I would not."

"What life would you care for, then?"

"I would like, without any other condition, such a life as God might be pleased to give me."

"In other words, one which would be happy-go-lucky, and of which you would know no more than you do of the coming year."

"Exactly."

"Well, then, that is what I would like too; it is what every one would like, and for the simple reason that up to this time there is no one whom chance has not badly treated. Every one agrees that the misery of life outbalances its pleasure, and I have yet to meet the man who would care to live his old life over. The life which is so pleasant is not the life with which we are personally acquainted; it is another life, not the life that we have lived, but the life which is to come. Next year will treat us all better; it will be the beginning of a happy existence. Do you not think it will?"

"Indeed, I hope so, sir."

"Show me your best calendar."

"This one, sir; it is thirty soldi."

"Here they are."

"Thank you, sir, long life to you, sir. Calendars! new calendars!"

There are few scenes as clever as this, and fewer still in which irony and humor are so delicately blended; and yet, notwithstanding its studied bitterness, there is little doubt that its author clearly perceived that life does hold one or two incontestable charms.

In speaking of glory, Pascal noted in his *Pensées* that even philosophers seek it, and those who wrote it down wished the reputation of having written it down well. To this rule Leopardi was no exception; he admitted as much on several occasions; and even if he had not done so, the fact would have been none the less evident from the burnish of his verse and the purity of his prose, which was not that of a writer to whom the opinion of others was indifferent. In the essay, therefore, in which he attacks the illusion of literary renown, he reminds one forcibly of Byron hurrying about in search of the visible isolation which that simple-minded poet so seriously pursued; and yet while no other writer, perhaps, has been more thoroughly given to *pose* than the author of *Childe Harold*, there are few who have been so entirely devoid of affectation as Leopardi. The comparative non-success of his writings, however, was hardly calculated to make him view with any great enthusiasm the subject of literary fame; and as, moreover, he considered it his mission to besiege all illusions, he held up this one in particular as a seductive chimera and attacked it accordingly.

In the *Ovvero della Gloria*, he says reflectively: "Before an author can reach the public with any chance of being judged without prejudice, think of the amount of labor which he expends in learning how to write, the difficulties which he has to overcome, and the envious voices which he must silence. And even then, what does the public amount to? The majority of readers yawn over a book, or admire it because some one else has admired it before them. It is the style that makes a book immortal; and as it requires a certain education to be a judge of style, the number of connoisseurs is necessarily restricted. But beyond mere form there must also be depth, and as each class of work presupposes a special competence on the part of the critic, it is easy to see how narrow the tribunal is which decides an author's reputation. And even then, is it one which is thoroughly just? In the first place, the critic, even when competent, judges—and in that he is but human—according to the impression of the moment, and according to the tastes which age or circumstances have created. If he is young, he likes brilliance; old, he is unimpressionable. Great reputations are made in great cities, and it is there that heart and mind are more or less fatigued. A first impression, warped in this way, may often become final; for if it be true that valuable works should be re-read, and are only appreciated with time, it is also true that at the present time very few books are read at all. Supposing, however, the most favorable case: supposing that a writer, through the suffrage of a few of his contemporaries, is certain of descending to posterity as a great man,—what is a great man? Simply a name, which in a short time will represent nothing. The opinion of the beautiful changes with the days, and literary reputations are at the mercy of their variations; as to scientific works, they are invariably surpassed or forgotten. Nowadays, any second-rate mathematician knows more than Galileo or Newton." Genius, then, is a sinister gift, and its attendant glory but a vain and empty shadow.

The life of Leopardi, as told by his biographers, is poetically suggestive of the story of the pale Armide, who burned the palace that enchanted her; and the similarity becomes still more noticeable when he is found hacking and hewing at the illusion of love. Personally considered, Leopardi was not attractive; he was undersized, slightly deformed, near-sighted, prematurely bald, nervous, and weak; and though physical disadvantages are often disregarded by women, and not infrequently inspire a compassion which, properly tended, may warm into love, yet when the body, weak and infirm as was his, encases the strength and lurid vitality of genius, the unlovable monstrosity is complete. Indeed, in this respect, it may be noted that while the love of a delicate-minded woman for a coarse and stupid ruffian is an anomaly of daily repetition, there are yet few instances in which genius, even when strong of limb, has succeeded in inspiring a great and enduring affection.

Against Leopardi, then, the house of love was doubly barred. When he was about nineteen, he watched the usual young girl who lives over the way, and with a *naïveté* which seems exquisitely pathetic he made no sign, but simply watched and loved. The young lady does not appear to have been in any way conscious of the mutely shy adoration which her beauty had fanned into flame, and at any rate paid no attention to the sickly dwarf across the street. She sat very placidly at her window, or else fluttered about the room humming some old-fashioned air. This went on for a year or more, until finally she was carried away in a rumbling coach, to become the willing bride of another.

This, of course, was very terrible to Leopardi. Through some inductive process, which ought to have been brought about by the electric currents which he was establishing from behind the curtain, he had in his lawless fancy made quite sure that his love would sooner or later be felt and reciprocated. When, therefore, from his hiding place he saw the bride depart in maiden ignorance of her conquest, and entirely unconscious of the sonnets which had been written in her praise, the poet's one sweet hope faded slowly with her.

This pure and sedate affection remained vibrant in his memory for many years, and formed the theme of so many reveries and songs that love finally appeared to him as but another form of suffering. In after life, when much of the luster of youthful candor had become dull and tarnished, he besieged the heart of another lady, but this time in a bolder and more enterprising fashion. His suit, however, was unsuccessful. It may be that he was too eloquent; for eloquence is rarely captivating save to the inexperienced, and the man who makes love in rounded phrases seems to the practiced eye to be more artistic than sincere. At all events, his affection was not returned. The phantom had passed very close, but all he had clutched was the air. He was soon conscious, however, that he had made that mistake which is common to all imaginative people: it was not the woman he loved, it was beauty; not woman herself, but the ideal. It was a conception that he had fallen in love with; a conception which the woman, like so many others, had the power to inspire, and yet lacked the ability to understand. This time Leopardi was done with love, and forthwith attacked it as the last, yet most tenacious, of all illusions. "It is," he said, "an error like the others, but one which is more deeply rooted, because, when all else is gone, men think they clutch therein the last shadow of departing happiness. *Error beato*," he adds, and so it may be, yet is he not well answered by that sage saying of Voltaire, "*L'erreur aussi a son mérite*"?

It was in this way that Leopardi devastated the palace from whose feasts he had been excluded. At every step he had taken he had left some hope behind; he had been dying piecemeal all his life; he was confessedly miserable, and this not alone on account of his poverty and wretched health, but chiefly because of his lack of harmony with the realities of existence. The world was to him the worst one possible, and he would have been glad to adorn the gate of life with the simplicity of Dante's insistent line,—

> "*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate.*"

"There was a time," he said, "when I envied the ignorant and those who thought well of themselves. Today, I envy neither the ignorant nor the wise, neither the great nor the weak; I envy the dead, and I would only change with them."

This, of course, was purely personal. Toward the close of his life he recognized that his judgment had been in a measure warped by the peculiar misfortunes of his own position, but in so doing he seemed almost to be depriving himself of a last, if sad, consolation. Nor did he ever wholly recant, and it is in the conception of the universality of misery which stamped all his writings, and which, even had he wished, he was then powerless to alter, that his relation to the theoretic pessimism of today chiefly rests.

As a creed, the birthplace of pessimism is to be sought on the banks of the Ganges, or far back in the flower-lands of Nepaul, where the initiate, with every desire lulled, awaits Nirvana, and murmurs only, "Life is evil."

Now, as is well known, in every religion there is a certain metaphysical basis which is designed to supply an answer to man's first question; for while the animal lives in undismayed repose, man of all created things alone marvels at his own existence and at the destruction of his fellows. To his first question, then, What is life and death? each system attempts to offer a perfect reply; indeed, the temples, cathedrals, and pagodas clearly attest that man at all times and in all lands has continually demanded that some reply should be given, and it is perhaps for this very reason that where other beliefs have found fervent adherents, neither materialism nor skepticism have been ever able to acquire a durable influence. It is, however, curious to note that in attempting the answer, nearly every creed has given an unfavorable interpretation to life. Aside from the glorious lessons of Christianity, its teaching, in brief, is that the world is a vale of tears, that nothing here can yield any real satisfaction, and that happiness, which is not for mortals, is solely the recompense of the ransomed soul. To the Brahmin, while there is always the hope of absorption in the Universal Spirit, life meanwhile is a regrettable accident. But in Buddhism, which is perhaps the most naïve and yet the most sublime of all religions, and which through its very combination of simplicity and grandeur appeals to a larger number of adherents than any other, pessimism is the beginning, as it is the end.

To the Buddhist there is reality neither in the future nor in the past. To him true knowledge consists in the perception of the nothingness of all things, in the consciousness of—

> "The vastness of the agony of earth,
> The vainness of its joys, the mockery
> Of all its best, the anguish of its worst;"

and in the desire to escape from the evil of existence into the entire affranchisement of the intelligence. To the Buddhist,—

> ..."Sorrow is
> Shadow to life, moving where life doth move."

The Buddhist believes that the soul migrates until Nirvana is attained, and that in the preparation for this state, which is the death of Death, the nothingness of a flame extinguished, there are four degrees. In the first, the novitiate learns to be implacable to himself, yet charitable and compassionate to others. He then acquires an understanding into the nature of all things, until he has suppressed every desire save that of attaining Nirvana, when he passes initiate into the second degree, in which judgment ceases. In the next stage, the vague sentiment of satisfaction, which had been derived from intellectual perfection, is lost, and in the last, the confused consciousness of identity disappears. It is at this point that Nirvana begins, but only begins and stretches to vertiginous heights through four higher degrees of ecstasy, of which the first is the region of infinity in space, the next, the realm of infinity in intelligence, then the sphere in which nothing is, and, finally, the loss of even the perception of nothing. When Death is dead, when all have attained Nirvana, then, according to the Buddhist, the universe will rock forevermore in unconscious rest.

In brief, then, life to the Christian is a probation, to the Brahmin a burden, to the Buddhist a dream, and to the pessimist a nightmare.

CHAPTER TWO.

The High Priest of Pessimism.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER, THE FOUNDER OF THE PRESENT school, was born toward the close of the last century, in the now mildewed city of Dantzic. His people came of good Dutch stock, and were both well-to-do and peculiar. His grandmother lost her reason at the death of her husband, a circumstance as unusual then as in more recent years; his two uncles passed their melancholy lives on the frontiers of insanity, and his father enjoyed a reputation for eccentricity which his end fully justified.

This latter gentleman was a rich and energetic merchant, of educated tastes and excitable disposition, who, when well advanced in middle life, married the young and gifted daughter of one of the chief magnates of the town. Their union was not more unhappy than is usually the case under similar circumstances, his time being generally passed with his ledger, and hers with the poets.

With increasing years, however, his untamable petulance grew to such an extent that he was not at all times considered perfectly sane, and it is related that on being visited one day by a lifelong acquaintance, who announced himself as an old friend, he exclaimed, with abrupt indignation, "Friend, indeed! there is no such thing; besides, people come here every day and say they are this, that, and the other. I don't know them, and I don't want to." A day or two later, he met the same individual, greeted him with cheerful cordiality, and led him amiably home to dinner. Shortly after, he threw himself from his warehouse to the canal below.

He had always intended that his son, who was then in his sixteenth year, should continue the business; and to prepare him properly for his duties he had christened him Arthur, because he found that name was pretty much the same in all European languages, and furthermore had sent the lad at an early age first to France, and then to England, that he might gain some acquaintance and familiarity with other tongues.

The boy liked his name, and took naturally to languages, but he felt no desire to utilize these possessions in the depressing atmosphere of commercial life, and after his father's death loitered first at the benches of Gotha and then at those of Göttingen.

Meanwhile his mother established herself at Weimar, where she soon attracted to her all that was brilliant in that brilliant city. Goethe, Wieland, Fernow, Falk, Grimm, and the two Schlegels were her constant guests. At court she was received as a welcome addition, and such an effect had these surroundings upon her imagination, that in not very many years she managed to produce twenty-four compact volumes of criticism and romance.

During this time her son was not idle. Thoroughly familiar with ancient as with modern literature, he devoted his first year at Göttingen to medicine, mathematics and history; while in his second, which he passed in company with Bunsen and William B. Astor, he studied physics, physiology, psychology, ethnology and logic; as these diversions did not quite fill the hour, he aided the flight of idle moments with a guitar.

He was at this time a singularly good-looking young man, possessing a grave and expressive type of beauty, which in after years developed into that suggestion of majestic calm for which the head of Beethoven is celebrated, while to his lips there then came a smile as relentlessly implacable as that of Voltaire.

From boyhood he had been of a thoughtful disposition, finding wisdom in the falling leaf, problems in vibrating light, and movement in immobility. Already he had wrung his hands at the stars, and watched the distant future rise with its flouting jeer at the ills of man. In this, however, there was little of the cheap sentimentalism of Byron, and less of the weariness of Lamartine. His griefs were purely objective; life to him was a perplexing riddle, whose true meaning was well worth a search; and as the only possible solution of the gigantic enigma seemed to lie in some unexplored depth of metaphysics, he soon after betook himself to Berlin, where Fichte then reigned as Kant's legitimate successor. But the long-winded demonstrations that Fichte affected, his tiresome verbiage, lit, if at all, only by some trivial truism or trumpery paradox, bored Schopenhauer at first well-nigh to death, and then worked on his nerves to such an extent that he longed, pistol in hand, to catch at his throat, and cry, "Die like a dog you shall; but for your pitiful soul's sake, tell me if in all this rubbish you really mean anything, or take me simply for an imbecile like yourself." For Schopenhauer, it should be understood, had passed his nights first with Plato and then with Kant; they were to him like two giants calling to one another across the centuries, and that this huckster of phrases should pretend to cloak his nakedness with their mantle seemed to him at once indecent and absurd.

Schelling pleased him no better; he dismissed him with a word,—mountebank; but for Hegel, Caliban-Hegel as he was wont in after years to call him, his contempt was so violent that, with a prudence which is both amusing and characteristic, he took counsel from an attorney as to the exact limit he might touch in abusing him without becoming amenable to a suit for defamation. "Hegel's philosophy," he said, "is a crystallized syllogism; it is an abracadabra, a puff of bombast, and a wish-wash of phrases, which in its monstrous construction compels the mind to form impossible contradictions, and in itself is enough to cause an entire atrophy of the intellect." "It is made up of three fourths nonsense and one fourth error; it contains words, not thoughts;" and then, rising in his indignation to the heights of quotation, he added, "'Such stuff as madmen tongue and brain not.'" Time, it may be noted, has to a great extent indorsed Schopenhauer's verdict. The tortures of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel linger now in the history of philosophy very much as might the memory of a nightmare, and except in a few cobwebbed halls the teachings of the three sophists may safely be considered as a part of the inexplicable past.

It should not, however, be supposed that because he found the philosophy of the moment so little to his taste he necessarily squandered his time; on the contrary, he turned to Aristotle and Spinoza for consolation, and therewith followed sundry lectures in magnetism, electricity, ichthyology, amphiology, ornithology, zoölogy, and astronomy, all of which he enlivened with rapid incursions to the rich granaries of Rabelais and Montaigne, and moreover gave no little time to the study of the religion and philosophy of India.

It was at this time characteristic of the man, that while his appearance, wealth, and connections would have formed an open letter to the best society in Berlin, which was then heterogeneously agreeable, or even to the worst, which is said to have been charming, he preferred to pass his leisure hours in scrutinizing the animals in the Zoölogical Gardens, and in studying the inmates of the State Lunatic Asylum.

In this *cità dolente* his attention was particularly claimed by two unfortunates who, while perfectly conscious of their infirmity, were yet unable to master it; in proof of which, one wrote him a series of sonnets, and the other sent him annotated passages from the Bible.

In the second year of his student life at Berlin the war of 1813 was declared, and Schopenhauer was in consequence obliged to leave the city before he had obtained his degree. He prepared, however, and forwarded to the faculty at Jena an elaborate thesis, which he entitled the "Quadruple Root of Conclusive Reason,"—a name which somewhat astounded his mother, who asked him if it were something for the apothecary,—and meanwhile prowled about Weimar meditating on the philosophy which he had long intended to produce. He visited no one but Goethe, took umbrage at his mother's probably harmless relations with Fernow, treated her to discourse not dissimilar to that which Hamlet had addressed to his own parent, received his degree from Jena, and then went off to Dresden, where he began to study women with that microscopic eye which he turned on all subjects that engaged his attention.

The result of these studies was an essay on the metaphysics of love, which he thereupon attached to his budding system of philosophy; an axiom to the effect that women are rich in hair and poor in thought; and the same misadventure that befell Descartes.

His life at Dresden was necessarily much less secluded than that to which he had been hitherto accustomed; he became an *habitué* at the opera and comedy, a frequent guest in literary and social circles, and, as student of men and things, he went about disturbing draperies and disarranging screens, very much as any other philosopher might do who was bent on seeing the world.

Meanwhile, he was not otherwise idle: the morning he gave to work, and in the afternoon he surrendered himself to Nature, whom he loved with a passionate devotion, which increased with his years. The companionship of men was always more or less irksome to him; and while it was less so perhaps at this time than at any other, it was nevertheless with a sense of relief that he struck out across the inviting pasture-lands of Saxony, or down the banks of the Elbe, and left humanity behind, in search of that open-air solitude which is Nature's nearest friend.

In the companionship of others he was constantly seeking a trait or a suggestion, some hint capable of development; when in the world, therefore, he flashed a lantern, so to speak, at people, and then passed them by; but in the open country he communed with himself, and strolled along, note-book in hand, jotting down the thoughts worth jotting very much after the manner that Emerson is said to have recommended.

With regard to the majority of men, it will not seem reckless to say that their end and aim is happiness and self-satisfaction; but however trite the remark may be, it may still perhaps serve to bring into relief something of Schopenhauer's distinctive purpose. It would, of course, be foolish to assert that he did not care for his own happiness, and disregarded his own satisfaction, for of these things few men, it is imagined, have thought more highly. If his ideas of happiness diverged widely from those generally received as standards, it has but little to do with the matter in hand, for the point which is intended to be conveyed is simply that above all other things, beyond the culture of self, that which Schopenhauer cared for most was truth, and that he pursued it, moreover, as pertinaciously as any other thinker whom the world now honors. Whether he ran it to earth or not, the reader must himself decide; indeed, it was very many years before any one even heard that he had been chasing it at all. Of late, however, some of the best pickets who guard the literary outposts from Boston to Bombay have brought a very positive assurance that he did catch it, and, moreover, held it fast long enough to wring out some singularly valuable intimations.

In hurrying along after his quarry, Schopenhauer became convinced that life was a lesson which most men learned trippingly enough, but whose moral they failed to detect; and this moral, which he felt he had caught on the wing, as it were, he set about dissecting with a great and sumptuous variety of reflection.

Wandering, then, on the banks of the Elbe, massing his thoughts and arranging their progression, his system slowly yet gradually expanded before him. He wrote only in moments of inspiration, yet his hours were full of such moments; little by little he drifted away from the opera and his friends into a solitude which he made populous with thought, and in this manner gave himself up so entirely to his philosophy that one day, it is reported, he astonished an innocent-minded gate-keeper, who asked him who he was, with the weird and pensive answer, "Ah! if I but knew, myself!"

Meanwhile his work grew rapidly beneath his hands, and when after four years of labor and research *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* was so far completed as to permit its publication, he read it over with something of the same unfamiliarity which he would have experienced in reading the work of another author, though, doubtless, with greater satisfaction.

Fascinated with its merits, he offered the manuscript to Brockhaus, the Leipsic publisher. "My book," he wrote, "is a new system of philosophy, but when I say new I mean new in every sense of the word; it is not a restatement of what has been already expressed, but it is in the highest degree a continuous flow of thought such as has never before entered the mind of mortal man. It is a book which, in my opinion, is destined to rank with those which form the source and incentive to hundreds of others."

Brockhaus, familiar with the proverbial modesty of young authors, lent but an inattentive ear to these alluring statements, and accepted the book solely on account of the reputation which Schopenhauer's mother then enjoyed; a mark of confidence, by the way, which he soon deeply regretted. "It is so much waste paper," he said, dismally, in after years; "I wish I had never heard of it." He lived long enough, however, to change his mind, and in 1880 his successors published a stout little pamphlet containing the titles of over five hundred books and articles, of which the *World as Will and Idea* formed the source and incentive. "*Le monde*," Montaigne has quaintly noted, "*regorge de commentaires, mais d'auteurs il en est grand chierté*."

Schopenhauer's philosophy first appeared in 1818; but while it was still in press, its author, like one who has sprung a mine and fears the report, fled away to Italy, where he wandered about from Venice to Naples bathing his senses in color and music. He associated at this time very willingly with Englishmen, and especially with English artists and men of letters. Germans and Americans he avoided, and as for Jews, he not only detested them, but expressed an admiring approval of Nebuchadnezzar, and only regretted that he had been so lenient with them. "The Jews are God's chosen people, are they?" he would say, "very good; tastes differ, they certainly are not mine." In this dislike he made no exception, and scenting in after years some of the *fœtor judaicus* on Heine and Meyerbeer, he refused them the attention which others were only too glad to accord. Schopenhauer's distaste, however, for everything that savored of the Israelite will be perhaps more readily understood when it is remembered that the Jews, as a race, are optimists, and their creed, therefore, to him, in his consistency, was like the aggressive flag to the typical bull.

With the Germans he had another grievance. "The Germans," he said, "are heavy by nature; it is a national characteristic, and one which is noticeable not only in the way they carry themselves, but in their language, their fiction, their conversation, their writings, their way of thinking, and especially in their style and in their mania for constructing long and involved sentences. In reading German," he continued, "memory is obliged to retain mechanically, as in a lesson, the words that are forced upon it, until after patient labor a period is reached, the keynote is found, and the meaning disentangled. When the Germans," he added, "get hold of a vague and unsuitable expression which will completely obscure their meaning, they pat themselves on the back; for their great aim is to leave an opening in every phrase, through which they may seem to come back and say more than they thought. In this trick they excel, and if they can manage to be emphatic and affected at the same time, they are simply afloat in a sea of joy. Foreigners hate all this, and revenge themselves in reading German as little as possible.... Wherefore, in provision of my death, I acknowledge that on account of its infinite stupidity I loathe the German nation, and that I blush to belong thereto."

At various *tables-d'hôte* Schopenhauer had encountered traveling Yankees, and objected to them accordingly. "They are," he said, "the *plebs* of the world, partly, I suppose, on account of their republican government, and partly because they descend from those who left Europe for Europe's good. The climate, too," he added, reflectively, "may have something to do with it." Nor did Frenchmen escape his satire. "Other parts of the world have monkeys; Europe has Frenchmen, *ça balance*."

But with Englishmen he got on very well, and during his after life always talked to himself in their tongue, wrote his memoranda in English, and read the "Times" daily, advertisements and all.

Meanwhile Schopenhauer held his hand to his ear unavailingly. From across the Alps there came to him no echo of any report, only a silence which was ominous enough to have assured any other that the fusee had not been properly applied. But to him it was different; he had, it is true, expected a reverberation which would shake the sophistry of all civilization, and when no tremor came he was mystified, but only for the moment. He had been too much accustomed to seek his own dead in the great morgue of literature not to know that any man, who is to belong to posterity, is necessarily a stranger to his epoch. And that he was to belong to posterity he had no possible doubt; indeed he had that prescience of genius which foresees its own future, and he felt that however tightly the bushel might be closed over the light, there were still crevices through which it yet would shine, and from which at last some conflagration must necessarily burst.

It was part of the man to analyze all things, and while it cannot be said that the lack of attention with which his philosophy had been received left him entirely unmoved, it would be incorrect to suppose that he was then sitting on the pins and needles of impatience.

Deeply reflective, he was naturally aware that as everything which is exquisite ripens slowly, so is the growth of fame proportioned to its durability. And Schopenhauer meant to be famous, and this not so much for fame's sake, as for the good which his fame would spread with it. He could therefore well afford to wait. His work was not written especially to his own epoch, save only in so far as his epoch was part of humanity collectively considered. It did not, therefore, take him long to understand that as his work was not tinted with any of the local color and fugitive caprices of the moment, it was in consequence unadapted to an immediate and fictitious vogue. Indeed, it may be added that the history of art and literature is eloquent with the examples of the masterpieces which, unrewarded by contemporary appreciation, have passed into the welcome of another age; and of these examples few are more striking than that of the absolute indifference with which Schopenhauer's philosophy was first received.

It was presumably with reflections of this nature that Schopenhauer shrugged his shoulders at the inattention under which he labored, and wandered serenely among the treasuries and ghosts of departed Rome.

About this time an incident happened which, while not possessing any very vivid interest, so affected his after life as to be at least deserving of passing notice. Schopenhauer was then in his thirty-first year. On coming of age, he had received his share of his father's property, some of which he securely invested, but the greater part he deposited at high interest with a well-known business house in Dantzic. When leaving for Italy, he took from this firm notes payable on demand for the amount which they held to his credit, and after he had cashed one of their bills, learned that the firm was in difficulties. Shortly after, they suspended payment, offering thirty per cent. to those of their creditors who were willing to accept such an arrangement, and nothing to those who refused.

All the creditors accepted save Schopenhauer, who, with the wile of a diplomat, wrote that he was in no hurry for his money, but that perhaps if he were made preferred creditor he might accept a better offer. His debtors fell into the trap, and offered him first fifty, and then seventy per cent. These offers he also refused. "If," he wrote, "you offer me thirty per cent. when you are able to pay fifty, and fifty per cent. when you are able to pay seventy, I have good reason to suspect that you can pay the whole amount. In any event, my right is perennial. I need not present my notes until I care to. Settle with your other creditors, and then you will be in a better position to attend to me. A wise man watches the burning phœnix with a certain pleasure, for he well knows what that crafty bird does with its ashes. Keep my money, and I will keep your drafts. When your affairs are straightened either we will exchange, or you will be arrested for debt. I am, of course, very sorry not to be able to oblige you, and I dare say you think me very disagreeable, but that is only an illusion of yours, which is at once dispelled when you remember that the money is my own, and that its possession concerns my lifelong freedom and well-being. You will say, perhaps, that if all your creditors thought as I do, it would be deuced hard for me. But if all men thought as I do, not only would more be thought, but there would probably be neither bankrupts nor swindlers. Machiavelli says, *Giacchè il volgo pensa altrimente*,—although the common herd think otherwise,—*ma nel mondo non é se non volgo,*—and the world is made up of the common herd,—*e gli pocchi ivi luogo trovano,*—yet the exceptions take their position,—*dove gli molti stare non possono,*—where the crowd can find no foot-hold."

By the exercise of a little patience, and after a few more dagger thrusts of this description, Schopenhauer recovered the entire amount which was due him, together with the interest in full. But the danger which he had so cleverly avoided gave him, so to speak, a retrospective shock; the possibility of want had brushed too near for comfort's sake. He was thoroughly frightened; and in shuddering at the cause of his fright he experienced such a feeling of insecurity with regard to what the future might yet hold that he determined to lose no time in seeking a remunerative shelter. With this object he returned to Berlin, and as *privat-docent* began to lecture on the history of philosophy.

Hegel was then in the high tide of his glory. Scholars from far and near came to listen to the man who had compared himself to Christ, and said, "I am Truth, and teach truth." In the *Reisebilder*, Heine says that in the learned caravansary of Berlin the camels collected about the fountain of Hegelian wisdom, kneeled down, received their burden of precious waters, and then set out across the desert wastes of Brandenburg.

At that time not to bend before Hegel was the blackest and most wanton of sins. To disagree with him was heretical, and as few understood his meaning clearly enough to attempt to controvert it, it will be readily understood that in those days there was very little heresy in Berlin.

Among the few, however, Schopenhauer headed the list. "I write to be understood," he said; and indeed no one who came in contact with him or with his works had ever the least difficulty in seizing his meaning and understanding his immense disgust for the "pachyderm hydrocephali, pedantic eunuchs, apocaliptic retinue *della bestia triumphante*," as in after years, with gorgeous emphasis, he was wont to designate Hegel and his clique. The war that he waged against them was truly Homeric. He denounced Hegel in a manner that would have made Swinburne blush; then he attacked the professors of philosophy in general and the Hegelians in particular, and finally the demagogues who believed in them, and who had baptized themselves "Young Germany."

For the preparation of such writings as theirs he had a receipt, which was homeopathic in its simplicity. "Dilute a minimum of thought in five hundred pages of nauseous phraseology, and for the rest trust to the German patience of the reader." He also suggested that for the wonder and astonishment of posterity every public library should carefully preserve in half calf the complete works of the great philosophaster and his adorers; and, considering very correctly that philosophers cannot be hatched like bachelors of arts, he further recommended that the course in philosophy should be cut from the University programmes, and the teaching in that branch be limited to logic. "You can't write an *Iliad*," he said, "when your mother is a dolt, and your father is a cotton nightcap."

There are few debts which are so faithfully acquitted as those of contempt; and as Schopenhauer kicked down every screen, tore off every mask, and jeered at every sham, it would be a great stretch of fancy to imagine that he was a popular teacher. But this at least may be said: he was courageous, and he was strong of purpose. In the end, he dragged Germany from her lethargy, and rather than take any other part in Hegelism than that of spectre at the feast, he condemned himself to an almost lifelong obscurity. If, therefore, he seems at times too bitter and too relentless, it should be remembered that this man, whom Germany now honors as one of her greatest philosophers, fought single-handed for thirty years, and routed the enemy at last by the mere force and lash of his words.

But in the mean time, while Hegel was holding forth to crowded halls, his rival, who, out of sheer bravado, had chosen the same hours, lectured to an audience of about half a dozen persons, among whom a dentist, a horse-jockey, and a captain on half pay were the more noteworthy. Such listeners were hardly calculated to make him frantically attached to the calling he had chosen, and accordingly at the end of the first semester he left the empty benches to take care of themselves.

Early in life Schopenhauer wrote in English, in his notebook, "Matrimony—war and want!" and when the *privat-docent* had been decently buried, and the crape grown rusty, he began to consider this little sentence with much attention. As will be seen later on, he objected to women as a class on purely logical grounds,—they interfered with his plan of delivering the world from suffering; but against the individual he had no marked dislike, only a few pleasing epigrams. During his Dresden sojourn, as in his journey to Italy, he had knelt, in his quality of philosopher who was seeing the world, at many and diverse shrines, and had in no sense wandered from them sorrow-laureled; but all that had been very different from assuming legal responsibilities, and whenever he thought with favor of the *petits soins* of which, as married man, he would be the object, the phantom of a milliner's bill loomed in double columns before him.

Should he or should he not, he queried, fall into the trap which nature has set for all men? The question of love did not enter into the matter at all. He believed in love as most well-read people believe in William Tell; that is, as something very inspiring, especially when treated by Rossini, but otherwise as a myth. Nor did he need Montaigne's hint to be assured that men marry for others and not for themselves. The subject, therefore, was somewhat complex: on the one side stood the attention and admiration which he craved, and on the other an eternal farewell to that untrammeled freedom which is the thinker's natural heath.

The die, however, had to be cast then or never. He was getting on in life, and an opportunity had at that time presented itself, a repetition of which seemed unlikely. After much reflection, and much weighing of the pros and cons, he concluded that it is the married man who supports the full burden of life, while the bachelor bears but half, and it is to the latter class, he argued, that the courtesan of the muses should belong. Thereupon, with a luxury of reminiscence and quotation which was usual to him at all times, he strengthened his resolution with mental foot-notes, to the effect that Descartes, Leibnitz, Malebranche, and Kant were bachelors, the great poets uniformly married and uniformly unhappy; and supported it all with Bacon's statement that "he that hath wife and children has given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or of mischief."

In 1831 the cholera appeared in Berlin, and Schopenhauer, who called himself a choleraphobe by profession, fled before it in search of a milder and healthier climate. Frankfort he chose for his hermitage, and from that time up to the day of his death, which occurred in September, 1860, he continued to live there in great peace and tranquility.

Schopenhauer should in no wise be represented as having passed his life in building dungeons in Spain. Like every true scholar he was, in the absence of his peers, able to live with great comfort with the dead. He was something of a Mezzofanti; he spoke and read half a dozen languages with perfect ease, and he could in consequence enter any library with the certainty of finding friends and relations therein. For the companionship of others he did not care a rap. He was never so lonely as when associating with other people, and of all things that he disliked the most, and a catalogue of his dislikes would fill a chapter, the so-called entertainment headed the obnoxious list.

He had taken off, one by one, the different layers of the social nut, and in nibbling at the kernel he found its insipidity so great that he had small approval for those who made it part of their ordinary diet. It should not, however, be supposed that this dislike for society and the companionship of others sprang from any of that necessity for solitude which is noticeable in certain cases of hypochondria; it was simply due to the fact that he could not, in the general run of men, find any one with whom he could associate on a footing of equality. If Voltaire, Helvetius, Kant, or Cabanais, or, for that matter, any one possessed of original thoughts, had dwelled in the neighborhood, Schopenhauer, once in a while, would have delighted in supping with them; but as agreeable symposiasts were infrequent, he was of necessity thrown entirely on his own resources. His history, in brief, is that of the malediction under which king and genius labor equally. Both are condemned to solitude; and for solitude such as theirs there is neither chart nor compass. Of course there are many other men who in modern times have also led lives of great seclusion, but in this respect it may confidently be stated that no thinker of recent years, Thoreau not excepted, has ever lived in isolation more thorough and complete than that which was enjoyed by this blithe misanthrope.

It is not as though he had betaken himself to an unfrequented waste, or to the top of an inaccessible crag; such behavior would have savored of an affectation of which he was incapable, and, moreover, would have told its story of an inability to otherwise resist the charms of society. Besides, Schopenhauer was no anchorite; he lived very comfortably in the heart of a populous and pleasant city, and dined daily at the best *table d'hôte*, but he lived and dined utterly alone.

He considered that, as a rule, a man is never in perfect harmony save with himself, for, he argued, however tenderly a friend or mistress may be beloved, there is at times some clash and discord. Perfect tranquility, he said, is found only in solitude, and to be permanent only in absolute seclusion; and he insisted that the hermit, if intellectually rich, enjoys the happiest condition which this life can offer. The love of solitude, however, can hardly be said to exist in any one as a natural instinct; on the contrary, it may be regarded as an acquired taste, and one which must be developed in indirect progression. Schopenhauer, who cultivated it to its most supreme expression, admitted that at first he had many fierce struggles with the natural instinct of sociability, and at times had strenuously combated some such Mephistophelian suggestion as,—

> *"Hör' auf, mit deinem Gram zu spielen,*
> *Der, wie ein Geier, dir am Leben frisst:*
> *Die schlechteste Gesellschaft lässt dich fühlen*
> *Dass du ein Mensch, mit Menschen bist."*

But solitude, more or less rigid, is undoubtedly the lot of all superior minds. They may grieve over it, as Schopenhauer says, but of two evils they will choose it as the least. After that, it is presumably but a question of getting acclimated. In old age the inclination comes, he notes, almost of itself. At sixty it is well-nigh instinctive; at that age everything is in its favor. The incentives which are the most energetic in behalf of sociability then no longer act. With advancing years there arises a capacity of sufficing to one's self, which little by little absorbs the social instinct. Illusions then have faded, and, ordinarily speaking, active life has ceased. There is nothing more to be expected, there are no plans nor projects to form, the generation to which old age really belongs has passed away, and, surrounded by a new race, one is then objectively and essentially alone.

Then, too, many things are clearly seen, which before were as veiled by a mist. As the result of long experience very little is expected from the majority of people, and the conclusion is generally reached that not only men do not improve on acquaintance, but that mankind is made up of very defective copies, with which it is best to have as little to do as possible.

But beyond converting his life into a monodrama with reflections of this description, Schopenhauer considered himself to be a missionary of truth, and in consequence as little fitted for every-day companionship as missionaries in China feel themselves called upon to fraternize with the Chinese. It was the rule of his life to expect nothing, desire as little as possible, and learn all he could, and as little was to be expected and nothing was to be learned from the majority of the dull ruffians who go to the making of the census, it is not to be wondered that he trod the thoroughfares of thought alone and dismissed the majority of men with a shrug.

"They are," he said, "just what they seem to be, and that is the worst that can be said of them." Epigrams of this description were naturally not apt to increase his popularity. But for that he cared very little. He considered that no man can judge another save by the measure of his own understanding. Of course, if this understanding is of a low degree, the greatest intellectual gifts which another may possess convey to him no meaning; they are as colors to the blind; and consequently, in a great nature there will be noticed only those defects and weaknesses which are inseparable from every character.

But to such a man as Schopenhauer,—one who considered five sixths of the population to be knaves or blockheads, and who had thought out a system for the remaining fraction,—to such a man as he, the question of esteem, or the lack thereof, was of small consequence. He cared nothing for the existence which he led in the minds of other people. To his own self he was true, to the calling of his destiny constant, and he felt that he could sit and snap his fingers at the world, knowing that Time, who is at least a gentleman, would bring him his due unasked.

Schopenhauer's character was made up of that combination of seeming contradictions which is the peculiarity of all great men. He had the audacity of childhood and the timidity of genius. He was suspicious of every one, and ineffably kind-hearted. With stupidity in any form he was blunt, even to violence, and yet his manner and courtesy were such as is attributed to the gentlemen of the old school. If he was an egotist, he was also charitable to excess; and who shall say that charity is not the egotism of great natures? He was honesty itself, and yet thought every one wished to cheat him. To mislead a possible thief he labeled his valuables Arcana Medica, put his banknotes in dictionaries, and his gold pieces in ink bottles. He slept on the ground floor, that he might escape easily in case of fire. If he heard a noise at night he snatched at a pistol, which he kept loaded at his bedside. Indeed, he might have chosen for his motto, "*Je ne crains rien fors le dangier*," and yet who is ever so foolish as a wise man? Kant's biography is full of similar vagaries, and one has but to turn to the history of any of the thinkers whose names are landmarks in literature, to find that eccentricities no less striking have also been recorded of them.

Voltaire said, "*On aime la vie, mais le néant ne laisse pas* *d'avoir du bon*;" and Schopenhauer, not to be outdone, added more massively, that if one could tap on the tombs and ask the dead if they cared to return, they would shake their heads. His views of life, however, and of the world in general, will be considered later on, and for the moment it is but necessary to note that he regarded happiness as consisting solely in the absence of pain, and laid down as one of the supreme rules for the proper conduct of life that discontent should be banished as far as possible into the outer darkness.

When, therefore, to this Emerson in black there came those moments of restlessness and dissatisfaction which visit even the most philosophic, he would argue with himself in a way which was almost pathetic, and certainly naïve; it was not he that was moody and out of sorts, it was some *privat-docent* lecturing to empty halls, some one who was abused by the Philistines, some defendant in a suit for damages, some one whose fortune was engulfed perhaps beyond recovery, some lover pleading to inattentive ears, some one attacked by one of the thousand ills that flesh is heir to; yet this was not he; these things truly he might have endured and suffered as one bears for a moment an ill-made shoe, but now the foot no longer ached; indeed, he was none of all this, he was the author of the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, and what had the days to do with him!

But through all the intervening years the book had lain unnoticed on the back shelves of the Leipsic publisher; and Schopenhauer, who had at first been puzzled, but never disheartened, at the silence which had settled about it, became convinced that through the influence of the three sophists at Berlin, all mention of its merit had been suppressed from the start.

"I am," he said, "the Iron Mask, the Caspar Hauser of philosophy," and thereupon he pictured the Hegelians as looking admiringly at his system, very much as the man in the fairy tale looked at the genie in the bottle which, had he allowed it to come out, would carry him off. Truth, however, which is long-lived, can always afford to wait; and Schopenhauer, with something of the complacency of genius that is in advance of its era, held his fingers on the public pulse and noted the quickening which precedes a return to consciousness. Germany was waking from her torpor. Already the influence of Hegel had begun to wane; his school was split into factions, and his philosophy, which in solving every problem had left the world nothing to do but to bore itself to death, was slowly falling into disrepute. Moreover, the great class of unattached scholars and independent thinkers, who cared as little for University dogmas as they did for the threats of the Vatican, were earnestly watching for some new teacher.

Schopenhauer was watching too; he knew that a change was coming, and that he would come in with the change. He had but to wait. "My extreme unction," he said, "will be my baptism; my death, a canonization."

Meanwhile old age had come upon him unawares, but with it the rich fruition of lifelong study and reflection. The perfect tranquility in which he passed his days had been utilized in strengthening and expanding his work, and in 1843, in his fifty-sixth year, the second and complementary volume of his philosophy was completed.

Twelve months later he wrote to Brockhaus, his publisher:—

"I may tell you in confidence that I am so well pleased with this second volume, now that I see it in print, that I really think it will be a great success.... If, now, in return for this great work, you are willing to do me a very little favor, and one that is easily performed, I will beg you each Easter to let me know how many copies have been sold."

For two years he heard nothing, then in answer to a letter from him, Brockhaus wrote:—

"In reply to your inquiry concerning the sale of your book, I can only tell you that, to my sorrow, I have made a very poor business out of it. Further particulars I cannot enter into."

"Many a rose," Schopenhauer murmured, as he refolded the note and turned to other things.

In 1850, when, after six years' daily labor, he had completed his last work, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, his literary reputation was still so insignificant that Brockhaus refused to publish it. Schopenhauer then offered it, unavailingly, to half a dozen other publishers. No one would have anything to do with it; the name which it bore would have frightened a pirate, and the boldest in the guild was afraid to examine its contents. "One thing is certain," said Schopenhauer, reflectively, "I am unworthy of my contemporaries, or they of me." The *Parerga*, however, in spite of the lack of allurement in its title, was not destined to wither in manuscript. After much reconnoitering a publisher was discovered in Berlin who, unwillingly, consented to produce it, and thereupon two volumes of the most original and entertaining essays were given to the public. For this work Schopenhauer received ten copies in full payment.

Meanwhile a few adherents had rallied about him. Brockhaus, in an attempt to make the best of a bad bargain, had marked the "Welt" down to the lowest possible price, and a few copies had in consequence fallen into intelligent hands. Among its readers there were some who came to Frankfort to make the author's acquaintance; a proceeding which pleased, yet alarmed Schopenhauer not a little.

One of them wrote to people with whom he was unacquainted, advising them to read the work at once. "He is a fanatic," said Schopenhauer, in complacent allusion to him, "a fanatic, that's what he is."

Dr. Gwinner, his subsequent biographer, whom he met about this time, was his apostle, while Dr. Frauenstadt, another Boswell, whose acquaintance he made at *table d'hôte*, he called his arch-evangelist, and, not without pathos, repeated to him Byron's seductive lines,—

"In the desert a fountain is springing,
  In the white waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
  That speaks to my spirit of thee."

These gentlemen, together with a few others, made up a little band of sturdy disciples, who went about wherever they could, speaking and writing of the merits of Schopenhauer's philosophy. But the first note of acclamation which, historically speaking, was destined to arouse the thinking world, came, curiously enough, from England.

In 1853 the "Westminster Review" published a long and laudatory article on Schopenhauer's philosophy; and this article Lindner, the editor of the "*Vossiche Zeitung*," to whom Schopenhauer had given the title of *doctor indefatigabilis*, reproduced in his own journal. In the following year Dr. Frauenstadt published, in a well-written pamphlet[*] which only needed a little more order and symmetry to be a valuable handbook, a complete exposition of the doctrine; and the applause thus stimulated reëchoed all over Germany. The *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, the "World as Will and Idea," which for so many years had lain neglected, was dragged from its musty shelf like a Raphael from a lumber-room; and the fame to which Schopenhauer had not made a single step came to him as fame should, unsought and almost unbidden.

"My old age," he said, "is brighter now than most men's youth, for time has brought its roses at last; but see," he added, touching his silvered hair, "they are white."

From all sides now came evidences of the most cordial recognition. The reviews and weeklies published anecdotes about him and extracts from his works. Indeed, it was evident that the

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[*] *Briefe über die Schopenhauer'sche Philosophie.*

Iron Mask had escaped, and that to Caspar Hauser light and air had at last been accorded. Thinkers, scholars, and philosophers, of all creeds and colors, became his attentive readers. Decorations were offered to him, which he unostentatiously refused. The Berlin Academy, within whose walls Hegel had reigned supreme, invited him to become one of its faculty. This honor he also declined. "They have turned their back on me all my life," he said, "and after my death they want my name to adorn their catalogues." His philosophy was lectured upon at Breslau, and the University of Leipsic offered it as a subject for a prize essay. All this was very pleasant. Much to his indignation, however, for he was by nature greatly disinclined to serve as pastime to an idle public, the "*Illustrirte Zeitung*" published his likeness, and added insult to injury by printing his name with two p's. Ah! how truly has it been said that fame consists in seeing one's name spelt wrong in the newspapers!

One of the most flattering manifestations of this sudden vogue was the curiosity of the public, the number of enthusiasts that visited him, and the eagerness with which artists sought to preserve his features for posterity. To all this concert of praise it is difficult to say that Schopenhauer lent a rebellious ear. The success of his philosophy of disenchantment enchanted him. He accepted with the seriousness of childhood the bouquets and sonnets which rained in upon him on his subsequent birthdays, and in his letters to Frauenstadt alluded to his ascending glory with innocent and amusing satisfaction:—

FRANKFORT, *September 23, 1854.*

...A fortnight ago, a Dr. K., a teacher, came to see me; he entered the room and looked so fixedly at me that I began to be frightened, and then he cried out, "I must look at you, I will look at you, I came to look at you." He was most enthusiastic. My philosophy, he told me, restored him to life. What next?...

June 29, 1855.

...B. called today; he had been here for twenty-four hours under an assumed name, and after many hesitations came in a closed carriage to pay his respects.... On taking leave, he kissed my hand. I screamed with fright....

August 17, 1855.

...My portrait, painted by Lunteschütz, is finished and sold. Wiesike saw it in time, and bought it while it was still on the easel. But the unheard-of part of the whole matter is that he told me, and Lunteschütz too, that he was going to build a temple on purpose for it. That will be the first chapel erected in my honor. Recitativo, "Ja, ja, Sarastro herrschet hier."* What will be said of me, I wonder, in the year 2100?...

September, 1855.

...Received a number of visits. Baehr, the Dresden painter and professor, came; he is a charming fellow, and pleased me very much. He knows all my works, and is full of them. He says, at Dresden every one is interested in them, especially the women, who, it appears, read me with passionate delight. Hornstein, a young composer, came also; he is a pupil of Richard Wagner, who, it seems, is also one of my students. Hornstein is still here, and pays me an exaggerated respect; for instance, when I want my waiter, he rises from table to summon him.... My portrait has been for a fortnight at the exposition. There has been a great crowd to see it. Von Launitz, the Frankfort Phidias, wants to take my bust....

December 23, 1855.

...A gentleman has written to me from Zurich to say that in the club to which he belongs my works are read with such admiration that the members are crazy to get a picture of me of any kind, nature, or description, and that the artist who takes it has but to forward it C. O. D.... You see that my fame is spreading like a conflagration, and not in arithmetical ratio either, but in geometric, and even cubic....

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* "Yes, yes, Sarastro reigns herein."—Air from the *Magic Flute.*

March 28, 1856.

...R., too, kissed my hand,—a ceremony to which I cannot accustom myself; yet it is one, I suppose, that forms part of my imperial dignity....

June 6, 1856.

...Becher sent his son and nephew here, and Baehr sent his son also, and that only that these young people may in their old age be able to boast that they had seen and spoken to me....

June 11, 1856.

...Professor Baehr, of Dresden, was here yesterday, and, penetrated with the most praiseworthy enthusiasm, wished to exchange his beautiful silver snuff-box for my forlorn old leather one. I refused, however. He told me of a certain Herr von Wilde, who was a perfect fanatic on the subject of my philosophy, and who, at the age of eighty-five, died with my name on his lips.

My Buddha, re-gilded, glittering on his pedestal, gives you his benediction.

August 14, 1856.

...Four pages and a half of Tallendier about me.[*] You have seen it, I suppose. French chatter, personal details, etc., but where the devil did he hear that I am "*tout etonné du bruit que font mes écrits dans le monde*?" I am so little astonished, that Emden told Nordwall, to the latter's intense surprise, that I had predicted to him my future celebrity fully twenty years ago....

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[*] An article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.*

Now, mediocrity may, of course, be praised, but, as Balzac has put it, it is never discussed. And Schopenhauer, in the matter of discussion, came in for his full share. He was praised and abused by turn. Like every prominent figure, he made a good mark to fire at. Certain critics said that he had stolen from Fichte and Schelling everything in his philosophy that was worth reading, others abused him personally; and one writer, a woman with whom he had refused to converse, and who had probably expected to pay her hotel bill with the protocol of his conversation, wrote a quantity of scurrilous articles about him. But *censura perit, scriptum manet.* The criticisms are forgotten, while his work still endures and, moreover, grows each year into surer and stronger significance.

Among his visitors at the time was M. Foucher de Carsil, and the portrait which that gentleman subsequently drew of him is so graphic that it is impossible to resist the temptation of making the following extract:[*]—

"When I first saw him, in 1859, at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, at Frankfort, he was then an old man, with bright blue and limpid eyes. His lips were thin and sarcastic, and about them wandered a smile of shrewd intelligence. His high forehead was tufted on either side with puffs of white hair that gave to his physiognomy, luminous as it was with wit and malice, a stamp of nobility and distinction. His garments, his lace *jabot*, his white cravat, reminded me of that school of gentlemen who lived toward the close of the reign of Louis XV. His manners were those of a man accustomed to the best society; habitually reserved and timid even to suspicion, he rarely entered into conversation with any save his intimates and an occasional sympathetic traveler. His gestures were abrupt, and in conversation they became at once petulant and suggestive. He avoided discussions and combats in words, but he did so that he might the better enjoy the charm of familiar conversation. When he did speak, his imagination embroidered on the heavy canvas of the German tongue the most subtle and delicate arabesques that the Latin, Greek, French, English, or Italian languages were capable of suggesting. Indeed, when he cared to talk, his conversation possessed swing and precision, and joined thereto was a wealth of citation, an exactitude of detail, and such tireless flow of wit, as held the little circle of his friends charmed and attentive until far into the night. His words, clear-cut and cadenced, captivated his listener wholly: they both pictured and analyzed, a tremulous sensitiveness heightened their fervor, they were precise and exact on every topic. A German, who had traveled extensively in Abyssinia, was so astonished at the minute details which he gave on the different species of crocodiles, and their customs, that he thought that in him he recognized a former companion.

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[*] *Hegel et Schopenhauer.* Paris: Hachette et Cie.

"Happy are they who heard this last survivor of the conversationalists of the eighteenth century! He was a contemporary of Voltaire and of Diderot, of Helvetius and of Chamfort; his brilliant thoughts on women, on the part that mothers hold in the intellectual qualities of their children; his theories, profoundly original, on the connection between will and mind; his views on art and nature, on the life and death of the species; his remarks on the dull and wearisome style of those who write to say nothing, or who put on a mask and think with the thoughts of others; his pungent reflections on the subject of pseudonyms, and on the establishment of a literary censure for those journals which permitted neologisms, solecisms, and barbarisms; his ingenious hypotheses on magnetic phenomena, dreams, and somnambulism; his hatred of excess of every kind; his love of order; and his horror of obscurantism, '*qui, s'il n'est pas un péché contre le Saint Esprit en est un contre l'esprit humain*,' make for him a physiognomy entirely different from any other of this century."

A few tags and tatters of these conversations have been preserved by Dr. Frauenstadt,* and in them Schopenhauer is discovered sprawled at ease, and expressing himself on a variety of topics with a *disinvoltura* and freedom of epithet which recalls the earlier essayists. With them, as with him, periphrasis was avoided. Spades were spades, not horticultural implements; and in one dialogue Frauenstadt compliments his master in having, in breadth and reach of his polemic, nothing in common with contemporary regard for ears polite. Citations of this class, however, may well be omitted. A thinker in slippers, and especially *in puris naturalibus*, is generally unattractive even to those the least given to prudishness. But beyond certain instances of this description, the scholar and man of the world is usually very discernible. At times he is profound, at others vivacious; for instance, he is asked what man would be if Nature, in making the last step which leads to him, had started from the dog or the elephant; to which he answers, in that case man would be an intelligent dog or an intelligent elephant, instead of being an intelligent monkey. As may be imagined, there was about Schopenhauer very little of the Sunday-school theologian, and religion was in consequence seldom viewed by him from an orthodox standpoint; when, therefore, Schleiermacher was quoted before him to the effect that no man can be a philosopher who is not religious, he observed very quietly, "No man who is religious can become a philosopher,—metaphysics are useless to him, and no true philosopher is religious; he is sometimes in danger, but he is not fettered, he is free." Elsewhere he said, "Religion and philosophy are like the two scales of a balance; the more one rises, the more does the other descend."

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* Arthur Schopenhauer. *Von ihm, Ueber ihn.* Berlin.

In Schopenhauer's opinion, the greatest novels were *Tristram Shandy*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Don Quixote*, and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. To *Don Quixote* he ascribed an allegorical meaning, but as an intellectual romance he preferred *Wilhelm Meister* to all others. He believed in clairvoyance, but not that man is a free agent; and it may be here noted that, according to the most recent scientific opinion, man is a free agent, *at most*, about once in twenty-four hours. "Everything that happens, happens necessarily," he would say; and it was with this maxim, of whose truth he had a variety of every-day examples, and with the aid of the theory of the ideality of time, that he explained second sight. "Everything is now that is to be," he said; "but with our ordinary eyes we do not see it; the clairvoyant merely puts on the spectacles of Time."

In the *Paränesen und Maximen*, in which Schopenhauer chats quietly with the reader and not with the disciple, many quaint and forcible suggestions are to be found. For instance, among other things, he says, "I accord my entire respect to any man who, when unoccupied, and waiting for something, does not immediately begin to beat a tattoo with his fingers, or toy with the object nearest his hand. It is probable that such a man has thoughts of his own." His advice, too, on the manner in which we should think and work is quite Emersonian in its directness. It was, it may be added, the manner in which he thought and worked, himself: "Have compartments for your thoughts and open but one of them at a time; in this way each little pleasure you may have will not be spoiled by some lumbering care; neither will one thought drive out another, and an important matter will not swamp a lot of smaller ones."

Such, vaguely outlined, was this great and interesting figure. With the appearance of the *Parerga* his work was done. He lived ten years longer in great seclusion, receiving only infrequent visits. "There, where two or three are gathered together," he would say, and suggested that his friends and believers should meet and consult without him. Such literary labor as he then performed consisted mainly in strengthening that which he had already written, and in making notes and suggestions for future editions. At the age of seventy-two he died, very peacefully though suddenly, leaving all his fortune to charitable purposes.

In these pages no attempt has been made to enter into the details of biography, for that pleasant task has been already well performed by other and better equipped pens. The present writer has therefore only sought to present such a view of Schopenhauer as might aid the general reader to a clearer understanding of the doctrine which he was the first to present, and which will be briefly considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE.

The Sphinx's Riddle.

In the Munich beer halls, when one student is heard laying down the law about something which he does not understand to a companion who cares not a rap on the subject, it is very generally taken for granted that the two are talking metaphysics. Indeed, metaphysics has a bad name everywhere. In itself, it suggests nothing very enticing, and even its nomenclature seems to bring with it a sort of ponderosity which is very nearly akin to the repulsive.

This prejudice, of course, is not without its reason. The philosophers, nearly one and all, seem to have banded themselves into a sort of imaginary freemasonry, whose portals they bar to any one refusing to robe his thoughts in a garment of technical speech. Moreover, at the very gateway of their guild there looms before the timorous the fear of a hideous initiation, the cold douche of logic, and the memorizing of hateful terms. There can therefore be no stronger proof of Schopenhauer's ability than that which is contained in the fact that he successfully eluded all these stale abuses, and turned one of the heaviest kinds of writing into one of the most agreeable.

Indeed, Schopenhauer is not only one of the most profound thinkers of the essentially profound nineteenth century, but, what is still more noteworthy, he is an exceptionally fascinating teacher. His spacious theories and tangential flights are, of course, not such as charm the reader of the penny dreadful; but any one who is interested in the drama of evolution and the tragi-comedy of life will, it is believed, find in him a fund of curious information, such as no other thinker has had the power to convey.

He has, it is true, made the most of the worst; but beyond this reproach, but one other of serious import remains to be brought against him, and that is that though he has been dead and buried for very nearly a quarter of a century, he is still on the outer margin of his epoch. For this he is not, of course, entirely to blame. There are among thinkers many pleasant optimists still, who form a respectable majority; to be sure, a wise man once said that in considering a new subject the minority were always right; but, disregarding for the moment the fallacy of believing that this world is the best one possible, it cannot but be admitted that scientific pessimism is still in its infancy. It has yet many prejudices to disarm, and many errors of its own to correct. Like meaner things, it must mature. For this it has ample time.

Berkeley says that few men think, yet all have opinions; and it is now very frequently asserted that when more is thought, not only there will not be such a diversity of opinion, but at that time Pessimism, as the religion of the future, will begin its sway.

It has been elsewhere noted that the effect of Kant's philosophy was not dissimilar to that of a successful operation on cataract, and the aim of the *World as Will and Idea* is to place in the hands of those on whom that operation has been satisfactorily performed a pair of such spectacles as are suitable to convalescent eyes. Schopenhauer is therefore in a measure indebted to Kant, as also, it may be added, to Plato, and the sacred books of the Hindus.

In saying, however, that Schopenhauer is indebted to Kant, it is well to point out that Schopenhauer begins precisely where Kant left off. Kant's great merit consisted in distinguishing the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself, or in other words, in showing the difference between that which seems and that which is.* For the inaccessible thing-in-itself he had no explanation to offer. He called it the *Ding an sich*, regarded it as the result of an unintelligible cause, and then left it to be a bugbear to every student of his philosophy.

This unpleasant *Ding an sich* was exorcised, and well-nigh banished for good and all, by Fichte and Hegel; but Schopenhauer reëstablished the incomprehensible factor on a fresh basis, christened it "Will," and asserted it to be the creator of all that is, and at once independent, free, and omnipotent; in other words, the interior essence of the world of which Christ crucified is the sublime symbol. Thus disposed of, the *Ding an sich* may now be left to take care of itself, and the examination of the great theory begun.

Schopenhauer opens his philosophy with the formula, "The world is my idea;" a formula which, it may be noted, condenses in the fewest possible words all that is worth condensing of the idealism of Germany. Beginning in this manner it is evident that he proposes to show neither whence the world comes nor whither it tends, nor yet why it is, but simply, *what it is.* The question has been asked before. According to Schopenhauer, the world is made up of two zones, the real and the ideal; and it may here be said that over the real and the ideal Schopenhauer successfully read the banns.

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* This distinction of Kant's is not strictly original. Its germ is in Plato, and Voltaire set all Europe laughing at Maupertuis, who had vaguely stated that *"nous vivons dans un monde ou rien de ce que nous apercevons ne ressemble à ce que nous apercevons."* Whether Kant was acquainted or not with Maupertuis' theory is, of course, difficult to say; at any rate, he resurrected the doctrine, and presented idealism for the first time in a logical form.

To return, however, to the opening formula. "The world is my idea" is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and thinks, but which, however, is appreciable only by man. When appreciated, it is at once clear that what we know is neither a sun nor an earth, for we have at best an eye which sees the one, and a hand which feels the other. In brief, we are unacquainted with either forms or colors; we have but senses which represent them to us, while objects exist for us merely through the medium of the intelligence. Indeed, as Schopenhauer has said, no other truth is more certain and less in need of proof than this,—that the whole world is simply the perception of a perceiver; in a word, idea.

Emerson says that the frivolous make themselves merry with this theory; and it must be admitted that at first it does not seem quite satisfactory to be told that the world in which we live is nothing more nor less than a cerebral phenomenon, which man carries with him to the tomb, and which, in the absence of a perceiver, would not exist at all. To arrive, however, at a clear understanding of the purely phenomenal existence of the exterior world, it will suffice to represent to one's self the world as it was when entirely uninhabited. At that time it was necessarily without perception. Later, there sprang up a great quantity of plants, upon which the different forces of light, air, humidity, and electricity acted according to their nature. If, now, it be remembered how impressionable plants are to these agents, and how thought leads by degrees to sensation and thence to perception, immediately then the world appears representing itself in time and space. Or, reverse the argument and imagine that the dream of the poet is realized, that nations have disappeared, and that every living thing has ceased to be, while beneath the sun's unchanging stare, and enveloped in the sky's bland, pervasive blue, the earth with her continents and archipelagoes continues to revolve in space. Under such circumstances it would naturally seem as though the universe subsisted still. But if the question is examined more closely, it will perhaps be admitted that these things remain as they are only on condition of being seen and felt. For supposing one spectator present, but of a different mental organization from our own, then the entire scene is changed; suppress him, and the whole spectacle tumbles into chaos.

This doctrine, as it will be readily understood, does not in any sense deny the reality of the world in the ordinary acceptation of the term; it maintains merely that every object is conditioned by its subject; or, to explain the theory less technically, it will be sufficient to reflect that for the world, or for anything else, to be an object, there must be some one as subject to think it; for instance, the dreamless sleep proves that the earth exists only to the thinking mind, and should all Nature be rocked in an eternal slumber, there could then be no question of an exterior world.

If it be asked in what this perception consists, which represents the exterior world, we find that it is limited to three fundamental concepts, that of time, space, and their concomitant causality; but inasmuch as time and space are the receptacle of every phenomenon, once their ideality is established, the ideality of the world is proven at the same moment, and with it the truth of the formula, "The world is my idea."

Now the ideality of time is established, according to Schopenhauer, by what is known in mechanics as the law of inertia. "For what," he asks in the *Parerga*, "does this law teach? Simply, that time alone cannot produce any physical action, that alone and in itself it alters nothing either in the repose or movement of a body. Were it either accidentally or otherwise inherent in things themselves, it would follow that its duration or brevity would affect them in a certain measure. But it does nothing of the sort; time passes over all things without leaving the slightest trace, for they are acted upon only by the causes that unroll themselves *in* time, but in no sense by time itself. When, therefore, a body is withdrawn from chemical action, as the mammoth in the ice fields, the fly in amber, and the Egyptian antiquities in their closed necropoli, thousands of years may pass and leave them unaffected. Indeed," he adds elsewhere, "the living toads found in limestone lead to the conclusion that even animal life may be suspended for thousands of years, provided this suspension is begun in the dormant period and maintained by special circumstances."

The *London Times*, 21st September, 1840, contains a notice to the effect that, at a lecture delivered by Mr. Pettigrew, at the Literary and Scientific Institute, the lecturer showed some grains of wheat which Sir G. Wilkenson had found in a grave at Thebes, where they must have lain for three thousand years. They were found in an hermetically sealed vase. Mr. Pettigrew had sowed twelve grains, and obtained a plant which grew five feet high, and the seeds of which were then quite ripe.

Many other instances are given of this absolute inactivity; for example, let a body once be put in motion, that motion is never arrested or diminished by any lapse of time; it would be never ending were it not for the reaction of physical causes. In the same manner a body in repose would remain so eternally did not physical causes put it in motion. It follows, therefore, that time is not a real existence, but only a condition of thought, or purely ideal.

In regard to the ideality of space, Schopenhauer says, "The clearest and most simple proof of the ideality of space is that we can never get it out of our thoughts, as we might anything else. We can fancy space as having no longer anything to fill it, we can imagine that everything within it has disappeared, we can represent it as being, between the fixed stars, an absolute void, but space itself we can never get rid of; whatever we do, however we turn, there it is in endless expansion. This fact certainly proves that space is a part of our intellect; or, in other words, that it is the woof of the tissue upon which the different objects of the exterior world apply themselves. As soon as I think of an object, space appears with it and accompanies every movement, every turn and *détour* of my thought, as faithfully as the spectacles on my nose accompany every movement, every turn and *détour* of my person, or just in the same manner as the shadow accompanies the body. If I notice that a thing accompanies me everywhere, and under all circumstances, I naturally conclude that it is in some way connected with me; as if, for instance, wherever I went I noticed a particular odor from which I could not escape. Space is precisely the same; whatever I think of, what ever I imagine, space comes first and yields its place to nothing. It must, therefore, be an integral part of my understanding, and its ideality in consequence must extend to everything that is thinkable."

Space and time being but the empty framework of phenomenal existence, something must fill them, and that something is causality, which, according to Schopenhauer, is synonymous with action and matter. Into these abstract regions, however, it is unnecessary to follow him any further. Suffice it to say that having shown in this way that one of the two zones of which the world is formed is but an effect of the perceptions, he passes therefrom to the world as it is.

Now there were many paths which might or might not have led him to the unravelment of the great secret which Kant gave up in despair, there were many ways which seemed to tend to a direct solution of the Sphinx's riddle, but the course which he chose, and which brought him nearer to the proper answer than any other system of which the world yet knows, may be fairly said to have been inspired by the spirit of truth, and as an inspiration given first to him of all men.

It was not mathematics that he selected to aid him in his search for the real, for whatever the subtleties of that science may be, it is still too superficial to contain an explorable depth. The natural sciences could aid him as little. Anatomy, botany, and zoölogy reveal, it is true, an infinite variety of forms, but these forms at best are but unrelated perceptions, a series of indecipherable hieroglyphics. Even etiology, when embracing the whole range of physical science, gives at most but the nomenclature, succession, and changes of inexplicable forces, without revealing anything of their inner nature. All these methods were smitten with the same defect,—they were all external, and offered not the essence of things, but only their image and description. To employ them, therefore, in a search for truth would, he said, be on a par with a man who, wandering about a castle looking vainly for the entrance, takes meanwhile a sketch of the façade. Such, however, he noted, is the method which all other philosophers have followed. He concluded, therefore, as man was not only a thinking being, to whom the world was merely an idea, but an individual riveted to the earth by a body whose affections were the starting-point of his intuitions, that reality would come to him, not from without, but from within. "For this body of man's is," he argued, "but an object among other objects; its movements and actions are unknown to the thinking being save as are the changes of the others, and they would be as incomprehensible to him as his own were not their signification revealed to him in another manner. He would see movements follow motives with the constancy of a natural law, and would as little understand the influence of the motive as the connection of any other effect with its cause. He could, if he chose, call it force, quality, or character, but that is all that he would know about it."

What, then, is the interior essence of every manifestation and of every action? What is that which is identical with the body to such an extent that to its command a movement always answers? What is that with which Nature plays, which works dumbly in the rock, slumbers in the plant, and awakes in man? Schopenhauer answers with a word, "Will." Will, he teaches, is a force, and should not be taken, as it is ordinarily, to mean simply the conscious act of an intelligent being. In Nature it is a blind, unconscious power; in man it is the foundation of being.

But before entering into an examination of the functions and vagaries of this force, of which everything, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, is a derivative, it is well to inquire what its exact rank is. It has been already said that in man it was the foundation of being, but from very early times,—as a matter of fact, since the days in which Anaxagoras lived and taught,—the intellect has held, among all man's other attributes, a sceptre hitherto uncontested. If Schopenhauer, however, is to be believed, the supremacy hitherto accorded to it has been the result of error. The throne, by grace divine, belongs to Will. The intellect is but the prime minister, the instrument of a higher force, as the hammer is that of the smith.

If the matter be examined however casually, it will become at once clear that what we are most conscious of in effort, hope, desire, fear, love, hatred, and determination, are the workings and manifestations of Will. If the animal is considered, it will be seen that in the descending scale intelligence becomes more and more imperfect, while Will remains entirely unaffected. The smallest insect wants what it wants as much as man. The intellect, moreover, becomes wearied, while Will is indefatigable. Indeed, when it is remembered that such men as Swift, Kant, Scott, Southey, Rousseau, and Emerson have fallen into a state of intellectual debility, it is well-nigh impossible to deny that the mind is but a function of the body, which, in turn, is a function of the Will. But that which probably shows the secondary and dependent nature of the intelligence more clearly is its peculiar characteristic of intermittence and periodicity. In deep sleep, the brain rests, while the other organs continue their work. In brief, then, Intellect is the light and Will the warmth. "In me," Schopenhauer says, "the indestructible is not the soul, but rather, to employ a chemical term, the basis of the soul, which is Will."

Will, moreover, is not only the foundation of being, but, as has been noted, it is the universal essence. Schopenhauer points out the ascension of sap in plants, which is no easy problem in hydraulics, and the insect's marvelous anticipations of the future, and asks what is it all but Will? The vital force itself, he says, is Will,—Will to live,—while the organism of the body is but Will manifested, Will become visible.

As Schopenhauer describes it, Will is also identical, immutable, and free. Its identity is shown in inorganic life in the irresistible *tendency* of water to precipitate itself into cavities, the *perseverance* with which the loadstone turns to the north, the *longing* that iron has to attach itself to it, the violence with which contrary currents of electricity *try* to unite the *choice* of fluids, and in the manner in which they join and separate. In organic life, it is shown by the fact that every vegetable has a peculiar characteristic: one wants a damp soil, another needs a dry one; one grows only on high ground, another in the valley; one turns to the light, another to the water; while the climbing plant seeks a support. In the animal kingdom there exists another form, which is noticeable in the partly voluntary, partly involuntary movements of the lowest type. When, however, in the evolution of Will the insect or the animal seeks and chooses its food, then intelligence begins and volition passes from darkness into light.

Will, too, is immutable. It never varies; it is the same in man as in the caterpillar, for, as has been said, what an insect wants it wants as decidedly as does a man; the only difference is in the object of desire. The immutability of Will, moreover, is the base of its indestructibility; it never perishes, and for that matter what does? In the world of phenomena all things, it is true, seem to have a birth and a death, but that is but an illusion, which the philosopher does not share. Our true being, and the veritable essence of all things, dwell, Schopenhauer says, in a region where time is not, and where the concepts of birth and death are without significance. The fear of death, he adds parenthetically, is a purely independent sentiment, and one which has its origin in the Will to live. Briefly, it is an illusion which man brings with him when he is born, and which guides him through life; for notice that were this fear of death perfectly reasonable, man would be as uneasy about the chaos which preceded his existence as about that which is to follow it.

Let the individual die, however; the species is indestructible, for death is to the species as sleep is to the individual. The species contains the indestructible, the immutable Will of which the individual is a manifestation. It contains all that is, all that was, and all that will be.

"When we think of the future and of the coming generations, the millions of human beings who will differ from us in habits and customs, and we try in imagination to fancy them with us, we wonder from where they will spring, where they are now? Where is this fecund chaos, rich in worlds, that hides the generations that are to be? And where can it be save there, where every reality has been and will be,—here, in the present, and what it contains. And you, foolish questioner, who do not recognize your own essence, you are like the leaf on the tree which, withering in autumn, and feeling it is about to fall, laments at death, inconsolable at the knowledge of the fresh verdure which in spring will cover the tree once more. The leaf cries, 'I am no more.' Foolish leaf, where do you go? Whence do the fresh leaves come? Where is this chaos whose gulf you fear? See, your own self is in that force, interior and hidden, acting on the tree which, through all generations of leaves, knows neither birth nor death. And now tell me," Schopenhauer concludes, as though he were about to pronounce a benediction, "tell me, is man unlike the leaf?"

This doctrine, which teaches that through all there is one invariable, identical, and equal force, is the great problem whose solution was sought by Kant, and which he gave up in despair; it is the discovery which makes of Schopenhauer one of the foremost thinkers of the century, and one, it may be added without any unguarded enthusiasm, which will suffice to carry his name into other ages, somewhat in the same manner as the name of Columbus has descended to us.

"If we were to consider," he said, "the nature of this force which admittedly moves the world, but whose psychological examination is so little advanced that the most certain analytical results seem not unlike a paradox, we should be astonished at this fundamental verity which I have been the first to bring to light, and to which I have given its true name,—Will. For what is the world but an enormous Will constantly irrupting into life. Gravitation, electricity, heat, every form of activity, from the fall of an apple to the foundation of a republic, is but the expression of Will, and nothing more."

This doctrine of volition coincides, it may be noted, very perfectly with that of evolution, and it was not difficult for Schopenhauer to show that the more recent results of science were a confirmation of his philosophy. In the *Parerga*, which he wrote thirty years after the publication of his chief work, he says that during the early stages of the globe's formation, before the age of granite, the objectivity of the Will-to-live was limited to the most inferior forms; also that the forces were at that time engaged in a combat whose theatre was not alone the surface of the globe, but its entire mass, a combat too colossal for the imagination to grasp. When this Titan conflict of chemical forces had ended, and the granite, like a tombstone, covered the combatants, the Will-to-live, by a striking contrast, irrupted in the peaceful world of plant and forest. This vegetable world decarbonized the air, and prepared it for animal life. The objectivity of Will then realized a new form,—the animal kingdom. Fish and crustaceans filled the sea, gigantic reptiles covered the earth, and gradually through innumerable forms, each more perfect than the last, the Will-to-live ascended finally to man. This stage attained is, in his opinion, destined to be the last, for with it is come the possibility of the denial of the Will, through which the divine comedy will end.

This possibility of the denial of the Will, and the ransom of the world from its attendant misery thereby, will be explained later on, and for the moment it will be sufficient to note that Schopenhauer refused to admit that a being more intelligent than man could exist either here or on any other planet, for with enlarged intelligence he would consider life too deplorable to be supported for a single moment.

If, now, the foregoing arguments are admitted, and it is taken for granted that there are two separate and distinct hemispheres, one apparent and one real, one the world of perceptions and one the world of Will, there must necessarily be some connection between the two, some point at which they meet and join. This chasm Schopenhauer lightly bridges over with those ideas of Plato which the Middle Ages neglected, and which formed the banquet and the sustenance of the Renaissance: in fact, the eternal yet ever fresh suggestions that Nature offers to the artist, and which the sculptor with his chisel, the poet with his pen, the painter with his brush, resuscitate and explain anew.

It is, however, only in the purest contemplation that these suggestions can be properly received, and it is, of course, in genius that a preëminent capacity for such receptivity exists. For it is as if when genius appears in an individual, a larger measure of the power of knowledge falls to his lot than is necessary for the service of an individual will, and this superfluity, being free, becomes, as it were, the mirror of the inner nature of the world, or, as Carlyle puts it, "the spiritual picture of Nature." "This," Schopenhauer notes parenthetically, "explains the restless activity of the genius, for the present can rarely satisfy him, because it does not fill his thoughts. There is in him a ceaseless aspiration and desire for new and lofty things, and a longing to meet and communicate with others of similar status. The common mortal, on the other hand, filled with the hour, ends in it, and finding everywhere his like enjoys that satisfaction in daily life from which the genius is debarred."

The common mortal, the *bourgeois*, as it is the fashion to call him, turned out as he is daily by the thousand, manufactured, it would seem, to order, finds in his satisfied mediocrity no glimmer, even, of a spark that can predispose him to disinterested observation. Whatever arrests his attention does so only for the moment, and in all that appears before him he seeks merely the general concept under which it is to be brought, very much in the same manner as the indolent seek a chair, which then interests them no further.

And yet it is unnecessary to pore over German metaphysics to know that whoso can lose himself in Nature, and sink his own individuality therein, finds that it has suddenly become a suggestion, which he has absorbed, and which is now part of himself. It is in this sense that Byron says:—

"Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?"

This theory, it is true, is not that of all great poets, many of whom, as witness Shelley and Leopardi, did not see in the splendid face of Nature that they could not be absolutely perishable, and so selfishly mourned over their own weakness and her impassibility.

According to Schopenhauer, art should be strictly impersonal, and contemplation as calm as a foretaste of Nirvana, in which the individual is effaced and only the pure knowing subject subsists. This condition he praises with great wealth of adjective as the painless state which Epicurus, of refined memory, celebrated as the highest good, the bliss of the gods, for therein "man is freed from the hateful yoke of Will, the penal servitude of daily life ceases as for a Sabbath, the wheel of Ixion stands still." The cause of all this he is at no loss to explain, and he does so, it may be added, in a manner poetically logical and peculiar to himself. "Every desire is born of a need, of a privation, or a suffering. When satisfied it is lulled, but for one that is satisfied how many are unappeased! Desire, moreover, is of long duration, its exigencies are infinite, while pleasure is brief and narrowly measured. Even this pleasure is only an apparition, another succeeds it; the first is a vanished illusion, the second an illusion which lingers still. Nothing is capable of appeasing Will, nor of permanently arresting it; the best we can do for ourselves is like the alms tossed to a beggar, which in preserving his life today prolongs his misery to-morrow. While, therefore, we are dominated by desires and ruled by Will, so long as we give ourselves up to hopes that delude and fears that persecute, we have neither repose nor happiness. But when an accident, an interior harmony, lifting us for the time from out the infinite torrent of desire, delivers the spirit from the oppression of the Will, turns our attention from everything that solicits it, and all things seem as freed from the allurements of hope and personal interest, then repose, vainly pursued, yet ever intangible, comes to us of itself, bearing with open hands the plenitude of the gift of peace."

The fine arts, therefore, as well as philosophy, are at work on the problem of existence. Every mind that has once rested in impersonal contemplation of the world tends from that moment to some comprehension of the mystery of beauty and the internal essence of all things; and it is for this reason that every new work which grapples forcibly with any actuality is one more answer to the question, What is life?

To this query every masterpiece replies, pertinently, but in its own manner. Art, which speaks in the ingenuous tongue of intuition, and not in the abstract speech of thought, answers the question with a passing image, but not with a definite reply. But every great work, be it a poem, a picture, a statue, or a play, answers still. Even music replies, and more profoundly than anything else. Indeed, art offers to him who questions an image born of intuition, which says, See, this is life.

Briefly, then, contemplation brings with it that affranchisement of the intelligence, which is not alone a release from the trammels of the Will, but which is the law of art itself, and raises man out of misery into the pure world of ideas.

In the treatment of this subject, which in the hands of other writers has been productive of inexpressible weariness, Schopenhauer has given himself no airs. In what has gone before there has been, it must be admitted, no attempt to narrate history, and then pass it off as an explanation of the Universe. He has gone to the root of the matter, seized a fact and brought it to light, without any nauseous accompaniment of "Absolutes" or "Supersensibles." In view of the magnitude of the subject, it has been handled, I think, very simply, and that perhaps for the reason that simplicity is the *cachet* which greatness lends to all its productions. If in these pages it has seemed otherwise, the fault is not that of the master, but rather that of the clerk.

The question as to what the world is has been considered, and the answer conveyed that Will, the essence of all things, is a blind, unconscious force which, after irrupting in inorganic life and passing therefrom through the vegetable and animal kingdom, reaches its culmination in man, and that the only relief from its oppressive yoke is found in art and impersonal contemplation. Taking these premises for granted, and admitting for a moment their corollary that life is a restless pain, it will be found that the sombre conclusion which follows therefrom has been deduced with an exactitude which is comparable only to the precision of a prism decomposing light.

Literature is admittedly full of the embarrassments of transition, and philosophy has naturally its attendant share. It is, of course, not difficult for the metaphysician to say, This part of my work is theoretical, and this, practical; but to give to the two that cohesion which is necessary in the unfolding of a single, if voluminous, thought is a feat not always performed with success. It is, therefore, no little to Schopenhauer's credit that he triumphantly connected the two in such wise that they seem as though fused in one, and after disposing of the world at large was able to turn to life and its attendant, pain.

Now in all grades of its manifestation, Will, he teaches, dispenses entirely with any end or aim; it simply and ceaselessly strives, for striving is its sole nature. As, however, any hindrance of this striving, through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary aim, is called suffering, and on the other hand the attainment of its end, satisfaction, well-being, or happiness, it follows, if the obstacles it meets outnumber the facilities it encounters, that having no final end or aim, there can be no end and no measure of suffering.

But does pain outbalance happiness? The question is certainly complex, and for that matter unanswerable save by a cumbersome mathematical process from which the reader may well be spared. The optimist points to the pleasures of life, the pessimist enumerates its trials. Each judges according to his lights. Schopenhauer's opinion goes without the telling, and as he gave his whole life to the subject his verdict may, for the moment, be allowed to pass unchallenged. Still, if the question is examined, no matter how casually, it will be seen, first, that there is no sensibility in the plant and therefore no suffering; second, that a certain small degree is manifested in the lowest types of animal life; third, that the capacity to feel and suffer is still limited, even in the case of the most intelligent insects; fourth, that pain of an acute degree first appears with the nervous system of the vertebrates; fifth, that it continues to increase in direct proportion to the development of the intelligence; and, finally, that as intelligence attains distinctness, pain advances with it, and what Mr. Swinburne calls the gift of tears finds its supreme expression in man. Truly, as Schopenhauer has expressed it, man is not a being to be greatly envied. He is the concretion of a thousand necessities. His life, as a rule, is a struggle for existence with the certainty of defeat in the end, and when his existence is assured, there comes a fight with the burden of life, an effort to kill time, and a vain attempt to escape ennui.

Nor is ennui a minor evil. It is not every one who can get away from himself. Schopenhauer could, it is true, but in so doing he noted that its ravages depicted on the human countenance an expression of absolute despair, and made beings who love one another as little as men do seek each other eagerly. "It drives men," he said, "to the greatest excesses, as does famine, its opposite extreme. Public precautions are taken against it as against other calamities, hence the historical *panem et circenses*. Want," he added, "is the scourge of the people as ennui is that of fashionable life. In the middle classes ennui is represented by the Sabbath, and want by the other days of the week."

In this way, between desire and attainment, human life rolls on. The wish is, in its nature, pain, and satisfaction soon begets satiety. No matter what nature and fortune may have done, no matter who a man may be, nor what he may possess, the pain which is essential to life can never be dodged. Efforts to banish suffering effect, if successful, only a change in its form. In itself it is want or care for the maintenance of life; and if in this form it is at last and with difficulty removed, back it comes again in the shape of love, jealousy, lust, envy, hatred, or ambition; and if it can gain entrance through none of these avatars, it comes as simple boredom, against which we strive as best we may. Even in this latter case, if at last we get the upper hand, we shall hardly do so, Schopenhauer says, "without letting pain in again in one of its earlier forms; and then the dance begins afresh, for life, like a pendulum, swings ever backward and forward between pain and ennui."

Depressing as this view of life may be, Schopenhauer draws attention to an aspect of it from which a certain consolation may be derived, and even a philosophic indifference to present ills be attained. Our impatience at misfortune, he notes, arises very generally from the fact that we regard it as having been caused by a chain of circumstances which might easily have been different. As a rule, we make little, if any, complaint over the ills that are necessary and universal; such, for instance, as the advance of age, and the death which must claim us all; on the contrary, it is the accidental nature of the sorrow that gives its sting. But if we were to recognize that pain is inevitable and essential to life, and that nothing depends on chance save only the form in which it presents itself, and that consequently the present suffering fills a place which without it would be occupied by another which it has excluded,—then, from convictions of this nature, a considerable amount of stoical equanimity would be produced, and the amount of anxious care which now pervades the world would be notably diminished. But fortifications of this description, however cunningly devised, form no bulwark against pain itself; for pain, according to Schopenhauer, is positive, the one thing that is felt; while on the other hand, satisfaction, or, as it is termed, happiness, is a purely negative condition. Against this theory it is unnecessary to bring to bear any great battery of argument; many thinkers have disagreed with him on this point, as they have also disagreed with his assertion that pleasure is always preceded by a want. It is true, of course, that unexpected pleasures have a delight whose value is entirely independent of antecedent desire. But unexpected pleasures are rare; they do not come to us every day, and when they do they cease to be pleasures; indeed, their rarity may in this respect be looked upon as the exception which confirms the rule. Ample proof, however, of the negativity of happiness is found in art, and especially in poetry. Epic and dramatic verse represent struggles, efforts, and combats for happiness; but happiness itself, complete and enduring, is never depicted. Up to the last scene the hero copes with dangers and battleaxes difficulties, whereupon the curtain falls upon his happiness, which, being completely negative, cannot be the subject of art. The idyl, it is true, professes to treat of happiness, but in so doing it blunders sadly, for the poet either finds his verse turning beneath his hands into an insignificant epic made up of feeble sorrows, trivial pleasures, and trifling efforts, or else it becomes merely a description of the charm and beauty of Nature. The same thing, Schopenhauer says, is noticeable in music. Melody is a deviation from the keynote, to which, after many mutations, it at last returns; but the keynote, which expresses "the satisfaction of the will" is, when prolonged, perfectly monotonous, and wearisome in the extreme.

From the logic of these arguments it is clear that Voltaire was not very far wrong when he said: "Happiness is but a dream, and only pain is real. I have thought so for eighty-four years, and I know of no better plan than to resign myself to the inevitable, and reflect that flies were born to be devoured by spiders, and man to be consumed by care."

To this conclusion the optimist will naturally object, but he does so in the face of history and experience, either of which is quite competent to prove that this world is far from being the best one possible. If neither of them succeeds in so doing, then let him wander through the hospitals, the cholera slums, the operating-rooms of the surgeon, the prisons, the torture-chambers, the slave-kennels, the battlefields, or any one of the numberless haunts of nameless misery; or, if all of these are too far, or too inconvenient, let him take a turn into one of the many factories where men and women, and even infants, work from ten to fourteen hours a day at mechanical labor, simply that they may continue to enjoy the exquisite delight of living.

Moreover, as Schopenhauer asks with grim irony, "Where did Dante find the materials for his 'Inferno' if not from this world; and yet is not his picture exhaustively satisfactory? To some minds it is even a trifle overcharged; but look at his Paradise; when he attempted to depict it he had nothing to guide him, this pleasant world could not offer a single suggestion; and so, being obliged to say something, and yet not knowing what to say, he palms off in place of a celestial panorama the instruction and advice which he imagines himself as receiving from Beatrice and the Saints."

Briefly, then, life, to the pessimist, is a motiveless desire, a constant pain and continued struggle, followed by death, and so on, in *secula seculorum*, until the planet's crust crumbles to dust.

Since, therefore, life is so deplorable, the deduction seems to follow that it is better to take the poet's advice:—

"Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,
  Count o'er thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
  'Tis something better—not to be."

But here the question naturally arises, how is this annihilation to be accomplished? Through a vulgar and commonplace suicide? Not at all. Schopenhauer is far too logical to suggest a palliative so fruitless and clap-trap as that. For suicide, far from being a denial of the will to live, is one of its strongest affirmations. Paradoxical as it may seem, the man who takes his own life really wants to live; what he does not want are the misery and trials attendant on his particular existence. He abolishes the individual, but not the race. The species continues, and pain with it.

In what manner, then, can we decently rid ourselves, and all who would otherwise follow, of the pangs and torments of life? Schopenhauer will give the receipt in a moment; but to understand the method clearly, it is necessary to take a glance at the metaphysics of love.

We are told by Dr. Frauenstadt that Schopenhauer considered this portion of his philosophy to be "a pearl." A pearl it may be, but as such it is not entirely suited to an Anglo-Saxon setting; nevertheless, as it is important to gain some idea of what this clear-eyed recluse thought of the delicate lever which disturbs the gravest interests, and whose meshes entwine peer and peasant alike, a brief description of it will not be entirely out of place.

By way of preface it may be said that, save Plato, no other philosopher has cared to consider a subject so simple yet complex as this, and of common accord it has been relinquished to the abuse of the poets and the praise of the rhymesters. It may be, perhaps, that from its nature it revolted at logic, and that the seekers for truth, in trying to clutch it, resembled the horseman in the familiar picture who, over ditches and dykes, pursues a phantom which floats always before him, and yet is ever intangible. La Rochefoucauld, who was ready enough with phrases, admitted that it was indefinable; a compatriot of his tried to compass it with the epigram, "*C'est l'égoïsme à deux.*" Balzac gave it an escutcheon. Every one has had more or less to say about it; and as some have said more than they thought, while others thought more than they said, it has been beribboned with enough comparisons to form an unportable volume, while its history, from Tatterdemalia to Marlborough House, is written in blood as well as in books.

Love, however, is the basis of religion, the mainstay of ethics, as well as the inspiration of lyric and epic verse. It is, moreover, the principal subject of every dramatic, comic, and classic work in India, Europe, and America, and the inexhaustible spring from whose waters the fecund lands of fiction produce fresh crops more regularly than the seasons. It is a subject never lacking in actuality, and yet one to which each century has given a different color. It is recognized as a disease, and recommended as a remedy. And yet what is it? There are poets who have said it was an illusion; but however it may appear to them, it is no illusion to the philosopher: far from it; its reality and importance increase in the ratio of its ardor, and whether it turns to the tragic or the comic, a love affair is to him, above all other early aims, the one which presents the gravest aspects, and the one most worthy of consideration; for all the passions and intrigues of today, reduced to their simplest expression and divested of all accompanying allurements, are nothing more nor less than the combination of the future generation.

"It is through this frivolity," Schopenhauer says, "that the *dramatis personæ* are to appear on the stage when we have made our exit. The existence of these future actors is absolutely conditioned on the general instinct of love, while their nature and characteristics depend on individual choice. Such is the whole problem. Love is the supreme will to live, the genius of the species, and nature, being highly strategic, covers itself, for the fulfillment of its aims, with a mask of objective admiration, and deludes the individual so cleverly therewith, that he takes that to be his own happiness which, in reality, is but the maintenance of the species."

The love affairs of today, therefore, instead of representing questions of personal joy or sorrow, are simply and solely a series of grave meditations on the existence and composition of the future generation. It is this grand preoccupation that causes the pathos and sublimity of love. It is this that makes it so difficult to lend any interest to a drama with which the question is not intermingled. It is this that makes love an every-day matter, and yet an inexhaustible topic. It is this that explains the gravity of the *rôle* it plays, the importance which it gives to the most trivial incidents, and above all, it is this that creates its measureless ardor. To quote Madame Ackermann:—

> "*Ces délires sacrés, ces désirs sans mesure,*
> *Déchaînés dans vos flancs comme d'ardents essaims,*
> *Ces transports, c'est déjà l'humanité future*
> *Qui s'agite en vos seins.*"

However disinterested and ideal an affection may seem, however noble and elevated an attachment may be, it is, from Schopenhauer's standpoint, simply Will projecting itself into the creation of another being; and the moment in which this new being rises from chaos into the *punctum saliens* of its existence is precisely that moment in which two young people begin to fancy each other. It is in the innocent union and first embrace of the eyes that the microbe originates, though, of course, like other germs, it is fragile and prompt to disappear. In fact, there are few phenomena more striking than the profoundly serious, yet unconscious, manner in which two young people, meeting for the first time, observe one another. This common examination, this mutual study, is, as has been stated, the meditation of the genius of the species, and its result determines the degree of their reciprocal inclination.

In comedy and romance the sympathies of the spectator are invariably excited at the spectacle of these two young people, and especially so when they are discovered defending their affection, or, to speak more exactly, the projects of the genius of the species, against the hostility of their parents, who are solely occupied with their individual interests. It is unquestionably for this reason that the interest in plays and novels centres on the entrance of this serene spirit, who, with his lawless aims and aspirations, threatens the peace of the other actors, and usually digs deep graves for their happiness. As a rule, he succeeds, and the climax, comformably with poetic justice, satisfies the spectator, who then goes away, leaving the lovers to their victory, and associating himself in the idea that at last they are happy, whereas, according to Schopenhauer, they have, in spite of the opposition of their parents, simply given themselves up as a sacrifice to the good of the species.

In tragedies in which love is the mainspring, the lovers usually die, because, as follows from the foregoing logic, they have been unable to triumph over those designs of which they were but the instruments.

As Schopenhauer adds, however, a lover may become comic as well as tragic, and this for the reason that in either case he is in the hands of a higher power, which dominates him to such an extent that he is, so to speak, carried out of himself, and his actions in consequence become disproportioned to his character. "Hence it is that the higher forms of love bring with them such poetic coloring, such transcendental and supernatural elevation, that they seem to veil their true end and aim from him completely. For the moment, he is animated by the genius of the species. He has received a mission to found an indefinite series of descendants, and, moreover, to endow them with a certain constitution, and form them of certain elements which are only obtainable from him and a particular woman. The feeling which he then has of acting in an affair of great importance transports the lover to such superterrestial heights, and garbs his material nature with such an appearance of immateriality that, however prosaic he may generally be, his love at once assumes a poetic aspect, a result which is often incompatible with his dignity."

In brief, the instinct which guides an insect to a certain flower or fruit, and which causes it to disregard any inconvenience or danger in the attainment of its end, is precisely analogous to that sentiment which every poet has tried to express, without ever exhausting the topic. Indeed, the yearning of love which brings with it the idea that union with a certain woman will be an infinite happiness, and that the inability to obtain her will be productive of insufferable anguish, cannot, according to Schopenhauer, be considered to have its origin in the needs of the ephemeral individual; it is in fact but the sigh of the genius of the species, who sees herein a unique opportunity of realizing his aims, and who in consequence is violently agitated.

Inasmuch as love rests on an illusion of personal happiness, which the supervising spirit is at little pains to evoke, so soon as the tribute is paid the illusion vanishes, and the individual, left to his own resources, is mystified at finding that so many sublime and heroic efforts have resulted simply in a vulgar satisfaction, and that, taking all things into consideration, he is no better off than he was before. As a rule, Theseus once consoled, Ariadne is forsaken, and had Petrarch's passion been requited his song would then have ceased, as that of the bird does when once its eggs are in the nest.

Every love-match, then, is contracted in the interest of the future generation, and not for the profit of the individual. The parties imagine, it is true, that it is for their own happiness; but, as Schopenhauer has carefully explained, owing to the instinctive illusion which is the essence of love they soon discover that they are not united to each other in any respect, and this fact becomes at once evident when the illusion which first joined them has at last disappeared. Hence it happens, Schopenhauer adds, that love-matches are usually unhappy, for they but assure the presence of the next generation at the expense of everything else, or, as the proverb runs, "*Quien se casa por amores ha de viver con dolores.*"

"If now," he concludes, "we turn our attention to the tumult of life, we find that all men are occupied with its torments, we see them uniting their efforts in a struggle with want and massing their strength against misery, and yet there, in the thick of the fight, are two lovers whose eyes meet, charged with desire! But why do they seem so timid, why are their actions so mysterious? It is because they are traitors who would perpetuate the pain which, without them, would soon come to that end which they would prevent, as others have done before them."

There can be but one objection to this novel theory, which, at least, has the merit of being thoroughly logical, as well as that of connecting a subject so intangible as love to the fundamental principle of the whole doctrine, and that is that it leaves those higher and purer realms of affection, of which most of us are conscious, almost entirely unvisited. This objection, however, loses much of its force when it is remembered that Schopenhauer gave to this division of his subject the title of "Metaphysics of Love," and in so doing sought solely to place the matter on a scientific basis. In this he has undoubtedly succeeded, and his explanation, if characteristic, is not for that reason necessarily unsound. In another essay,* which is narrowly connected with the one in hand, he takes the reader from the highest spheres of pure love to the foundation of ethics, and shows that both are derived from an identical sentiment, which he calls compassion.

And since grief is king, what better primate can he have than sympathy? To the thinker who sees joy submerged by pain, and death rule uncontested, what higher sentiment can come than that of pity? Schopenhauer has, however, been very frequently blamed for giving this as the foundation of morality; to many it has seemed too narrow and incomplete, and an academy (that of Copenhagen) refused to crown his essay, for that very reason. But whatever objections may be brought against it, its originality at least is unattackable. In ancient philosophy, ethics was a treatise of happiness; in modern works, it is generally a doctrine of eternal salvation; to Schopenhauer, it is neither; for if happiness is unobtainable, the subject is necessarily untreatable from such a standpoint, and on the other hand, if morality is practiced in the hope of future reward, or from fear of future punishment, it can hardly be said to spring from any great purity of intention. With such incentives it is but a doctrine of expediency, and at best merely adapted to guide the more or less interested motives of human action; but as the detection of an interested motive behind an action admittedly suffices to destroy its moral value, it follows that the criterion of an act of moral value must be the absence of any egotistic or interested motive.

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* "Das Fundament der Moral," contained in *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik.* Leipsic: Brockhaus.

Schopenhauer points out that acts of this description are discernible in the unostentatious works of charity, from which no possible reward can accrue, and in which no personal interest is at work. "So soon," he says, "as sympathy is awakened the dividing line which separates one being from another is effaced. The welfare and misfortunes of another are to the sympathizer as his own, his distress speaks to him and the suffering is shared in common." Meanwhile this phenomenon, which he sees to be of almost daily occurrence, is yet one which reason cannot explain. All, even the most hard-hearted, have experienced it, and they have done so very often intuitively and to their own great surprise. Men, for instance, risk their lives spontaneously, without possible hope of gain or applause, for a total stranger. England, some years ago, paid twenty millions sterling to free the slaves in her colonies, and the motive of that grandiose action can certainly not be attributed to religion, for the New Testament does not contain a word against slavery, though in the days to which it refers slavery was universal.

It is pity, then, according to Schopenhauer, which is the base of every action that has a true moral value. "Indeed," he says, "the soundest, the surest guarantee of morality is the compassionate sympathy that unites us with everything that lives. Before it the casuist is dumb. Whoso possesses it is incapable of causing the slightest harm or injury to any one; rather to all will he be magnanimous, he will forgive, he will assist, and each of his actions will be distinguished by its justice and its charity." In brief, compassion "is the spontaneous product of nature, which, while independent of religion and culture, is yet so pervasive that everywhere it is confidently evoked, and nowhere counted among the unknown gods. It is compassion that makes the mother love best her feeblest child. Truly the man who possesses no compassion is outside of humanity."

The idea that runs through the whole subject, and which is here noted because its development leads to the logical climax of the entire philosophy, is that all love is sympathy, or, rather, all pure love is sympathy, and all love which is not sympathy is selfishness. Of course combinations of the two are frequently met; genuine friendship, for instance, is a mixture of both, the selfishness consisting in the pleasure experienced in the presence of the friend, and the sympathy in the participation in his joys and sorrows. With this theory as a starting-point, Schopenhauer reduces every human action to one, or sometimes to two, or at most three motives: the first is selfishness, which seeks its own welfare; the second is the perversity or viciousness which attacks the welfare of others; and the third is compassion, which seeks their good. The egotist has but one sincere desire, and that is the greatest possible amount of personal well-being. To preserve his existence, to free it from pain and privation, and even to possess every delight that he is capable of imagining, such is his end and aim. Every obstacle between his selfishness and his desires is an enemy to be suppressed. So far as possible he would like to possess everything, enjoy everything, dominate everything. His motto is, "All for me, nothing for you." When, therefore, the power of the state is eluded, or becomes momentarily paralyzed, all at once the riot of selfishness and perversity begins. One has but to read the "*Causes Célèbres*," or the history of anarchies, to see what selfishness and perversity are capable of accomplishing when once their leash is loosed.

At the bottom of the social ladder is he whose desire for life is so violent that he cares nothing for the rights of others, and for a small personal advantage oppresses, robs, or kills. Above him is the man who never violates the rights of others,—unless he has a tempting opportunity, and can do so with every reasonable assurance of safety,—the respectable citizen who pays his taxes and pew-rent, and once in a while serves on the jury. On a higher level is he who, possessing a considerable income, uses but little of it for himself and gives the rest to the poor, the man who makes less distinction than is usually made between himself and others. Such an one is as little likely to let others starve while he himself has enough and to spare, as another would be to hunger one day that he might eat more the next. To a man of this description the veil of Mâyâ, which may be taken to mean the veil of illusions, has become transparent. He recognizes himself in every being, and consequently in the sufferer.

Let this veil of Mâyâ be lifted from the eyes of a man to such an extent that he makes no distinction at all between himself and others, and is not only highly benevolent, but ready at all times to sacrifice himself for the common good; then he has in him the holiness of the saint and the germ that may flower into renunciation. The phenomenon, Schopenhauer says, by which this change is marked is the transition from virtue to asceticism. In other words, it then no longer suffices for him to love others as himself; there arises within him a horror of the kernel and essence of the world, which recognizably is full of misery, and of which his own existence is an expression, and thereupon denying the nature that is in him, and ceasing to will anything, he gives himself up to complete indifferentism to all things.

Such, in outline, is Schopenhauer's theory of ethics, which, starting from the principle of kindness of heart, leads to the renunciation of all things, and, curious as the *dénouement* may appear, at last to universal deliverance.

In earlier pages the world has been explained to be utterly unsatisfactory, and it has been hinted that the suicide, were he delivered of his suffering, would gladly rehabilitate himself with life; for it is the form of life that the suicide repudiates, not life itself. But life, to be scientifically annihilated, should be abolished, not only in its suffering, but in its empty pleasures and happiness as well; its entire inanity should be recognized, and the whole root cut once and for all. In explaining in what manner this is to be accomplished, Schopenhauer carries his reader *bon gré, mal gré*, far off into the shadows of the Orient. On the one side is the lethargy of India, on the other China drugged with opium, while above all rises the fantasy of the East, the dogma of metempsychosis.

As has been seen, Schopenhauer holds that there is in every life an indestructible principle. This belief he shares with the Buddhist, the Brahmin, the ancient Druid, and the early Scandinavian; historically speaking, the doctrine is so old that a wise Anglican is reported to have judged it fatherless, motherless, and without genealogy. Properly speaking, however, this creed does not now insist that there is a transmigration of the soul, but rather, in accordance with recent esoteric teaching, it implies simply that the fruit of good and evil actions revives with the individual through a succession of lives, until the evil is outbalanced, the good is paramount, and deliverance is at last attained. In other words, the beautiful myth of the early faith is superseded by an absurd and awkward palingenesia.

Schopenhauer gives the name of Will to that force which, in Indian philosophy, is considered to resurrect with man across successive lives, and with which the horror of ulterior existences reappears. It is from this nightmare that we are summoned to awake, but in the summons we are told that the awakening can only come with a recognition of the true nature of the dream. The work to be accomplished, therefore, is less physical than moral. We are not to strangle ourselves in sleep, but to rise out of it in meditation.

"In man," says Schopenhauer, "the Will-to-live advances to consciousness, and consequently to that point where it can readily choose between its continuance or abolition. Man is the saviour, and all nature awaits its redemption through him. He is at once the priest and the victim."

If, therefore, in the succeeding generations the appetite for death has been so highly cultivated, and compassion is so generally practiced, that a widespread and united pity is felt for all things, then through asceticism, which the reader may construe universal and absolute chastity, that state of indifference will be produced in which subject and object disappear, and—the sigh of the egoist Will once choked thereby into a death-rattle—the world will be delivered from pain.

"It is this," Schopenhauer exclaims in his concluding paragraph, "that the Hindus have expressed in the empty terms of Nirvana, and reabsorption in Brahma. We readily recognize that what remains after the entire abolition of the Will is without effect on those in whom it still works; but to those in whom it has been crushed, what is this world of ours with its suns and stellar systems? Nothing."

In the preface to the second edition of the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Schopenhauer recommends that the work be read by the light of his supplementary essays. This task, beyond demanding an agility of pencil and some concentration, is otherwise one of the most morbidly agreeable that can be suggested. The sensation that comes with a first reading is that of an abrupt translation to the wonders of a world which heretofore may have been dimly perceived, but which then for the first time is visited and thoroughly explored. The perspective, it is true, holds no Edens; in the distance there are no Utopias; but when the journey is ended and the book laid aside, the peaks and abysses to which the reader has been conducted stand steadfast in memory, and the whole panorama of deception and pain groups itself in a retrospect as sudden and clear as that which attends the last moments of the drowning man.

And Schopenhauer is the least pedantic, and yet the most luminous of ciceroni: in pages which Hugo would not disavow, and of which the foregoing analysis can give at best but a bald and unsatisfactory idea, he explains each height and ruin with an untiring verve, and with an irony as keen and fundamental as Swift's. But beyond his charm as a stylist, and his exhaustive knowledge of life, he claims attention through his theory of the universal force, his originality in the treatment of ethics, and the profound ingenuity with which he attaches everything, from a globule to an adagio in B flat, to his general system.

It is said that philosophy begins precisely where science ends; the doctrine, therefore, which has just been considered is, in a measure, impregnable to criticism. Reduced to its simplest expression, it amounts briefly to this: an unknown principle—an *x*, which no term can translate, but of which Will, taken in the widest sense of Force, is the rendition the least inexact—explains the universe. The highest manifestation of Will is man; any obstacle it encounters is pain. Pain is the attendant of life.

Man, however, duped by the instinct of love, has nothing better to do than to prolong through his children the sorrowful continuation of unhappy generations. The hope of a future existence in a better world seems to be a consolation, but as a hope it rests on faith. Since life is not a benefit, chaos is preferable. Beyond suicide, which is not a philosophic solution, there are but two remedies for the misery of life; one, a palliative, is found in art and disinterested contemplation; the other, a specific, in asceticism or absolute chastity. Were chastity universal, it would drain the source of humanity, and pain would disappear; for if man is the highest manifestation of Will, it is permissible to assume that, were he to die out, the weaker reflections would pass away as the twilight vanishes with the full light.

All great religions have praised asceticism, and in consequence it was not difficult for Schopenhauer to cite, in support of his theory, a number of texts from the gnostics, the early fathers of the church, the thinkers, such as Angelius, Silesius, and Meister Eckhard, the mystics, and the quietists, together with pertinent extracts from the Bible and the sacred books of the Orient. But none of these authorities seem to have grasped the principle which, according to Schopenhauer, lies at the root of asceticism and constitutes its chief value. At best, they have seen in it but the merit of obedience to a fantastic law, the endurance of a gratuitous privation, or else they have blessed in celibacy the exaltation of personal purity and the renunciation of worldly pleasures. From the philosophic standpoint, however, the value of asceticism consists in the fact that it leads to deliverance, prepares the world for the annihilation of pain, and indicates the path to be pursued. Through his labors and sympathy the apostle of charity succeeds in saving from death a few families which, in consequence of his kindness, are condemned to a long misery. The ascetic, on the other hand, does far better; he preserves whole generations from life, and in two or three instances very nearly succeeded in saving the world. "The women," Schopenhauer says somewhere, "refused to join in the enterprise, and that is why I hate them."

If asceticism were practiced by all men, it follows that pain, so far as man is concerned, would cease in it. But is it permissible to assume that with the disappearance of man the world will vanish with him—in other words, if humanity dies out, that animality must necessarily follow after?

It is here, if anywhere, that Schopenhauer has blundered; the world is deplorably bad, let the optimist and thoughtless say what they will, and it would undoubtedly be very advantageous to have the whole universe tumble into sudden chaos; but that such a consummation is to be brought about by voluntary asceticism is, in the present state of society, and independent of the opposition of women, greatly to be doubted.

Schopenhauer has denied that a being superior to man could exist; if, then, the nineteenth century, which plumes itself on the mental elevation and culture of the age, and in looking back at the ignorance of earlier epochs considers itself the top of all creation,—if, then, the nineteenth century, in its perspicacity, refuses such a solution, there is little left for humanity to do save to bear the pains of life as it may, or, better still, with the resignation which Leopardi long ago suggested.

When, putting aside this eccentric theory of deliverance, the teaching of Schopenhauer is reviewed, it will, according to the nature of the reader, bring with it a warm approval or a horrified dissent. To some he will appear like an incarnation of the Spirit of Truth; to others like the skeleton in Goya's painting, which, leaning with a leer from the tomb, scrawls on it the one word, Nada,—nothing.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The Borderlands of Happiness.

IT WAS WITH SOMETHING OF THE LASSITUDE WHICH succeeds an orgy that Schopenhauer turned from the riot of the will and undertook to examine such possibilities of happiness as life may yet afford, and, as incidental thereto, the manner in which such possibilities may be most enjoyed.

To this subject he brought a sumptuous variety of reflections, which are summed up in a multi-colored essay, entitled "Lebensweisheit," or Conduct of Life, but in which, in spite of the luxury of detail and brilliancy of description, Schopenhauer almost unconsciously reminds the reader of a man who takes his constitutional at midnight, and preferentially when it rains.

The suggestions that occur to him are almost flamboyant in their intensity, and yet about them all there circles such a series of dull limitations that one somehow feels a sense of dumbness and suffocation, a longing to get away and rush out into an atmosphere less charged with sombre conclusions.

Concerning the baseness and shabbiness of every-day life

Schopenhauer has but little to say. He touches but lightly on its infinite vulgarity, while its occasional splendor is equally unnoticed. Indeed, he preaches not to redeem nor convert, but simply that his hearers may be in some measure enlightened as to the bald unsatisfactoriness of all things, and so direct their individual steps as to come as little in contact with avoidable misery as possible. To many it will, of course, seem quite appalling that a mind so richly receptive as his should have chosen such shaggy moorlands for habitual contemplation, when, had he wished, he might have feasted his eyes on resplendent panoramas. The moorlands, however, were not of his making; he was merely a painter filling in the landscape with objects which stood within the perspective, and if he happened upon no resplendent panoramas, the fault lay simply in the fact that he had been baffled in his attempt to find them.

Voltaire says, somewhere, "I do not know what the life eternal may be, but at all events this one is a very poor joke." In this sentiment Schopenhauer solemnly concurred. That which was a *boutade* to the one became a theory to the other, and it is to his treatment of this subject that the attention of the reader is now invited. The introduction which he gives to it, if not as light as the overture to a ballet, will, it is believed, still be found both interesting and instructive, while its conclusion and supplement form, it may be noted, an admitted part of that which is best of the modern essayists.

The first chapter opens with an enumeration of those possessions which differentiate the lot of man, and which in so doing form the basis of possible happiness. It has been said that the happiest land is the one which has little, if any, need of importations, and he notes that the man is most contented whose interior wealth suffices for his own amusement, and who demands but little, if anything, from the exterior world. Or, as Oliver Goldsmith has expressed it,—

"Still to ourselves in ev'ry place consigned
Our own felicity we make or find."

"In a world such as ours," Schopenhauer thinks, "he who has much to draw upon from within is not unlike a room in which stands a Christmas tree, bright, warm, and joyous, while all about are the snows and icicles of a December night."

That which a man is in himself, that which accompanies him into solitude, and which none can give him or take from him, is necessarily more essential than all that he may possess or all that he may appear in the eyes of others. The scholar, for instance, even when utterly alone feeds most agreeably on his own thoughts, and we are most of us very well aware that he whose intelligence is limited may ceaselessly vary his festivals and amusements without ever succeeding in freeing himself from the baleful weariness of boredom.

According to Schopenhauer, then, the supreme and all-important elements of earthly happiness are subjective possessions, such as a noble character, a capable mind, an easy disposition, and a well-organized and healthy body; and it is these gifts, he rightly insists, that should be cultivated and preserved, even at the expense of wealth and emolument. An easy disposition, however, is that which above all other things contributes most directly to contentment. Gayety of heart is, indeed, its own recompense, and he who is really gay has a reason for so being from the very fact that he is so. Supposing a man to be young, handsome, rich, and respected, the one question to be asked about him is, Is he light-hearted? On the other hand, if he is light-hearted, little does it matter whether he is young or old, straight-limbed or deformed, poor or rich; in any case he is contented. It is light-heartedness alone which is, so to speak, the hard cash of happiness; all the rest is but the note-of-hand; and in making this observation, he (Schopenhauer) is careful to point out that there is nothing that contributes so little to gayety as wealth, and nothing that contributes so much thereto as health. "It is in the lower classes, among the laborers, and particularly among the tillers of the soil, that gayety and contentment are to be found, while on the other hand, the faces of the great and the rich generally present an expression of sullen constraint. To thoroughly understand, however, how greatly happiness depends on gayety of disposition and the state of health, it is only necessary to compare the impression which the same circumstances and similar wants bring to us in days of health and vigor, with that which is paramount when through our condition we are predisposed to dullness and discontent. In brief, it is not the event itself, but the way in which we view it, that makes or unmakes our happiness." Or, as Epictetus said long ago, man is not moved by things, but by his opinion of them.

As a general rule, nine tenths of happiness may be said to rest on the state of health; when this is perfect, anything and everything may be a source of pleasure; in illness, on the other hand, nothing, no matter what its nature may be, is capable of affording any real enjoyment. It follows, therefore, that it is wanton stupidity to sacrifice health for any purpose, even for wealth and fame, and especially to passing and fugitive pleasures, however alluring they may appear.

The next class of possessions of which Schopenhauer treats is property; and in considering this division he seems not unlike that contented individual who, on seeing a quantity of objects exposed for sale, exclaimed pensively, "How much there is of which I have no need!"

Every man, it will be admitted, has his own horizon, beyond which his pretensions do not extend. They reach the edge, but they do not cross it. In other words, the absence of those possessions with which a man is unacquainted is in no sense a privation to him; and it is probably for this reason that the day-laborer bothers himself so little about the flaring wealth of the rich. Wealth, on the other hand, is like salt water; the more one drinks, the greater the thirst. But, even so, this grim philosopher was far from despising it. "It is a rampart against an incalculable number of discomforts; and it is in this manner that it should be viewed, instead of being considered, as is generally the case, in the light of a permission to procure a diversity of pleasure."

As a practical man, Schopenhauer saw nothing that could make his ink blush in repeatedly recommending the preservation of a fortune, made or inherited; "for even," he says, "if it simply suffices to permit its possessor to live without the necessity of labor, it is still an inappreciable advantage in that it brings with it an exemption from the general drudgery which is the ordinary lot of man. It is only on this condition that man is born free, master of his hour and his strength, and enabled to say each morning, 'The day is mine.' The difference, therefore, between him who has a thousand crowns a year and the landlord whose rent-roll runs into millions is infinitely less than the difference between the first and the man who has nothing."

If the man whose necessities are provided for is inclined to follow Schopenhauer's advice, he will, first of all, seek in repose and leisure the avoidance of every form of discomfort; especially will he seek to lead a tranquil and unpretentious existence which, so far as possible, will be sheltered from all intruders. After having for a certain time kept up relations with what is termed the world, he will prefer a retired life; and if he is of superior intelligence, he will give himself up to solitude. This he will do, because the more a man possesses in himself, the less he has need of the exterior world. Superiority of intelligence will therefore lead him to insociability; for, as Schopenhauer says, "It is precisely in solitude, where each of us is dependent on his own resources, that every one is brought face to face with his own individuality; there the imbecile in his purple groans beneath the weight of his miserable self, while he who is mentally gifted peoples and animates with his thoughts the most arid and desert region."

Now, it may be objected that contentment is not to be found in an idle folding of the hands behind a hedge set against vexation. Nor is this Schopenhauer's meaning. Wealth is but the means, not the source of contentment. It is not the certainty of an income that brings happiness, for its accompanying affranchisement from want carries the tenant to the opposite pole of misery, where gapes the hydra, ennui. And it is there that he whose necessities are provided for surely lands, unless he fills the hour with some one of the many elevated pursuits from which those who are obliged to work for their bread are in a great measure debarred.

The third and last class of possessions that Schopenhauer discusses is that which a man represents; or, in other words, the manner in which he appears to his neighbors. "There is," he says, "no superstition more universally dominant than that which leads us to attach a high value to the opinion of others; and whether it be that this superstition has its roots in our very nature, or that it has followed us up from the birth of society and civilization, it is none the less certain that it influences our conduct in a manner which is incommensurate, and hostile to our well-being. This influence may be traced from the point in which it shows itself beneath the anxious and servile deference to the *qu'en dira-t-on*, to that in which it drives the dagger of Virginius into his daughter's heart, or else to where it leads men to sacrifice their peace, their fortune, their wealth, and their lives, for the sake of posthumous renown."

The existence, however, which we lead in the minds of others is a possession, Schopenhauer has carefully explained, which, through a singular weakness, while highly prized is yet entirely unimportant to our happiness. Indeed, if the comparison be drawn between that which we are in reality and that which we are in the eyes of others, it will be seen that the first term of the comparison comprises our entire existence, for its sphere of action is in our own perceptions, while, on the other hand, that which we represent acts on other minds than our own, and in consequence has no direct existence for us, and an indirect one only so far as it may influence their conduct toward us. The wealthy, in their uttermost magnificence, can but say, "Our happiness is entirely outside of us; it dwells in the minds of others." Certainly, to a happiness of this description every thinker is indifferent, or will necessarily become so as he grows aware of the superficiality and dullness of mind, the narrow sentiments and limited ideas, the absurdity of opinion and numberless errors, which go to the making of his neighbor's brain. Indeed, it is generally sufficient to note with what contempt half-a-dozen imbeciles will speak of some distinguished man, to be quite ready to agree with Schopenhauer that in according a high value to the opinion of others we are paying them an honor which they in no sense deserve.

It is essential to our well-being to thoroughly understand the simple fact that each one lives but in his own particular skin and not in the opinion of others, and that, therefore, our actual condition as determined by health, temperament, intellect, wife, children, and home, is a hundred times more important than what it may please others to think about us; fame, of course, is very pleasant; so is glory; but, after all, what do they amount to? As has been seen, Leopardi snapped his fingers at them both. To him they were simply illusions. Schopenhauer goes more deeply into the subject, and explains with great opulence of detail and fantasy of adjective that glory and fame are founded on that which a man is in comparison to others; in other words, that their value is purely relative, and would disappear entirely if every one became that which a celebrity is already. It is not fame that is so desirable, but rather the merit which should precede it. “The predisposing conditions are, so to speak, the substance, while glory itself is but the accident, which works on its possessor as an exterior symptom, and confirms his own high opinion of himself. But this symptom is yet not infallible, for is there not glory without merit and merit without fame?”

As glory is incontestably but the echo, the image, the shadow, the simulachre of merit, and as in any case that which is admirable should be more highly valued than the admiration that it excites, it follows that that which causes happiness does not consist in glory, but rather in the attracting force of merit; or, to put it more exactly, in the possession of such character and faculties as predispose thereto.

To be deserving of fame is, then, its own exceeding great reward. There all the honor lies, and necessarily this must be true, “for, as a rule, the reverberation of a glory that is to echo through future ages rarely reaches the ears of him who is the object; and though certain instances to the contrary may be objected, yet they have usually been due to fortuitous circumstances which are otherwise without great importance. Men lack ordinarily the proper balance of judgment which is necessary for the appreciation of superior productions; and in these matters they usually take the opinion of others, and that, too, in such wise that ninety-nine admirers out of a hundred accord their praise at the nod of one.” It is for this reason that the approbation of one’s contemporaries, however numerous their voices may be, has so slight a value for the thinker, for at best he can hearken to the voices of the few, which in themselves may be but the effect of the moment. “Would a virtuoso be greatly flattered by the applause of his public if he learned that, with but two or three exceptions, the auditorium was filled with deaf mutes who, to conceal their infirmity, clapped a loud approval so soon as they saw a real listener move his hands? And how would it be if he knew the leaders of the clique were often paid to procure a great success to the most insignificant scraper of cat-gut?"

It is with reflections of this description that Schopenhauer explains why it is that sudden celebrity so rarely passes into immortal glory, and points—

> ..."how hard it is to climb
> The heights where Fame's proud temple shines afar,"

and even, the summit gained, the uselessness of it all.

This same conclusion has been reached by several other writers, notably by Leopardi, whose views have been already explained, and by Von Hartmann, whose theories are mentioned in the next chapter; but the main idea has perhaps been best expressed by D'Alembert, who, in speaking of the temple of fame, says, "Its interior is inhabited only by the dead who were not there in their life-time, and by certain aspirants who are shown the door as soon as they die."

To sum up what Schopenhauer has set forth, and of which the foregoing detached ideas can give at best but a lame conception, we find that to his mind, as perhaps to that of every serious thinker, the first and most essential condition of contentment is the quality of character; and this would be essential if only because it is always in action, but it is so, even to a greater extent, because it is the only possession which cannot in some manner be taken from us. In this sense he considers its value as absolute when opposed to the relative value of mere possessions and the opinion of others. In brief, man is not so susceptible to the influence of the exterior world as it is generally supposed, for only Time can exercise his sovereign rights upon him. Beneath this force the physical and intellectual qualities wane and gradually succumb, the moral character alone remaining invulnerable.

Considered in this connection, actual possessions and the opinions which others hold concerning us have this advantage over character: they need not necessarily be affected by time;

moreover, being accessible in their nature they both may be acquired, while, on the other hand, character once established remains invariable for life. Schopenhauer evidently does not hold with him who sings—

> "That men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves, to higher things."

All that can be done, he has explained, is to employ the individuality, such as it is, to the greatest profit; or, in other words, a man should pursue only those aspirations which correspond to his disposition, and only choose in consequence that occupation and walk of life which is best suited to it.

From the preponderance thus given to the first of these three divisions over the two others, it follows that it is far better to watch over health and the development of the intellect than it is to attend to the acquisition of wealth. Schopenhauer, of course, does not mean that the acquisition of that which is necessary to one's proper maintenance should be in any wise neglected; far from it. His idea is simply that a superfluity of riches, instead of contributing to well-being, brings with it an inevitable vexation in the constant care which the management of a large fortune demands.

Briefly, then, the essential element of contentment is that which one is in himself, and it is simply because the dose is ordinarily so small that the majority of those who have been conquerors in the struggle with want feel themselves to be as thoroughly unhappy as those who are still in the thick of the fight. But still, whatever the issue of the conflict may be, each one among us is enjoined to aspire to a good repute. Honor is an inappreciable belonging, and glory, the most exquisite of all that is within the reach of man, is the Golden Fleece of the elect.

The second and third divisions have upon each other a reciprocal effect: wealth brings with it the good opinion of others, and the good opinion of others has aided many a man on the road to fortune; taken together they represent over again the *habes, haberis* of Petronius, yet the factors that reside within us contribute more liberally to contentment than those which are born of things.

It is somewhat in this manner, but with a conciseness of deduction and a felicity of diction which the foregoing summary is inadequate even to suggest, that Schopenhauer, without any noticeable effort, points quietly and with a certain suavity of self-confidence to the fact that there is, in spite of all our bluster and hurrying about, very little in life that is of much consequence. There is, of course, little that is terrifying in what he has written; there is no incentive and no stimulus, as the phrase goes, to be up and doing; indeed, to the reflective mind his logic will have somewhat the effect of a sedative, and to many he will seem to hold that the best use life can be put to is to pass it in a sort of dilettante quietism. Such in the main is his idea, but it is an idea which, to be acted upon, necessitates a refinement of the senses and a burnish of the intellect such as is possessed but by the few, and consequently the fear of its general adoption need cause but small alarm. It may be remembered that, beyond the surface of things here examined, he pointed, in another essay, to the influence of morality on general happiness, and recommended the practice of charity, forbearance, and good will to all men, as one of the first conditions of mental content.

Against all this, naturally, many objections might be raised, and several ameliorations could be suggested, but in the main the teaching has a certain sound value which it would be difficult to talk away. Champfort has said, “Happiness is no easy matter; it is hard to find it within us, and impossible to find it elsewhere,” and this aphorism, with which Schopenhauer decked his title-page, served pretty much as keynote to the whole essay. All the way through he has insisted that the prime essential is what one *is* in one's self, that is, in character and disposition, but not wealth nor yet the esteem of others; these, it is true, are pleasing additions, but not the *sine qua non.*

Wealth, however, is too greatly prized to suffer from a theoretic treatment any appreciable diminution in general esteem, and there are necessarily few who will object to it because they are told it is an extra burden. Perhaps Schopenhauer would not have turned his back upon it either had he been put to the test, but as he escaped that, the conjecture is comparatively useless; still, few men can eat two dinners, and those who have that capacity are seldom objects of envy, even to the disciples of Baron Brisse. The dinners may stand, of course, for figurative repasts, and, according to Schopenhauer, if a man has enough, a superfluity is not only unnecessary, but may readily resolve itself into a cause of vexation.

Certainly, as Schiller said, we are all born in Arcadia: that is, we enter life fully persuaded that happiness exists, and that it is most easy to make acquaintance with it; but, generally speaking, experience soon lets us know that happiness is a will o' the wisp, which is only visible from afar, while on the other hand, suffering and pain have a reality so insistent that they present themselves not only at once and unexpectedly, but without any of the flimsiness of illusion. In Schopenhauer's view, the best the world has to offer is an existence of painless tranquillity; pleasures are and always will be negative, and to consider them otherwise is a mistake which brings its own punishment with it. Pain, on the contrary, is positive, and it is in its absence that the ladder to possible contentment may be found. If, then, from a condition of this description, viz.: one which is devoid of pain, boredom be also subtracted, then the reader may be sure that this is the pinnacle of earthly happiness, and that anything that lies beyond belongs to the domain of pure chimera.

In the chapter succeeding the one just considered Schopenhauer added certain reflections on the proper conduct of life which, though loose and unsystematic, are yet peculiarly fertile in suggestion, and entirely free from the more or less accentuated platitudes with which other writers have dulled the subject.

In this essay he holds that the supreme rule of earthly wisdom is contained in Aristotle's dictum that the sage will seek to dwell where pain is not, and not where pleasure is. The truth of this axiom he establishes by a constant reiteration of his favorite theory that pleasure as well as happiness is negative, and only pain is real. Now other writers, particularly Mr. James Sully and Herr von Hartmann, have rebelled against this statement, but the force of their arguments has not been strong enough to confute it. Indeed, mere logic can make no man contented, and in any event, if a philosopher considers pleasure as a negative condition, and the critic prefers to look upon it in a different light, the student is no more bound to agree with the one than with the other; he will, if properly advised, draw his conclusions from his own sensations. In accordance with the best views, however, Schopenhauer is right and his critics wrong. A homely example which he suggests may perhaps serve to set the matter straight: when we are in perfect health, and there is but one little painful spot somewhere—for instance, an aching tooth or a swollen finger—our otherwise perfect health is unnoticed, and our attention is directed entirely to the pain we are experiencing, while pleasure, determined, as always, by the totality of the sensations, is entirely effaced. In the same manner, when everything in which we are interested is going as we wish, save one thing which is going the wrong way, it is this particular thing that is constantly in our mind, and not the other and more important matters, which are giving us no concern.

Schopenhauer's advice, therefore, is that attention should not be directed to the pleasures of life, but to the means by which its innumerable evils may best be escaped. If this recommendation is not sound, then Voltaire's aphorism—happiness is but a dream and only pain is real—is as false in appearance as it is correct in reality. Whoever, then, would draw up a balance sheet of pleasure and pain should not base the sum total on the amount of pleasures which he has enjoyed, but rather in accordance with the pains which he has avoided. For as it has been pointed out, life at best is not given to us to be enjoyed, but to be endured, and the happiest man is, therefore, he who has wandered through life with the smallest burden of physical and mental suffering, and not he to whom the most vivid delights and intensest joys have been accorded.

In any case, the greatest piece of stupidity of which man can be guilty is to wish to transform his theatre of misery into a pleasure-ground, and to attempt to seek happiness therein, instead of trying, as he should, to avert as many pains as possible. There are, of course, many who are foolish enough not to take this view of life; but, according to Schopenhauer, those who do not do so are much more at fault than those who, with excess of precaution, look upon the world as a burning pit, and occupy themselves to the best of their ability in procuring a fire-proof dwelling.

The simpleton will always run after pleasure, and the pessimist will do all he can to give pain a wide berth; if, in spite of his efforts, the success of the latter is small, the fault is not so much his as that of fate; and if, in pursuance of this idea, he has taken a very roundabout way and uselessly sacrificed any amount of possible pleasures without any appreciable benefit, he can at least take heart again in the knowledge that he has in reality lost nothing at all, for the possible pleasures are such pure chimeras that it is simply childish to grieve about them.

It is, Schopenhauer says, because this mistake is so frequently made in favor of optimism that such a number of misfortunes occur, for in those moments that we are free from discomfort "disquieting desires dazzle our eyes with the illusions of an unreal yet seductive happiness, and lure us on to a suffering which is neither the one nor the other; then indeed do we grieve over the lost estate, which was exempt from pain, as over a paradise on which we have wittingly turned the key. In this way it seems as though some evil spirit was constantly working a deceptive mirage to draw us from that freedom from pain, which is the supreme and only real happiness."

Now, the average young man is usually possessed of some vague conviction that the world, stretching out before him to unseen limits, is the seat of a tangible happiness, which only escapes those who are not clever enough to grasp it. This conviction, moreover, is strengthened by romance and verse, and by that hypocrisy which leads the world always by the thread of exterior appearance. Ever after, his life is a more or less prudently conducted hunt, a chase for a fictitious game, until at last with a round turn he is pulled up face to face with disenchantment, and finds that the infinite vistas narrow down to a dark alley, with a dead wall at the end.

On the other hand, the careful observer of men and things will mark a protest on his own existence; he will have no great hopes, and but few regrets; Plato long ago said there is nothing in life worth a struggle, and to this maxim Schopenhauer's ideal reader will attune his days and, in any variations he may attempt, keep always to the minor key.

The chief difficulty, however, which the candidate in pessimism will encounter in his first attempt to practice the foregoing recommendations is that which is raised by the hypocrisy of the world, to which allusion has been already made; and yet, in Schopenhauer's teaching, the most practical lesson that can be given to youth is the showing up of the whole thing for the sham that it is. "The splendors are merest tinsel," he says; "the essence of the thing is lacking; the fêtes, the balls, the illuminations, the music, are but the banners, the indications, the hieroglyphics of joy; yet, as a rule, joy is absent, it alone has sent a regret. When it does present itself, it comes ordinarily without invitation and unannounced; it enters, *sans façon*, in the simplest manner, often for the most trivial reason, and under circumstances that are well-nigh insignificant. Like the gold in Australia, it is spread about here and there according to the whim of hazard, without law or rule, generally in small particles, and but seldom in an appreciable quantity."

This certainly cannot be termed an enthusiastic view of life, nor, for that matter, is it intended to be so considered. There was too much unreasoning enthusiasm, Schopenhauer thought, and too much unwary skating over thin surfaces, and it was precisely for this reason that he set about painting Danger in the biggest and blackest-looking characters. If his advice, therefore, is not always cheerful, it is at least practical, and in any event no one can go far astray in following the monitory finger-posts which he was the first to erect; the wayfarer who takes them for guidance may perhaps stand still, but at least he will not stumble into any artificial pitfalls, or happen upon unexpected quagmires.

In treating of our conduct to ourselves, Schopenhauer lays much stress on the recommendation that such proportion be preserved between the attention which we give to the present and that which we grant to the future, that the one will in nowise interfere with the other. As there are many who live for the hour and many who live for the future, the right measure is seldom attained; but, as Schopenhauer points out, the future, like the past, has a value which is more apparent than real. It is the present that is actual, it is the present that is certain, while the future, on the contrary, usually turns out in a manner totally different from our expectation. The distance which "robes the mountains" expands them in our thoughts, but the present alone is true and effective; and as it is therein that our existence exclusively rests, it should not only be hospitably received, but every hour that is free from vexation or pain should be enjoyed to the fullest extent, and not saddened with the memory of irrecoverable hopes, or darkened by apprehensions of the morrow. In other words, let the dead past bury its dead, and for the moment take Seneca for model, and agree with him that each day separately is a separate life. As for the future, it rests in the lap of the gods.

"The only misfortunes concerning which we should alarm ourselves are those that are inevitable; but then, after all, how many are there of this nature? Misfortunes, broadly considered, are either possible and probable, or else certain, though in the indefinite future; and if we bother ourselves over all that *might* come to pass, we would never enjoy a moment's repose." In order, therefore, that tranquillity may not be unnecessarily disturbed, Schopenhauer advises that possible misfortunes be looked upon as though they would never occur, and inevitable misfortunes as though they were still far distant.

It is a curious fact that the blind, who of all people are usually pitied as the most unfortunate, possess, as a class, the calmest and most contented expression. This phenomenon may serve as some corroboration of a theory, which Schopenhauer expands at great length, that the narrower the circle of vision the greater the happiness; and conversely, the wider it is the greater the inquietude and torment. It is, then, in the simplicity and uniformity of life—so long, of course, as it does not engender weariness of mind—that the greatest measure of happiness is to be found. Under conditions of this description, which every poet from Horace to Joaquin Miller has more or less praised, the burden from which life is inseparable is borne most lightly, and existence flows like a rivulet, without tides or waves.

The claims of society, the effort to keep in the swim, *dans le mouvement*, as the French say, is not, of course, very conducive to the tranquil contentment which is here so earnestly commended. Schopenhauer has much to say on the subject. As a self-constituted recluse he necessarily judged the world, and as necessarily found it wanting. Indeed, it may fairly be said that he held in utter contempt the entire machinery of fashion, and looked upon the whole thing as a toy for imbeciles. To say that he hated it would be unjust, for, like most sensible people, he held hatred to be an elixir far too precious to be wasted on trivial matters. He simply took up society and then let it drop, and he did so not because it soiled his gloves, but because it did not seem worth the holding.

Such views as he cared to express on this subject are unmarked by any striking vividness of originality; for the most part they are simple, every-day observations, as pertinent to Europe half a century ago as to contemporary London and New York, and imply, briefly, that society is a mill of the conventional which grinds individualities into a tiresome sameness of sample. Individuality was like a strong-box into which Schopenhauer placed all his valuables, and to which, we are led to believe, he clung with all his might and main. Rather than have it tampered with he carried it off to a hermitage and kept it there, one might say, in cotton. It may be, however, that the underlying reason of the sombre obliqueness with which he viewed the world at large sprang from a cause which was natural, if commonplace; it did not appreciate him. Nor is this very surprising; society, as a rule, has an immense fund of appreciation, which it lavishes liberally on every merit, save alone that of intellectual ability; on this it looks askant, or, as Schopenhauer says, "as if it were smuggled." "Furthermore," he goes on to say, "good society, so called, not only brings one in contact with a lot of people whom he can neither approve of nor like, but it will not permit us to be ourselves, to be such as our nature demands; on the contrary, it compels us, that we may remain on the same diapason with the rest, to shrivel up completely, and even at times to appear deformed."

Wit and repartee are admittedly out of place save among one's peers; in ordinary society such manifestations are either not understood, or looked upon as dreadfully bad form. For that matter, it is only the novice who thinks that brilliant conversational powers will serve as passport; as a rule, it does nothing of the sort; rather does it excite among the majority a feeling nearly akin to hatred, and which is all the more bitter because it must be concealed.

"Ordinarily," Schopenhauer says, "when two people are talking together, so soon as one of them notices a great superiority on the part of the other he tacitly concludes, and without definite reason for so doing, that his own inferiority has been noticed by his companion, for whom he immediately conceives a blind resentment, even a violent dislike; nor in this is he much to be blamed, for what is a display of wit and judgment but an accusation to others of their own commonplace stupidity and dullness? To please in society, therefore, one needs to be scatter-brained or ignorant; and it is precisely those who are the one or the other, or even both, who are welcome and well received."

From Schopenhauer's standpoint, then, the society that is worth the trouble of cultivating is not such as is told of in the morning papers. The ball-goers, the dinner-givers, the pleasure-seekers of every class and denomination, were to him mentally insolvent, and unable to offer any indemnity for the boredom and fatigue which their reunions and conversation created. To be socially inclined was to him irrefutable evidence of a vacuous mind; and with some of that grim humor which characterized much of his work, he compared the modern assembly to that Russian orchestra which, composed of horns that have but one note apiece, is harmonious only through the exact coincidence of each instrument; taken separately, each one is appallingly monotonous, and it is only in conjunction with others that they amount to anything at all. So it is, he finds, with the majority of people; individually, they seem to have but one thought, and are in consequence both tiresome and sociable.

There is a tolerably familiar anecdote of Louis XIII., which represents that feeble monarch as hailing one of his officers with the bland suggestion that they should wile away the hour in common boredom: *"Venez, monsieur,"* run the historic words, "*allons nous ennuyer ensemble*;" and it is perhaps this self-same, but unanalyzed motive which leads so many to ease their weariness in the companionship of their fellows, for, after all, it cannot but be admitted that the most gregarious seek the presence of others, and even of those for whom they care nothing, not so much for the sake of society as to get away from themselves and the dull monotone of an empty head.

Such, at any rate, is Schopenhauer's idea; and he is careful, in pointing to the retired existence of all really distinguished thinkers, to note that the desire for companionship is not derived from a love of society, but from a fear of solitude, and that so soon as the latter is mastered there is no further desire to mingle with the crowd. The only society, therefore, that is worth the trouble of cultivation is that of one's own self; in this Schopenhauer apparently makes no exception; however closely the bonds of love or friendship may be woven, there is always some clash of temperament; an echoless shock it may be, but to nerves properly attuned none the less unpleasant. In regard to the society of the distinguished thinkers, of whose conspicuous solitude he makes constant parade, nothing is said; but it is perhaps allowable to suppose that genius, when it does descend from its lofty seclusion, quickly tires of giving, giving always, without return, and on its summits fraternizes as seldom with its peers as kings do with their equals. In brief, then, the sociability of man is in an inverse ratio to his intellectual value, and to say of some one "he is not at all sociable," may be generally taken to mean "he is a man of great ability."

The praises of solitude have been written over and over again; almost all the essayists, and most of the poets, have expatiated more or less volubly on its charms, but no one has entered so thoroughly into the core of the subject as did this spectacled misanthrope. Emerson has told a quaint little story of a friend who took an exquisite delight in thinking of the incalculable number of places where he was not, and whose idea of felicity was to dwell far off somewhere among the back stars, "there to wear out ages in solitude, and forget memory itself." Had Schopenhauer known this gentleman he would have loved him, though perhaps at a distance; as it was, he expressed an approval that was well-nigh rapturous of La Bruyère's well-known axiom: "All our misfortunes come from an inability to be alone," and at measured intervals repeated Voltaire's maxim that "the world is full of people who are not worth speaking to." His own ideas on the subject savor highly of the epigrammatic. "Solitude," he says, "offers a double advantage to the thinker: the first in being with himself, the second in not being with others."

The love of solitude, however, cannot be considered otherwise than as an acquired taste; it must come as the result of experience and reflection, and advance with the development of the intellect as well as with the progress of age. A child will cry with fright if it be left alone even for a moment; in boyhood, solitude is a severe penance; young men are eminently sociable, and it is only the more elevated among them who from time to time wander off by themselves; but even so, a day passed in strict seclusion is no easy matter. In middle age, it is not so difficult, while to the aged, solitude seems the natural element. But in each individual, separately considered, the growth of the inclination for solitude is always in proportion to the strength of the intellect, and, according to Schopenhauer, it is never thoroughly matured until the individual becomes firmly convinced that society is the most disagreeable of all the unpleasant things in the world.

To this conclusion both Petrarch and Zimmerman came in their respective works on solitude. Chamfort says somewhere, very wittily, "It is sometimes said of a man that he lives alone and does not care for society; this is very much the same as saying that he does not care for exercise, because he does not make excursions at night in the forest of Bondy." In short, all those whom Prometheus has fashioned from his finer clay have brought testimony of like purport. To Schopenhauer a desire for solitude was a sure indication of aristocratic tastes. "Every blackguard," he says, "is pitiably sociable, but true nobility is detected in the man who finds no pleasure in the companionship of others, and who, in preferring solitude to society, gradually acquires the conviction that, save in rare exceptions, there is little choice between isolation and vulgarity." Angelus Silesius, whose name has descended to us in a halo of Christian tenderness, bears witness to the truth of this theory,

> "Though solitude is hard, yet the refined
> Will still in ev'ry place a desert find."

It is especially in old age, when one has ceased to expect anything in particular from the generality of mankind, when one has become pretty well satisfied that in the long run men do not improve on acquaintance, and when one is usually divested of those illusions which make the companionship of others seem desirable,—it is at this period that the taste for solitude, which heretofore has demanded a succession of struggles, becomes at once natural and matter of fact. One feels, then, as much at ease therein as the fish does at high water.

But in spite of the advantages of solitude there is a hackneyed proverb about the rose and the thorn which has here a most direct application. In the same manner that every breath of frosty air injuriously affects any one who constantly keeps to his own room, so does a man's disposition become so sensitive in solitude that he is vexed and annoyed at the most trivial incident, at a word, or even at an expression of the countenance. It is hard, however, to catch Schopenhauer napping, and for this he has a remedy which, if not within the reach of all, is none the less efficacious. His recipe is simply that every aspirant should accustom himself to carry a part of his solitude into society, and learn to be alone even in a crowd; in other words, not to tell others at once what he thinks, and not to pay much attention to what others may say; in this way he will in a measure keep himself unaffected by the stupidities which must necessarily surge about him, and harden himself to exterior influences.

As has been noted, it was far from Schopenhauer's intention to recommend an idle folding of the hands. Solitude is all very well, but to be habitable it must be peopled with thoughts and deeds; the essence of life is movement, and in inaction it is a most difficult thing to be tranquil. Indeed, the most thoughtless must do something, even if that something consist but in a tattoo beaten on the window-pane. Schopenhauer's words, however, are presumably not addressed to thoughtless people. To struggle and cope is, he says, as much of a necessity to man as burrowing is to the mole. To conquer resistance constitutes the fullness of human delight, and whether the obstacles are of a material nature, as in action and exercise, or purely mental, as in study and research, it is the combat and the victory that bring happiness with them.

In treating of our conduct to others, Schopenhauer seems always to be peering down and sounding bottom in unfathomed depths of the human heart, and to be taking measure of those crevices and sinuosities for which Balzac and La Rochefoucauld, with all their equipment of bitterness, possessed no adequate compass. The result of his soundings and measurements is a lesson of circumspection and indulgence, of which the first stands as guarantee against prejudice, and the second as shelter from quarrels and disputes. Machiavelli warned every one to as carefully avoid an injury to the self-esteem of an inferior as one would the commission of a crime. Schopenhauer goes even further; his theory is that whoever is obliged to live among his fellows should never repulse any one, however pitiful, wicked, or ridiculous his character may be; on the contrary, he should accept him as something immutable, and consider that there must necessarily be some one of that class too. If he does otherwise he commits not only an imprudence, but provokes a life-long enmity, for, after all, no one can modify his own character, and if a man is condemned unreservedly there is, of necessity, nothing left for him to do but to declare war to the knife. It is for this reason that when one wishes, or is obliged to live among his fellow-creatures, it becomes necessary to let each one work out his own nature and accept each individual as he stands; the most that can be done is to attempt to utilize the qualities and dispositions of each, so far as they may be adaptable, but in no case is a man to be condemned purely and simply for what he is. This is the true signification of the dictum, "Live and let live."

Meanwhile, in learning how to treat others it will not come amiss, Schopenhauer goes on to say, to exercise a little patience on any of the inanimate objects which in virtue of some physical or mechanical necessity obstinately annoy and thwart us every day; for in so doing we learn to bestow on our fellows the patience already acquired, and in this manner become accustomed to the thought that they, too, whenever they form an obstacle to our wishes, do so because they cannot help it, in virtue of a natural law which is as rigorous as that which acts on inanimate things, and because it is as absurd to get angry with them as to be annoyed at the stone which slips between our feet.

But in all this Schopenhauer is far from recommending any over-indulgence or excess of amiability, for he readily recognizes that the majority of people are like children, who become pert as soon as they are spoiled. Refuse a loan to a friend, he says, and you will not lose him as readily as you would if you had advanced the money; in the same manner a trace of haughtiness and indifference on your part will generally quell any of those preliminary symptoms of arrogance that follow upon too much kindness. Indeed, it is the idea that one has need of them that few men can bear,—they become presumptuous at once; and it is for this reason that there are so few with whom one can be really intimate.

Most especially should we avoid any familiarity with vulgar natures. "If by chance an inferior imagines for a moment that I have more need of him than he has of me, he will suddenly act as though I had stolen something from him, and hurry to revenge himself and get his property back." In brief, the only way in which superiority can be maintained is in letting others see that we have no need of them at all. Moreover, Schopenhauer notes, it is a good plan to appear a trifle disdainful from time to time; such an attitude has a strengthening effect on friendship: "*Chi non istima, vien stimato*" (he who shows no respect is respected himself) runs the sagacious Italian proverb. But above all, if any one does possess a high value in our eyes it should be hidden from him as a sin. This advice is not particularly exhilarating, but it is sound. Too much kindness disagrees with dogs, to say nothing of men.

It is a curious fact that the more intellectual a man is the more easily he is deceived. There seems to be something almost incompatible between a high degree of culture and an extended knowledge of men and things, whereas, in the case of people of ordinary calibre, a lack of experience will not necessarily hinder them from properly conducting their affairs; they possess, as it were, an *a priori* knowledge which is furnished to them by their own nature, and it is precisely the absence of this knowledge that causes the mistakes of the more refined. Even when a man has learned from the teaching of others and through his own experience just what he may expect from men in general, even when he is thoroughly convinced that five sixths of them are so constituted that it is better for him to have nothing at all to do with them, even then, his knowledge is insufficient to preserve him from many false calculations. A presumable wiseacre, for instance, may accidentally be drawn into the society of people with whom he is unacquainted, and be astonished to find that in conversation and manners they are sensible, loyal, and sincere, and, perhaps, intelligent and witty. In that case, Schopenhauer warns him to keep well on his guard, for the reason that Nature is entirely unlike the dramaturge who, when he wishes to create a scoundrel or a simpleton, sets about it so awkwardly that he seems to be standing behind each character in turn, and in disavowing their gestures and words to be warning the audience that one is a ruffian and the other a fool, and that no one is to believe a word that they say. It is not at all in this way that Nature acts: her method is that of Shakespeare and Goethe, in whose plays each person, be he the Devil himself, speaks as he ought to, and is conceived so realistically that he attracts and commands attention. To think, then, that the Devil goes about with horns, and the fool with bells, is to lay one's self open to a continual deception, for, as a rule, our moralist says, men behave very much like the moon or like the hunchback; they show only one side, and even then they have a peculiar talent for making up their faces into a species of mask, which exactly represents *what they ought to be*, and this they assume whenever they wish to be well received. Put not your trust in princes, say some; Schopenhauer's advice is, Put not your trust in masks; and to substantiate his warning he quotes an old proverb, which holds that no matter how vicious a dog may be he can still wag his tail.

To all these rules and suggestions there are, of course, exceptions; there are even exceptions that are incommensurably great, for the difference between individuals is gigantic, but taken as a whole, Schopenhauer condemns the world as irreclaimably bad, and it may be added that one does not need to be a professional pessimist to arrive at very nearly the same conclusion. But beyond these broad recommendations a few others are given on our proper bearing and attitude to the world at large, and which, summed up in his own words, amount, in brief, to the teaching that one half of all wisdom consists in neither loving nor hating, and the other half in saying nothing and believing nothing.

Lamennais exclaimed one day, "My soul was born with a sore," and to some it may perhaps seem that on Schopenhauer's heart an ulcer had battened during each of the seventy years that formed his life. Certainly he has appeared to force the note many times, but it is permissible to doubt that he prepared a single paragraph in which he expressed himself otherwise than as he really thought. In his pessimism there is no pose and as little affectation; he wrote only what he felt to be true, and he did so with a cheerful indifference to approval or dislike; his position was simply that of a notary drawing up provisos and conditions in strict accord with the statutes of life of which he stood as witness. His mother, who had little cause to come forward as an eulogist, paid him—years after their separation—this one sincere tribute: "With all his vagaries," she said, "I have never known my son to tell a lie." Other encomiums have, of course, been passed upon him, but it is impossible to imagine one more glorious than this. Over and above his disregard of sham and falsehood, beyond his theory of force and the seductions of his ethics, Schopenhauer is chiefly remarkable in this: that he was the first to detect and logically explain that universal nausea which, circulating from one end of Europe to the other, presents those symptoms of melancholy and disillusion which, patent to every observer, are indubitably born of the insufficiencies of modern civilization.

Where, then, it may be asked, for this malady of the refined, are the borderlands of happiness to be found? From the standpoint of this teacher the answer is that they are discoverable simply and solely in an unobtrusive culture of self, in a withdrawal from every aggressive influence, and above all in a supreme indifference which, culpable though alluring, permits the neophyte to declaim with Baudelaire,—

> "*Résigne-toi, mon cœur, dors ton sommeil de brute.*"

* * *

The foregoing attempt to winnow some of the finer fibres of thought from the six volumes which form the complete edition of Schopenhauer's works leaves admittedly much to be desired. There has been, as the phrase goes, an *embarras des richesses,* and in consequence much attendant indecision as to the choice to be made of different yet equally interesting topics. The passages that have been selected and annotated in this and in the preceding chapter have been, it may be explained, so selected, because they seemed, when arranged with some attempt at orderly sequence, to present in the fewest possible words the essence of the main idea which runs through the entire philosophy, and which in the absence of some such arrangement demands a concentration more prolonged than is usually at the disposal of the ordinary reader. Those who are already acquainted with Schopenhauer's works, and who may do the present writer the honor of reading this exposition, will perhaps object to it on the ground that it does not enter sufficiently into the scientific side of the doctrine, and through this neglect leaves the reader in the dark as to its true value. To this presumable objection the writer begs leave to make answer that the scientific aspect of the doctrine has been so exhaustively treated by others that it has seemed to him a waste of time to enter into any further consideration of a subject whose true value, in spite of the numberless controversies and arguments which it continues to create, still remains undetermined. Moreover, as will have been readily seen, the foregoing pages have in no sense been addressed to the scientist, and that for the reason that exact information is only obtainable from the philosophy itself, or from such a complete and, therefore, voluminous analysis as would be out of place in a treatise of this description. The aim of these chapters is but to draw in outline the principal features of this doctrine, and in so doing to present in the absence of complete translations a little of that vigor and color which has raised the original to the prominent position it holds among the foremost works of modern thought. No attempt at the polemical has been made, and this for the reason that it is seldom advisable to attack the truth; the notations and criticisms which have been offered have been prepared, not with the wish to controvert, but rather with the hope that they might serve to a clearer understanding of the whole philosophy.

CHAPTER FIVE.

The Great Quietus.

It is related of Schopenhauer that he was in the habit of putting down a gold piece on the *table d'hôte* where he dined, and of taking it up again when the dinner was ended. This gold piece, he explained to his Boswell, was for the waiter the first time that any one of the different officers, who frequented the dining-room, was heard discussing a loftier topic than that which is circled in wine, woman, and song. As the story runs, no occasion ever presented itself in which he could in this manner express his pleasure and contentment; but had he lived long enough to meet Lieutenant Von Hartmann there is little doubt that the gold piece would have formed an immediate and rightful part of the waiter's perquisites.

This gentleman, who is now no longer an officer, but simply a thinker and a man of letters, may, in many respects, be regarded as Schopenhauer's direct descendant. To the world at large very little concerning him is known, and that little is contained in a modest autobiography which appeared a few years ago, and to which his publisher has since added a supplement.

The meagre details that are furnished therein amount, in brief, to this: Eduard von Hartmann was born in 1842, in Berlin, in which city he passed an uneventful boyhood. The school which he attended, and which like most other schools forced the pupils to master a quantity of subjects whose usefulness may be questioned, brought him into an almost open revolt against a system of education which, in nine cases out of ten, is nothing more than a pure waste of time. On leaving the gymnasium he decided, for reasons which to the average German must seem fantastic, to enter the military service at once instead of passing the usual semesters at a university. To this budding pessimist student life seemed to offer but dull variations between commonplaceness and vulgarity: to listen or not to listen to sundry poorly expressed lectures by day, to engulf at night a certain quantity of beer in stone measures, and to diversify these occupations in receiving slashes on the cheek-bone, or in affording amusement to the Hebes of Prussian restaurants, was not to him the life that was called ideal. Very wisely, then, and in accordance with the example which his father had already given, he chose in a military career a profession most apt to satisfy those inclinations of the scientist and of the artist which had already begun to exert an influence upon him.

In the year 1858 Herr von Hartmann entered the crack artillery regiment of Berlin as volunteer. He then passed three years at the artillery school, intermingling the scientific studies of his profession with artistic and philosophic researches, and frequenting meanwhile the refined society to which his family belonged. About this time a rheumatic affection, which had first declared itself toward the close of his school-days, became complicated with a fracture of some of the delicate machinery of the knee. The injury was both painful and incurable, and in 1864 he was obliged to resign his position, and thereupon left the army with the grade of first lieutenant. These latter details are given by way of counterbalance to the calumnies of his enemies, who, in explaining his pessimism by the state of his health,—which they insinuate was brought about by excessive and unusual debauchery,—have in one way and another managed to vituperate his chief work into nine editions.

On leaving the army he sought a career first as painter and then as musician; it did not take him long, however, to discover that his vocation was not such as is found in purely artistic pursuits; "the bankruptcy of all my ambitions," he says, "was complete; there remained to me but one thing, and that was thought." It was from thought, then, that he demanded a consolation and an employment, and turning to metaphysics he began at once to plan his *Philosophy of the Unconscious.* Meanwhile, for his own distraction and instruction he had written a few essays, of which but one was destined to see the light of day. This monograph, *Die dialektische Methode*, was so favorably viewed at Rostock, that he received therefrom the degree and title of Doctor of Philosophy.

The Philosophy of the Unconscious, when completed, remained a year in his closet, and was only published in 1868, owing to an accidental meeting with an intelligent publisher. Before, as since, the appearance and success of this work, which is very generally considered as the chief philosophical event of the last two decades, Dr. von Hartmann has lived at Berlin, where he endeavors in every-day life to prove the practical value of evolutionary pessimism, which it is his wish to substitute for the indifferentism and quietist doctrines of Schopenhauer.

Personally, Dr. von Hartmann is a very attractive individual, and his attractiveness is increased by the fact that there is nothing commonplace, and at the same time nothing affected about him. When I called at his house, I found him coiled up in a rug on one of those long chairs that are familiar to every ocean traveler. My first impression was that I was in the presence of a giant; and as the Berlinese as a race are notoriously tall, I was only surprised at the great size of his head, which differed singularly from that of the ordinary Prussian. His hair was brushed back from his forehead in the manner popularly termed *à la Russe*, but which is more noticeable in Vienna than in St. Petersburg; his eyes, which were large and luminous, possessed an expression of such indulgence as would put the most timid visitor at ease. Owing partly to the arrangement of his hair, his forehead seemed to me to be the most expansive that I had ever seen; the lower part of his face was hidden in a beard which descended very nearly to his waist, while as for his mustache, it is, I think, the longest in metaphysics. In some way or another I had gotten to believe that it was part of the professional philosopher to be both self-contained and absent-minded; I always pictured him as a class as wearing spectacles far down on the nose, as being somewhat snuffy, and carelessly tired in loose and shabby dressing-gown. I can give no reason for this fancy of mine other than that it is one of those pictures which we all draw of people and places that we have not seen. If I remember rightly, Mr. Sala said that he imagined Leipzig to be a city of very squat houses, in which dwelt little girls in blue skirts, and this until he got there and found that it was precisely like any other of its kind.

As a child, and indeed until very lately, I invariably thought of Hungary as having red roads, bordered by crimson houses and bluffs of green, while all about I saw in fancy splendid horses prancing in rich caparisons; but, as any traveler will admit, Hungary, in point of natural effects, is as humdrum as Connecticut; for real color, I suppose one must go to Japan, and yet there are many who have done so and then returned utterly disillusioned. Dr. von Hartmann took away my illusion about the philosopher; he had a rug, it is true, but no dressing-gown, or at least not one which was visible, and there was nothing of the careless mien and abstracted attitudes which I had expected; to use a current phrase, he was very wide awake, and I may add that to one who has lived among Germans he seemed refreshingly hospitable and graciously courteous.

Even in its most pleasant season, Berlin is not a pleasant city; a lounge of but half an hour on the Unter den Linden results through unconscious imitation in an enforced quickstep; to begin with, there are too many big houses, and then there are too many big soldiers; and while the soldiers present to the stranger an appearance of arrogant hostility, the houses, not to be outdone, try to look as much like the soldiers as possible, and loom up in alert unbending aggressiveness; indeed, I have now in my mind a certain street which, when I looked down it, almost got up and threatened me. I experienced, therefore, a subtle pleasure on discovering that out of the whole of rigid Berlin Dr. von Hartmann had chosen his residence in the most unsoldierly, and for that reason the most attractive part; and it was to this quarter of the city that I went to visit the man who, in spite of certain vagaries of thought, may be considered as Germany's first thinker. When he had disentangled himself from the folds of his rug, the impression which had been produced by the size of his head and the breadth of his shoulders vanished entirely. I thought for the moment of the quaint myths of the earlier Teutons, of the gnomes and kobolds, for Dr. von Hartmann, while massive in head and shoulders, is yet short and undersized, and the suggestion of the Rhine legends which his appearance caused was heightened by the strange effect produced by the luxuriance of his beard and mustache.

He had barely spoken, however, before I recognized in him not only the man of the world, which goes without the telling, but the gentleman, and, in a moment, the thinker. Stendhal says somewhere, in speaking of German, that it took him "two whole years to forget the beastly language." Stendhal was what is termed nowadays an impressionist, and his expression may perhaps on that account be excused; in any event German is decidedly an unpleasant tongue; it is very rich, rich even to exuberance, and when it is well handled it is to the initiate delightful in many respects; but to the Latin, and the average Anglo-Saxon, it is terribly tortuous, and most easy to lose one's way in. I had hoped, therefore, that I might be allowed to talk with Dr. von Hartmann in some more flowing form of speech, but as he preferred German, it was not, of course, my place to rebel, and I soon found that I had nothing to regret. I have had in the Fatherland the privilege of hearing some very accomplished actors, and I have also sat beneath some very eloquent speakers, but the amplitude and resources of the German language were first made clear to me by this gentleman. When he spoke, I may say, without exaggeration, that his words seemed less like figures of speech than evocations of pictures. I had puzzled for some time over a particular point in his teaching, and when I told him of my difficulty he drew down before me a series of illustrations and examples, which were as well defined as though they formed a panorama on the wall; and therewithal was such a fluency of verb, such a precision of adjective, and such a nicety of accent, that for the first and only time I loved the German language.

Dr. von Hartmann is in no sense a misanthrope. He leads a quiet and easy life, demonstrating by his own example that pessimism is not a gospel of desolation. Personally, he has had many grave misfortunes; he has suffered in health, in name, and in purse, he has lost many who were most dear to him, but his laugh is as prompt and as frank as a boy's. At the head of his table sits a gracious and charming woman, his children are rich in strength and spirits, and an observer lately said of him and his family, "If you wish to see happy and contented faces, go call on the Hartmanns."

Beyond writing a dozen or more monographs, and dissertations on philosophical subjects, Dr. von Hartmann has also charmed the public with two elaborate and well-conceived poems. His chief claim to recognition, however, and the one which has placed him at the head of contemporary metaphysics, is the work already mentioned, in which, somewhat after the manner of his predecessor, and yet with a diffuseness of argument which had no part in Schopenhauer's system, he reduces the motor forces of the universe to a dual principle which he terms the *Unbewussten*, or the Unconscious.

It is unnecessary to enter into any minute examination of this theory of his, in which, with a juggle of fancies and facts, he tries to reconcile the teaching of Hegel with that of Schopenhauer, for, however it may be considered, it is in any event but loosely connected with that part of his philosophy which treats of the matter in hand.

It will be sufficient for the understanding of what is to follow, to note simply that after examining the forms of phenomenal existence, matter, life organic and inorganic, humanity, and so on, he presents the Unconscious as the One-in-all, the Universal soul, from which, through determined laws, the multiplicity of individuals and characters is derived. This one-in-all is sovereignly wise, and the world is admirable in every respect; but while he argues in this way that the world is the best one possible, he has no difficulty in showing that life itself is irreclaimably miserable.

The originality of his system consists in a theory of optimistic evolution as counterbalanced by a pessimistic analysis of life, and also in the manner in which, with a glut of curious argument, he concludes that as the world's *progressus* does not tend to either universal or even individual happiness, the great aim of science should be to emancipate man from the love of life, and in this wise lead the world back to chaos.

The main idea runs somewhat as follows. The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own; it would be to our advantage not to live, it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into the belief that life is a pleasant thing, well worth the living. The instincts that are within us are but the different forms beneath which this unreasoning desire to live is at work, and with which the Unconscious inspires man and molds him to its profit. Hence the energy so foolishly expended for the protection of an existence which is but the right to suffer, hence the erroneous idea which is formed of the pain and pleasure derivable from life, and hence the modification of past disenchantments through the influence of fresh and newer hopes.

With regard to happiness, there are, according to Hartmann, three periods or forms of illusion, from all of which the world must be thoroughly freed before the great aim of science can be attained. The first of these illusions consists in the idea that under certain circumstances happiness is now obtainable on earth; the second, in the belief that happiness is realizable in a future state; and the third, in the opinion that happiness will be discovered in the march of progress through the coming centuries.

Of these three ideas, the first has for some time past been recognized by many as a chimera. In certain quarters the decomposition of the second has already begun, but the belief in the reality of the third is unquestionably the paramount conviction of the present century. When each of these three illusions has been utterly routed and universally done away with, then, Hartmann considers, the world will be ripe for its great quietus.

The first of these three forms is, of course, the most tenacious; indeed, it is an incontestible fact that man, even when miserable, clings to life, and loves it not only when there is some vague hope of a brighter future, but even under its most distressing conditions. It is, therefore, against this illusion that pessimism, to be successful, must rain the hardest blows.

The views of many eminent writers on this subject have already been expressed in the course of these pages, but their views, while in a measure important, should nevertheless be received with a certain amount of caution, for they emanate from superior minds, in which melancholy as the attribute of genius constantly presides.

Let us imagine, then, with Hartmann, a man who is not a genius, but simply a man of ordinary culture, enjoying the advantages of an enviable position; a man who is neither wearied by pleasure nor oppressed by exceptional misfortunes; in brief, a man capable of comparing the advantages which he enjoys with the disadvantages of inferior members of society; let us suppose that Death comes to this man and speaks somewhat as follows: "Your hour is at hand; it remains with you, however, to live at once a new life, with the past entirely effaced, or to accept the grave as it is."

There can be little doubt, if this hypothetical individual has not lived carelessly and thoughtlessly, and does not permit his judgment to be biased by the desire for life at any price, that he would choose death in preference to another existence, in which he would be assured of none of the favorable conditions which he had hitherto enjoyed. He will recommence his own life, perhaps, but no other of an inferior grade.

This choice, however, would be that of an intelligent man, and might be objected to on a ground not dissimilar to the one already advanced against the judgments of genius. But let us follow Hartmann still further, and in descending the spiral of humanity put the same question to every one we meet; let us take, for instance, a woodcutter, a Hottentot, or an orangutan, and ask of each which he prefers, death, or a new existence in the body of a hippopotamus or a flea. Each will answer, "death," but none of them will hesitate between their own lives and death; and if a like question be put to the hippopotamus and the flea, their answers will be precisely similar.

The difference in the comparative judgment that each would bring to bear on his own life, and on that of life in an inferior degree, results evidently from the fact that on being questioned each enters imaginatively into the existence of the lower creation, and at once judges its condition to be insupportable. The difference between the opinion which the flea holds on the value of its own existence and our own private judgment on this insect is derived simply from the fact that the flea has a quantity of absurd illusions which we do not share, and these illusions cause it such an excess of imaginary happiness that in consequence it prefers its own life to death. In this the flea is not wrong; on the contrary, it is quite right, for the value of an existence can only be measured in accordance with its natural limitations. In this sense illusion is as serviceable as truth.

From this introduction it follows quite of itself that each and every creature is capable of weighing the discomforts of an existence inferior to that in which it dwells, and yet is unable to rightly judge its own. Each can discern the illusions with which its inferior is surrounded, but is always defenseless against its own, save under exceptional circumstances, as in the case of genius. Hartmann concludes, therefore, very logically that an intelligence which is capable of embracing every form of life would condemn existence in its totality in the same manner that an intelligence relatively restricted condemns it in part.

In drawing up the balance-sheet of life, Hartmann differs from Schopenhauer on the question of the purely negative character of pleasure. That pleasure is at times a negative condition, as in the cessation of pain, he willingly admits, but from his standpoint it is something else besides; it may be either positive, although derived from an illusion, as in love, or real, as in art and science. Nevertheless, the predominance of pain over pleasure seems to be firmly established, and his examination of this subject is not without a repellant interest.

The four greatest blessings of life are admittedly health, youth, liberty, and well-being; but from their nature, Hartmann points out, these things are incapable of raising man out of indifference into pleasure save only as they may help to diminish an anterior pain, or guard him from a possible discomfort. Take the case of health, for instance; no man thinks of his nerves until they are affected, nor yet of his eyes until they ache; indeed, it may fairly be said that a man who is in perfect condition only knows that he has a body because he sees and touches it. Liberty may be regarded in much the same manner: it is unnoticed until it is in some way interfered with; while youth, which is the most propitious condition of life, is in itself but capability and possibility, and not possession, nor yet delight.

Well-being, the certainty of shelter from need and privation, Hartmann very rightly considers merely as the *sine qua non* of life in its baldest aspect, for, he argues, were it otherwise, the simple fact of living would satisfy and content us; but we all know that an assured existence is a torment if nothing fills the gap.

In the menagerie of beasts that torture life there is one, Baudelaire says in his easy metre, that is more hideous than all the rest; it is:—

> ..."*l'ennui! L'œil chargé d'un pleur involontaire*
> *Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka—*
> *Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,*
> *—Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!*"

This insupportable companion of inaction is usually banished by work; but then, to him who is obliged to labor, is not work often distasteful, and even a species of misfortune? Indeed, there are few, if any, who ever work save under compulsion; and whether the compulsion is caused by the attracting force of fame, the desire to escape from want, or comes simply as a promise of relief from boredom, the incentive and necessity are one and the same. It is true that man when at work is consoled by the thought of rest, but then work and rest merely serve to change his position, and they do so very much in the same manner as that uneasiness which forces the invalid to turn in bed, and then to turn back again, when it has shown him that the second position is no better than the first.

The great blessings of life, therefore, reduce themselves, in brief, to this: they represent but that affranchisement from pain which is equivalent to a state of pure indifference; but as no one reaches this condition save momentarily and by accident, it seems to follow that life has less charm than non-existence, which represents indifference in its most absolute and unquestioned form.

This state of beatitude is yet to be acquired; meanwhile, as Schiller says, so long as philosophy does not govern the world, hunger and love will suffice to keep it in motion. After the four causes of contentment, Hartmann's views on the two incentives to activity remain to be examined.

In regard to the first, it may be said without extravagance that the sufferings of hunger rule the greater portion of the 1300 millions of the earth's inhabitants. Europe not long since averaged a famine every seven years; now, the facilities of communication have replaced famine with an increased valuation of food. Death is the rarest and the least important evil that hunger occasions; what is most to be regarded is the physical and intellectual impoverishment, the mortality among children, and the particular maladies which it engenders.

According to Hartmann, the analysis of hunger shows that in satisfying its demands the individual does not raise his sensibility above a state of pure indifference. He may, it is true, under favorable circumstances, cause a certain pleasure to predominate over suffering by means of taste and digestion; but in the animal kingdom, as in humanity, taken as a whole, the tortures caused by hunger are greatly in excess of any pleasures that may attach to it. In fact, from Hartmann's standpoint, the necessity of eating is in itself a misfortune.

After all that has been said through centuries of literature on the subject of love, it is certainly difficult to be original; but Hartmann has at least the merit of presenting it in a more abstract light, and from a less alluring standpoint than any other writer who has handled the subject. For love, according to his views, is either contrary to the laws of society, and as such environed by perils and pains, vice and degradation, or it is perfectly legal, and, in that case, quickly extinguished. "In the majority of cases," he says, "insurmountable obstacles arise between the two lovers and cause a consequent and immense despair, while in the rarer and more fortunate instances the expected happiness turns out to be purely illusory."

It is, however, as hard to love as it is not to love; but he (Hartmann) says, "Who once recognizes that the happiness which it offers is but a chimera, and that its pains are greater than its pleasures, will, while unable perhaps to escape entirely from its allurements, be none the less able to judge it differently from the novice, and therefore capable of diminishing some of its suffering, and some of the disproportion between its joys and its sorrows." According to this savage moralist, then, love is either an illusory and quickly vanishing happiness, or an actual suffering, and resembles hunger precisely in that it is in itself and to the individual a veritable curse.

Hartmann judges marriage with an epigram borrowed from Lessing: "There is, at most, but one disagreeable woman in the world; it is only a pity that every man gets her for himself." In very much the same manner are the ties of family and friendship weighed and judged. Scattered here and there is some reflection of Schopenhauer's wit and wisdom, but generally the discussion is defective, and lacks the grace of style and purity of diction which characterized the latter writer. The sentiments of honor, public esteem, ambition, and glory depend, he says, on the opinion of others, and are therefore merely toys of the imagination, "for my joys and troubles exist in my mind, and not in the minds of other people. Their opinion concerning me has merely a conventional value, and not one which is effective for me."

But to him who journeys through the desert called life, there is still one suave and green oasis. Hartmann is not utterly relentless, and though perhaps on all other subjects he may seem skeptical as a ragpicker, he has yet a word or two of cheer for art and science. These pleasant lands, however, are only traversable by rare and privileged natures, for if from the pleasure which attaches to music, painting, poetry, philosophy, and science, a deduction be made of all that which is but sham, dilettanteism, and vanity, the more considerable part of this supreme resource will be found to have disappeared. That which remains over is the compensation which nature preserves as recompense to the extreme sensibility of the artist and thinker, to whom the miseries of life are far more poignant than to other men, whose sensibilities are duller and less impressionable. Now, if the ubiquity of suffering is admitted, the temperament of this latter class is, in the long run, undoubtedly preferable to the more refined organization of the artist; for, after all, a state of comparative insensibility is evidently not too dearly bought, when the price is merely the lack of a delight, whose absence is not a privation, and which, to those able to appreciate it, is as rare as it is limited in duration. Moreover, even the real and ineffaceable pleasures which the thinker and artist enjoy are obtainable only after much trouble and discomfort.

Genius does not fall from the skies ready-made and complete in armor and equipment; the study which is to develop it is a task painful and tiresome, whose pleasures are rare, and, generally speaking, but those of anticipation and vanquished obstacles. Each art has its mechanical side, which demands a long apprenticeship; and even then, after the preliminary preparation, the only pleasant moments are those of conception, which, in turn, are directly succeeded by the long hours of technical execution.

In the case of the amateur, the pleasure of listening to good music, of seeing a fine actor, or of looking at works of art, is undoubtedly the one that causes the least amount of inconvenience, and yet Hartmann is not to be blamed for noting that even this pleasure is seldom unalloyed. In the first place, there is the bother of going to the picture-gallery; then there is the bad air and hubbub in the theatre; after this come the dangers of catching cold, of being run into, or annoyed in a dozen different ways, and especially the fatigue of watching and listening.

In the case of the artist there are the inevitable deceptions; the struggles with envy, the indifference and disdain of the public. Chamfort was wont to exclaim, "The public indeed! how many idiots does it take to make a public?" The public, nevertheless, has the ability to make itself very disagreeable, and not every one courts its smile with success. If, in addition to all these things, the nervous organization of the thinker, more vibrant a thousandfold than that of other men, is taken into consideration, it will be seen that Hartmann is not wrong in stating that the pleasures to which this class is privileged are expiated by a greater sensibility to pain.

But while art is not without its disadvantages, Hartmann declares that life still holds one solace that is supreme and unalloyed. "Unconscious sleep," he says, "is relatively the happiest condition, for it is the only one from which pain is completely banished. With dreams, however, all the miseries of life return; and happiness, when it then appears, does so only in the vague form of an agreeable sensation, such as that of being freed from the body, or flying through the air. The pleasures of art and science, the only ones which could reconcile a sensible man to life, are intangible herein, while suffering, on the other hand, appears in its most positive form."

Among the different factors which are generally supposed to be more or less productive of happiness, wealth or its symbol, money, usually represents the enchanted wand that opens the gate to every joy of life. It is true that we have seen that all these joys were illusions, and that their pursuit was more painful than pleasing, but Hartmann here makes an exception in favor of the delights which art and science procure, and also, like a true Berlinois, of those which the table affords.

"Wealth," he says, "makes me lord and master. With it I can purchase the pleasures of the table, and even those of love." It is unnecessary to contend with him on this point: our tastes all differ; still there are few, it is to be imagined, who will envy him in an affection which is purchasable with coin of the realm. Moreover, wealth does not make one lord and master; there is a certain charm in original and brilliant conversation which neither Hartmann nor any one else could buy, even though all the wealth of Ormus and the Ind stood to his credit on the ledgers of the Landesbank. Wealth, however, he hastens to explain, should be valued not for the commodities which it can procure, but rather because we are enabled therewith to shield ourselves from inconveniences which would otherwise disturb that zero of the sensibility which the pessimist holds to be the nearest approach to reality in happiness.

It is said that the drowning man will clutch at a straw, and it is possible that the reader who has seen his illusions dispersed and slaughtered one by one has perhaps deluded himself with the fancy that hope at least might yet survive; if he has done so, he may be sure that he has reckoned without his host. Hartmann guillotines the blue goddess in the most off-hand manner; she is the last on the list, and he does the job with a hand which is, so to speak, well in. Of course hope is a great delight; who thinks of denying it? Certainly not the headsman, who even drops a sort of half tear over her mangled wings. But if we come to look over the warrant which has legalized the execution, the question naturally arises who and what is hope? It is of little use to ask the poets, for they are all astray; what they see in hope is a fair sky girt with laurels,—in other words, the rape of happiness; but has it not been repeated even to satiety that happiness does not exist, that pain outbalances pleasure? What is hope, then, but an illusion? and an illusion, too, that plays all manner of tricks with us, and amuses itself at our expense; one, in fact, which makes use of us until our task is accomplished, and we understand that all things are different from that which we desired. "He, then," Hartmann says, "who is once convinced that hope is as vain and illusory as its object will see its influence gradually wane beneath the power of the understanding, and the one thing to which he will then look forward will be, not the greatest amount of happiness, but the easiest burden of pain."

In all that has gone before, Hartmann has endeavored to show that suffering increases with the development of the intellect, or rather, that happiness exists only in the mineral kingdom, which represents that zero of the senses above which man struggles in vain. It has been seen that they whose nervous systems are most impressionable have a larger share of suffering than their less sensitive brethren; furthermore, experience teaches that the lower classes are more contented than the cultivated and the rich, for while they are more exposed to want, yet they are thicker-skinned and more obtuse. In descending the scale of life, therefore, it is easy to show that such weight of pain as burdens animal existence is less than that which man supports. The horse, whose sensibility is most delicate, leads a more painful existence than the swine, or even the fish, whose happiness at high tide is proverbial. The life of the fish is happier than that of the horse, the oyster is happier than the fish, the life of the plant is happier yet, and so on down to the last degrees of organic life, where consciousness expires and suffering ends.

The balance sheet of human pleasure and pain may therefore be summed up somewhat as follows: in the first column stand those conditions which correspond to a state of pure indifference, and merely represent the absence of certain sufferings; these are health, youth, liberty, and well-being; in the second are those which stand as illusory incentives, such as the desire for wealth, power, esteem, and general regard; in the third are those which, as a rule, cause more pain than pleasure, such as hunger and love; in the fourth are those which rest on illusions, such as hope, etc.; in the fifth are those which, recognized as misfortunes, are only accepted to escape still greater ones: these are work and marriage; in the sixth are those which afford more pleasure than pain, but whose joys must be paid for by suffering, and in any event can be shared but by the few: this is the column of art and science.

Let a line be drawn and the columns added up, the sum total amounts to the inevitable conclusion that pain is greatly in excess of pleasure; and this not alone in the average, but in the particular existence of each individual, and even in the case of him who seems exceptionally favored. Hartmann has taken great care to point out that experience demonstrates the vanity of each of the opulent aspirations of youth, and that on the subject of individual happiness intelligent old age preserves but few illusions.

Such is the schedule of pleasure and pain which each one is free to verify by his own experience, or, better still, to disregard altogether; for, from what has gone before, it is easy to see that man is most happy when he is the unconscious dupe of his own illusions. In Koheleth it is written: "To add to knowledge is to add to pain." He, then, whose judgment is obscured by illusions is less sensible to the undeniable miseries of life; he is always prepared to welcome hope, and each deception is forgotten in the expectation of better things. Mr. Micawber, whose acquaintance we have all made, is not alone a type, but a lesson, the moral of which is sometimes overlooked.

In brief, Hartmann's teaching resolves itself into the doctrine that the idea that happiness is obtainable in this life is the first and foremost of illusions. This conclusion, in spite of certain eccentricities of statement, is none the less one which will be found singularly difficult to refute. But every question has two different sides, and this one is no exception. The devil, whom Schopenhauer painted in a good grim gray, Hartmann has daubed all over with a depth of black of which he is certainly undeserving; and not only that, but he has taken an evident pleasure in so doing. It is not, therefore, unfair to use his own weapon, and tell him that he, too, is the dupe of an illusion, or, to borrow a simile from the prince of wits, to insist that while he may not carry any unnecessary quantity of motes in his eye, some dust has assuredly settled on his monocle.

As is the case with others who have treated the subject, Hartmann confounds the value of the existence of the unit with the worth of life in the aggregate. Taken as a whole, it is undeniably and without doubt unfortunate, but that does not prevent many people from being superlatively, and, to the pessimist, even insultingly happy; and though the joy of a lifetime be circumscribed in a single second, yet it is not rash to say that that second of joy may be so vividly intense as to compensate its recipient for all miseries past and to come. It may be noted, further, that the balance-sheet which has just been reviewed is simply a resultant of Hartmann's individual opinion. Sometimes, it is true, he deals with unquestioned facts, and sometimes with unanswerable figures; but it has been wittily said that nothing is so fallacious as facts except figures; and certain of these figures and facts, which seem to bear out his statements, are found at times to be merely assertions, and exaggerated at that.

The second great illusion from which Hartmann would deliver us is the belief that happiness is realizable in a future life. As has been seen, he has already contended that earthly felicity is unobtainable, and his arguments against a higher state are, in a word, that unless the condition which follows life is compared to the anterior state of being, chaos, the successor of life, can bring to man neither happiness nor unhappiness; but as the belief in the regeneration of the body is no longer tenable, it follows that this contrast cannot be appreciated by the non-existent, who are necessarily without thought or consciousness.

This doctrine, which is very nearly akin to Buddhism, has, of course, but little in common with Christianity. Christianity does not, it is true, recognize in us any fee simple to happiness, but it recommends the renunciation of such as may be held, that the value of the transcendent felicity which it promises may be heightened to a still greater extent. It was this regenerating hope, this association of a disdain for life to a promise of eternal well-being, that saved antiquity from the despair and distaste for life in which it was being slowly consumed. But, according to the tendency of modern thought, every effort to demonstrate the reality of ultramundane happiness only results in a more or less disguised and fantastic representation of Nirvana, while the idea which each forms of such a condition varies naturally with the degree of his culture. It is certainly not at all astonishing that all those who are more or less attached to the Christian conception of life should, as Hartmann says, indignantly repulse any and every suggestion of this description. For such ideas to be accepted, a long and worldly civilizing preparation is needed.

A period of this nature is found in his analysis of the third and last great illusion, which holds that happiness will be realizable in the progressing evolution of the world. The chapter in which this subject is treated is one of the most masterly in his entire work, and as such is well deserving of careful examination.

First, it may be explained that to the student of modern science the history of the world is that of a continuous and immense development. The union of photometry and spectral analysis enables him to follow the evolution of other planets, while chemistry and mineralogy teach him something of the earth's own story before it cooled its outer crust. Biology discloses the evolution of the vegetable and animal kingdom; archæology, with some assistance from other sources, throws an intelligible light over the prehistoric development of man, while history brings with it the reverberation of the ordered march of civilization, and points at the same time to larger and grander perspectives. It is not hard, then, to be convinced of the reality of progress; the difficulty lies in the inability to present it to one's self in a thoroughly unselfish manner. From an egoist point of view, man—and by man is meant he who has succeeded in divesting himself of the two illusions just considered—would condemn life not only as a useless possession, but as an affliction. He has, however, Hartmann tells him, a *rôle* to fill under the providential direction of the Unconscious, which, in conformity with the plan of absolute wisdom, draws the world on to a beneficent end, and this *rôle* exacts that he shall take interest in, and joyously sacrifice himself to life. If he does otherwise, his loss prevents no suffering to society, on the contrary, it augments the general discomfort by the length of time which is needed to replace a useful member. Man may not, then, as

Schopenhauer recommended, assist as a passive spectator of life; on the contrary, he must ceaselessly act, work, and produce, and associate himself without regret in the economic and intellectual development of society; or, in other words, he must lend his aid to the attainment of the supreme goal of the evolution of the universe, for that there is a goal it is as impossible to doubt as it is unreasonable to suppose that the world's one end and aim is to turn on its orbit and enjoy the varied spectacle of pain. And yet, what is this goal to which all nature tends? According to a theory which nowadays is very frequently expressed, it is the attainment of universal happiness through gradual advancement and progress.

But, whatever progress humanity may realize, it will never be able, Hartmann affirms, to do away with, nor yet diminish those most painful of evils, illness, old age, poverty, and discontent. So, no matter to how great an extent remedies may be multiplied, disorders, and especially those which are light but chronic, will spread with a progression far more rapid than the knowledge of therapeutics. The gayety of youth, moreover, will never be but the privilege of a fraction of mankind, while the greater part will continue to be devoured by the melancholy of old age. The poverty of the masses, too, as the world advances, becomes more and more formidable, for all the while the masses are gaining a clearer perception of their misery. The happiest races, it has been said over and over again, are those which live nearest to nature, as do the savage tribes; and after them come necessarily the civilized nations, which are the least cultivated. Historically speaking, therefore, the progress of civilization corresponds with the spread of general nausea.

May it not be, then, as Kant maintained, that the practice of universal morality is the great aim of evolution? Hartmann considers the question at great length, and decides in the negative; for, were it such, it would necessarily expand with time, gain ground, so to speak, and take a firm hold on the different classes of society. These feats, of course, it has not performed, for immorality in descending the centuries has changed only in form. Indeed, putting aside the fluctuations of the character of every race, it will be found that everywhere the same connection is maintained between egotism and sympathy. If one is shocked at the cruelty and brutality of former days, it should nevertheless be remembered that uprightness, sincerity, and justice were the characteristics of earlier nations. Who shall say, however, that today we do not live in a reign of falsehood, perfidy, and the coarsest crimes; and that were it not for the assured execution of the repressive enactments of the state and society, we should see the naked brutality of the barbarians surge up again among us? For that matter, it may be noted that at times it does reappear in all its human bestiality, and invariably so the moment that law and order are in any way weakened or destroyed. What happened in the draft riots in New York, and in Paris under the Commune?

Since morality cannot be the great aim of evolution, perhaps it may be art and science; but the further back one looks, the more does scientific progress appear to be the exclusive work of certain rare and gifted minds, while the nearer one approaches the present epoch, the more collective does the work become. Hartmann points out that the first thinkers were not unlike the magicians who made a monument rise out of nothing, whereas the laborers who work at the intellectual edifice of the present day are but corporations of intelligent builders who each, according to their strength, aid in the construction of a gigantic tower. "The work of science hereafter will," he says, "be broader and less profound; it will become exclusively inductive, and hence the demand for genius will grow gradually less. Similarity of dress has already blended the different ranks of society; meanwhile we are advancing to an analogous leveling of the intelligence, which will result in a common but solid mediocrity. The delight in scientific production will gradually wane, and the world will end in knowing only the pleasures of passive understanding. But the pleasure of knowledge is tasteless when truth is presented like a cake already prepared: to be enjoyed it must cost an effort and a struggle."

Art will be handicapped in much the same manner. It is no longer now what it was for the youth of humanity, a god august dispensing happiness with open hands; it is simply a matter of amusement, a remedy for ennui, and a distraction from the fatigues of the day. Hence the increase of dilettantism and the neglect of serious study. The future of art is to Hartmann self-evident. "Age has no ideal, or rather, it has lost what it had, and art is condemned in the increasing years of humanity to hold the same position as the nightly ballets and farces now do to the bankers and brokers of large cities."

This consistent treatment of the subject Hartmann cleverly founds on the analogy of the different ages of the life of the individual with the development of humanity. It is, of course, merely a series of affirmations, but not for that reason necessarily untrue. The great thinkers have disappeared, as have also the great artists; and they have done so, Hartmann would say, because we no longer need them. Indeed, there can be little doubt that could the Greeks come back, they would tell us our art was barbarous; even to the casual observer it has retrograded, nor is it alone in painting and sculpture that symptoms of decadence are noticeable; if we look at the tendencies in literature, nothing very commendable is to be found, save in isolated instances, where the technicalities of style have been raised very near to perfection; but, apart from a few purists who can in no sense be called popular, the majority of the manufacturers of fiction have nothing to offer but froth and rubbish.

The modern stage, too, brings evidence that a palpitant tableau is more appreciated than a polished comedy, and the concert-hall tells a story which is not dissimilar. Music, which with Mozart changed its sex, has been turned into a harlot by Offenbach and his successors; and there are but few nowadays who would hesitate between Don Juan and the last inanity of Strauss. One composer, however, of incontestable genius, has been slowly fighting his way into the hearts of cultivated people, and, curiously enough, has sought to translate with an orchestra some part of the philosophy of pessimism. Schopenhauer, it is said, shook his head at Wagner, and would have none of him; yet if Schopenhauer was ever wrong, he was certainly wrong in that; for Wagner has expressed, as no one will do again, the flooding rush of Will, and the unspiritual but harmonious voice of Nature.

But whatever may become of art, science is not to be dismissed so abruptly. Practically considered, the political, social, and industrial advance of the world depends entirely on its progress; and yet, from Hartmann's standpoint, all that has been accomplished hitherto, by the aid of manufactories, steamships, railways and telegraphs, has merely served to lessen the embarrassments which compressed the activity of man; and the sole advantage which society has reaped by their aid is that the force heretofore expended in actual labor is now free for the play of the intellect, and serves to hasten the evolution of the world. This result, Hartmann remarks, while of importance to general progress, in no wise affects the happiness of the individual.

This last statement of his will perhaps be better understood if it be taken into consideration that the increased production of food which will necessarily follow on a more intelligent culture of the soil will greatly augment the population. An increase of population will multiply the number of those who are always on the verge of starvation, of which there are already millions. But an advance of this kind, while a step backward one way, must yet be a step forward in another; for the wealth which it will bring in its train will necessarily aid in diminishing suffering.

Politically considered, the outlook does not seem to be much more assured. An ideal government can do nothing more than permit man to live without fear of unjust aggressions, and enable him to prepare the ground on which he may construct, if he can, the edifice of his own happiness. Socially, the result will be about the same: through solidarity, association, and other means, men will learn how to make the struggle of the individual with want less severe; yet, in all this, his burdens will be merely lightened, and positive happiness will remain unobtained.

Such are the outlines of Hartmann's conception of what future progress will amount to. If the ideal is realized, man will be gradually raised out of the misery in which he is plunged, and little by little approach a state of indifference in every sphere of his activity. But it should be remembered that the ideal is ever intangible; man may approach, but he can never reach it, and consequently will remain always in a state of suffering.

In this manner, but with a profusion of argument, which, if not always convincing, is yet highly instructive, Hartmann has shown in brief that the people that dwell nearest to nature are happier than the civilized nations, that the poor are more contented than the rich, the poor in spirit more blessed than the intelligent, and that in general that man is the happiest whose sensibilities are the most obtuse, because pleasure is then less dominated by pain, and illusions are more steadfast and complete; moreover, that the progress of humanity develops not only wealth and its needs, and consequently discontent, but also the aptitudes and culture of the intellect, which in turn awaken man to the consciousness of the misery of life, and in so doing heighten the sentiment of general misfortune.

The dream that another golden age is to visit the earth is, therefore, puerile in the extreme. As the wayfarer's burden grows heavier with the miles, so do humanity's suffering and the consciousness of its misery continually increase. The child lives in the moment, the adolescent dreams of a transcendent ideal; man aspires to glory, then to wealth or practical wisdom; lastly, old age, recognizing the vanity of all things, holds but to peace, and bends a tired head to rest. "And so it is with civilization,—nations rise, strengthen, and disappear. Humanity, by unmistakable signs, shows that it is on the wane, and that having employed its strength in maturity, age is now overtaking it. In time it will be content to live on the accumulated wisdom of the centuries, and, inured to thought, it will review the collective agitations of its past life, and recognize the vanity of the goal hitherto pursued.... Humanity, in its decline, will leave no heir to profit by its accumulated wealth. It will have neither children nor grandchildren to trouble the rigor of its judgment through the illusions of parental love. It will sink finally into that melancholy which is the appanage of great minds; it will in a measure float above its own body like a spirit freed from matter; or, as Œdipus at Colonna, it will in anticipation taste the calm of chaos, and assist with compassionate self-pity at the spectacle of its own suffering. Passions that have vanished into the depths of reason will be resolved into ideas by the white light of thought. Illusions will have faded and hope be done with, for what is there left to hope? Its highest aim can be but the absence of pain, for it can no longer dream of happiness; still weak and fragile, working to live, and yet not knowing why it does so, it will ask but one gift, the rest of an endless sleep that shall calm its weariness and immense ennui. It is then that humanity will have passed through the three periods of illusion, and in recognizing the nothingness of its former hopes will aspire only to absolute insensibility and the chaos of Nirvana."

It remains but to inquire what is to become of disillusionized humanity, and to what goal evolution is tending. The foregoing account of Hartmann's theory should have shown that this goal cannot be happiness, for at no period has it ever been reached, and, moreover, that with the progress of the world man is gaining a clearer perception of his misery. On the other hand, it would be illogical to suppose that evolution is to continue with no other aim than that of the discharge of the successive moments that compose it; for if each of these moments is valueless, evolution itself would be meaningless; but Hartmann, it may be remembered, has recognized in the Unconscious a principle of absolute wisdom, and the answer must be looked for elsewhere, but preferably in that direction which most noticeably points to some determined and progressive perfection. No such sign, however, is to be met with anywhere save in the development of consciousness; here progress has been clearly and uninterruptedly at work, from the appearance of the first globule to contemporaneous humanity, and in all probability will continue to advance so long as the world subsists. All things aid in its production and development, while to its assistance there come not only the perfecting of the nervous system, but also such personal incentives as the desire for wealth, which in increasing general welfare disfranchises the intellect; then, too, there are the stimulants to intellectual activity, vanity and ambition, and also sexual love, which heightens its aptitudes; in short, every instinct which is valuable to the species, and which costs the individual more pain than pleasure, is converted into an unalloyed and increasing gain for consciousness.

In spite of all this, however, the development of consciousness is but the means to an end, and cannot therefore be considered as an absolute goal; "for consciousness," Hartmann says, "is born of pain, and exists and expands with suffering, and yet what manner of consolation does it offer? Merely a vain self-mirroring. Of course, if the world were good and beautiful, this would not be without its advantage; but a world which is absolutely miserable, a world which must curse its own existence the moment it is able to judge it, can never regard its apparent and purely ideal reflection as a reasonable goal and termination of its existence. Is there not suffering enough in reality? Is it necessary to reproduce it in a magic lantern? No; consciousness cannot be the supreme goal of a world whose evolution is directed by supreme wisdom.... Some other end must be sought for, then, to which the development of consciousness shall be but the means."

But, however the question is regarded, from whatever standpoint the matter is viewed, there seems to be but one possible goal, and that is happiness. Everything that exists tends thereto, and it is the principle on which rests each of the diverse forms of practical philosophy; moreover, the pursuit of happiness is the essence of Will seeking its own pacification. But happiness has been shown to be an illusion; still there must be some key to the riddle. The solution is at once simple and unexpected. There can be no positive happiness, and yet happiness of some kind is necessary; the supreme aim of universal progress, of which consciousness is but the instrument, is then the realization of the highest possible felicity, which is nothing else than the freedom from all pain, and, in consequence, the cessation of all life; or, in other words, total annihilation.

This climax is the only one which Hartmann will consent to consider; from any other point of view evolution would be a tireless *progressus* which some day might be blindly arrested by chance, while life in the mean time would remain in the utter desolation of an issueless purgatory.

The path, however, through which the great deliverance is to be effected is as tortuously perplexing as the irrational duality of the Unconscious. Many generations of pessimists are needed before the world will be fully ripe for its great leap into the night of time; even then, though Hartmann does not appear to suspect it, there will probably be quite a number of pantheists who, drunk on Nature, will stupidly refuse the great bare bodkin, which will have thus been carefully prepared for their viaticum.

It should not be supposed that in all this there is any question of the suicide of the individual: Hartmann is far too dramatic to suggest a final tableau so tame and humdrum as that; besides, it has been seen that the death of the individual does not drag with it the disappearance of the species, and in no wise disturbs the heedless calm of Nature. It is not the momentary and ephemeral existence that is to be destroyed, for, after its destruction, the repairing and reproducing force would still survive; it is the principle of existence itself which must be extinguished; the suicide, to be effectual, must be that of the cosmos. This proceeding, which will shortly be explained, "will be the act of the last moment, after which there will be neither will nor activity; after which, to quote Saint John, 'time will have ceased to be.'"

But here it may be pertinently asked whether humanity, such as it now is, will be capable of this grandiose development of consciousness which is to prepare the absolute renunciation of the will to live, or whether some superior race is to appear on earth which will continue the work and attain the goal. May it not be that the globe will be but the theatre of an abortive effort of this description, and long after it has gone to increase the number of frozen spheres, some other planet, which is to us invisible, may, under more favorable circumstances, realize the self-same aim and end? To this the answer is made that if humanity is ever destined to conduct the world's evolution to its coronation, it will assuredly not complete its task until the culminating point of its progress has been reached, nor yet until it has united the most favorable conditions of existence. We need not, however, bother about the perspective which science has disclosed, and which points to a future period of congelation and complete inertia; long before that time, Hartmann says, evolution will have ended, and this world of ours, with its continents and archipelagos, will have vanished.

The manner in which this great and final annihilation is to be accomplished is of a threefold nature; the first condition necessary to success is that humanity at some future time shall concentrate such a mass of Will that the balance, spread about elsewhere over the world, will be insignificant in proportion. This, Hartmann explains, is in no wise impossible, "for the manifestation of Will in atomic forces is greatly inferior to that which is exercised in the vegetable and animal kingdom, and hence much less than that which irrupts in man. The supposition, therefore, that the greater part may be capitalized in man is not necessarily an idle dream. When that day arrives, it will suffice for humanity to no longer will to live to annihilate the entire fabric; for humanity will at that time represent more Will than all the rest of Nature collectively considered."

The second condition necessary to success is that mankind shall be so thoroughly alive to the folly of life, so imperiously in need of peace, and shall have so completely disentangled every effort from its aimlessness, that the yearning for an end to existence will be the prime motive of every act. A condition such as this, Hartmann thinks, will probably be realized in the old age of humanity. The theory that life is an evil is already admitted by thinkers; the supposition, therefore, that it may some day triumph over the prejudices of the multitude is neither absurd nor preposterous. As is shown in the history of other creeds, an idea may penetrate so deeply into the minds of its adherents as to breed an entire race of fanatics; and it is the opinion, not of Hartmann alone, but of many serious and cultivated scholars, that if ever an idea was destined to triumph without recourse to either passion or violence, and to exercise at the same time an action purely pacific, yet so profound and durable as to assure its success beforehand, that idea, or rather that sentiment, is the compassion which the pessimist feels not only for himself, but for everything that is. Its gradual adoption these gentlemen consider not as problematical, but merely as a question of time. Indeed, the difficulty is not so great as might be supposed; every day the will of the individual suffices to triumph over the instinctive love of life, and, Hartmann logically argues, may not the mass of humanity do the same thing? The denial of the will to live on the part of the individual is, it is true, barren of any benefit to the species, but, on the other hand, a universal denial would result in complete deliverance.

Mankind, however, has yet a long journey before it, and many generations are needed to overcome, and to dissipate little by little, through the influence of heredity, those passions which are opposed to the desire for eternal peace. In time, Hartmann thinks, all this will be brought about; and he holds, moreover, that the development of consciousness will correspond with the weakening of passion, which is to be one of the characteristics of the decline of humanity, as it is now one of the signs of the day.

The third condition necessary for the perfect consummation of this gigantic suicide is that communication between the inhabitants of the world be so facilitated that they may simultaneously execute a common resolution. Full play is allowed the imagination in picturing the manner in which all this is to be accomplished. Hartmann has a contempt for details, and contents himself with asserting that it is necessary and possible, and that in the abdication of humanity every form of existence will cease.

Such, in brief, is this vehement conception of the ordering of the world, and the plan for its precipitate destruction. With a soldierly disregard of objection, but with a prodigality of argument and digression which, if not always substantial, is unusually vivid, Hartmann explains the Unconscious and its reacting dualism of Will and Idea. One principle is, as has been seen, constantly irrupting into life, and it is through the revolt of the second that the first is to be thwarted and extinguished. Nothing, indeed, could be more simple; and it would be a graceless and pedantic task to laboriously clamber to the same vague altitudes to which Hartmann has so lightly soared, and there contradict his description of the perspective.

To any one who has cared to follow the writer thus far, the outlines given of Hartmann's conspiracy against pain must have seemed aggressively novel. Schopenhauer's ideas on the same subject were seemingly more practical, if less lurid, but then Schopenhauer hugged a fact and flouted chimeras. It may be that Schopenhauer was a little behind the age, for Hartmann has criticized him very much as a collegian on a holiday might jeer at the old-world manners of his grandfather. As they cannot both be right, each may be wrong; and it may be that the key to the whole great puzzle is contained in that one word, resignation, which the poet-philosopher pronounced so long ago. As a remedy this certainly has the advantage of being a more immediate and serviceable palliative to the sufferer than either of those suggested in the foregoing systems. It is admitted that—

> "Man cannot feed and be fed on the faith of to-morrow's baked meat;"

and it is in the same manner difficult for any one to hypnotize himself and his suffering with the assurance that in the decline of humanity all pain will cease; on the other hand, whether we have in regard to future generations an after-me-the-deluge feeling, and practically care very little whether or no they annihilate themselves and pain too, still the more intelligent will readily recognize the ubiquity of sorrow, and consider resignation at present as its most available salve.

But in spite of its vagaries, pessimism, as expounded by Schopenhauer and Hartmann, possesses a real and enduring value which it is difficult to talk away; it is naturally most easy to laugh, in the heyday of youth and health, at its fantastic misanthropy; indeed, it is in no sense perfect; it has halted and tripped many times; it has points that even to the haphazard and indifferent spectator are weak and faulty, and yet what creed is logically perfect, and what creed is impregnable to criticism? That there is none such can be truly admitted. The reader, then, may well afford to be a little patient with pessimism; theoretically, it is still in its infancy, but with increasing years its blunders will give way to strength; and though many of the theories that it now holds may alter, the cardinal, uncontrovertible tenet that life is a burden will remain firm and changeless to the end of time.

CHAPTER SIX.

Is Life an Affliction?

IN VERY STATELY WORDS, THAT WERE TYPICAL OF HIM WHO uttered them, Emerson said, "I do not wish to be amused;" and turned therewith a figurative back on the enticements of the commonplace.

Broadly speaking, the sentiment that prompted this expression is common to all individual men. The so-called allurements and charms of the world are attractive to the vulgar, but not to the thinker, and whether the thinker be a Trappist or a comedian, he will, if called to account, express himself in a manner equally frank.

For sentiments of this description neither orthodoxy nor pessimism is to blame. They are merely the resultants of the obvious and the true; they leap into being in every intelligent mind. The holiday crowd on its way to the Derby, to Coney Island, the Lido, or to any one of the other thousand places of popular resort, causes even the ordinary observer to wonder why it is that he cannot go too, and enjoy himself with the same boisterous good humor which palpitates all about him; he thinks at first that he has some fibre lacking, some incapacity for that enjoyment which has in so large a measure been given to others; but little by little the conviction breaks upon him that he has a fibre more, and that it is the others who lack the finer perceptions with which he is burdened.

That the others are to be envied, and he to be pitied, there can be no manner of doubt, but all the same the fact that he is unable to take part in popular amusements steadfastly remains; and while the matter of the extra fibre is more or less reassuring, it is not always perfectly satisfactory, and he then begins to look about for the reason. If to his power of observation there be added also a receptive mind and an introspective eye, it will be unnecessary for him to have ever heard of M. Renan to become gradually aware that he is the victim of a gigantic swindle. In common with many others, he has somehow imagined that the world was a broad and fertile plain, with here and there a barren tract. It is impossible for him to give any reason for this fancy; "In the world ye shall have tribulation," is the explicit warning of the Founder of Christianity, and to this warning all creeds, save that of the early Hellenists, concur. It did not, therefore, come from any religious teaching, nor, for that matter, from any philosophy. Still the impression, however vague it may seem when analyzed, has none the less been with him, as with all others, the reason being simply that he grew up with it as he may have grown up with fairy tales, and it is not until his aspirations stumble over facts that he begins to see that life, instead of being the pleasant land flowing with milk and honey, which he had imagined, is in reality something entirely different.

These deductions, of course, need not follow because a man finds that he is more or less indifferent to every form of entertainment, from a king's revel to a walking-match; but they may follow of any man who has begun to dislike the propinquity of the average, and to feel that where the crowd find amusement there will be nothing but weariness and vexation of spirit for him. Under such circumstances he is an instinctive pessimist, and one who needs but little theoretic instruction to learn that he, as all others, has been made use of, and cheated to boot. The others, it is true, are, generally speaking, unaware of the deception that has been practiced on them; they have, it may be, a few faint suspicions that something has gone wrong somewhere, but even in uttermost depression the untutored look upon their misfortunes as purely individual, and unshared by the world at large. Of the universality of suffering, of the fact, as John Stuart Mill has put it, that there is no happiness for nineteen twentieths of the world's inhabitants, few have any conception or idea. They look, it may be, over their garden wall, and, hearing their neighbor grumble, they think that, being cross-grained and ill-tempered, his life is not one of unalloyed delight. But their vision extends no further. They do not see the sorrow that has no words, nor do they hear the silent knell of irrecoverable though unuttered hopes, "the toil of heart, and knees, and hands." Of all these things they know nothing; household worries, and those of their neighbor and his wife, circle their existence. If they are not contented themselves, then happiness is but a question of distance. Another street, or another town, or another country holds it, and if the change is made, the old story remains to be repeated.

There are those, too, who from dyspepsia, torpidity of the liver, or general crankiness of disposition, are inclined to take a gloomy view of all things; then there is a temperamental pessimism which displays itself in outbursts of indignation against the sorrows of life, and in frantic struggles with destiny and the meshes of personal existence; there is also the sullen pessimism of despair noticeable in the quiet folding of hands, and which with tearless eyes awaits death without complaint; then there are those who complain and sulk, who torment themselves and others, and who have neither the spunk to struggle nor the grace to be resigned, —this is the *"forme miserable;"* there is also a haphazard pessimism which comes of an unevenness of disposition, and which asserts itself on a rainy day, or when stocks are down; another is the accidental type, the man who, with loss of wife, child, or mistress, settles himself in a dreary misanthropy; finally, there is hypochondria, which belongs solely to pathology.

In none of these categories do the victims have any suspicion that a philosophical significance is attached to their suffering. Curiously enough, however, it is from one or from all of these different classes that the ordinary acceptation of pessimism is derived; it is these forms that are met with in every-day life and literature, and yet it is precisely with these types, that spring from the disposition and temperament of the individual who exhibits them, that scientific pessimism has nothing to do. It ignores them entirely.

Broadly stated, scientific pessimism in its most advanced form rests on a denial that happiness in any form ever has been or ever will be obtained, either by the individual as a unit or by the world as a whole; and this for the reason that life is not considered as a pleasant gift made to us for our pleasure; on the contrary, it is a duty which must be performed by sheer force of labor,—a task which in greater matters, as in small, brings in its train a misery which is general, an effort which is ceaseless, and a tension of mind and body which is extreme, and often unbearable. Work, torment, pain, and misery are held to be the unavoidable lot of nearly every one, and the work, torment, pain, and misery of life are considered as necessary to mankind as the keel to the ship. Indeed, were it otherwise, were wishes, when formed, fulfilled, in what manner would the time be employed? Imagine the earth to be a fairyland where all grows of itself, where birds fly roasted to the spit, and where each would find his heart's best love wreathed with orange flowers to greet his coming; what would the result be? Some would bore themselves to death, some would cut their throats, while others would quarrel, assassinate, and cause generally more suffering than is in the present state of affairs actually imposed upon them. Pain is not the accident, but the necessary and inevitable concomitant of life; and the attractiveness of the promise "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee," is, in consequence, somewhat impaired.

Nor, according to scientific pessimism, is there any possibility that happiness will be obtained in a future life. In this there is no atheism, though the arguments that follow may seem to savor of the agnostic.

As has been seen, pleasures are, as a rule, indirect, being cessations or alleviations of pain. If it be taken for granted that in a future life there will be no pain, the difficulty is not overcome, but rather increased by the fact of the rapid exhaustion of nervous susceptibility to pleasure. Furthermore, as without brain there is no consciousness, it will not be illogical to suppose that every spirit must be provided with such an apparatus; in which case the psychological laws in the other life must be strictly analogous to those of early experience. The deduction follows of itself,—there, too, must be pain and sorrow.

To this it may be objected that in a future life there need be no question either of pain or pleasure, and that the ransomed soul will, in contemplation, or love, or the practice of morality, be too refined to be susceptible to any sensations of a grosser nature.

To all this advanced pessimism has a ready answer: first, there can be no morality, for where there is no body and no property it is impossible to injure another; second, there can be no love, for every form of love, from the highest to the lowest, rests on the basis of sensibility; when, therefore, after the abstraction of shape, voice, features, and all bodily actions that are manifested through the medium of the brain, nothing but an unsubstantial shadow remains, what is there left to love? third, there can be no contemplation, for in a state of clairvoyance contemplation is certainly useless.

In these arguments pessimism, it may be noted, does not deny the possibility of future existence; it denies merely the possibility of future happiness; and its logic, of course, can in no wise affect the position of those who hold that man is unable to conceive or imagine anything of that which is, or is not to be.

From a religious standpoint advanced pessimism teaches that the misery of life is immedicable, and strips away every illusion with which it has been hitherto enveloped; it offers, it is true, no hope that a future felicity will be the recompense of present suffering, and if in this way it ignores any question of reward and punishment, it does not for that reason necessarily open a gate to license and immorality; on the contrary, pessimism stands firmly to the first principle of the best ethics, and holds that men shall do good without the wish to be rewarded, and abstain from evil without the fear of being punished.

In regard to what follows death, it recognizes in the individual but the aspiration to be liberated from the task of coöperating in evolution, the desire to be replunged in the Universal Spirit, and the wish to disappear therein as the raindrop disappears in the ocean, or as the flame of the lamp is extinguished in the wind. In other words, it does not aim at mere happiness, but at peace and at rest; and meanwhile, until the hour of deliverance is at hand, it does not acquit the individual of any of the obligations that he owes to society, nor of one that is due to himself. In short, the creed as it stands is one of charity and good-will to all men; and, apart from its denial of future happiness, it does not in its ethics differ in any respect from the sublime teachings of the Christian faith.

It seems trite to say that we are passing through a transition period, for all things seem to point to a coming change; still, whatever alterations time may bring in its train, it is difficult to affirm that the belief here set forth is to be the religion of the future, *n'est pas prophète qui veut*; in any event, it is easy to prove that pessimism is not a religion of the past. Its very youth militates most against it; and while it may outgrow this defect, yet it has other objectionable features which to the average mind are equally unassuring: to begin with it is essentially iconoclastic; wherever it rears its head, it does so amid a swirl of vanishing illusions and a totter and crash of superstition. There are few, however, that part placidly with these possessions; illusions are relinquished grudgingly, and as for superstitions,—a wise man has said, Are they not hopes? It would seem, then, that in showing the futility of any quest of happiness here or hereafter, this doctrine, if received at all, will have performed a very thankless task. Indeed, it is this reason, if no other, that will cause it for some time to come to be regarded with distrust and dislike. The masses are conservative, and their conservatism usually holds them one or two centuries in arrears of advancing thought; and even putting the masses out of the question, one has to be very hospitable to receive truth at all times as a welcome guest, for truth is certainly very naked and uncompromising; we love to sigh for it, Béranger said, and, it may be added, most of us stop there.

Pessimism, moreover, seemingly takes, and gives nothing in return; but if it is examined more closely it will be found that its very melancholy transforms itself into a consolation which, if relatively restricted, is none the less valuable. Taubert, one of its most vigorous expounders, says, "Not only does it carry the imagination far beyond the actual suffering to which every one is condemned, and in this manner shield us from manifold deceptions, but it even increases such pleasures as life still holds, and doubles their intensity. For pessimism, while showing that each joy is an illusion, leaves pleasure where it found it, and simply incloses it in a black border, from which, in greater relief, it shines more brightly than before."

Another objection which has been advanced against pessimism is that it is a creed of quietist inactivity. Such, however, it can no longer be considered; for if it be viewed in the light of its recent developments, it will be found to be above all other beliefs the one most directly interested in the progress of evolution. Pessimism, it may be remembered, came into general notice not more than twenty-five years ago; at that time it aroused in certain quarters a horrified dislike, in others it was welcomed with passionate approval; books and articles were written for and against it in much the same manner that books and articles leaped into print in defense and abuse of the theory generally connected with Darwin's name. Since then the tumult has gradually calmed down; on the one hand pessimism is accepted as a fact; on the other new expositors, less dogmatic than their great predecessor, and with an equipment of a quarter of a century's advance in knowledge, prune the original doctrine, and strengthen it with fresh and vigorous thought. Among these, and directly after Hartmann, Taubert takes the highest rank. This writer recognizes the truth of Schopenhauer's theory that progress brings with it a clearer consciousness of the misery of existence and the illusion of happiness, but at the same time much emphasis is laid on the possibility of triumphing over this misery through a subjugation of the selfish propensities. It is in this way, Taubert considers, that peace may be attained, or at least the burden of life noticeably diminished.

The bleakness in which Hartmann lodged the Unconscious is through this treatment rendered, if not comfortable, at least inhabitable. But while in this manner Taubert plays the upholsterer, another exponent wanders through the shadowy terraces of thought, and in so doing looks about him with the grim suavity of a sheriff seeking a convenient spot on which to clap a bill of sale. This writer, Julius Bahnsen, is best known through his *Philosophy of History*,[*] and a recent publication, *The Tragic as the World's First Law*, whose repulsively attractive title sent a fresh ripple eddying through the seas of literature. In these works the extreme of pessimism may be said to have been reached, for not only does their author vie with Schopenhauer in representing the world as a ceaseless torment which the Absolute has imposed on itself, but he goes a step further, and in denying that there is any finality even immanent in Nature, asserts that the order of phenomena is utterly illogical. It may be remembered that the one pure delight which Schopenhauer admitted was that of intellectual contemplation:—

> "That blessed mood,
> In which the burden of the mystery,
> In which the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world
> Is lightened."

But from Bahnsen's standpoint, inasmuch as the universe is totally lacking in order or harmonious design, since it is but the dim cavernous abode of unrelated phenomena and forms, the pleasure which Schopenhauer admitted, so far from causing enjoyment, is simply a source of anguish to the intelligent and reflective mind. Even the hope of final annihilation, which Schopenhauer suggested and Hartmann planned, has brought to him but cold comfort. He puts it aside as a pleasant and idle dream. To him the misery of the world is permanent and unalterable, and the universe nothing but Will rending itself in eternal self-partition and unending torment.

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[*] *Zur Philosophie der Geschichte*, u. s. w. Carl Duncker, Berlin; also *Das Tragische als Weltgesetz*, u. s. w. Lauenburg.

Beyond this it is difficult to go; few have cared to go even so far, and the bravado and vagaries of this doctrine have not been such as to cause anything more than a success of curiosity. Indeed, Bahnsen's views have been mentioned here simply as being a part of the history, though not of the development of advanced pessimism, and they may now very properly be relegated to the night to which they belong.

To sum up, then, what has gone before, the modern pessimist is a Buddhist who has strayed from the Orient, and who in his exodus has left behind him all his fantastic shackles, and has brought with him, together with ethical laws, only the cardinal tenet, "Life is evil." Broadly considered, the difference between the two creeds is not important. The Buddhist aspires to a universal nothingness, and the pessimist to the moment when in the face of Nature he may cry:—

> "*Oh! quelle immense joie, après tant de souffrance!*
> *À travers les débris, par-dessus les charniers,*
> *Pouvoir enfin jeter ce cri de délivrance—*
> *'Plus d'hommes sous le ciel! Nous sommes les derniers!'*"

Beyond this difference, the main principles of the two beliefs vary only with the longitude. The old, yet still infant East demands a fable, to which the young yet practical West turns an inattentive ear. Eliminate palingenesis, and the steps by which Nirvana is attained, and the two creeds are to all intents and purposes precisely the same.

Of the two, Buddhism is, of course, the stronger; it appeals more to the imagination and less to facts; indeed, numerically speaking, its strength is greater than that of any other belief. According to the most recent statistics the world holds about 8,000,000 Jews, 100,000,000 Mohammedans, 130,000,000 Brahmins, 370,000,000 Christians, and 480,000,000 Buddhists, the remainder being pagans, positivists, agnostics and atheists. Within the last few years Buddhism has spread into Russia, and from there into Germany, England, and the United States, and wherever it spreads it paves in its passing the way for pessimism. The number of pessimists it is of course impossible to compute: instinctive pessimists abound everywhere, but however limited the number of theoretic pessimists may be, their literature at least is daily increasing. For the last twenty years, it may safely be said that not a month has gone by unmarked by some fresh contribution; and the most recent developments of French and German literature show that the countless arguments, pleas, and replies which the subject has called forth have brought, instead of exhaustion, a new and expanded vigor.

The most violent opposition that pessimism has had to face has come, curiously enough, from the Socialists. For the Socialists, while pessimists as to the present, have optimistic views for the future. Their cry is not against the misery of the world, but against the capital that produces it. The artisan, they say, is smothered by the produce of his own hands: the more he produces, the more he increases the capital that is choking him down. In time, Marx says, there will exist only a few magnates face to face with a huge enslaved population; and as wealth increases in geometric proportion so will poverty, and with it the exasperation of the multitude. Then the explosion is to come, and Socialism to begin its sway. Now Socialism does not, as is generally supposed, preach community of goods; it preaches simply community of profits, and the abolition of capital as a productive agent. When the explosion comes, therefore, the Socialists propose to turn the state into one vast and comprehensive guild, to which all productive capital, land, and factories shall appertain. The right of inheritance of personal property, it may be noted, will be retained; and this for a variety of reasons, of which the most satisfactory seems to be that such a right serves as an incentive to economy and activity. Money may be saved and descend, but it is not to be allowed the power of generation.

It will be readily understood, even from this brief summary, that such a doctrine as Hartmann's, which is chiefly concerned in disproving the value of every aspect of progress, was certain to call out many replies from those who see a vast area for the expansion of human comfort and happiness in the future developments of social life.

To these replies the pessimists have but one rejoinder, and that is that any hope of the expansion of happiness is an illusion. And is it an illusion? Simple Mrs. Winthrop said, "If us as knows so little can see a bit o' good and rights, we may be sure as there's a good and a rights better nor what we knows of." But then Mrs. Winthrop was admittedly simple, and her views in consequence are hardly those of the seer. From an endæmonist standpoint, the world does not seem to be much better off now than it was two or three thousand years ago; there are even some who think it has retrograded, and who turn to the civilization of Greece and Rome with longing regret; and this, notwithstanding the fact that from the peace and splendor of these nations cries of distress have descended to us which are fully as acute as any that have been uttered in recent years. Truly, to the student of history each epoch brings its own shudder. There have been ameliorations in one way and pacifications in another, but misery looms in tireless constancy through it all. Each year a fresh discovery seems to point to still better things in the future, but progress is as undeniably the chimera of the present century as the resurrection of the dead was that of the tenth; each age has its own, for no matter to what degree of perfection industry may arrive, and to whatever heights progress may ascend, it must yet touch some final goal, and meanwhile pessimism holds that with expanding intelligence there will come, little by little, the fixed and immutable knowledge that of all perfect things which the earth contains misery is the most complete.

To question whether life is an affliction seems, from the facts and arguments already presented, to be somewhat unnecessary. The answer appears in a measure to be a foregone conclusion. Yet, if the question be examined without bias and without prejudice the issue is not only doubtful, but difficult to ascertain. If in any intelligent community the matter were put to vote by acclamation, the decision would undoubtedly be in the negative; and that for a variety of reasons, first and foremost of which is that ninety and nine out of a hundred persons are led by the thread of external appearance, and whatever their private beliefs may be, they still wish their neighbors to think that they at least have no cause to complain.

It is this desire to appear well in the eyes of others that makes what is termed the shabby-genteel, and which prevents so many proud yet vulgar minds from avowing their true position. Indeed, there are few who, save to an intimate, have the courage to acknowledge that they are miserable; there is at work within them the same instinct that compels the wounded animal to seek the depths of the bushes in which to die. People generally are ashamed of grief, and turn to hide a tear as the sensitive turn from an accident in the street, and veil their eyes from deformity. Moreover, it is largely customary to mock at the melancholy; and in good society it is an unwritten law that every one shall bring a certain quota of contentment and gayety, or else remain in chambered solitude.

Added to this, and beyond the insatiable desire to appear serene and successful in the eyes of others, there is the terrible dread of seeming to be cheated and outwitted of that which is apparently a universal birthright; and, according to a general conception, there is the same sort of moral baseness evidenced in an unuttered yet visible appeal for sympathy, as that which is at work in the beggar's outstretched palm. Many, it is true, there are who drop the furtive coin, but the world at large passes with averted stare. "There is work for all," is a common saying, and for the infirm there are hospitals and institutions; "What, then, is the use of giving?" it is queried, and the answer follows, "They who ask for alms are frauds." If the alms be taken to stand for sympathy, the frauds will be found to be few and far between; for, if each man and woman who has arrived at the age of reason, at that age, in fact, which is not such as is set by the statute, but which each individual case makes for itself; if each one should have his heart first wrung dry and then dissected, there would be such an expanse and prodigality of sorrow discovered as would defy an index and put a library to shame.

If the tendency of current literature is examined, it will be found to point very nearly the same way. In earlier days the novel ended with the union of two young people, and the curtain fell on a tableau of awaited happiness. Nowadays, however, as the French phrase goes, we have changed all that. Realistic fiction is a picture of life as it is, and not, as was formerly the case, a picture of life as we want it. Probably the strongest and most typical romance of recent American authors is *The Portrait of a Lady*; and this picture of a thoroughbred girl, awake to the highest possibilities of life, ends not only in her entire disenchantment, but also, if I have understood Mr. James aright, in her utter degradation. In that very elaborate novel, *Daniel Deronda*, the moral drawn is not dissimilar, and yet its author stood at the head of English fiction.

In French literature, the same influence is even more noticeably at work. It is the fashion to abuse Zola, and to say that his works are obscene; so they are, and so is the life that he depicts, but his descriptions are true to the letter; and the gaunt and wanton misery which he described in *l'Assommoir* is not, to my thinking, such as one need blush over, but rather such as might well cause tears. The work which those princes of literature, the

Goncourts and Daudet, have performed, has been prepared, as one may say, with pens pricked in sorrow. *Germanie Lacerteux*, *la Fille Eliza*, *Chérie*, *Jack*, the *Nabab*, and the *Évangéliste*, are but one long-drawn-out cry of variegated yet self-same agony. In this respect Tourguénieff was well up to the age, as is also Spielhagen, who is very generally considered to be the best of German novelists.

The splendid wickedness of mediæval Italy has done little to inspire her modern authors. The romances most abundant there are cheap translations from the French. De Amicis, the most popular native writer, and one whose name is familiar to every one as a traveler in Gautier's footsteps, has written but few stories, of which the best, however, *Manuel Menendez*, is the incarnation of the soul of tragedy.*

Less recently, Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert have harped the same note of accentuated despair; Musset has sung songs that would make a statue weep, and Baudelaire seems to have supped sorrow with a long spoon. In brief, the testimony of all purely modern writers amounts pretty much to the same thing; life to them seems an affliction.

This, of course, it may do without altering its value to others; let any one, for instance, go to a well-nurtured and refined girl of eighteen and tell her that life is an affliction, and she will look upon her informant as a retailer of trumpery paradox. And at eighteen what a festival is life! To one splendid in beauty and rich in hope how magnificent it all seems; what unexplored yet inviting countries extend about the horizon! winter is a kiss that tingles, and summer a warm caress; everything, even to death, holds its promise. And then picture her as she will be at eighty, without an illusion left, and turning her tired eyes each way in search of rest.

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* An admirable translation (the work of Professor Charles Carroll, of New York) of this romance appeared a few years ago in *Harper's Monthly*.

Life is not an affliction to those who are, and who can remain young; there are some who, without any waters of youth, remain so until age has sapped the foundation of their being; and it is from such as they that the greatest cheer is obtained. But to those who live, so to speak, in the thick of the fight, who see hope after hope fall with a crash, and illusion after illusion vanish into still air; to the intelligent, to the observer, and especially to him who is forced against his will to struggle in the van, life is an affliction, a mishap, a calamity, and sometimes a curse.

That there are many such is proven by the statistics which the daily papers afford; and could one play Asmodeus, and look into the secret lives of all men, the evidence obtainable would in its baldness seem hideously undesirable. The degrees of sensitiveness, however, and the ability or inability to support suffering, vary admittedly with the individual. There are men who rise from an insult refreshed; there are many to whom an injury is a tonic and pain a stimulant; and there is even a greater number whose sensibilities are so dull that what is torture to another is barely a twinge to them.

It was the melancholy privilege of the writer to assist, a short time since, at an operation performed in a German hospital. A common soldier had been thrown from a horse with such force that his elbow was dislocated; in the *Klinik* he put his uninjured arm around a post, and then let the surgeon pull on a strap which had been fastened to the other, until the joint was once more in position. His arm was then bandaged, and he was told to return in a fortnight. On his second visit the bandage was removed, and the surgeon, after a violent effort, moved the stiffened joint backwards and forwards. During both operations, the only noticeable evidence of pain was a slight contraction of the upper lip, while the general expression of his face was that of a calm as stolid as is required of the soldier when in the presence of his superior. To such an one as he life is no more an affliction than it is to the turtle.

Then, there are those to whom life is the amusing dream of an hour, who flit through existence in loops of yellow light, who find pleasure in all things, and are careless of the morrow; and these, perhaps, above all others, are the most to be envied. It is such natures as theirs that are usually met with in ordinary fiction, and which are so singularly infrequent in real life. In fancy they are evoked with ease, and yet somehow they do not seem to bear the stamp which experience has set upon the real. That there are such natures it is, of course, absurd to deny, but to affirm that they are persistent types is scarcely in accordance with facts. There are, for instance, many young people who enter life with a prodigality of supposition which is certainly lavish; they see that others are smiling, and that life, even to its outskirts, presents an appearance of pleasing serenity. The supposition which they foster, that a percentage of happiness will be allotted to them, is then not unreasonable; on the contrary, it is very natural; but as far as the expectation goes, we are, most of us, very well aware that it holds its own but for a short space of time.

This fact, while self-evident, is not always satisfactorily explained; indeed, the reason why so many become disappointed with life is, perhaps, explainable only on psychological grounds. By all means the most important *rôle* throughout the entire length and breadth of humanity is that which is played by thought. Its influence is as noticeable in a bakeshop as in the overthrow of an empire; yet, in spite of the results which are constantly springing from it, it was Rousseau's opinion that "*l'homme qui pense est un animal dépravé.*" Balzac caught at this theme, and wrung from it its most severe deductions. To him it was a dissolvent of greater or less activity, according to the nature of the individual in whom it worked. Others have considered it to be the corrosive acid of existence, and the mainspring of every misfortune; all this it may or may not be, but that at least it is the prime factor of disenchantment is evidenced by such an every-day instance as that man, as a rule, and with but few exceptions, pictures in advance the pleasures and sensations which the future seems to hold, and yet when the pictured future becomes the actual present the disproportion between fact and fancy is so great that it results, in nine cases out of ten, in a complete insolvency. After one or more bankruptcies of this description the individual very generally finds that he has had enough, so to speak, and lets hope ever after alone, whereupon disillusionment steps in and takes its place.

It is thought, then, that does the mischief; or to be more exact, it is the inability to maintain an equilibrium between the real and the ideal; that is, in the majority of cases, the cause of disenchantment. To this it may be also added that it is because every one is so well organized for misfortune that such a small amount of open revolt is encountered. When it does appear, it is, as a rule, presented by such thinkers as have been mentioned in the course of these pages, who, through their assertion of the undeniable awake the dislike and animosity of those who have not yet had their fill of proceedings in bankruptcy, and still hope to find life a pleasant thing well worth the living.

It may be said in conclusion, and without any attempt at the discursive, that the moral atmosphere of the present century is charged with three distinct disturbances,—the waning of religious belief, the insatiable demand for intense sensations, and the increasing number of those who live uncompanied, and walk abroad in solitude. That each of these three effects is due to one and the self-same cause is well-nigh unquestionable. The immense nausea that is spreading through all lands and literature is at work on the simple faith, the contented lives, and joyous good-fellowship of earlier days, and in its results it brings with it the signs and portents of a forthcoming though undetermined upheaval. Jean Paul said that we care for life, not because it is beautiful, but because we should care for it; whence follows the oft repeated yet hollow reasoning,—since we love life it must be beautiful; and it is from a series of deductions not dissimilar that the majority of those who are as yet unaffected by that which after all may be but a passing change still cling resolutely to the possibility of earthly happiness.

Out of a hundred intelligent Anglo-Saxons there are seldom two who think precisely alike on any given subject, be that subject what it may,—art, politics, literature, or religion. Indeed, there is but one faith common to all, and that is custom. It is not, however, customary to discuss a subject such as that which is treated in these pages; and it is, as a rule, considered just as bad form to question the value of life as it is to touch upon matters of an indelicate or repulsive nature.

It is, perhaps, for this latter reason, as also in view of the great difference of expressed opinion on all topics, that in England, and especially in America, so little is said on this subject, which for many years past has been of interest to the rest of the thinking world, and which each year is gaining in strength and significance. What its final solution will be is, of course, uncertain. Schopenhauer recommended absolute chastity as the means to the great goal, and Hartmann has vaguely suggested a universal denial of the will to live; more recently, M. Renan has hazarded the supposition that in the advance of science some one might discover a force capable of blowing the planet to atoms, and which, if successfully handled, would, of course, annihilate pain. But these ideas, however practicable or impracticable they may be in the future, are for the moment merely theories; the world is not yet ripe for a supreme quietus, and in the mean time the worth of life may still be questioned.

The question, then, as to whether life is valuable, valueless, or an affliction can, with regard to the individual, be answered only after a consideration of the different circumstances attendant on each particular case; but, broadly speaking, and disregarding its necessary exceptions, life may be said to be always valuable to the obtuse, often valueless to the sensitive; while to him who commiserates with all mankind, and sympathizes with everything that is, life never appears otherwise than as an immense and terrible affliction.

The Anatomy of Negation.

"Lost at nightfall in a forest, I have but a feeble light to guide me. A stranger happens along: 'Blow out your candle,' he says, 'and you will see your way the better.' That stranger is a theologian."

-Diderot

CHAPTER ONE.

The Revolt of the Orient.

MAN, AS DESCRIBED BY QUATREFAGES, IS A RELIGIOUS ANIMAL. The early naturalists said the same thing of the elephant; but while this statement, which contains all the elements of a libel, has fallen into disrepute, the former, little by little, has assumed the purple among accepted facts.

Man's belief in the supernatural antedates chronology. It was unfathered and without a mother. It was spontaneous, natural, and unassisted by revelation. It sprang into being with the first flight of fancy.

The characteristic trait of primitive man seems to have been that of intellectual passivity. He was never astonished: if he noticed anything, it was his own weakness; the power of the elements he accepted as a matter of course. The phenomena that he witnessed, the sufferings that he endured, were to him living enemies whose violence could be conjured by prayers and donations. Everything had its spectre; phantoms were as common as leaves. There was not a corner of the earth unpeopled by vindictive demons. In sleep he was visited by them all, and as his dreams were mainly nightmares, his dominant sensation was that of fright.

As his mind developed, frontiers were outlined between the imaginary and the real; the animate and the inanimate ceased to be identical. Instead of attributing a particular spirit to every object, advancing theology conceived a number of aggrandized forces. The earth, sea and sky were laid under contribution, and the phenomena of nature were timidly adored. In the course of time these open-air deities were found smitten by a grave defect—they were visible. The fear of the unseen demanded something more mysterious, a hierarchy of invisible divinities of whom much might be suspected and but little known. It was presumably at this point that the high-road to polytheism was discovered; and when man grew to believe that the phenomena which his ancestors had worshiped were but the unconscious agents of higher powers, the gods were born.

Consecutive stages of development such as these have evidently been far from universal. There are races whose belief in the supernatural is so accidental that any classification is impossible. There are others in whose creeds the transition from animism to broader views is still unmarked. In the equatorial regions of Africa, in Madagascar, Polynesia, and among certain Tartar tribes, animism and its attendant fetishism is reported to be still observable. The distinction between the palpable and the impalpable, the separation between what is known to be material and that which is conceived to be divine, does not necessarily exist even in countries that have reached a high degree of civilization. In India, the dance of the bayaderes before the gilded statues, and the top-playing that is to amuse a stone Krishna, are cases in point. But these instances are exceptions to the general rule. It seems well established that man, in proportion to his intelligence, passed out of animism, loitered in polytheism, and drifted therefrom into monotheistic or pantheistic beliefs.

The race whose beliefs have held most steadfast from their incipiency to the present day is the Hindu. In their long journey these beliefs have encountered many vicissitudes; they have been curtailed, elaborated and degraded, but in the main they are still intact. At the contact with fresher faiths, the primitive religions of other lands have either disappeared abruptly or gradually faded away. It is India alone that has witnessed an autonomous development of first theories, and it is in India that the first denying voice was raised. To appreciate the denial it is necessary to understand what was affirmed. For this purpose a momentary digression may be permitted.

In the beginning of the Vedic period, Nature in her entirety was held divine. To the delicate imagination of the early Aryan, the gods were in all things, and all things were gods. In no other land have myths been more fluid and transparent. Mountains, rivers and landscapes were regarded with veneration; the skies, the stars, the sun, the dawn and dusk were adored, but particularly Agni, the personification of creative heat. Through lapses of time of which there is no chronology, this charming naturalism drifted down the currents of thought into the serenest forms of pantheistic beliefs.

The restless and undetermined divinities, omnipresent and yet impalpable, the wayward and changing phenomena, contributed one and all to suggest the idea of a continuous transformation, and with it, by implication, something that is transformed. Gradually the early conception of Agni expanded into a broader thought. From the spectacle of fire arose the theory of a deva, one who shines; and to this deva a name was given which signified both a suppliant and a supplication—Brahma. In this metamorphosis all vagueness was lost. Brahma became not only a substantial reality, but the creator of all that is. Later, the labor of producing and creating was regarded as an imperfection, a blemish on the splendor of the Supreme. It was thought a part of his dignity to be majestically inert, and above him was conceived the existence of a still higher being, a being who was also called Brahma; yet this time the name was no longer masculine, but neuter and indeclinable—neuter as having no part in life, and indeclinable because unique.*

This conception of a neuter principle, eternal, inactive, and a trifle pale perhaps, was not reached during the period assigned to the Vedas. It was the work of time and of fancy, but it was unassisted. The religion of India is strictly its own; its systems were founded and its problems solved before the thinkers of other lands were old enough to reflect. In Greece, which was then in swaddling clothes, Anaxagoras was the first who thought of a pure Intelligence, and this thought he contented himself with stating; its development was left to other minds, and even then it remained unadorned until Athens heard the exultant words of Paul. Nor could the Hindus have gathered their ideas from other countries. Their brothers, the Persians, were watching the combat between Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman. With the Hebrews there was no chance nor rumor of contact: Elohim had not given way to Jehovah. Chaldea was celebrating the nuptials of Nature and the Sun; while far beyond was Egypt, and on her heart the Sphinx.

It seems, then, not unsafe to say that the Vedas and the theories that were their after-growth have no connection with any foreign civilization. Beyond this particular, Brahmanism enjoys over all other religions the peculiar distinction of being without a founder. Its germ, as has been hinted, was in the Vedas; but it was a germ merely that the priests planted and tended, and watched develop into a great tree, which they then disfigured with engraftments.

Emerson recommended us to treat people as though they were real, and added, "Perhaps they are," But the doubt that lingered in the mind of the stately pantheist never entered into that of the Hindu. In its purest manifestation the creed of the latter was a negation of the actuality of the visible world. The forms of matter were held to be illusive, and the semblance of reality possessed by them was considered due to Māyā. Māyā originally signified Brahma's longing for something other than himself; something that might contrast with his eternal quietude; something that should occupy the voids of space; something that should lull the languors of his infinite ennui. From this longing sprang whatever is, and it was through Māyā, which afterwards became synonymous with illusion, that a phantom universe surged before the god's delighted eyes, the mirage of his own desire.

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* Burnouf: Essai sur le Veda. Taine: Essais.

This ghostly world is the semblance of reality in which man dwells: mountains, rivers, landscapes, the earth itself, the universe and all humanity, are but the infinite evolutions of his fancy. The ringing lines that occur in Mr. Swinburne's "Hertha" may not improperly be referred to him:

"I am that which began;
  Out of me the years roll;
Out of me, God and man;
  I am equal and whole.
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;
  I am the soul."

Familiarly, Brahma is the spider drawing from his breast the threads of existence: emblematically, a triangle inscribed in a circle; poetically, the self-existing supremacy that is enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold; and theologically, the one really existing essence, the eternal germ from which all things issue and to which all things at last return.

From man to Brahma, a series of higher forms of existence are traceable in an ascending scale till three principal divinities are reached. These, the highest manifestations of the First Cause, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer, constitute the Tri-murti, the Trinity, typified in the magically mystic syllable Om. To these were added a host of inferior deities and even local gods similar to those which the Romans recognized in later years. Such was and still is the celestial hierarchy. In the eyes of the Hindu, none of these gods are eternal. At the end of cycles of incommensurable duration, the universe will cease to be, the heavens will be rolled up like a garment, the Tri-murti dissolved; while in space shall rest but the great First Cause, through whose instrumentality, after indefinite kalpas, life will be re-beckoned out of chaos and the leash of miseries unloosed.

This delicious commingling of the real and the ideal degenerated with the years. Like Olympus, it was too fair to last. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, once regarded as various manifestations of the primal essence, became in lapses of time concrete. Female counterparts were found for them, and the most poetic of the creeds of man was lowered into a sensuous idolatry. Today there is nothing, however monstrous or grotesque, that is deemed unfit for worship. In Benares there is a shrine to small-pox; in Gaya there is one to the police; and it may be that somewhere between Cape Comorin and the Himalayas an altar has been raised to those who dull digestion with the after-dinner speech.

This, however, is the work of the priest. In earlier days the higher castes of man, the younger brothers of the gods, were thought capable of understanding the perfection that resides in Brahm. It was held that they might ascend to the rank of their elders, and with them at last be absorbed in the universal spirit. The one pathway to this goal was worship, and over it the priests constituted themselves the lawful guides.

The laws which they codified were numberless, and an infraction of any one of them was severely visited on the transgressor. For each fault, whether of omission or commission, there was an expiation to be undergone, and it was taught that the unatoned violation of a precept precipitated the offender into one of twenty-eight hells which their inflammable imaginations had created.

In the face of absurdities such as these, it is permissible to suppose that, like the Roman augurs, the educated Brahmans could not look at each other without laughing; yet, however this may be, it seems certain that many of the laity laughed at them. Already in the Rig-Veda mention was made of those who jeered at Agni. The question as to whether there is really another life seems to have been often raised, and that too in the Brahmanas. Yaska, a venerable sage, found himself obliged to refute the opinions of sages older and more venerable than himself, who had declared the Vedas to be a tissue of nonsense. This skepticism had found many adherents. The name given to these early disbelievers was Nastikas—They who deny. Like other sects, they had aphorisms and slokas of their own, which with quaint derision they attributed to the tutor of the gods. The aphorisms appear to have been markedly anti-theistic, while the slokas were captivating invitations to the pleasures of life.

> "*Vivons, ouvrons nos cceurs aux ivresses nouvelles:*
> *Dormir et boire en paix, voila 1'unique bien.*
> *Buvons! Notre sang brule et nos femmes sont belles:*
> *Demain n'est pas encore, et le passe n'est rien!*"

Among those who laughed the loudest was Kapila. His life is shrouded in the dim magnificence of legends. There let it rest; yet if little can be said of the man, his work at least is not unfamiliar to students. The Sānkhya Kārika, which bears his name, is one of the most important and independent relics of Indian thought. In its broadest sense, Sānkhya means rationalism or system of rational philosophy. In India it is known as the philosophy Niriswara, the philosophy without a god.

Kapila was the first serious thinker who looked into the archaic skies and declared them to be void. In this there was none of the moderation of skepticism, and less of the fluctuations of doubt. Kapila saw that the idea of a Supreme Being was posterior to man; that Nature, anterior to her demiurge, had created him; and he resolutely turned his back on the Tri-murti, and denied that a deity existed, or that the existence of one was necessary to the order and management of the world. The motor-power he held to be a blind, unconscious force, and of this force, life was the melancholy development. If he had disbelieved in transmigration, Schopenhauer would not have startled the world with a new theory.

Kapila's purpose was to relieve man from suffering. There were no rites to be observed. Knowledge and meditation were alone required. He recognized but three things—the soul, matter and pain. Freedom from pain was obtainable, he taught, by the liberation of the soul, from the bondage of matter. According to his teaching, the heavens, the earth and all that in them is, are made up of twenty-five principles, and of these principles matter is the first and the soul the last. Matter is the primordial element of universal life, the element that animates and sustains all things. The principles that succeed it are simply its developments. Of these, the soul is the chief. It is for matter to act and for the soul to observe. When its observations are perfect and complete, when it has obtained a discriminative knowledge of the forms of matter, of primeval matter and of itself, then is it prepared to enter into eternal beatitude.

On the subject of eternal beatitude, each one of the systems of Eastern thought has had its say. That which Kapila had in view is not entirely clear. He gave no description of it otherwise than in hinting that it was a state of abstract and unconscious impassibility, and he appears to have been much more occupied in devising means by which man might be delivered from the evils of life than in mapping charts of a fantastic paradise.

The sentiment of the immedicable misery of life is as prominent in the preface of history as on its latest and uncompleted page. The problem of pain agitated the minds of the earliest thinkers as turbulently as it has those of the latest comers. In attempting to solve it, in endeavoring to find some rule for a law of error, the Hindu accepted an unfathered idea that he is expiating the sins of anterior and unremembered existences, and that he will continue to expiate them until all past transgressions are absolved and the soul is released from the chain of its migrations. According to the popular theory, the chain of migrations consists in twenty-four lakhs of birth, a lakh being one hundred thousand.

Apparently such beatitude as lay beyond the tomb consisted to Kapila in relief from transmigration, and this relief was obtainable by the ransomed soul, only, as has been hinted, through a knowledge acquired of matter and of itself. Garmented in the flesh of him that constitutes its individuality, the soul was to apply itself to an understanding of Nature, who, with the coquetry of a bayadere, at first resists and then unveils her beauties to the eyes of the persistent wooer. This knowledge once obtained, the soul is free. It may yet linger awhile on earth, as the wheel of the spinner turns for a moment after the impulse which puts it in motion has ceased to act; but from that time the soul has fulfilled all the conditions of its deliverance, and is forever affranchised from the successive migrations which the unransomed soul must still undergo.

In his attack on official theology, Kapila paid little attention to its rites and observances. He probably fancied that if the groundwork was undermined, the superstructure would soon totter. In this he was partially correct, though the result of his revolt was entirely different from what he had expected. The climax of his philosophy is a metaphysical paradox: "Neither I am, nor is aught mine, nor is there any I"—a climax which must have delighted Hegel, but one which it is difficult to reconcile with the report of the philosophy's present popularity. And that it is popular there seems to be no doubt. There is even a common saying in India that no knowledge is equal to the Sankhya, and no power equal to the Yoga, which latter, a combination of mnemonics and gymnastics, is a contrivance for concentrating the mind intently on nothing.

But whatever popularity the Sankhya may now enjoy, it is evident that, like other systems of Eastern thought, it was understood only by adepts; and even had the science which it taught been offered to the people, it was not of a nature to appeal to them. The masses today are as ignorant as carps, and at that time they were not a whit more intelligent. Besides, it was easier to understand the Tri-murti than twenty-five abstract principles. Brahma was very neighborly, and his attendant gods were known to tread the aisles of night. The languid noons and sudden dawns were sacred with their presence. What could be more reasonable? If life was an affliction, that very affliction carried the sufferer into realms of enchantment, where Brahma was enthroned on a lotus of azure and gold.

It is small wonder then that Kapila's lessons left the established religion practically unharmed. Kant's *Kritik* did not prevent the Konigsbergians from listening to the Pfarrer with the same faith with which their fathers had listened before them. And Kant, it may be remembered, was not only a popular teacher, he was one that was revered. But aside from any influence that Kapila's philosophy may have exerted, it was evidently smitten by a grave defect. Concerning the soul's ultimate abiding-place it was silent. This silence enveloped the entire system in an obscurity which another and a greater thinker undertook to dissipate.

It has been said before, and with such wisdom that the saying will bear repetition, that revolutions are created, not by the strength of an idea, but by the intensity of a sentiment. In great crises there is a formula that all await; so soon as it is pronounced, it is accepted and repeated; it is the answer to an universal demand. Toward the close of the sixth century before the present era, at Kapilavastu, a city and kingdom situated at the foot of the mountains of Nepal, a prince of the blood, after prolonged meditations on the misfortunes of life, pronounced a watchword of this description.

The name of this early Muhammad was Siddartha. He was the heir of the royal house of Sakya, and in later years, in remembrance of his origin, he was called Sakya-Muni, Sakya the Anchorite, to which was added the title of Buddha, the Sage. The accounts of his life are contained in the *Lalita Vistâra*, a collection of fabulous episodes in which the supernatural joins hands with the matter-of-fact. It is said, for instance, that he was born of an immaculate conception, and died of an indigestion of pork. Apart from the mythical element, his life does not appear to have been different from that of other religious reformers, save only that he is supposed to have been born in a palace instead of a hovel. To his twenty-ninth year Siddartha is represented as living at court, surrounded by all the barbaric ease and gorgeousness of the Ind. Yet even in his youth his mind appears to have been haunted by great thoughts. He took no part in the sports of his companions, and was accustomed, it is said, to wander away into the solitudes of bamboo, and there to linger, lost in meditation.

In the course of time he was married to a beautiful girl, but even in her fair arms his thoughts were occupied with the destinies of the world. During the succeeding festivals and revels, amid the luxury of the palace and the enticements of love, he meditated on the miseries of life. In Brahmanism he found no consolation. At its grotesqueness he too smiled, but his smile was nearer to tears than to laughter. The melancholy residue of his reflections was with him even in dream, and one night—so runs the legend—he was encouraged in a vision to teach mankind a law which should save the world and establish the foundation of an eternal and universal rest.

A combination of fortuitous circumstances, the play of the merest hazard, appears to have strengthened the effect of this vision. On the high-roads about Kapilavastu he encountered a man bent double with age, another stricken by fever, and lastly a corpse. "A curse," he cried, "on youth that age must overcome; a curse on health that illness destroys; a curse on life which death interrupts! Age, illness, death, could they but be forever enchained!" Soon after, he disappeared, and seeking the jungles, which at that time were peopled with thinkers of ken, he devoted himself to the elaboration of his thoughts. It was there that he seems to have acquired some acquaintance with the philosophy of Kapila. He divined its significance and saw its insufficiency. Thereafter for six years he gave himself up to austerities so severe that, in the naïve language of the legend, they startled even the gods. These six years are said to have been passed at Ouruvilva, a place as famous in Buddhist annals as Kapilavastu. In this retreat he arranged the principles of his system, and perfected the laws and ethics which were to be its accompaniment. Yet still the immutable truth that was to save the world escaped him. A little longer he waited and struggled. The Spirit of Sin, with all his seductive cohorts, appeared before him. The cohorts were routed and the Spirit overcome; the struggle was ended; and under a Bodhi-tree which is still shown to the pilgrim, Siddartha caught the immutable truth, and thereupon presented himself as a saviour to his fellows.

Such is the popular legend. Its main incidents have been recently and most felicitously conveyed in *The Light of Asia.* As a literary contribution, Mr. Arnold's poem is simply charming; as a page of history, it has the value of a zero from which the formative circle has been eliminated. The kingdom of Kapilavastu, or rather Kapilavatthu, was an insignificant hamlet. The Buddah's father was a petty chieftain, the raja of a handful of ignorant savages. Palaces he had none; his wealth was his strength; and could his concubine be recalled to life, she would, had she any sense of humor, which is doubtful, be vastly amused at finding that she had been given a rôle in the solar myth.

There can, however, be no doubt that the Buddha really lived. His existence is as well established as that of the Christ. To precisely what an extent he was a visionary is necessarily difficult of conjecture. Yet unless all belief in him be refused, it seems almost obligatory to assume that after years of reflection he considered himself in possession of absolute knowledge. The truth which he then began to preach was not doctrine that he held as personal and peculiar to himself, but rather an eternal and changeless law which had been proclaimed from age to age by other Buddhas, of whom he fancied himself the successor.

To speak comparatively, it is only with recent years that the attention of Western students has been attracted to Buddhist literature. Today, however, thanks to translations from the Pali and kindred tongues, it is possible for any one to study the doctrine from the sacred books themselves. There are verses in the Vedas which when recited are said to charm the birds and beasts. Compared with them, the Buddhist Gospels are often lacking in beauty. To be the better understood, the priests, who addressed themselves not to initiates but to the masses, employed a language that was simple and familiar. There are in consequence many repetitions and trivial digressions, but there are also parables of such exquisite color, that in them one may feel the influence of a bluer sky than ours, the odor of groves of sandal, the green abysses of the Himalayas, and the gem-like splendor of white Thibetian stars.

The Buddha believed neither in a personal nor an impersonal God. The world he compared to a wheel turning ceaselessly on itself. Of Brahman tenets he preserved but one, that of the immedicable misery of life. But the doctrine which he taught may perhaps best be summarized as resting on three great principles—Karma, Arahatship and Nirvana. When these principles are understood, the mysteries of the creed are dissolved, and the need of esoteric teaching diminished.

It may be noted, by way of proem, that the theory of the transmigration of souls is not advanced in the Vedas. It is a part of Brahman teaching, but Brahmanism and Vedaism are not the same. The Vedas are claimed as the outcome of direct revelation, while all that part of post-Vedic literature in which Brahmanism is enveloped is held to be purely traditional. The origin of the theory of the transmigration is indiscoverable, but it is one which has been shared by many apparently unrelated races. It was a part of the creed of the Druids; the Australian savage, as well as some of the American aborigines, held to the same idea; thinkers in Egypt and in Greece advanced identical tenets; it is alluded to in the Talmud, and hinted at in the Gospel which bears the name of St. John. Possibly it was held by the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, and in that case it is equally possible that it was through them that the doctrine descended into Brahmanism. But whether or not its engraftment came about in this way is relatively a matter of small moment. The important point to be observed is that it was not received by the Buddhists. The popular idea to the contrary is erroneous.

Spinoza noted that there is in every man a feeling that he has been what he is from all eternity, and this feeling has not left the Buddhist unaffected. But between such a sentiment and a belief in transmigration the margin is wide. The popular error in which the two are confused has presumably risen from a misunderstanding of the laws of Karma and Vipaka, the laws of cause and affect. The difference therein discoverable amounts in brief to this: in the theory of transmigration the soul is held to be eternal; in Buddhism the existence of the soul is denied. In the one, the ego resurrects through cycles of unremembered lives: in the other, nothing survives save the fruit of its actions. In the one, every man is his own heir and his own ancestor; in the other, the deeds of the ancestor are concentrated in a new individual. In each there is a chain of existences, but in the one they are material, in the other they are moral. One maintains the migration of an essence, the other the results of causality; one has no evidence to support it, the other accords with the law of the indistructibility of force. One is metempsychosis, the other palingenesis; one is beautiful, and the other awkward; but one is a theory, and the other a fact.

From this chain the Hindu knew no mode of relief. Prior to the Buddha's advent, there was an unquestioned belief that man and all that encompasses him rolled through an eternal circle of transformation; that he passed through all the forms of life, from the most elementary to the most perfect; that the place which he occupied depended on his merits or demerits; that the virtuous revived in a divine sphere, while the wicked descended to a yet darker purgatory; that the recompense of the blessed and the punishment of the damned were of a duration which was limited; that time effaced the merit of virtue as well as the demerit of sin; and that the law of transmigration brought back again to earth both the just and the unjust, and threw them anew into a fresh cycle of terrestrial existences, from which they could fight free as best they might.

When the Buddha began to teach, he endeavored to bring his new theories into harmony with old doctrines. Throughout life, man, he taught, is enmeshed in a web whose woof was woven in preceding ages. The misfortunes that he endured are not the consequences of his immediate actions; they are drafts which have been drawn upon him in earlier days—drafts which he still must honor, and against which he can plead no statute of limitations. Karma pursues him in this life, and unless he learns its relentless code by heart, the fruit of his years is caught up by revolving chains, and tossed back into the life of another. How this occurred, or why it occurred, is explainable only by a cumbersome process from which the reader may well be spared; and it may for the moment suffice to note that while the Buddha agreed with the Brahmans that life formed a chain of existences, it was the former who brought the hope that the chain might be severed.

The means to the accomplishment of this end consist in a victory over the lusts of the flesh, the desire for life and the veils of illusion. When these have been vanquished, the Arahat, the victor, attains Nirvana.

Nirvana, or Nibbana as it stands in the Pali, is not a paradise, nor yet a state of post-mortem trance. It is the extinction of all desire, the triple victory of the Arahat, which precedes the great goal, eternal death. The fruits of earlier sins remain, but they are impermanent and soon pass away. Nothing is left from which another sentient being can be called into existence. The Arahat no longer lives; he has reached Para Nirvana, the complete absence of anything, that can be likened only to the flame of a lamp which a gust of wind has extinguished.

The Buddha wrote nothing. It was his disciples who, in councils that occurred after his death, collected and arranged the lessons of their master. In these synods the canon of sacred scripture was determined. It consisted of three divisions, called the Tri-pitaka, or Three Baskets, and contained the Suttas, the discourses, of the Buddha—the Dharmas, the duties enjoined on the masses—and lastly the Vinayas, the rules of discipline.

The Dharmas contain the four truths whose discovery is credited to the Buddha. The first is that suffering is the concomitant of life. The second, that suffering is the resultant of desire. The third, that relief from suffering is obtained in the suppression of desire. And fourth, that Nirvana, which succeeds the suppression of desire, is attainable only through certain paths. These paths are eight in number; four of which—correctness in deed, word, thought and sight—were recommended to all men; the remainder—the paths of application, memory, meditation and proper life—being reserved for the eremites.

For the use of the faithful, the four truths have been condensed in a phrase: "Abstain from sin, practice virtue, dominate the flesh—such is the law of the Buddha." The recognition of the four truths and the observance of the eight virtues are obligatory to all who wish to reach Nirvana. The neophyte renounces the world and lives a mendicant. Yet inasmuch as a society of saints is difficult to perpetuate, members are admitted from whom the usual vows of continence and poverty are not exacted.

The charm of primitive Buddhism was in its simplicity. The faithful assembled for meditation and not for parade. The practice of morality needed no forms and fewer ceremonies. But with time it was thought well to make some concession to popular superstitions; and although the Buddha had no idea of representing himself as a divinity, every moral and physical perfection was attributed to him. The rest was easy. Idolatry had begun. To the right and left of a saint elevated to the rank of God Supreme, a glowing Pantheon was formed of the Buddhas that had preceded him. A meaningless worship was established; virtues were subordinated to ceremonies; and today before a gilded statue a wheel of prayers is turned, while through the dim temples, domed like a vase, the initiates murmur, "Life is evil."

In attempting to convert the multitude, the Buddha made no use of vulgar seductions. From him came no flattery to the passions. The recompense that He promised was not of the earth nor material in its nature. To his believers he offered neither wealth nor power. The psychic force, the seemingly supernatural faculties, that knowledge and virtue brought to those who had reached superior degrees of sanctity, were shared by the Brahmans as well; they were an appanage, not a bait. The one reward of untiring efforts was an eternal ransom from the successive horrors of Karma. The paradise which he disclosed was the death of Death. In it all things ceased to be. It was the ultimate annihilation from which life was never to be re-beckoned.

It is not surprising that the captivating quiet of a goal such as this should forcibly appeal to the inclinations of the ascetic; the wonder of it is that It could be regarded for a moment as attractive to the coarse appetites of the crowd. Nor does it seem that the Christ of Chaos made this mistake. It was the after-comers who undertook to lift the commonplace out of the humdrum. The Buddha's hope of the salvation of all mankind was a dream extending into the indefinite future; the theory of immediate emancipation was never shared by him. For the plain man, he laid down a law which was a law of grace for all, that of universal brotherhood. If its practice was insufficient to lead him to Nirvana, it was still a preparation thereto, a paving of the way for the travelers that were yet to come.

The method which he employed to convert his hearers seems to have been a tender persuasion, in which there was no trace of the dogmatic. He did not contend against strength, he appealed to weakness, varying the insinuations of his parables according to the nature of the listener, and charming even the recalcitrant by the simplicity and flavor of his words. In these lessons there were no warnings, no detached maledictions; but there were exhortations to virtue, and pictures of the sweet and sudden silence of eternal rest. His struggle was never with creeds, but with man, with the flesh and its appetites; and from the memory of his victorious combat with himself there came to him precepts and maxims of incomparable delicacy and beauty.

These were his weapons. His teaching was a lesson of infinite tenderness and compassion; it was a lesson of patience and resignation and abnegation of self, and especially of humility, which in its renouncement of temporal splendors opens the path to the magnificence of death.

In the ears of not a few modern thinkers, this promise of annihilation has sounded like a gigantic paradox. It has seemed inconceivable that men could be found who would strive unremittingly their whole lives through to reach a goal where nothing was. And yet there were many such, and, what is more to the point, their number is constantly increasing. On the other hand, it has been argued that to those who knew no prospect of supernal happiness and who had never heard of an eternity of bliss, the horror of life might be of such intensity that they would be glad of any release whatever. But the value of this argument is slight. The spectacle of a Buddhist converted to Christianity is the most infrequent that has ever gladdened the heart of a missionary. Per contra, the number of those who turn from other creeds to that of Buddhism is notoriously large. The number of its converts, however, is not a proof of its perfections. And Buddhism is far from perfect: its fantastic shackles may be alluring to the mystic, but they are meaningless to the mathematician. It may be charming to hold a faith which has put pessimism into verse, and raised that verse into something more than literature; but it is useless. The pleasure of utter extinction is one which we will probably all enjoy, and that too without first becoming Arahats; and yet, again, we may not. The veil of Māyā is still unraised. The most we can do to lift it is to finger feebly at the edges. Sakya-Muni taught many an admirable lesson, but in his flights of fancy, like many another since, he transcended the limits of experience. Let those who love him follow.

Charity is the New Testament told in a word. When it was preached on the Mount of Olives it must have brought with it the freshness and aroma of a new conception. Before that time, the Galileans had heard but of Justice and Jehovah; then at once they knew of Christ and Compassion; and ever since the name and the virtue have gone hand-in-hand. And yet five hundred years before, a sermon on charity was preached in Nepal.

The charity which Sakya-Muni taught was not the ordinary liberality which varies from a furtive coin to a public bequest. It was a boundless sympathy, a prodigality of abandonment in which each creature, however humble, could find a share, and which, once entered in the heart of man, extinguished every spark of egotism. This sentiment of universal compassion was one which the two greatest of the world's reformers sought alike to instil. Between the Prince of Kapilavastu and Jesus of Nazareth there are many resemblances, but none, it may be taken, more striking than this. Beyond the common legend of their birth, both were supposed to have been tempted by the devil; and by the Buddha, as the Christ, the devil was vanquished. Their lessons in ethics were nearly the same; both were nihilists; both held that the highest duty is to be at variance with self; both struck a blow at the virility of man, and neither of them wrote. About the lives of each the myth-makers have been at work; both were deified; and if today the believers in the Buddha largely outnumber those of the Christ, it is only fair to note that the former have enjoyed advantages which the latter have never possessed. Through none of their wide leisures have they ever held it a blasphemy to think.

Another religion without a God, and one which is a twin-sister to Buddhism, is that of the Gainas. Explanatory documents concerning it are infrequent, and in search of information the student is usually obliged to turn to Brahman sources. The Gainas are the believers in Gina, the Victorious, as the Buddhists are believers in Buddha, the Sage. A Gina—in Buddhism this term is one of the many synonyms of

Sakya-Muni—is a prophet who, having attained omniscience, comes to re-establish the law of salvation when it has become corrupted through the march of time. There are said to have been twenty-four Ginas, including the most recent; and as the Gainas maintain that the Buddha was a disciple of the founder of their creed, the number corresponds to that of Siddartha and his twenty-three predecessors. The Gainas, like the Buddhists, deny the authority of the Vedas; they consider them apocryphal, and oppose in their stead a collection of Angas of their own. No sect has been more rigorous than they in the respect of everything that lives. They eat no flesh; and it is reported that the stricter devotees filter their water, breathe through a veil, and as they walk sweep the ground before them, that no insect, however insignificant, may be destroyed. Among the customs in which they differ from Buddhism, suicide is the one worth noting. For a long period this rite seems to have been decorously observed. On most other points the two beliefs are in apparent agreement. The Gainas, too, are atheists. They admit of no Creator, and deny the existence of a perfect and eternal Being. The Gina, like the Buddha, has become perfect, but it is not thought that he has always been so. This negation has not prevented a particular division of the faith from affecting a kind of heretical and schismatic deism, Like the Nepalese, who have imagined an Adibuddha, a supreme Buddha, they also have invented a Ginapati, a perfect Gina, whom, in opposition to their canonical Angas, they regard as primordial creator. The Angas teach that man possesses a soul, and that his soul, although a pure and an immortal intelligence, is yet the prey of illusion, and for that reason condemned to bear the yoke of matter through an indefinite series of existences. In Gainism it is not existence that is an affliction, it is life; and the Nirvana is less an annihilation than an entrance into eternal beatitude. To distinguish between the two faiths, the Brahmans called the Buddhists, "They who affirm," and the Gainas, "They who say, Perhaps."[*]

The Chinese, who are our elders in little else than corruption, feel as much need for a religion as a civilian does for a military uniform. From the threshold of history to the present day, the inhabitants of the celestial Empire have had no term wherewith to designate a deity. The name of God has not entered into their philosophy. As a rule, then, when an educated Chinese is asked what his creed is, he answers, that not being a priest, he has none at all. The clergy have three: the official religion—originated by Confucius—Buddhism and Tauism. The latter faith was founded by Laou-tze.

The life of this early thinker has been as liberally interwoven with legends as that of the Buddha. The Orient seems to have had a mania for attributing the birth of reformers to immaculate conceptions; and one learns with the weariness that comes of a thrice-told tale, that the mother of Laou-tze, finding herself one day alone, conceived suddenly through the vivifying influence of Nature. But though the conception was abrupt, the gestation was prolonged, lasting, it is said, eighty-four years; and when at last the miraculous child was born, his hair was white—whence his name, Laou-tze, the Aged Baby. This occurred six hundred years before the present era.

The philosophy of this prodigy, contained in the *Taou-teh-king*, the *Book of Supreme Knowledge and Virtue*, is regarded by Orientalists as the most profound and authentic relic of early Chinese literature. The most profound, as rivaling the works of Confucius and Mencius; and the most authentic, in that it was the only one said to have been exempt from the different edicts commanding the destruction of manuscripts.

Laou-tze was probably the first thinker who established the fact that it is not in the power of man to conceive an adequate idea of a First Cause, and the first to show that any efforts in that direction result merely in demonstrating human incompetence and the utter vainness of the endeavor. When, therefore, he was obliged to mention the primordial essence in such a manner as to be understood by his hearers, the figurative term which he employed was Tau. "Tau," he said, "is empty, in operation exhaustless. It is the formless mother of all things." And to this description Spinoza found little to add.

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[*] Dictionnaire de sciences religieuses, art. Jainisme.

Laou-tze appears to have dipped into all the philosophies then in vogue, and after taking a little eclectic sip from each, elaborated a system so cleverly that he may safely be regarded as the earliest moralist. His doctrine was thoroughly pantheistic. Man, he taught, is a passing and inferior phase of the Great Unity which is the beginning and end of all things, and into which the soul is absorbed. Happiness, he added, is like paradise, an imaginary Utopia, a fiction of the non-existent extending beyond the borderlands of the known. And on the chart which he drew of life, he set up a monitory finger-post, warning men that the only real delights were those that consist in the absence of pain. Enterprise, effort and ambition, were so many good, old-fashioned words which to this early pessimist represented merely a forethought for a future generation. And of a future generation he saw little need. The one laudable aim was in the avoidance of suffering. After all, what was there in life? Nothing save a past as painful as the present, with hope to breed chimeras and the future for a dream.

Like Buddhism, the doctrine of Laou-tze degenerated with the years. Their common simplicity was too subtle for the canaille, and to each gaudy superstitions have been added. Yet in their primal significance they are as ushers of negation, the initial revolt at the supernatural, the first reasoned attempts to route the spectres from the mind of man.

In earlier Hinduism, life was a nightmare, and the universe a phantasm that vaunted itself real. In an effort to escape, Kapila lost himself in abstractions, the Buddha ordered Death to stand a lackey at the door of Peace, while Laou-tze turned his almond eyes within and descended the stair of Thought. To the first, salvation lay in metaphysics; to the second, in virtue; to the third, in indifference. Had their theories been fused, the revolt might not have been so vain.

CHAPTER TWO

The Negations of Antiquity.

THE CLAMOR OF LIFE AND THOUGHT ENTERED GREECE through Asia Minor. Quinet has called the itinerary of the tribes that took possession of her hills and vales, an itinerary of the gods. That somnambulist of history has seen, as in a vision, their passage marked, here by a temple, there by a shrine. While the tribes dispersed, the gods advanced. Orpheus has told the story of their youth; but now Orpheus is indiscoverable, and the days of which he sang are as vague as the future. When the gods entered folk-lore, they had already ascended Olympus, and the divinity of Jupiter was attested in traditions out of which Homer formed another Pentateuch. The name of the Ionian Moses is as unsubstantial as that of Orpheus; but if his personality is uncertain, it is yet a matter of common knowledge that his epics formed the articles of an indulgent creed, and that from them the infant Greece first learned the pleasures that belong to dream. At this time the mysteries of the archaic skies were dissolved. Dread had vanished; in its place was the Ideal. Throughout the mellow morns and languid dusks there was an unbroken procession of the gayest, the most alluring divinities; their fare was ambrosia, their laughter was inextinguishable. Virtue was rewarded on earth, and Nemesis pursued the wrong-doer. The dower of men and maidens was beauty; love was too near to nature to know of shame; religion was more aesthetic than moral, more gracious than austere. The theologians were poets: first Orpheus, Musaeus and Linus, then Homer and Hesiod; mirth, magnificence and melancholy they gave in fee.

Homer was not only a poet, he was an historian as well; and it is a fact amply demonstrated that he believed as little in the sacerdotal legends as Tennyson in the phantom idyls of Arthur. At that time no semblance of revealed religion was affected: the people, however, like all others before and since, would have gods, and gods they got; yet in displaying them to the infant race, Homer laughed at the divinities, and predicted that their reign would some day cease.

This prescience of the incredulity that was to come is significant. The history of Greece is one of freedom in art, in action, but particularly in thought. The death of Socrates, the flight of Aristotle, are among the exceptions that make the rule. In its broad outlines, the attitude of Hellenic thought was one of aggressive skepticism. This attitude may have been due to the fact that there was nothing which in any way resembled a national faith; each town, each hamlet, each upland and valley, possessed myths of its own, and such uniformity as existed appears to have been ritualistic rather than doctrinal. But perhaps the primal cause is best attributable to that nimble spirit of investigation which is at once a characteristic of the Greek intellect and a contrast to the cataleptic reveries of the Hindu.

It goes without the need of telling that the philosophers put Jupiter aside much as one does an illusion of childhood, and possibly with something of the same regret. But this leniency on their part was not universally imitated. The story of Prometheus, the most ancient of fables, traces of which have been discovered in the Vedas, became in the hands of Æschylus a semi-historical, semi-cosmological legend, in which the Titan, as representative of humanity, mouths from the escarpolated summits of Caucasus his hatred and defiance of Jove. Euripides, too, was well in the movement. There was not an article of Hellenic faith that he did not scoff at. Then came the farce. Aristophanes found nothing too sacred for his wit; with the impartiality of genius he joked at gods and men alike.

While the poets and dramatists were pulling down, the philosophers were building up. If the belief in an eternal fancy ball on Olympus was untenable, something, they felt, should be suggested in its place. In lieu, therefore, of the theory that Jupiter was the first link in the chain of the universe, Thales announced that the beginning of things was water; Anaximenes said air; Heraclitus preferred fire. Anaximinder held to an abstraction, the Infinite. Pythagoras, who, like all his countrymen, dearly loved a quibble, declared that the First Cause was One. This One, Xenophanes asserted, was a self-existent Mind. Empedocles gave as definition a sphere whose centre was everywhere and circumference nowhere, a definition which Pascal revived as an attribute of the Deity. Anaxagoras, who was banished for his pains, believed in a pure Intelligence. This pure Intelligence was not a deity, except perhaps in the sense of a *deus ex machina*; it was an explanation, not a god. But even so, it looked like one; there were already too many unknown gods, and the idea was not received with enthusiasm. Among those who opposed it with particular vehemence was Diagoras, he who first among the Greeks received the name of atheist. This logician chanced one day to be at sea during a heavy storm. The sailors attributed the storm to him. All that they were enduring was a punishment for conveying such an impious wretch as he. "Look at those other ships over there," said Diagoras. "They are in the same storm, aren't they? Do you suppose that I am in each of them?"

Diagoras had learned his lessons from Democritus, a thinker who in certain schools of thought holds today a position which, if not superior, is at least equal to that of Plato. The reason of this admiration is not far to seek. Democritus is the grandsire of materialism. Materialism is out of fashion today, but to-morrow it may come in again. During a long and continually rejuvenated career, it has been a veritable hydra. Every time its head seemed severed for all eternity, there has sprouted a new one, and one more sagacious than the last.

The theory of atoms announced in the remote past and repeated in recent years underwent a baptism of fire at the beginning of the present century. Dalton applied it to the interpretation of chemical laws, and a little later a band of German erudites embellished it with the garlands of new discoveries. Contemporary science treats it with scant respect; but all who are of a liberal mind admit that its conclusions have been useful implements of progress. Its originator, Democritus, was a contemporary of Sakya-Muni. It is even possible that he sat at the Buddha's feet; he is said to have wandered far into the East; and it is also recorded that he visited Egypt, whither he had been preceded by Pythagoras, and where his questioning eyes must have met the returning stare of the Sphinx.

At that time traveling was not necessarily expensive, yet in his journeys Democritus squandered his substance with great correctness; and when after years of absence he returned to his home, he found himself amenable to a law of the land which deprived of the honors of burial those who had dissipated their patrimony. A statute of this description was not of a nature to alarm such a man as Democritus. He invited all who cared to do so, to meet him in the public square, and there, through the wide leisures of Thracian days, he recited passages from Diakosmos, his principal work. This procedure, together with the novelty of the ideas which he announced, so impressed his hearers, that they made for him a purse of five hundred talents, and after his death erected statues in his honor. Those indeed were the good old days.

In the system which Democritus suggested to his countrymen, matter was pictured as the union of an infinite number of indivisible elements, which in the diversity of their forms represent the phenomena of nature. Beyond these indivisible elements, space held but voids. Atoms and emptiness is the theory in a phrase. The voids are the absence of obstacles, and the atoms continually passing through them are the constituents of all that is. In their eternal voyage through space, these atoms meet, unite and separate, unruled save by the laws of unconscious and mechanical necessity. To their chance clash is due the world; the universe is one of their fortuitous combinations, and the hazard which presided at its formation will some day see it again dissolved. The word hazard, it may be noted, is used from lack of a better term. In exact speech there seems to be nothing which at all resembles it. The accident that occurs in the street, the rambles of the ball on the roulette-table, may seem the play of chance; but were the predisposing causes understood, the accident would be recognized as the result of a cause in which chance had no part, and in the rambles of the ball the operations of consistent laws would be discerned. Dubois Reymond has noted that if, during a short though determined space of time, an intelligent man were able to mark the exact position and movement of every molecule, he could, in accordance with the laws of mechanics, foresee the whole future of the world. In the same manner that an astronomer can foretell the date on which a comet, after years of remote wanderings, will re-visit our heavens, so in his equations could this imaginary individual read the precise day when England shall burn her last bit of coal, and Germany brew her last keg of beer.

Beyond this theory, which as a matter of course includes the denial that man is a free agent, Democritus was accustomed to assert that out of nothing, nothing comes—an axiom which one does not need to be a mathematician to agree with, though it is one that somewhat impairs the scientific value of the first chapter of Genesis. And were it otherwise, if things sprang from nothing, the producing cause would be limitless; men might issue from the sea, and fish from the earth. In the fecundity of chaos, everything, even to the impossible, would be possible. But in a system such as this, in which the operations of nature are represented as effected by invisible corpuscles which possess in themselves the laws of all their possible combinations, there is room only for the actual; the universe explains itself more or less clearly, and that too without recourse to a First Cause or an over-watching Providence.*

Democritus was one of the first quietists, but he was quietist without leanings to mysticism. He was among the earliest to note that it is the unexpected that occurs; and he barricaded himself as best he might against avoidable misfortune by shunning everything that was apt to be a source of suffering or annoyance. Beyond mental tranquility, he appears to have praised nothing except knowledge; and it is stated that he hunted truth not so much for the pleasure of the chase as for the delight which the quarry afforded.

The negations of Democritus had been well ventilated when the stage of history was abruptly occupied by a band of charlatan nihilists, who personified the spirit of doubt with ingenious effrontery. These were the sophists. To be called a sophist was originally a compliment. It meant one who was a master in wisdom and eloquence. But when Greece found herself imposed upon by a company of mental gymnasts, who in any argument maintained the pros and cons with equal ease, who made the worst appear the best, who denied all things even to evidence, and affirmed everything even to the absurd, and who took sides with the just and the unjust with equal indifference—then the title lost its lustre and degenerated into a slur. This possibly was a mistake. A disapproval of the paradoxes of these dialecticians is almost a praise of the commonplace. Yet the sophists deserve small approbation. Their efforts to show that all is true and all is false, and, above all, the brilliancy of their depravity, undermined thought and morals to such an extent that philosophy, which had taken wings, might have flown forever away, had it not been re-beckoned to earth by the familiar reform instituted by Socrates.

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* Nolen: *La philosophie de Lange.* Wurtz: *La théorie atomique.*

Socrates was as ungainly as a satyr, but the suppleness of his tongue was that of a witch. At the hands of this insidious Attic, the sophists fared badly. He brought their versatilities into discredit; and in reviewing and enlarging a forgotten theory of Anaxagoras, purified thought with new lessons in virtue. This reaction seems to have been of advantage to moral philosophy, but detrimental to metaphysics; so much so, in fact, that his hearers turned their backs on theory, and devoted themselves to ethics. "Give me wisdom or a rope," cried Antisthenes, presumably to appreciative ears; and when Diogenes lit his dark lantern in broad daylight, he found every one eager to aid him in the ostentatious bizarrerie of that immortal farce.

In the midst of these pre-occupations there appeared a thinker named Pyrrho, to whom every skeptic is more or less indebted. Pyrrho was born at Elis. His people were poor, and doubtless worthy; but their poverty compelled him to seek a livelihood, which for a time he seems to have found, with his brush. By nature he was sensitive, nervous, as are all artists, and passionately in love with solitude. From some reason or another, but most probably from lack of success, he gave up painting, and wandered from one school to another, until at last a sudden introduction to Democritus turned the whole current of his restless thought. For this introduction he was indebted to Anaxarchus, a philosopher who went about asserting that all is relative, and confessing that he did not even know that he knew nothing. But in this there was possibly some little professional exaggeration. He was a thorough atomist, and very dogmatic on the subject of happiness, which, with broad good sense, he insisted was found only in the peace and tranquillity of the mind.

In Alexander's triumphal suite, Pyrrho went with this scholar to Asia, and together they visited the magi and the reflective gymnosophists. The abstracted impassibility of these visionaries caused him, it is said, an admiration so intense that he made from it a rule of daily conduct; and one day when his master, with whom he was walking, fell into a treacherous bog, Pyrrho continued calmly on his way, leaving Anaxarchus to the mud and his own devices. It may be that in this there was some prescience of the modern aphorism that any one is strong enough to bear the misfortunes of another; but even so, Pyrrho, when it was necessary, could be brave in his own behalf, and one of the few anecdotes that are current represent his unmurmuring endurance of an agonizing operation. This occurred before any one was aware of the imperceptibility of pain; the stoics were yet unborn.

During his long journey, Pyrrho acquired all, or nearly all, that the East had to teach. He listened to Brahman and Buddhist, and took from each what best they had to give. The impassibility of the one appealed to him forcibly, the ethics of the other seemed to him most admirable; and with these for luggage, packed together with an original idea of his own, he returned to his early home, where his fellow-citizens, as a mark of their appreciation, elevated him to the rank of high priest, a dignity which may have caused him some slight, if silent, amusement.

At that time Greece was rent by wars and revolutions. In the uncertainty of the morrow and the instability of all things, there was a general effort to enjoy life while enjoyment was yet to be had, and to make that enjoyment as thorough as possible. When, therefore, Pyrrho announced his intention to teach the science of happiness, he found his audience ready-made.

The doctrine which he then unfolded was received at first with surprise, but afterwards with sympathetic attention; it gained for him wide praise, and also fervent followers. These followers, to whom the thanks of posterity are due, took to themselves the duty of preserving his teaching; for, like Socrates, Pyrrho wrote nothing.

It has been hinted that Pyrrho accepted the materialism of Democritus, admired the hedonism of Anaxarchus, and practised the impassibility of the Hindus. These elements, which formed what may be termed the angles of his system, were rounded and completed by an original doctrine, which represented doubt as an instrument of wisdom, moderation and personal welfare. Before this time there had been much skepticism, but it had been of a vacillating and unordered kind, the indecision of the uncertain, and no one had thought of making it a stepping-stone to happiness. This Pyrrho did, and in it lies his chief originality.

The skepticism which Pyrrho instituted was an unyielding doubt, and one, paradox as it may seem, which was highly logical. In it Kant found the outlines of his *Criticism* traced in advance, and that too by a master-hand. Pyrrho admitted no difference between health and illness, life and death. He expected nothing, asked for nothing, believed in nothing. If he ever struggled with himself, the struggle was a silent combat, of which his heart was the one dumb witness. He was not simply a skeptic, nor yet merely a cynic; he was a stoic, with a leaven of both. To the eternal question, "What am I?" he answered, "It matters not." He had but one true successor—Montaigne. The everlasting refrain, *Que sçay ie?* is an echo, faint may be, but still an echo, of his own unperturbed indifference. The only refuge in the midst of the uncertainties to which man is ever a prey, lay, Pyrrho held, in an entire suspension of judgment. Between assertion and denial he did not so much as waver; he balanced his opinion in a perfect equipoise. As there is no criterion of truth, his position was impregnable.

"There is," he taught, "nothing that is inherently beautiful or ugly, right or wrong, and hence nothing that can be defined as an absolute truth. Things in themselves," he added, "are diverse, uncertain and undiscernable. Neither sensation nor thought is capable of teaching the difference between what is true and what is false. As a consequence, the verdict of mind and of senses should be equally distrusted; an opinionless impassibility should be observed; nothing should be denied, nothing should be affirmed; or if one of the two seems necessary, let the affirmation and the denial be concurrent."

And happiness? some one may ask. But that is happiness. Where there is indifference and apathy, there too is ataraxia, the perfect and unruffled serenity of the mind. If in act, word and thought, an entire suspension of judgment be maintained—if men, and women too, and events and results and causes, concerning all of which we may have our fancies and our theories, but whose reality escapes us, are treated with complete indifference—then do we possess an independent freedom, an unroutable calm. Once freed from beliefs and prejudices, an exterior influence is without effect; perfect impassibility is obtained; and with it comes the passionless serenity, the ataraxia, which is the goal of the sage.

Such in its broadest outlines was Pyrrho's doctrine. Confute it who may. For the details the reader must turn to back bookshelves where speculative spiders are the only hosts, and there thumb the mildewed pages of Sextus Empiricus, Aristocles and

Diogenes Laertius. It should be noted that Pyrrho's skepticism did not extend to virtue, which he was fond of saying is the one thing whose possession is worth the gift. At an advanced age he died, greatly esteemed by his townsmen, who to do him honor exempted all philosophers from taxation. But elsewhere he was forgotten, and at the time of his death his brilliancy was eclipsed by the rising glories of Epicurus.

When Epicurus addressed the public, he was no longer a young man. His early life had been an unbroken journey. No sooner was he settled in one place, than circumstances compelled him to seek another. These inconveniences did not prevent him from cultivating philosophy, for which from boyhood he evinced a marked predilection. "In the beginning was chaos," his first tutor announced. "And where did chaos come from?" asked Epicurus. But to this the tutor had no answer, and the boy turned to Democritus.

To this master much of his subsequent philosophy is attributable, but his personal success was due to the charm of his manner and the seduction of his words. Syrians and Egyptians flocked to Athens to hear him speak, and few among them went away dissatisfied.

At that time the riot of war had demoralized society. The echoes from a thousand battlefields had banished all sense of security. Greece, moreover, was as tired of speculations as of conflicts; the subtleties of the Lyceum had outwearied the most intrepid. In the midst of the general enervation, Epicurus came, like another Pyrrho, to tell the secret of Polichinelle, to paint pleasure and describe happiness. In the telling he made no mysteries; his hearers approached him without effort. Pleasure, he held, was too simple and unaffected to need logical demonstrations; and to make her acquaintance, commonsense was a better letter than mathematics. But pleasure should not be sought merely for pleasure's sake. It should be regarded as a means to an end. Between pleasure and pleasure there is always a choice. There are pleasures that should be shunned, and there are trials that should be endured. There is the pleasure that is found in the satisfaction of the flesh, and there is the pleasure which is found in the tranquillity of the mind. The one lasts but a moment, and wanes in repetition; the other endures through life, and increases with the years. All this Epicurus thoroughly understood. He had a maxim to the effect that wealth does not consist in the vastness of possessions, but in the limitation of desires. He did not restrict his hearers to scanty enjoyments; on the contrary, he preached their multiplication, but it was a multiplication which was both a lure and a prohibition. He wished men to live so simply that pleasure, when it came, might seem even more exquisite than it is. Of all the high-roads to happiness, he pointed to prudence as the surest and most expeditious. The prudent are temperate in all things, unambitious and of modest requirements, and through this very prudence maintain the health of mind and body which in itself is the true felicity of the wise.

The Epicurean doctrine was one long lesson in mental tranquillity. Anything that ministered to contentment was welcomed, and all things that disturbed it were condemned. Among the latter were the gods.

> "*Ces dieux que l'homme a fait, et qui n'ont pas fait l'homme.*"

The proper way to treat them was a difficult question. Epicurus had no taste for hemlock, and he found his garden very pleasant. He had no wish to flee, like Aristotle, in the night, nor mope, like Anaxagoras, in a dungeon. He was a teacher, not a martyr. His position, therefore, was one of extreme delicacy. On the one hand, he was obliged to consider his personal inconvenience; on the other, the superstitions of the masses. To respect the former and banish the latter, Epicurus took the gods and juggled with them, and in the legerdemain they mounted to such altitudes that from them the vulgar had nothing left to hope or to fear. Their existence was openly admitted, and their intervention as openly denied. In words of devout piety he took from them the reigns of government, and pictured their idleness as an ideal impassibility. After that, Olympus was to let.

The early legends say that the first created thing was fear. After routing the gods, Epicurus undertook to banish dread; *il timor delta paura*, as the Italians have it in their insidious tongue—the fear of fright, or at least that particular form with which hallucinated antiquity was accustomed to terrify itself into repentant spasms. Aided by the materialism of his master, Epicurus looked across the tomb, and announced that there no tormenting phantoms lurked in ambush. The dissolution of the atoms composing the body was also a dissolution of the atoms composing the soul. This affirmation of nothing divested life of a constant anxiety. It took from it one more care. It made the tranquillity of the mind easier, and assured it against an idle pre-occupation.

This doctrine, far from giving free play to the passions, held them well in check. Epicurus could see two sides to a question as well as another. Morality and temperance even to abstinence were praised. His hearers were enjoined to limit their desires, and at all times to be just and to be charitable. The virtues, too, were praised; and this not so much perhaps on account of their inherent beauty, as because they were safeguards against mental disturbance.

In disclosing his ideas, Epicurus necessarily refuted other theories; but his candor, his unalterable placidity and his luminous good faith, disconcerted his adversaries, whose infrequent reprisals he answered, if at all, with an epigram.

In disinteresting his adherents from all things and even from themselves, it was the wish of Epicurus to create, not a school of thought, but a something whose status should approach that of a general disbelief. It was to be a religion whose one dogma was repose. In this purpose he very nearly succeeded. By the terms of his will, his garden, his writings and authority descended from one disciple to another in perpetuity. There was then no statute of mortmain, and the terms of the testament remained in force for seven hundred years—in fact, down to the last gasp of classic antiquity.

The continuity which it enjoyed is perhaps less attributable to its dogmas than to a sentiment of great delicacy which pervaded it. Christianity teaches that all men are brothers, but Epicurism practiced the lesson before it was taught. Its bonds were those of friendship. Cicero has given it to history that the Epicureans had one to another the most unselfish sentiments. There was no community of goods. Friendship gave its own from a sense of pleasure and not from constraint.

During its long reign, Epicurism attracted many converts from other sects, but lost none of its own adherents. This singularity was explained by a wit of the baths, who, adjusting his toga, noted with the light banter of the day that it was easy enough to make a eunuch of a man, but another matter to make a man of a eunuch. It is possible that this *bel esprit* had grasped the doctrine better than his hearers. Certainly it has not always been thoroughly understood. Montesquieu accused it of corrupting Rome; but the accusation is groundless, for at its advent the Eternal City was one vast lupanar.

Seneca said of Epicurus that he was a hero disguised as a woman, and it is in this disguise that he is usually represented. The doctrine which he gave to the world seemed to praise sensuality where in reality it preached repose. Idlers in all times have halted at the appearance and omitted to go further. For this reason, if for none that is better, there has always been a false and a true Epicurism. Unhappily, the bastard has been best received, and in its reception it has managed to discredit both the philosopher and the philosophy.

Over the gateway to his olive-gardens Epicurus had written: "Enter, stranger; here all is fair; Pleasure lords the day." The sign was a bait, and of a flavor far different from the repellent severity of the notice which swung from the Academe. There admittance was refused to those who did not know geometry. But when the stranger, attracted by the proffered allurement, entered the gardens, he found that the lording of pleasure meant health of body and of mind.

There were some who entered, and who, delighted at the teaching, remained. There were others who entered at one gate and passed out discomfited at another; and there was also a third class, who, noting the tenor of the invitation, and knowing that the host was a philosopher, passed on charmed with the idea that the gratification of the senses possessed the sanction of metaphysics. These latter necessarily compromised Epicurus; and when his doctrine passed from Athens to Rome, it had been preceded by a bad reputation. For this the excuse is, seemingly, small. Epicurus was as voluminous a writer as Voltaire; and if the Romans misunderstood him, it is either because their knowledge of Greek was slight, or else because they were content to accept his teaching on hearsay. Toward the close of the republic, the system—such little at least as was generally known—became largely the fashion; and the elegance of Rome, like the indolence of Athens, cloaked its corruption with a mind-woven mantle of imaginary philosophy.

In descending the centuries, its reputation has not improved. Epicurism is not now synonymous, as it once was, with refined debauchery; yet at the dinner-tables of contemporary clubland there are many still unaware that he who is claimed as patron-saint had tastes so simple that his expense for food was less than an obolus a day, while Metrodorus, his nearest friend, expended barely a lepton more. Now and then, on high-days and festivals, a bit of cheese was eaten with sensual relish; but it is a matter of history that the ordinary fare of these voluptuaries was bread dipped in water.

The national divinity of the Romans is unknown. To all but the hierophants his name was a secret. Cicero has admitted that to him it was undisclosed. A tribune was even put to death for having pronounced it. If, in such a matter, conjectures were worth anything, it would not be irrational to fancy that the deity who ranked as Jupiter's superior was Pavor, Fright.

The hardiest and foremost conquerors in the world, the descendants of a she-wolf's nursling, were timid as children before the unintelligibility of the universe. Their earliest gods were revealed in the thunder; their belief was a panic; and when the panic subsided, it was succeeded by a dull, unreasoning dread.

No other land has seen a vaster Pantheon. There were so many divinities that Petronius said it was easier for the traveller to meet a god than a man. The more there were, the less insecure they felt. When they conquered a country, they took the gods as part of the spoils, but they treated them with great reverence; the temples were left standing and the altars unharmed. This moderation was probably due less to a sense of duty than to fear. They were afraid of their own gods; they were afraid of those of other nations; and those of whom they knew the least seem to have frightened them most.

In those days there was no iconoclasm, nor was there any attempt to make proselytes. The whole sentiment of Roman antiquity was opposed to the suppression of a creed, and such an idea as supplanting one religion by another was unknown. This liberality was particularly manifest during the latter part of the republic. At that time a statue to Isis was erected vis-a-vis to Jupiter. Sylla escorted a Syrian goddess to Rome, and Mithra, who had been lured from the East, became very popular among the lower classes. But all this occurred after triumphant campaigns. When Rome was young, her gods, if equally numerous, were less concrete.

The religion of the Sabines and the Latins was the naturalism of their Aryan ancestors. In it the gods, if emblematic, were unimaged; they were manifestations of the divine, but not actual divinities. Each new manifestation was a fresh revelation, to which the early Italiot was quick to give a name and found a worship; but in the worship there was more of dread than of hope, the dread of the unknown and the invisible.

Gradually the gods became less abstract, but as M. Boissier has hinted, they were probably as lack-lustre as the imagination of the laborers that conceived them, and so remained dully and dimly perceived until peddlers from Cumae and Rhegium came over with wares and legends. To their tales the Romans listened with marvelling surprise. Their gods, like themselves, were poor and prosaic; they had no history, no myths; and with a pleasant and liberal sense of duty, they robed them with the shreds and tatters of Ionian verse.

At precisely what epoch this occurred is uncertain; but as the art of writing was familiar to the Romans in very ancient times, and as it has been shown that the Roman alphabet was drawn from Eolo-Dorian characters, it is not unreasonable to infer that relations between the two races were established at a comparatively early date.

The gods to whom the freedom of the city was thus unwarily granted, grew and expanded with it, but their native charm had been lost in crossing the sea. The serene mythology in which they were nursed was supplanted by gloomy superstitions; the gay and gracious fictions were dulled with grave chronicles; and the gods, who at home were cordial and indulgent, developed under the heavy hand of their adopters into an inquisitive and irritable police.

Instead of being loved, they were feared, and the fear they inspired was the heartrending fright of a child pursued.

To the untrained minds of their supplicants they lurked everywhere, even in silence. They were cruel and vindictive; they tormented the Roman out of sheer wantonness, for the mere pleasure of seeing him writhe. Plutarch has confided to posterity that in those days a man could not so much as sneeze without exposing himself to their anger. In such circumstances, worship was not merely a moral obligation, it was a matter of business, a form of insurance against divine risks, in which the worshipper with naïve effrontery tried to bargain with the gods that they should hold him harmless. This effort was solemnized by a religious ceremony whose meaning had been forgotten, and during which the priests mumbled prayers in a jargon which they did not understand.

With a retrospect even of two thousand years, it is a little difficult to fancy that the Romans pinned their faith to these mummeries, yet such seems to have been the case. In Greece there was much incredulity, but it was the laughing incredulity of a boy who has disentangled himself from the illusions of the nursery. That of the Romans took a different form; it was an irritated skepticism which vacillated between defiant negation and fervent belief. Doubtless there were enlightened men who took it all easily and with several grains of Attic salt; but they were infrequent; incredulity seems to have been the exception and in no wise the rule.

When the Roman, angered to exasperation, braved the gods with a sacrilege, at the first sign of impending danger he was quick to implore their protection. Sylla, feeling in the humor, sacked Delphi and insulted Apollo; all of which, Plutarch says, did not prevent him, the first time he was frightened, from praying to the very god whose temple he had pillaged. And Sylla, it may be remembered, was the last one to harbor any unnecessary superstitions. If remorse was felt by such an accomplished ruffian as he, what could be expected of the mass of his compatriots, who, if equally ruffian, were far less accomplished?

In reading back through history, it seems as though the Romans hated their divinities and yet were afraid to show their hatred; and it seems too that had one of them met a god alone, that god would have fared badly. Indeed, it is probable that the majority were animated with a feeling of displeasure like to that of the Norse warrior who ardently wished to meet Odin that he might attack and slay him. Nevertheless, they attended to their religious ceremonies; though they did so, perhaps, very much as most people pay their taxes. Of two evils, they chose the least. But when it was found that Evemerus had announced that the gods were ordinary bullies, who had been deified because every one was afraid of them, it was very generally thought that the right nail had been struck full on the head. In any event the idea was highly relished; and when in a certain play an individual was introduced who denied that there was such a thing as a Providence, the applause of the audience was appreciatively eruptive. It was like the sight of a sail to shipwrecked sailors.

This, however, was all very well in comedy, where any little blasphemy brought with it the thrill and flavor of forbidden fruit; but tragedy was a different matter. There, it is said, when the hero announced his escape from the infernal regions, children screamed and women shuddered. And indeed the contemporary pictures of the land of shades seem well calculated to terrify even the valiant. In the imagination of the people, any life beyond the tomb was nearly synonymous with an eternal nightmare. Of actual and physical torture there was none, or at least none, they believed, for them. The vengeance of Jupiter descended only on Titans and insurgent kings; It disdained the insignificance of the vulgar.

Nor was there any hope of happiness. The beatitude of the

Elysian Fields was only for the anointed. The common mortal received neither reward nor punishment. The just and the unjust were plunged into the grotesque horrors of a fantastic night, from which, save on the stage, there was no escape.

The poets, admittedly, gave pictures of afterlife that were other and more alluring than this, but their pictures were discredited; and besides, between the conceptions of the dreamer and the opinions of the masses there is a chasm that is never bridged. To the general public the idea of immortality does not seem to have been a consolation. Probably it partook something of the character of an embarrassing dilemma. On the one hand was the liberty to accept it for what it was worth; on the other was the privilege to disbelieve in it entirely. There were doubtless not a few who took the latter course, and whose consequent freedom of thought must have been a cause of shuddering envy to the orthodox; but so inextinguishable is the love of life, that the majority seem to have preferred to believe that existence, however miserable, was continued beyond the tomb, to adopting any theory which savored of extinction. They were afraid, Seneca said, to go to Hades, and equally afraid not to go anywhere.

Toward the latter part of the republic, the credulity of the masses was somewhat impaired. Echoes of the *obita dicta* of the enlightened reached their ears. Besides, there was then little time for devotional exercises. Rome was in a ferment; the tramp of soldiery was continuous; cities were up at auction; nations were outlawed; institutions were falling; laws were laughed at; might was right, and magnificent vice triumphant. The field, then, was prepared for nothing if not a moralist, and Nature, who is often beneficent, produced one in the nick of time.

The annals of literature are harmonious with the name of Rome, yet Rome was the mother of but two men of letters—Cæsar and this moralist who was called Lucretius. Concerning the latter, history has been niggardly. It is said that he was born when Cæsar was a child, and died when Vergil was putting on the *toga virilis*; but beyond these dates history is dumb.

Lucretius is known to be the author of a poem, the most exquisite perhaps in the Latin tongue; but after that is recorded there are no anecdotes to help the sentence out. "Veil thy days," Epicurus had said, and the passionate Roman took the maxim for a motto. How he lived or why he lived, has been and now always will be purely conjectural. Yet if there is no diary to tell of the poet's incomings and outgoings, it is not a difficult matter to familiarize oneself with his train of thought and to picture the circumstances that directed it.

During his childhood, Sylla and Marius were playing fast-and-loose with their armies and with Rome. As a boy he could have witnessed a massacre beside which St. Bartholomew's was a street row—the massacre of fifty thousand allies at the gates of Rome—and on the morrow he may have heard the cries of eight thousand prisoners who were being butchered in the circus; while Sylla, with the air of one accounting for a trivial incident, explained to the startled Senate that the uproar came from a handful of insurgents bellowing at the whip. Later came the revolt of Spartacus, the conspiracy of Cataline, the flight of the coward Pompey, and finally the passing and apotheosis of Cæsar. If such things are not enough to give impressions to a poet, then one may well wonder what are.

In a monograph on this subject,[*] to which, it should be said in passing, the present writer is much indebted, M. Martha has noted that Lucretius believed in but one god. That god was Epicurus. "*Deus ille fuit, deus*," he exclaimed; and if the words sound exuberant, they may perhaps find an excuse in the fact that the Romans were very ignorant and Epicurus very wise. How he became acquainted with the works of the grave Athenian is unrecorded. In Rome, as has been hinted, contemporary acquaintance with them was scant and consisted of hearsay. At that time some fragmentary translations of Greek physics had been made, and it is possible that through them his attention was directed to materialism in general and Epicurism in particular. There is even a legend which represents him studying in Athens at the fountain-head. But however this may be, it is clear that Lucretius gave Rome her first real lesson in philosophy.

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[*] *Le Poème de Lucrèce.*

The doctrine which Lucretius preached to his compatriots was one of renunciation—renunciation of this world and renunciation of any hope of another. He was fanatical in his disbelief, and he expounded it with a vehemence and with an emphasis which, while convincing enough in its way, was yet in striking contrast to the apathy of Epicurus, who, serenely consistent to his principles, saw, as M. Martha says, no need to get excited when admonishing others to be quiet. But their tasks were dissimilar. Epicurus addressed himself to those who were already indifferent, while those who listened to Lucretius were still among the horrors of their original faith.

It was these horrors that Lucretius set about to dissipate. His imagination had caught fire on the dry materialism of Greece, and it was with the theory of atoms that he sought to rout the gods. The undertaking was not a simple matter. The abolition of the divine was an abolition of every tenet, political as well as devotional. The moment the atomistic theory was accepted, away went the idea that the phenomena of nature were dependent on the will of the gods; the whole phantasmagoria of religion faded, and with it the elaborate creed of centuries evaporated into still air. There was nothing left; even death was robbed of its grotesqueness.

To those who objected that in devastating the skies a high-road was opened to crime, Lucretius, pointing to the holocausts, the hecatombs and the sacrifices, answered, "It is religion that is the mother of sin."

"Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta."

Other teachers had tried to purify religion, but Lucretius wished nothing short of its entire suppression; it had been without pity for Rome, and he was without pity for it. He hacked and hewed it with all his strength, and with a strength that was heightened by irony and science. The irony was not new to Rome, but the science was. Against the panic of superstition he opposed the tranquillity of common sense; against Pavor, Veritas, or at least that which seemed truth to him.

There is nothing classic about Lucretius except his materialism. The value of that is slight, but contemporary readers have found themselves startled at the modernity of his sentiments. The cry of disgust which came from him is identical with that which the latest singers have uttered. Their common pessimism has been echoed across the centuries. In many ways Lucretius may be considered Pyrrho's heir as well as that of Epicurus. Between the testators the difference is not wide. One addressed the mind, the other the heart; the ultimate object, the attainment of happiness, was the same. If their dual influence has been unimportant, it is perhaps because the goal is fabulous. In this respect Lucretius may then be considered their direct successor, and one, moreover, who had his own views regarding the possible improvement of the possessions which descended to him. Lucretius not only denied the existence of the gods, he denied the existence of happiness. There was none in this life, and in his negation of an hereafter there could be none in another. As for ambition, what is it but a desire for an existence in the minds of other people—a desire which when fulfilled is a mockery, and unfulfilled a tomb? And besides, to what does success lead? To honor, glory and wealth? But these things are simulachres, not happiness. Any effort, any aspiration, any struggle, is vain.

> *"Nequidquam, quoniam medio de fonte leporum' Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."*

Nequidquam! In vain, indeed! How vain, few knew better than Alfred de Musset, when he paraphrased that immortal, if hackneyed, distich in lines like these:

> "*Au fond des vains plaisirs que j'appelle à mon aide,*
> *Je sens un tel dégout que je me sens mourir.*"

But Lucretius' nequidquam applied not only to empty pleasures; it applied to all the illusions that circle life, and to all that drape the grave. His disenchantment needed but one thing to be complete, a visit from that thought which was afterwards to haunt De Vigny:

> "*Seul, le silence est grand, tout le reste est faiblesse.*"

Whether or not the influence of Lucretius was great enough to effect a revolution, is difficult to determine. But this at least is certain: he was a popular poet, and the appearance of his work coincided with a great decline of superstition. The dread which had been multiplying temples subsided. Among the educated classes, atheism became the fashion. Those who were less indifferent occupied themselves in cooling their indignation, but believers were infrequent. Varro declared that religion was perishing, not from the attacks of its enemies, but from the negligence of the faithless. The testimony of Lucilius is to the effect that no respect was shown to laws, religion, or to gods. To Cicero the latter were absurd; and the immortality of the soul, which Cæsar denied in the open senate, was to him a chimera. "In happiness," he said, "death should be despised; in unhappiness it should be desired. After it there is nothing." Cornelius Nepos looked back and saw temples in ruins, unvisited save by archaic bats. Religion was a thing of the past. Here and there it received that outward semblance of respect which is the due of all that is venerable, but faith had faded and fright had ceased to build. The Romans, some one has suggested, were not unlike those fabled denizens of the under-earth, who suddenly deserted their subterranean palaces, left their toys, their statues and their gods to the darkness, and, emerging into the light, saw for the first time the pervasive blue of the skies and the magnificent simplicity of nature.

Later there was a revival. The restoration of religion was undertaken as a governmental necessity. The Senate proclaimed the divinity of Augustus, and thereafter the Cæsars usurped what little worship was left. That there was much faith in their divinity is doubtful. Valerius Maximus appears to have had no better argument than that they could be seen, which was more than could be said of their predecessors. Vespasian seems to have taken the whole thing as a joke. "I am becoming a god," he said with a smile as he died. Meanwhile, in the general incredulity, the earlier deities lost even the immortality of mummies. Under Diocletian a pantomime was given with great success. It was called, *The Last Will and Testament of Defunct Jupiter*.

CHAPTER THREE.

The Convulsions of the Church.

THE EARLIEST BARBARIAN THAT INVADED ROME WAS A JEW. He did not thunder at the gates; he went unheralded to the Taberna Meritoria—a squalid inn on the Tiber that reeked with garlic—broke his fast, and then sauntered forth, as any modern traveller might do, to view the city. His first visit was to his compatriots at the foot of the Janiculum. To them he whispered something, went away, returned and whispered again. After a while he spoke out loud. Some of his hearers contradicted him; he spoke louder. The peddlers, the rag-pickers, the *valets-de-place* and hook-nosed porters grew tumultuous at his words. The ghetto was raided, and a complaint for inciting disorder was lodged against a certain Christus, of whom nothing was known and who had managed to elude arrest.

Who was this Christus? Apart from the Gospels, canonical and apocryphal, history gives no answer. He is not mentioned by Philo or Justus. Other makers of contemporary chronicles are equally silent. Josephus makes a passing allusion to him, but that passing allusion is very generally regarded as the interpolation of a later hand. It may be added, that while Justus and Josephus say nothing of Jesus, they yet describe Essenism, and in those days many of the tenets of the early Church were indistinguishable from it. It seems, therefore, not unfair to suppose that either these historians knew nothing of the teaching of the Christ, or else that they considered it too unimportant to be deserving of record.

An early legend has, however, been handed down from Celsus, a Jew who lived about the time of Hadrian. The work containing this legend has been lost, and is known only through fragments which Origen has preserved. In substance it amounts to this. A beautiful young woman lived with her mother in a neglected caphar. This young woman, whose name was Mirjam—Mary—supported herself by needlework. She became betrothed to a carpenter, broke her vows in favor of a soldier named Panthera, and wandering away gave birth to a male child called Jeschu—Jeschu being a contraction of the Hebrew Jehoshua, of which Jesus is the Greek form. When Jeschu grew up, he went as servant into Egypt, which was then the head-quarters of the magicians. There he learned the occult sciences, and these gave him such confidence that on his return he proclaimed himself a god.

The story of Mirjam and Panthera is repeated in the Gemaras—the complements and commentaries of the Talmud—and also in the Toledoth Jeschu, an independent collection of traditions relative to the birth of the Christ. These later accounts differ from that of Celsus merely in this, that Mirjam is represented as a hairdresser, while Panthera or Pandira is described as a freebooter and a ruffian. It may be noted that, in a work on this subject, Mr. Baring-Gould states that St. Epiphanius, when giving the genealogy of Jesus, brings the name Panthera into the pedigree.*

The importance of these legends is slight, and the question of their truth or falsity is of small moment. That which it is alone important to consider is the individuality of the Saviour; and the point whose conveyance has been sought is simply this, that beyond a restricted circle nothing was known of it during the first century of the present era.

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* *The Lost and Hostile Gospels.*

Jesus, the Anointed, the Christ, was the flower of the Mosaic Law. The date of his birth is uncertain, and the story of his early years is vague. The picture of his boyhood, in which he is represented as questioning the Darschanim, the learned men, is, however, familiar to us all. In the schools—the houses of Midrasch, as they were called—he heard the sacred books of his race expounded, and learned such lessons in ethics as were obtainable from the moralists of the day. Meanwhile the dream of Israel, the forecast of a triumphant future, the advent of a Messiah, the abrupt upheaval which was to be both the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning, the punishment of the wicked, the sanctification of the faithful, the remission of sins and the magnificence that was to be, were constantly discussed before him. As he grew older, he seems to have placed little credence on these prophecies; he waived them aside, retaining only the lessons in ethics, to which, in advancing years, as his own ministry began, he added an idea which he had gathered from one preaching in the wilderness, an idea which his own originality heightened with a newer force and flavor, and which formed the subsequent corner-stone of the Christian Church.

At that time his belief in himself appears to have been slight. To the title of Messiah he made no claim. It was given to him unsought by his earliest adherents, who later imagined a genealogy which certain fractions of Christianity declined to accept. Among these, the Ebionites and Docetae are the most noteworthy. To the one he was an ordinary individual; to the other, a phantasm.

The story of his birth is one which is common to many religions. In a fragment of Irenæus it is stated that the Gospel according to St. Matthew was written to the Jews, who earnestly desired a Messiah of the royal line of David. To satisfy them that their wish was fulfilled was not an easy matter. The Aramaic Gospel to the Hebrews, as well as the gospel according to St. Mark, offered no evidence that Jesus was the one they sought. But the early Church had the boldness of youth. Against the existing Gospels she opposed a new evangel, one which was more complete and convincing than its predecessors, and one, moreover, which bore the revered and authoritative name of Matthew. St. Matthew, however, had then long been dead, and his ability to write in Greek does not appear to have been suspected.

The Gospel which the Church attributed to him is today very generally regarded as a compilation of its predecessors, with the addition of a genealogy. The Messiah, it had been prophesied, would be of the house of David, and accordingly an effort was made to show that Jesus was of the royal race. The royal race seems then to have been extinct; but that is a side issue. The one point to be noted is that the descent of Jesus is claimed through Joseph, who, it is stated, was not his father.

The genealogy completed, the historian turned his attention to two passages in what is known today as the Old Testament. The first of these passages occurs in Isaiah (vii. 14—16), the second in Micah (v. 2). The first relates to a child that the Lord was to give as a sign, and the second designates Bethlehem as his future birthplace. It may be noted that the term in Isaiah which refers to the child's mother, and which was afterwards rendered into παρθένος, is *olme*, and *olme* means young woman. The pseudo-Matthew, however, preferred a narrower description, and represented the mother as a virgin. In regard to the second passage, there is doubtless some mistake, as all impartial commentators are agreed that the nativity of Jesus took place, not at Bethlehem, but at Nazareth.

There are, however, few great events which have been handed down through history unswathed in fables and misconceptions. The Gospel according to St. Matthew—and the remark holds true of the others—was written without any suspicion that it would be subjected to the scrutiny of later ages; it was written to prepare man for the immediate termination of the world. Such misstatements as it contains may therefore be regarded with a lenient eye.

But to return to the point. However slight was the belief of Jesus in himself, it is tolerably clear that the pretensions of his adherents angered the Nazarenes. They declined to admit the royal and supernatural claims that were advanced in favor of one whose kinsmen were of the same clay as themselves. To them he was merely a graceful rabbi. Yet when he addressed the wondering fishers of Galilee, his success was both great and immediate. His electric words thrilled their rude hearts; they were both charmed and coerced by the grave music which he evoked from the Syro-Chaldaic tongue; their belief in him was spontaneous; they regarded him as dwelling in a sphere superior to that of humanity; gladly would they have proclaimed him king; and it was from their unquestioning confidence that Jesus drew a larger trust in himself. Certainly his personal magnetism must have been very great. There is a legend which represents him as being far from well-favored, and this legend, like the others, is doubtless false. It is probable that he possessed that exquisite, if effeminate, type of beauty which is not infrequent in the East. One may fancy that his tiger-tawny hair glistened like a flight of bees, and that his face was whiter than the moon. In his words, his manner and appearance, there must have been a charm which was both unusual and alluring. Indeed, there were few who were privileged to come into direct contact with him that did not love him at once; but the multitude stood aloof. It refused to recognize the son of David in the mystic anarchist who had no where to lay his head.

The ministry of Jesus did not extend over three years. M. Renan thinks it is possible that it did not extend much over one. But the time, however short, was well filled. On its lessons, races and nations have subsisted ever since. The pity of it is that the purport of the instruction should have been misunderstood.

It has been already hinted that the cornerstone of the Christian Church was formed of an idea which Jesus gathered from John the Baptist. When, therefore, he sent forth his disciples, he gave them no other message than that which he had himself received: "Go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." And he added: "Verily, I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before the Son of Man be come." "All these things shall come upon this generation," were his explicit words to his hearers and disciples. After the episodes in the wilderness, Jesus went into Galilee, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand." And a little later he addressed his auditors in these words: "Verily I say unto you that there be some of them that stand by which shall in nowise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power."

Citations of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely. If the testimony of the Gospels is to be believed, it is evident that the disciples were convinced that the fulfilment of the prophecy was a matter of months or at most of a few years. They lived, as M. Renan has noted, in a state of constant expectation. Their watchword was *Maranatha*, The Lord cometh. In fancy they saw themselves enthroned in immutable Edens, dwelling among realized ideals amid the resplendent visions which the prophets had evoked.

It was this error that formed the corner-stone of the Christian Church. When later it was recognized as such, the Church interpreted the "kingdom of God" as the establishment of the Christian religion.

But Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion, and still less of substituting a personal doctrine for the Mosaic Law. He came to prepare men, not for life, but for death. The virtues which he praised most highly were those of renunciation and abnegation of self. His one thought was centered in the approaching end of the world. It was on this belief that the value of his teaching rested; viewed in any other light, his continual condemnation of labor would be inexplicable; while his prohibition against wealth, his adjuration to forsake all things for his sake, the blow which he struck at the virility of man, his praise of celibacy, his disregard of family ties, his abasement of marriage, and his contempt even of the dead, would be without meaning

The faith which he inculcated was a necessary preparation for the event then assumed to be near at hand. It was exacted as a means of grace. In it the reason, the understanding, had no part. It was the complete submission of the intelligence, a resolution to accept dogmas without question. In the moral certainty which his believers possessed of the immediate realization of their hopes, it is not surprising that this faith should have been readily accorded. The enigma lies in the faith of the subsequent centuries. It may be, however, that the doctrine which has descended to us was merely the exoteric teaching. Of at least fifty Gospels that were written, four only have been recognized by the Church. Of these, the originals do not exist, and their supposed texts have been so frequently re-touched, that more than thirty thousand variations are said to have been discovered. It may be, then, that there was another doctrine, an esoteric teaching, which was never fully disclosed, or else has been lost in the dust-bins of literature. This possibility is strengthened by the fact that Valentine is recorded as asserting that he had received an esoteric doctrine which Jesus imparted only to the most spiritual among his disciples; and the possibility is further heightened by the incongruity between the sublimity of the genius which was the Christ's and the tenancy of a belief in the realization of the visions of Daniel.

Jesus was in no sense a scientist, but his insight was piercing and his intuitions clairvoyant. He was the most transcendent of rebels, but he was possessed of a comprehension too unerring to be deluded by the utopias of dreams. It maybe, then, that in the solitudes of the desert he conceived some such system as that which was taught by his predecessor in Nepal. To him, as to the Buddha, life was a tribulation. And what fairer paradise could there be than the infinite rest of chaos? Let the sullen rumble of accursed life once be quelled, and God's kingdom would indeed be come with power. What save this could have been that peace which passeth all understanding?

It may be remembered that according to the Hebrew sages man survived only in his children. The doctrine of resurrection, and the attendant theory of rewards and punishments, was unknown to them. But at the time of the advent of the Christ, these ideas were part of the teaching of the Pharisaic party. Where they were gathered is uncertain. They may have been acquired through acquaintance with the Parsis—and certainly Satan bears an astonishing resemblance to Ahriman—or they may have merely represented the natural development of Messianic hopes. In any event they seem to have pre-occupied Jesus greatly; and when questioned about them, he gave answers which, while delicate in their irony, are seldom other than vague.

It is probable that at the time when the questions were addressed to him, his system, which owing to his sudden death was perhaps never fully elaborated, was then merely in germ. But that he reflected deeply over the views of the patriarchs there can be no doubt, and it is equally indubitable that he considered the high-road to salvation to be discoverable, if anywhere, through them. The logic of it amounted to this: Life is evil; the evil subsists through procreation; ergo, abolish procreation and the evil disappears.

Many texts from the canonical Gospels might be given in support of this statement, but to cultivated readers they are doubtless too familiar to need repetition here. For the moment, therefore, it will suffice to quote two passages from the lost Gospel according to the Egyptians, a chronicle which was known to exist in the second half of the second century, and was then regarded as authoritative by certain Christian sects. The passages are to be found in the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria, iii. 6-9. In one, the Saviour speaks as follows: "I am come to destroy the work of the woman: of the woman, that is of concupiscence, whose works are generation and death." In the other passage, Salome, having asked how long men should live, the Lord answered, "So long as you women continue to bear children."

These passages, if authentic, and there is little reason to think them otherwise, seem tolerably conclusive. In any event, it was this idea that peopled with hermits the deserts of Nitria and Scete, and it was this same idea which in its weakened force filled those bastilles of God, the convents and monasteries of pre-mediaeval days. Cerdo, Marcion, and others of lesser note, advocated a doctrine of which it was evidently the starting-point; in many religious communities its influence is still distinguishable; but the question as to whether or not the idea as here represented was really the one on which the thoughts of the Saviour were turned, seems best answerable in the affirmative, if for no other reason than that it is less extravagant and more logical to regard the Christ as a practical philosopher than as an alluring visionary. And if he was not the one, he must have been the other. Certainly no one can claim for him any higher originality than that which was manifested in the form and flavor of his parables. He was the most entrancing of nihilists, but he was not an innovator. Others before him had instituted a reaction against the formalism of the Judaic creed. The austerity of his ethics, the communism which he preached, his contempt of wealth, and his superb disdain of everything which was of this world, were integral parts of the doctrine of the Essenes. The conception of a Supreme Being, differing in benignity from the implacable terrorism which Jehovah exerted, had been already begun by the prophets. Jesus unquestionably amplified the Father of Israel into the God of Humanity, but he did not invent him. It may be further noted that Jesus had no thought of representing himself as an incarnation or descendant of the Deity. To such a title he made no claim, nor except in certain passages inserted in the fourth Gospel, is he ever represented as using it. If Son of God at all, he was so in the sense that might apply to all men, and of which the address beginning, "Our Father who art in heaven," is a fitting example.

Yet this at least may be said. He created pure sentiment, the love of the ideal. He gave the world a fairer theory of æsthetics, a new conception of beauty, and he brought to man a dream of consolation which has outlasted centuries and taken the sting from death. So singular and powerful was the affection which he inspired, that after the crucifixion, Mary of Magdala, in the hallucinations of her love asserted that he had arisen. He arose, indeed, but as elsewhere suggested, it was in the adoring hearts of his disciples. And had it been otherwise, had their natures been less vibrant, their sympathies less exalted, less susceptible to psychological influences, the world would have lost its suavest legend, and the name of the pale Nazarene would have faded with those of the Essenes of the day.

M. Renan says that Rome, through relations with Syria, was probably the first occidental city that learned of the new belief. There were then, he has noted, many Jews there. Some were descendants of former prisoners of war, others were fugitives; but all were poor, miserable and down-trodden. To this abject colony Christianity brought an unexpected hope. The ideal, it is true, had fled from earth; but was it not possible to find it again above?

Many there were that accepted the new creed unquestioningly, but some of their more conservative brethren, disturbed at its dissidence with their orthodox tenets, denounced their compatriots to the government. It is possible that a certain amount of suppression was then exercised, but it appears to have been accidental and momentary. The Romans were familiar with too many deities to be alarmed at the advent of a new one. Their polytheistic tendencies made it quite easy for them to believe in a god, made man, and the suppressions which ensued were ordered in the interest of the public peace. The Christians were evidently regarded as seditious; in denying the divinity of the Cæsars they were guilty of nothing less than high-treason. They were punished accordingly, but their punishment had no religious signification. The Epicureans might easily have been subjected to analogous treatment, but the Epicureans were philosophers, and as such saw no reason for pulling a wry face at harmless mummeries.

Then, too, the early Christians seem to have made themselves extremely unpopular. The Pantheon was most hospitable; its niches were free to every comer. But the believers in the Nazarene would have none of it. They not only refused any allegiance to Olympian potentates, but they would not permit their own God to consort with them. It was tantamount to saying that Jupiter's society was pernicious. There were few indeed that pinned much faith to that opulent divinity; but the open show of respect which was demanded as a governmental necessity was generally accorded, and nothing else was asked. The Christians, moreover, gave offence by their mode of life. They appear to have been a quiet, silent and possibly inoffensive sect, who avoided the forum and the circus, and passed their hours in sullen seclusion. Added to this, they predicted the approaching end of the world, which was obstinate enough to continue to revolve through spacious voids of which they were utterly ignorant; and this prophecy on their part could not have been regarded otherwise than as an open slur on the imperial optimism of the day.

It was doubtless about this time that the edict, *Non licet esse Christianos*, was passed—an edict which with curious clairvoyance appears to have been directed mainly against those Romans who were tempted to embrace the new belief. It is one of the platitudes of history that Rome fell through her rottenness. Yet, as M. Renan has been at no loss to show, Rome fell when her soldiery became converted. The spirit of peace which pervaded the early Church enervated a nation; the virility of the most belligerent of races was sapped. But this is a digression. During its infancy, Christianity was smitten by a disease which has been likened to croup. This croup was endemic in Alexandria, and from there floated over to Rome. It was called Gnosticism.

Gnosticism was a compound of corrupt Platonism, Hinduism and charlatanism. To abandon M. Renan's simile and take another, it was the bridge over which the world passed from paganism. Gnosticism gathered up theosophy, mysticism, rites, ceremonials and art—everything, in fact, which seemed worth the gathering—and passed them all to Christianity, which, thus equipped, set out on its triumphant career. But not at once. The populace, as has been hinted, was not favorably disposed. Tertullian says that a Christian was denned as an enemy of gods, emperors, laws, customs, and Nature itself. To the believers in Jesus was ascribed the influence of that which the modern Roman calls the jettatura. They were held to-be connected with every calamity; and after each disaster the Eternal City echoed with shrieks from uncounted throats, *Christianos ad leonem!* To the circus with the Christians; let them camp with the beasts! It was then that Christianity learned to hate.

Meanwhile, the Ghetto mounted like a flood. Its ascension was favored by many things. The atmosphere of Rome dripped with metaphysics, and through it had passed a new and pervading sense of lassitude. Nero was dead; and Nero, it may be noted, was paradox incarnate. He was an imperial nightmare that was far from unpopular; a drama of the horrible, with a joke for finale; a caricature of the impossible in a crimson frame; a Ceasar whose follies were laws and whose laws were follies; a maniac whose cell was the world and whose delirium was fame; a sceptred acrobat, with a throne for spring-board; an emperor jealous of a tenor; and a cabotin jealous of the gods; in fact, the antithesis of the humdrum. Under him, Rome saw luxury and ferocity hand-in-hand; cruelty married to pleasure. Christians mantled in flame illuminated the gardens of a prince. Intoxication had no frontiers. Life itself was a breathless chase after impossible delights. But now all was quite different, and it was with something of that lassitude which succeeds an orgy that the Romans found themselves tired even of themselves. They could not all have the moon for mistress. What was there left for them to do? Christianity offered itself, and as often as not Christianity was accepted.

After Constantine had used the new belief as a masquerade, its spread was rapid. Julian, indeed, threatened to prevent such of the Galileans from wearing their heads as refused to aid him in the reconstruction of polytheism, but the halt under him was momentary. The impulsion continued unchecked; the intermediate persecutions had made it notorious; the advance continued, but in the advance the watchword, *Martin atha*, had lost its meaning. The end of the world was no longer expected. Fortune favoring, Christianity turned optimist. Yet paganism was not dead; it had merely fallen asleep. Isis gave way to Mary; apotheosis was replaced by canonization; the divinities were succeeded by saints; and, Africa aiding, the Church surged from mythology with the Trinity for tiara.

At the close of the fourth century, the Church was practically mistress of civilization. Her sway was immense and uncontested. And what a sway it was! Temples, statues and manuscripts were destroyed. Bands of monks went about pillaging and demolishing whatever they could. The Bishop Theophilus, after destroying the temple of Serapis, set fire to the Alexandrian library which contained nearly all the literary treasures of the past. But the power of the Church, though magnificent, was brief. At the moment when her glory was most brilliant, when Julian was forgotten and persecution had ceased, a mixed multitude of barbarians beat at the gates of Rome, and in their victorious onslaught swept antiquity away.

When the Church found herself surrounded by unfamiliar kings and chieftains—a set of fair, proud, honest and brutal ignoramuses, who wandered from place to place, or shut themselves up and got drunk in their strongholds, and with whom she had nothing in common—her dominant idea was to govern them. In this she succeeded: strength, however great, is defenceless against cunning, and the Church then was the depository of all the intelligence of the age. But her first act was to save herself from the violence to which society fell a prey. To save herself, she announced the principle of a separation of spiritual and temporal power. This accepted, she announced as corollary the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal. The rest was easy. Free inquiry was condemned; belief was forced; heretics were persecuted; and out of the ashes of imperial Rome a mitred prelate dragged a throne. *L'Eglise, c'etait lui.* Through his influence the barbarians were led to baptism like brutes to the slaughter. Those who objected were baptized by force. Dagobert had all Gaul baptized in this way. Thereafter the Church presided over an eclipse of the intellect that lasted a thousand years. During that thousand years it was blasphemy to think; yet over those ages that are known as dark there hovered that prescience of fairer things which is the accompaniment of night.

Meanwhile, in a corner of the Orient whither some of the flotsam and jetsam of civilization had drifted, a college of charlatans wearied the centuries with abstractions and discussions on words. Their earlier disputes are legendary. One of them concerned the soul. Was the soul round or oblong? This question was never satisfactorily determined. Another proposition which was much discussed concerned the Saviour. Was he, or was he not, co-eternal with God? The Council at Nicæa, to which appeal was made, decided that he was both; and the Church anathematized all those who disagreed with its decision. In spite of the anathema, certain erudites suggested a compromise which involved the acceptance or rejection of an iota: ὁμοούσις signified consubstantial, ὁμοιούσιος signified like as to the substance. If the one term were replaced by the other, the difficulty, it was argued, would be removed. But this solution was too easy to be well received, and the absence of that iota caused the death of several thousand dissenters.

Later, Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople, asserted that Mary, being of the earth, could not rightly be considered the mother of a God. This assertion was condemned as heretical by the General Council of Ephesus, and it was ordered that those who accepted it should be exterminated at once. Eutyches the archimandrite announced the contrary of that which Nestorius had advanced. He, too, was excommunicated; the true doctrine being that Jesus was both a perfect divinity and a perfect man. Then suddenly the Orient became peopled with heretics; some held to Nestorius, others to Eutyches. In the second quarter of the sixth century, Justinian, an emperor who is said to have been so illiterate that he could not write his own name, and who in consequence was easily bored by subtleties, confiscated the property of all who were suspected either of Nestorian or Eutychian sympathies. In spite of these efforts, heresy was not suppressed; or perhaps it would be more exact to say that when one was suppressed, its place was immediately filled by another. At last, Heraclitus in utter exasperation issued an edict forbidding any one to speak of the single or double nature of Jesus the Christ. This edict itself was regarded as heretical, and continued to be so regarded until Constant published another which forbade any theological discussion, no matter of what kind, nature or description. To this edict, which the Pope Theodore qualified as an abominable subtlety, no one paid any attention. Constant, however, refused to be idle. He tried to check the spread of monachism, which at that time was enormous, and failing, went to Rome and sacked it.

In the eighth century appeared the heresy known as that of the iconoclasts. The Church, as has been hinted, adopted much of the pomp of paganism, and with advancing years made herself gorgeous with crosses, images and tapers; but a particular predilection was manifested in favor of big dolls, whether of marble, bronze or precious metals. To this the iconoclasts objected; with the Emperor Leo for chief, they destroyed the statues of Jesus, of Mary, of the saints and angels, wherever such statues were to be found; and for many years persecuted and massacred the worshipers. Yet when the Empress Irene assumed the purple, the iconoclasts were at once pursued with a vigor that was riotous and avenging. It is just possible that this terrible lady perceived that the destruction of images was the destruction of art. But be this as it may, the Beautiful had been sadly frightened, and thereafter remained invisible until lured to view again by the enticements of the Renaissance.

In Europe, matters were even worse. There was a continual panic, a ceaseless fear. There was no security, either civil or ecclesiastical. Diseases of the mind and body were omnipresent; famine at times was so ruthless that anthropophagy was openly practiced. The only theory of right was might, and of this the Church held the reins. Many of the bishops were little better than bandits. They passed their days in wandering from place to place and in pillaging right and left. In a forgotten tale of Cervantes, one amiable scoundrel hails another, "Does your Grace happen to be a highwayman?" "Yes," the other answers, "in the service of God and honest people." Eliminate the courtesy and replace it with a blow from a bludgeon, and the question and answer may be represented as repeated indefinitely for five centuries.

Those of the clergy whose tastes were less adventurous devoted themselves to study and were looked upon as magicians; others, in the dim recesses of undrained monasteries, weary of all things, and most of life, gave themselves up unresistingly to acedia, the delirious pessimism of the cloister, and shrieked for death.

It was in those days that a demon of uncommon ugliness flitted through the gloom of the abbeys, whispering gaily to the cowering monks, "Thou art damned, and thou, and thou art damned for all eternity!" In the cathedrals, maidens had seen a beckoning fiend, who through shudders of song had called them down to swell the red quadrilles of hell. These visitors of course were legates of Satan. And who was Satan? His biography, though well filled, need not be long.

Satan was Jew from horn to hoof. The registry of his birth is contained in the evolution of Hebraic thought. In early ages, when sabaism, the primitive polytheism of the Semitic tribes, narrowed into monotheism, Jehovah was worshiped as the one real divinity. In his hands were the springs of all that is, of good and evil as well. But this idea was transient. About the Eternal were grouped a number of spirits whose duty it was to supervise the works of man. Among these celestials was one whose rôle was limited to that of accuser. This rôle appears to have been gradually expanded into one of general hostility. Above was Jehovah, below was man; while between the two were the inimical eyes of Satan. In the younger books of the Old Testament, Satan is little more than a detective; in the New Testament he is an inciter to evil. But during the intervening period two things seem to have happened. The Hebrews had communicated with the Parsis, and Satan, banished from heaven, had assumed all the powers and attributes of Ahriman. Thereafter he was hatred incarnate, the spirit that *stets verneint*, the fallen son of a mighty father, a disinherited prince who had founded a rival monarchy and called it Hell.

It is in this guise that he appears in the New Testament, and the delicate moral of the Synoptic Gospels is perhaps little more than the prefigurement of the endless conflict between right and wrong. But be this as it may, it is evident that after Satan and the Saviour had met, the apparitions of the former became a matter of frequent occurrence. Did not his minions the sucubes and incubes haunt with lascivious lips the sleep of holy men and holier women? Was it not through his artifices that St. Victor was seduced by a beautiful girl? Did he not personally menace and threaten St. Maur? The stone which he flung at the inflexible St. Dominick is a matter too well attested to be susceptible of doubt. See how he tempted St. Anthony. In fact, unvisited by him it was difficult to be considered a saint at all. In the middle ages he was everywhere. The atmosphere was so heavy with his legions, that the Messalians made spitting a part of their devotions. From encountering him at every turn, the world at last became used to his ways, and thereupon imagined that pact in which the devil agrees, in exchange for the soul, to furnish whatever is desired. The case of Gerbert is one in point. According to the gossip of the day,* Gerbert, once a Spanish student, afterwards Archbishop of Ravenna, and subsequently Pope, entered into an agreement of this kind, and one night the devil came in person to claim him. It was the agreement they had made together long before in Cordova, where Gerbert, finding his studies too arduous, had signed the bond in exchange for the royal road. It was the devil who had taught him all he knew—algebra, clock-making, and how to become a Pope. It was clear as day that he would have known none of these things without infernal assistance. Gerbert resists, but Mephisto proves his claim. "You did not think me a logician, did you?" are said to have been his historic words, and, presto! Gerbert disappears in a fork of lambent flame.

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* Michelet: *Historie de France.*

When Christianity first raised its head, it viewed the pagan gods as part of the cohorts of Satan. These cohorts Tertullian divided into two classes—the rebels who had been banished from heaven in Satan's train, and the angels who in antediluvian days had fallen in love with the daughters of men. Their queen was Lili Abi (Lilith), Adam's first wife, from whose name our lullaby is said to be derived. The Dusii, a later subdivision who have given us the deuce, were so well known to St. Augustine that he declared it an impertinence to deny their existence. These latter appear to have been a malignant set of incubi who made a prey of women. Mr. Lecky says that but little over a hundred years ago an annual mass was given in the abbey of Poissey that the nuns might be preserved from their wiles.

Satan, meanwhile, lost much of his dignity. Mice, wolves and toads became his symbols, his auxiliaries, and even his momentary incarnations. Throughout the middle ages no sorcerer was considered well equipped without a sleek black cat, an animal to which, like many a sensible mortal, the devil appears to have been greatly attached. It was in the company of the cat that the sabbat was attended. The sabbat was popularly held to be a mass offered to Satan, and any one suspected of attending it, or being in any wise affiliated with Mephisto, was burned. The first punishment for this offence occurred in Toulouse in 1275. During the next fifty years over four hundred people were burned in the neighborhood. In the fifteenth century all Christianity joined in a hunt for witches; and the hunt continued for three hundred years, until every sorcerer had disappeared and Salem put out her bonfires. In each country the warmth of the chase was in direct proportion to the power of the clergy. To spare a witch was considered an insult to the Almighty. Luther was particularly vehement on this point; so, too, was Calvin; and Wesley was as great a fanatic as any. Montaigne was one of the first to laugh at witchcraft; but Montaigne, like all advanced thinkers, was wickedly incredulous. The hunt, as has been hinted, was continued, and it was kept up not only until all the witches had disappeared, but until all belief in the devil had gone with them. Persecution subsided when skepticism began. The history of the Inquisition is exactly analogous. When the world began to think, intolerance ceased.

During this time Satan was not otherwise idle. He continued to appear in the most unexpected and surprising manner, and that, too, up to within comparatively recent dates. His last historical appearance is in a pleasant anecdote in which he is represented as visiting Cuvier. He enters the great man's study with his usual *quærens quern devoret* air. "What do you wish of me?" Cuvier asks curtly, for he is annoyed at the intrusion. "I've come to eat you." But Cuvier's shrewd eye had already examined him. "Horns and hoofs!" he retorts; "granivorous! You can't do it." Whereupon, outfaced by science, Satan vanished through an in-quarto, never to appear again save when, in the garb and aspect of a policeman, he visits the conscience of the misdemeanant.

But to return to the middle ages. The chronicles of Cassien, Vincent de Beauvais and Raoul Glaber, are filled with lurid pictures of those dark days. Disasters followed one another with the regularity of the seasons. The desolation which the Church had sought to stay had increased to terrific proportions. The empire of Karl the Great had been swept away as utterly as that of the Cæsars. Throughout Europe there was a hideous fear, a breathless expectation. The Antichrist had come. His presence was signalled from the pulpit. Churches, monasteries, donjons and burgs, echoed and thrilled with the rumor of his sacrileges. Now he was the son of the Popess Johanna, conceived during a pontifical procession; now he was a ruffian marauder, burning basilicas and violating the tombs of the saints. In the ninth century there was an eclipse of the sun which frightened a king to death. In 945, while a cyclone swept over Paris, monsters armed with battle-axes dropped from the skies, and, rushing into a church, tore down the pulpit, which they used as a battering-ram to destroy a neighboring house. In 988, a wolf entered the cathedral of Orleans, and, seizing the bell-rope in his mouth, rang out the knell of the world. It was evident to everyone that the trumpets of the last judgment were soon to be heard. At once there was a frantic effort to make peace with God; there was a rush for the monasteries, and a general donation of property to the Church. The *dies iræ* was at hand. The exact date was known. It was to come on the 25th of March, A.D. 1000. An hysterical rictus passed over the face of Christendom; the forgotten hope was to be realized! At last the *dies illa* arrived. In the Holy See the Pope sat, enervated and impatient, counting the minutes and awaiting the climax through the succeeding fractions of each hour. In the churches, the crowd, with heads bowed to the ground, felt time limp by and yet saw no sign. The expectation lasted four days and four nights. Then, so runs the chronicle, an immense dragon rushed through the open skies. In an abbey the eyes of a Christ were seen to weep. Yet still the earth remained unsundered and humanity unclaimed.

When the panic subsided, the Church found that her wealth had been largely increased. Her power, too, had developed. The cowl was everywhere, and everywhere it was dreaded. This dread was not unmingled with disgust; the fanaticism, asceticism and illiteracy of the clergy resulted as often as not in delirium and satyrisis. Indeed, their customs were neither amiable nor cleanly. The different bulls which the Popes launched at them make it easy to see of what they were capable, and difficult to fancy of what they were not. But their manners and morals are relatively unimportant; the terrorism that the Church exerted is more to the point.

The chief instruments of coercion of which the Church disposed were excommunication and the confessional. Without confession, no absolution; and without absolution, eternal torture.

There is a quaint little anecdote about the Curé of Mendon, in which that immortal jester is represented face to face with Clement VII. His Holiness having graciously permitted him to ask a favor, Rabelais begged to be excommunicated. Exclamation-points and question-marks shot from the Pontiffs eyes. "Holy Father," said the apostate, "I am a Frenchman. I come from a little town called Chinon, where the stake is often seen. A good many fine people have been burned there: some of my relatives, among others. But if your Holiness would excommunicate me, I fancy that I would never be burned. And my reason is this. Journeying lately with the Bishop from Paris to Rome, we passed through the Tarantaises, where the cold is bitter. Having reached a hut where dwelled an old woman, we besought her to make a fire. She took a faggot and tried to light it, but did not succeed; then she took some straw from her bed, and, being still unable to make it burn, she began cursing, and said, 'Since the faggot won't burn, it must have been excommunicated by the Pope's own jaw.'" This of course occurred after the Reformation, and relates to a man who was a notorious skeptic. It is even probable that the story is a fabrication; but as an anecdote it is serviceable in pointing the moral of the decadence of great things. In the primitive days of the Church, excommunication amounted merely to expulsion. Those against whom it was addressed were shut out of a limited circle; but when that circle expanded until it circumscribed all society, the potency of excommunication was prodigious. If the anathema was launched at a king, his entire monarchy fell under the ban. When Philippe Auguste was excommunicated, neither baptism, marriage nor burial was permitted in the realm. Corpses rotted in the highways. The people became wild with terror. This state of affairs lasted for eighteen months—in fact, until the interdict was removed. But with time, as has been hinted, its potency waned; like other good things, it was overdone; and early in the fifteenth century all those who had the heart to laugh must have been hugely amused at the spectacle of three rival popes excommunicating each other.

During the dark ages, however, amusement was rare. The masses were a prey to all the delusions and depressions that come of poor nourishment. They were ignorant and credulous; their minds were filled with fables and legends; they were terrorized by the dead as well as the living; agonized in this life, they were threatened with everlasting torture in another. It is, therefore, but small wonder that they shuddered at the viaticum and trembled before the priest. It was through his ministrations alone that salvation was obtainable.

At first the priest was merely an intercessor. In return for his good offices, he asked of the penitent little else than fasting, prayer and contrition; but gradually he discovered that these canonical penances were without advantage to himself, and he began to exact payment for the divine forgiveness which it was his privilege to declare. In the course of time, this custom was found so profitable that plenary indulgences were granted. In

1300, pilgrims from far and near flocked to Rome and covered the altars with gold. Every sin, every penalty, was remitted. The claims of purgatory were obliterated. The joy was so great, that the pilgrimage was called a jubilee.

The jubilee was instituted by Boniface VIII, the author of the bull *Ausculta fili*, in which he declared that, as representative of God, he had the right and the power to uproot, tear down, destroy, dissipate, rebuild and raise up in His name. In spite of this fine language, the Avignon Consistory established that he had asserted that the Trinity was an absurdity; that it was fatuous to believe in it; that religion was a lie; that there was no harm in adultery; and that he, the pope, who could humble kings, was mightier than Christ.

The success of the first jubilee was so great that Urban VI held another; only instead of summoning the pilgrims to Rome, he allowed his absolution to be hawked about wherever sinners most did congregate. It had been said that the riches of man are his redemption, and the clergy were very ready to put the saying into practice. Indulgences were not only sold, they appear to have been forced on those who refused them. A dominican, Johan Tetzel, took charge of the sale in Germany of those granted by Leo X. He announced that he had power to deliver a full discharge from the penalties of sin, even *si quis Virginem vitiasset ac gravidam fecisset*. His tariff is still exhibited.

Meanwhile, the General Councils had moved from Constantinople to Rome. The heresies which they were called upon to consider were mainly protestations against the despotism of the Church. First came the heresies of the Petrobusians and the Arnoldists—unimportant, but vexatious; so vexatious, in fact, that their respective founders, Petrus de Brueys and Arnold de Bresse, were burned at the stake. The Petrobusians were followed by the Vaudois, who, although pursued, proscribed and anathematized, maintained a secret continuity until Calvinism offered them a harbor. Another heresy was that of the Albigenses. The Albigenses, who came from a village in Languedoc, at a time Michelet has noted, when Languedoc was a Babel, professed a mixture of Gnosticism and Manicheism. They considered the Saviour to have been a man, like any other, who had suffered the just punishment of his sins. But, what was more serious, they questioned the prerogatives of the Holy See. Innocent III determined to exterminate them. At his commands the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy set out for Languedoc. The query was, how the heretics were to be distinquished from the orthodox. "Kill them all," said Armand, the pope's legate; "kill them all; God will know his own." Sixty thousand are reported to have been killed; and of these, seven thousand were slaughtered in a cathedral that was ringing with a Te Deum. The whole of Provence was devastated; vines were uprooted, harvests destroyed, and houses torn down. As this seemed insufficient, the bishops received orders to visit personally or by delegate any portion of their diocese in which they suspected that heretics might lurk. When this decretal was made, the Inquisition was established. "*Et ardet*," said the pseudo St. John; and those two words were sufficient to send over half-a-million of human beings to the stake.* Yet still heresies continued to appear. There was the heresy of the Dulcinists, the heresy of John Wicliffe, of John Huss, of Jerome of Prague. *J'en passe et des plus exquises.*

From the Crusades, in which nations wrangled over a sepulchre, sprang a new heresy, or rather an apostasy—that of the Templars, whose office it had been to protect pilgrims on their way to the East. It was claimed that, instead of attending to their duties, they had become believers in Muhammad; and, moreover, that they held Salahaddin to be a valiant and courteous knight, which he probably was. Muhammad, who had long been turned to dust, was a well-intentioned visionary, afflicted with what is known to pathology as hysteria muscularis—the only disease that ever founded a religion. Now if the Templars were apostates, they at least were logical. The Papacy had pitted Christianity against Muhammadanism, and staked the authenticity of each on the result. The result was that the latter proved its claim. This point, however, does not seem to have been advanced in their favor. They were tried, convicted, and many of them were burned.

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* Michelet: *Histoire de France.* Llorente; *Histoire de l'Inquisition.*

Meanwhile, the popes and princes of the Church had lost faith, and decency as well. Petrarch, in his letters *Sine titulo*, speaks of the papal court as follows:

"There is here (in Avignon) everything imaginable in the way of confusion, darkness and horror. Avignon is the sewer of every vice, the gully of every wickedness. I know from personal experience that in this place there is neither piety nor charity. Faith is absent; there is nothing holy, nothing just, nothing human. Friendship, modesty and decency are unknown. Houses, squares, temples, courts and pontifical palaces drip with lies. The hope of a future life is considered an illusion; Jesus Christ is looked upon as a useless invention; virtue is regarded as a proof of stupidity, and prostitution leads to fame."

Such is Petrarch's account; but Petrarch was possibly annoyed because his sister had been seduced by the pope.

The Abbé Guyot, author of the *Dictionary of Heresies*, says, though alluding this time to Rome: "The luxury of the bishops, their scandalous mode of life, their ignorance, which is on a par with their vices, have furnished heretics with excellent grounds for violent rhetoric."

Of Sixtus IV, Infessura says, in words that are best left untranslated, "*puerorum amator et sodomita fuit*." And it would appear, not only that he was guilty of these charming practices, but that he granted indulgences for their general commission. Innocent VIII, his successor, by way of setting a good example to future pontiffs, made public acknowledgment of four sons and three daughters. He established an agency where the remission of sins could be bought as readily as a railway ticket today. Of Alexander VI, the father and lover of Lucretia Borgia, little that is favorable can be said, except perhaps that he was the most magnificent ruffian that Rome had seen since the days when Nero, with a concave emerald for monocle, watched the rape of Christian girls.

If the popes were a bad lot, the clergy do not seem to have been much better. Gerson says that the cloisters were markets, the convents like lupanars, and that the churches and cathedrals were lairs of bandits and thieves. But the mediæval priest was not only a voluptuary and a freebooter, he appears to have been a jocular blasphemer as well. It is a part of history that when Luther reached Rome he heard more than one of them consecrate the Eucharist with a jeer: "*Panis es et panis manebis, vinum es et vinum manebis.*" There cannot have been two hells; and, granting that there was one, the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church seems to have been built on it.

In the year 1500 the world was very old. The Renaissance had lied. It had promised and not fulfilled. A few years before, Savonarola had sought to reform Christianity, and particularly the pope. He was burned. In words that rise and greet and kiss the eye, Dante had rejuvenated hell. Petrarch had poured the newest of wine into a cup that was gothic. Across the centuries an unterrified spirit of beauty had called to Boccaccio, and he had repeated the message to inattentive ears. There seemed to be no one that cared to blow away the dust of ages. Every germ that promised fruit was neutralized. Yet Italy was peopled with atheists. The jurisdiction of the Orient was lost; England was no longer a vassal. A tottering pontiff anathematized in vain, and, seeing the uselessness of his maledictions, filled Europe with the uproar of his debauches. The world was very old, but in the printing-press it had found the waters of youth. The earth was larger, and soon the skies were to be unveiled.

It was in those days that a German monk threw an ink-bottle at the devil and defied the pope. A little later, Bohemia seceded. Germany followed in the wake, and with her went Switzerland and the Northern States. Luther's heresy became orthodoxy. And yet the newest thing about it was so old that it had been forgotten. Everywhere it was welcomed. The question of its youth or age had nothing to do with it. It was in opposition to the existing order of things, and as such it was a success. Catholicism was a twilight, Lutherism a dawn. Christ said, Prepare; the Church said, Sleep; the Reformation called upon the world to awake. Luther's aim was to lead belief back to the starting-point, but for the time being his aim was overlooked. The heresy which bore his name was considered merely a quarrel between monks. "Bravo!" Hutton said; "let them eat each other up!"

Luther, who was a courageous blunderer and sincere in all his endeavors, did something more than try to change the current of affairs. He created German as Dante had created Italian. It was he who caught and tamed the ringing tongue of the Niebelungen. From the resisting heroes of the Rhine he lured a secret, and first of his race, gave to a nation a language for birthright.

Barbarism, meanwhile, had not absorbed itself. Pyrrho still slept. The reform which Luther instituted aggravated the evils which it proposed to correct. The Protestantism which followed was as intolerant as the mother Church; more so perhaps, for it had the intolerance of youth, and as it broke and scattered into countless creeds, each of the brood, save the Quakers, arrogated to itself the right to persecute and destroy. To Luther, persecution seemed not only lawful but necessary. Calvin, who was as intolerant as the Inquisition and every whit as fanatical, made it a prop of his church. And Knox, to whom one mass was more frightful than ten thousands insurgents, declared that an idolater merited nothing less than death.

But persecution, however endorsed, was not of a nature to resist the influence of advancing thought. As skepticism arose, Intolerance declined; and as belief in future punishment passed away, so did the torture of the recalcitrant. It may be noted that the lamented Ranke estimates the number of human beings destroyed by Christianity as surpassing ten million. And yet there are people who think that Justice merely limps. During ten centuries it sat motionless in a *cul de-jatte.*

Among the first to break a lance in the Lutheran tragedy was Erasmus. No one that has read *The Cloister and the Hearth* will need to be reminded that the story of Gerard and Marguerite is the history of his parentage. As a knight-errant of free thought he went about combating intolerance. In the last pages of the ever-famous *Praise of Folly*, he showed, with exquisite felicity of diction, the folly of creeds and sects. We are wiser now; but the world then was learning the alphabet. Erasmus received his full share of abuse, and, what is more to the point, saw his enemies exhaust twenty-seven editions of his work. Unpopularity has its advantages.

In spite of his intrepidity, Erasmus was as a small boy in comparison to that *abstracteur de quinte essence*, Master Alcofrybas Nasier. Where Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had looked into the past, the author of the exceedingly horrifying life of the Great Gargantua pointed to unexplored horizons. The *Praise of Folly* was cold as a rapier; the biography which Rabelais gave to the public was as exuberant, as prodigal and as turbulent as the sea. It was a new praise of Nature. Its appearance marked the beginning of another Renaissance; in all its pantagruelism there was not a single tear. Its philosophy was a commingling of science and satire; it was unexampled in boldness, but it was not dogmatic. Rabelais, who had been educated in a monastery, where the vows were those of ignorance and not of religion, was too wise to be an atheist. He objected mightily to tyranny, but he did not meddle with the unknowable. If he was anything, he was an agnostic. "I am going in search of the great Perhaps," he said on his death-bed. His obscenity is compromising, but it is not blasphemous. The nakedness of his thought extended only to the material.

Another thinker who refused to take a step beyond the actual was Montaigne. Where Rabelais hesitated, Montaigne doubted. He had caught the Isostheneia of Pyrrho, and balanced his thought in a perfect equilibrium. He neither affirmed nor denied. If he fancied that the universe was a foundling, his good taste prevented him from openly questioning the parentage. In this respect his silence is admirable and well worthy of imitation. Christianity he looked upon as a decadence. He noted with mild regret that the high-roads of civilization were moss-grown and abandoned, and that the compass which the Greeks had used was buried under the dust of centuries. But he waived conclusions; his thought was too volatile to convey a decision. Stella said that had Swift so desired, he could have written beautifully about a broomstick. Montaigne wrote about nothing at all with a charm that has never been excelled.

When Montaigne put a question-mark, Charron shrugged his shoulders; the *Que sçay ie?* the What do I know? became, What does it matter? And yet, like many another that affected indifference, Charron was ardent and prone to indignation. In his chief work, *De la Sagesse*, a work undeservedly forgotten, he said many smart things to the orthodox, and he said them, too, in a language which, if antiquated today, was then very virile. He was among the first to note that ideas of right and wrong vary with the latitude. "That which is impious, unjust and abominable in one place, is piety, justice and honor in another. There is not a law, a custom or a belief, that is everywhere received or rejected." Religion, too, he held to be a question of latitude. "Our religion is that of the country in which we are born and educated; we are circumcised and baptized, we are Jews, Muhammadans or Christians, before we know that we are men." To which he added: "A strange thing it is that the Christian religion, which, being the only belief true and revealed of God, ought to be extremely one and united, because there is but one God and one truth, is, on the contrary, torn into many parts and divided into many conflicting sects, to such an extent even, that there is not an article of faith or point of doctrine which has not been diversely argued and agitated, and given rise to heresies and dissensions. But what makes it seem still more strange is, that in the false and bastard religions, whether Gentile, Pagan, Jewish or Muhammadan, the like divisions do not appear." And much more to the same effect; concluding that truth is intangible, religions are equally *estranges et horribles au sens commun*, and that the sovereign remedy for the ills of life is *de se prester à aultruy et de ne se donner qu'à soy.*

While Charron in this manner was foreshortening Pyrrho, Sanchez, a Spaniard, was laying the foundations of agnosticism in a work entitled, *Tractus de multum nobile et prima universali Scientia, quod non scitur*—"Treatise on the very noble and extremely universal Science, to wit, that we know nothing." This contribution to literature appears to have created quite a little commotion; but, strange as it may seem, the commotion subsided, and today, outside the covers of a dictionary of philosophy, Sanchez, like Charron, is hard to find.

In the course of these international attacks, Rome had heard Bruno announce that the universe was a living organism whose soul was God. He was sent to the stake. Vanini had refused to discuss the immortality of the soul before he was old, rich and a German. He was burned at Toulouse. Campanella wrote a book against heresies, and was tortured at Naples seven times for his pains.

But the fangs of Romanism were being drawn. The Pope Urban VIII had written on his brother's tomb, *Hie jacet pulvis et cinis, postea nihil*, and announced that the world governed itself. Decidedly the influence of the Church was on the wane, and yet the time was still far away when thought was to be disenthralled.

Were it not for a handful of thinkers, the seventeenth century might be cataloged among the dark ages. The intellectual fecundity which was the characteristic of the sixteenth gave way to an era which was largely one of mental stagnation. The world seemed tired of disputes, and inclined, too, to accept old beliefs unquestioned. The hand of scholasticism was still upon it. It viewed speculation with uneasy dread, and kept its anxious eyes fixed upon the past.

And yet there were a few whose instincts invited to other vistas. In Holland was Spinoza; in England, Bacon and Hobbes; in Germany, Kepler and Leibnitz; while in France was Gassendi, Bayle, but first Descartes. "Give me force and matter," he cried, "and I will refurbish the world." Force and matter were not forthcoming, but in that magnificent boast was the accouchement of modern thought. One may even say that its layette was already prepared. A few years before, Europe had listened to Galileo recanting his heresy; but when, before the assembled prelates, the prisoner muttered, *E pur si muove*, a page of history was turned down, and across it was written, Farewell to Rome.

CHAPTER FOUR.

The Dissent of the Seers.

In one of the forgotten plays of Laberius, a jester is represented as recommending a smug-faced companion to get a foretaste of philosophy in the latrinas. In one sense the jester was wise in his generation and clairvoyant too. About philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular, the impolite have always discerned a bad odor. And this not without reason. In literature there is nothing more unpleasant than an attempt to prove something; indeed, if ever a proper penal code is devised, the dietary products of logic will be declared contraband, and every ergo banished the realm. In the absence of any criterion of truth, such a word as Therefore has seemingly no *raison d'être*. The sum of all the angles of a triangle may be equal to two right-angles, but however amply that fact or any other be demonstrated, it cannot lift the inquisitive beyond the limits of an experience which in itself may be erroneous. Who shall say but that in some other sphere, where perhaps there are now such commodities as square fluids and moral substances,—who shall say but that there the sum of all the angles of a triangle may not be equal to two right angles; or, as Mill has suggested, who shall say but that there is a land where two and two make five? Yet, waiving such magnificent hypotheses, and granting that deductions which follow from experience are not erroneous, it must be admitted that they bring us no nearer the truth; the essence, the reason of things is as intangible as before.

And metaphysics has yet another defect. The eternal questions, What am I? What can I know?—questions which it purports to answer—are left for all response as vague as the enveloping scholia. But the good that comes of evil is ever re-nascent, and out of the questions and answers have sprung the three foremost systems of modern anti-theistic thought. Of these, Pantheism takes the precedence, which is the due of age. Its nominal founder is Spinoza.

The life of Baruch Spinoza should be taught to every schoolboy. It is not only as uninteresting as the ordinary studies of average youth, but it holds a lesson of such gentleness, modesty and abnegation of self, that in a search for a better one the whole parade of history might be reviewed in vain.

Like certain other notabilities, Spinoza was a Jew. His parents were descendants of Portuguese Israelites, who had fled from the Inquisition and unfolded their tents behind the dykes of the Netherlands. Today, in Amsterdam, any valet-de-place will designate the early home of the philosopher, and every valet-de-place will point to a different house. But when the sight-seer is tired into satisfaction, discrepancies are of small moment. Moreover, after exhausting his imagination on the Burgwal, any valet-de-place is competent to show the exact spot near the synagogue where a fanatic believer aimed a dagger at the thinker's heart. The aim was unsuccessful, though it rent the coat; and this coat the guide, if he is clever, will tell you that Spinoza kept ever after among his memorabilia. But, clever or not, give him a louis and let him go. Spinoza's life is not such an one as should be listened to in the streets.

In the library at Wolfenbeütel there is a portrait of a grave, olive-skinned Hebrew, who stands in the upright idleness which is peculiar to portraits in oil. The hair falls back and over the shoulders in an expanding flood. The face is nearly oval, and the eyes are large and patient. This portrait, which is of Spinoza, was probably painted toward the close of his life. He died, it may be noted, at the age of forty-four, in the year 1677. As has been hinted, his life is without interest. If there was a tragedy in it, it was, as Oscar Wilde would say, that there was none at all. There is some mention of a little romance with the daughter of his teacher. But Spinoza was poor, and it is said that a wealthier student made diamonds of indifferent water fall in miniature cascades before the maiden's unresisting eyes. It is possible that this legend, out of which Auerbach has weaved one of his charming tales, is not untrue. There is a quotation to the effect that Mammon can win his way where angels might despair; and if an angel, then, *à fortiori*, a philosopher. In any event, Spinoza appears to have been jilted, which probably was the best thing that could have happened. A thinker should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Spinoza was educated to be a rabbi, but with increasing years he grew too big for Jewish theology and declined to visit the synagogue. It was then that some zealot tried to stab him. This argument being insufficient, the elders offered him an annual pension of a thousand florins, on condition that now and then he would appear in the synagogue and keep his opinions to himself. Spinoza was very poor, but his opinions were to him more precious than money. He refused therefore, and was excommunicated at once. The great ban, the Schammatha, was publicly pronounced upon him. For half-an-hour, to the blare of trumpets, he was cursed in the name which contains forty-two letters; in the name of Him who said, *I am that I am and who shall be;* in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Tetragrammaton; in the name of the Globes, the Wheels, Mysterious Beasts and Ministering Angels; in the name of the great Prince Michael; in the name of Metateron, whose name is like that of his master; in the name of Achthariel Jah. The Seraphim and Ofanim were called upon to give mouth to the malediction. Jehovah was supplicated never to forgive his sin, to let all the curses in the Book of the Law fall upon and blot him from under the heavens. Then, as the music swooned in a shudder of brass, the candles were reversed, and through the darkness the whole congregation chanted in unison, Amen!

After that, Spinoza, being no longer a Jew, changed his name from Baruch to Benedictus, and turned his thoughts from the Kabbala to Descartes. The life he thereafter led was one of extreme simplicity. He earned his bread by polishing lenses, and expended on it but a trifle more than the traditional obolus of Epicurus. When his father died, his sisters, arguing that a heretic had no right nor title to the property of the faithful, tried to keep from him his inheritance. Spinoza, however, appealed against them, won his suit, and then gave back as free gift all the contested property except one bed, which his biographer Colerus admits, *était en verité fort bon.* A few other instances of his magnanimity might be given, and a few anecdotes of his gentleness related; but when they were told, the reader would find himself as unacquainted with the man as before. Properly speaking, he had no biography; his life was one of solitude; its essence was meditation; and the Wolfenbeütel portrait would have served its purpose better, had it represented the sombre face of one whose eyes were lost in thought, and whose patient hand polished a concave lens.

Spinoza's fame rests principally on two works which shortly after his death were proscribed as profane, atheistic and blasphemous. These works are the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus* and the *Ethica.* The first in the key-note of rationalism, the second is the basis of modern philosophy. The rationalism of the first and the philosophy of the second stand in the closest connection. In both, Nature is shown to be an omnipotent ruler, in whose court such a parvenu as the supernatural is not received.

Spinoza's negations are three-fold. He denied the existence of an extra-mundane Deity; he denied that man is a free agent; and he denied the doctrine of final causes.

His negation of the existence of an extra-mundane Deity is not always clearly understood. The term *Deus* is strewn through his pages, and its repetition has often misled the unwary. There is, he taught, but one substance, and in this substance all things live, move and have their being. It is at once cause and effect; it is God. But the term thus used has nothing in common with the theistic idea of a Creator, who, having fashioned the world, "sits aloft and sees it go." On the contrary, God and the universe were to Spinoza one and identical; they were correlatives; the existence of the one made that of the other a logical necessity. To him the primordial entity, the *fons et origo rerum*, was God; but God was Nature, and Nature, Substance. The three terms he used interchangeably; the former predominate in his earlier writings, the third in the Ethics. His reason for making use of the first is not entirely apparent, unless it be, as Dr. Martineau has suggested, that even when the sun of Israel had set, he still loved to linger in the mystical penumbra of an earlier faith. But be this as it may, and however his use of the term maybe interpreted, it is tolerably clear that Spinoza, far from lowering the Deity to Nature, exalted Nature to a God. God was everywhere, and every region was filled with the Divine.

Spinoza has been frequently blamed for reading the banns over the unknowable and the known, and perhaps the blame is not altogether undeserved. But in this connection it may not be amiss to call Goethe to his rescue. And Goethe, it may be remembered, is the Spinoza of verse. “To discuss God apart from Nature,” said the poet, “is both difficult and dangerous. It is as though we separated the soul from the body. We know the soul only through the medium of the body, and God only through Nature. Hence the absurdity of accusing of absurdity those who philosophically unite the world with God.” Voltaire, however, took a different view, the view of an inconsequential historian who relies on his wit. Now wit is little else than the commonplace in fine clothes; and Voltaire, who treated the humdrum with the skill of a modiste, drew the threads of fancy, and worked an elaborate hemstitch:

> *“Alors un petit Juif, au long nez, au teint blême,*
> *Pauvre, mais satisfait, pensif et retiré,*
> *Esprit subtil et creux, moins lu que célébré,*
> *Cache sous le manteau de Descartes son maître,*
> *Marchant à pas comptés, s’approcha du grand Etre: ‘Pardonnez moi,’ dit-il, ‘en lui parlant tout bas,*
> *Mais je crois entre nous, que vous n’existez pas.’”*

That which is called Free-will had to Spinoza a purely verbal existence. To him, the state of mind at any given moment is the effect of some definite cause, which itself is the effect of a preceding cause, and so on without end. His argument is to the point: “Imagine that a stone which has been set in motion becomes conscious, and, so far as it is able, endeavors to persist in its motion. This stone, since it is conscious of and interested in its endeavor, will believe that it is free, and that it continues in motion for no other reason than that it so wills. Now such is the freedom of man, which every one boasts of possessing, and which consists but in this, that men are aware of their own desires, and ignorant of the causes by which those desires are determined.”[*]

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[*] Lettre 62. Traduction de Emile Saisset.

This apt negation of free-will in man, Spinoza extended to broader spheres; and in showing that Nature has no alternatives, no standards of comparison of better or worse, and no appreciation of antitheses, of right or of wrong—in fact, that everything occurs in virtue and in accordance with eternal laws which could not be otherwise—arrived at the consoling deduction that he who understands that everything which happens, happens necessarily, will find nothing worthy of hatred, mockery or contempt, but rather will endeavor, so far as human power permits, to do well, and, as the phrase goes, to be of good cheer.

There is something in the foregoing theory that seems to savor of Calvinistic predestination. But it is only a savor. To the Calvinist, predestination is made endurable by the belief that everything is ordained by the highest wisdom; while to the Pantheist, man is never the subject of fate. The laws of necessity are identical with his own nature, and it is through an understanding of them that he finds himself at peace with all the world.

Spinoza held the doctrine of Final Causes to be untenable, because inconsistent with the perfection that resides in God. His argument, which is advanced in the *Ethica*, has the charm which attaches to brevity: "If God acts for a designed end, it must be that He desireth something which He hath not."

Spinoza was neither an optimist nor a pessimist. He neither laughed at life nor grieved over it. It is possible that he understood it. Like many another before him, he had looked about for happiness; and in the search he saw that such simulachres as wealth, distinction and pleasure, even to that *grande dame* whose name is Glory, were smitten with one and the same defect. The desire for them sprang from an archaic source, the love of the transitory. But happiness to be real, he argued, should be imperishable. And where could such happiness be found?—where, indeed, save in the love of the eternal and the unending, in the love of truth, which in purifying and exalting the heart shields it from vain desires? If Spinoza had not been a geometrician, he would have been a poet.

In the *Tractatus Theologico-politicus*, Spinoza noted, with great good sense, that a plain man who does not enter upon philosophy may without harm and even with profit believe whatever he finds most edifying, provided he believes it sincerely. And it is related that his hostess, a simple-minded Lutheran, having asked him whether the religion she professed was capable of assuring her salvation, he advised her to seek no other, nor to doubt of its efficiency. "Do but good works," he said, " and endeavor so far as it is possible to lead a peaceful and virtuous life."

As Heine has well said, wherever a great mind gives utterance to its thoughts, there too is Golgotha. Spinoza was persecuted during his lifetime, and after death his works were condemned as profane, blasphemous and atheistic. And yet it is probable that few men more sincerely religious than he have ever lived and taught. His doctrine was one of abnegation of self and patient devotion to the eternal. He was in love with the Infinite; it was Nature that fluttered his pulse; it was the Spirit of the universe that filled his heart with living springs. Nevertheless there are today many warm-hearted and accomplished gentlemen whose views on Spinoza are a trifle more than two hundred years behind the age. To them he is still the blasphemer. But in all sincerity one may ask which is the more blasphemous, nay, which is the more vulgar, the mind that pictures the Deity as a jealous tyrant who keeps the world as a separate establishment, or the thinker who seeks to banish the dream that veils the part from the whole, and who shows the soul of man and of the universe to be the same?

In attempting to convey the higher view, Spinoza admittedly transcended the limits of experience. Indeed, there are contemporary free-thinkers who are ready to assert that he was sunk in the grossest superstitions. Perhaps he was; yet his superstitions were so refined, that in them there was room for nothing but the ideal.

A few years after Spinoza's death, on the 22nd day of November, 1694, Frangois Arouet and Marie-Marguerite Daumart, his wife, caused to be baptized at the church of St. André des Arcs in Paris, a male child, who, born dying six months before, lived long enough to christen himself Voltaire.

The heart of the eighteenth century was like a *veilliebchen*. As Michelet, who dissected it, announced, it was double. One half was Diderot, the other Voltaire; but Rousseau was wedged between. Voltaire wished superstition abolished and the throne preserved; Rousseau wanted the monarchy abolished and the altar upheld. Diderot sought the overthrow of both.

The united works of Diderot and Voltaire form a library of ninety volumes. But much of their labor is uncatalogued. Their ninety-first achievement is the French Revolution, their ninety-second is Modern Thought. If they are little read today, it is because their ideas have become common property, their daring seems less bold. Concerning Diderot, a word will be said later on; but no conjunction of phrases is rich enough to paint Voltaire. His figure is as familiar as the moon, yet the currents of his thought are almost as intangible. Nature, who, as Malebranche has said, speaks neither Latin nor Greek nor Hebrew, had taught him the nothingness of creeds. He had but one dogma, Reason. When he preached God and liberty, the liberty was freedom of thought, and God the deification of common-sense. In his vague deism there was room for many things. "Believe in God," he said to a questioning rhymster; "believe in God; there is nothing more poetic." But to Madame du Deffand, in whom he confided, he admitted his acquaintanceship with a man who thoroughly believed that when a bee died it ceased to hum. That man was none other than himself. In those days there were not a few who believed as he did. Among them was that most anti-christian of monarchs, the fat Frederick, who played badly on the flute, wrote verses that limp after him through history, but who possessed an enchanted sword, a nimble wit, and a great fund of appreciation for those whose views coincided with his own.

From this monarch there came to Voltaire an invitation requesting the pleasures of his society, and this invitation Voltaire accepted. Voltaire was never young. When he reached Berlin his hair was white, and he looked, Madame de Stael has said, like a wicked old monk come back from another world to visit this; but such a fascinating pagan was he, that in winning him from the fifteenth Louis of France, Frederick valued the gain more highly than a province.

At the historic suppers of the king, Voltaire likened the symposiasts to the seven sages of Greece in a lupanar. "In no corner of the globe," he said, " has liberty of speech been greater, or have superstitions been treated with keener contempt." Beside Voltaire and Frederick, the usual guests were the Marquis d'Argens, Lamettrie, Maupertuis, Algarotti and d'Armand. The last-named gentlemen are relatively unimportant, but the others should not pass unnoticed.

D'Argens was not only the king's guest, he was his nearest friend, a sort of dignified Triboulet. He was a Provencal, an ex-free lance, handsome and dissipated, who after a riotous career, during which he had explored most of the side scenes of life, made love in five languages, and fought over the better part of Europe, retired suddenly to Holland and burned the midnight oil. It was the old story of the devil turned hermit. In Holland in those days, thought was almost untrammelled. When a foreign author was afraid of the printers in his own country, he set those of the Netherlands at work, very much as the ultra-naturalists of contemporary France obtain today the assistance of Belgian publishers. D'Argens therefore went to the Hague, hired an apartment, shut himself up for six months, and then walked out with the *Lettres Juives* in his pockets.

The *Lettres Juives*, which are nothing if not liberal, were read and appreciated by the Crown Prince of Prussia, who at once asked d'Argens to pay him a visit. But d'Argens sent a regret. The throne was occupied by Frederick Wilhelm, and that monarch was not an agreeable person. If he took a walk, everybody took to their heels. Voltaire has given it to history that whenever he met a woman in the street, he sent her about her business: "Get thee hence, thou trull, thou trollope; thy place is at home!"—a remonstrance which was accompanied as often as not by a blow or a kick; and Voltaire adds that whenever a minister of the gospel took it into his head to view a parade, he was, if caught, treated in precisely the same manner.

D'Argens knew him by reputation, and declined his son's invitation with thanks. "To reach Potsdam," he wrote to the prince, "I should have to pass three battalions; and as I am tall, well-built, and not altogether bad-looking, I don't dare." But when the prince became king, there was nothing to fear, and Potsdam counted another guest.

It was not long before d'Argens became the chamberlain, and, as has been hinted, the friend of the king. He was a brilliant conversationalist, epigrammatic, paradoxical, and possessed of great opulence of imagination. And Frederick, who at that time, was possibly the only German in Berlin who knew how to talk, knew, too, how to appreciate that ability in another. The intimacy increased with years. When the king, overcome by public and private misfortunes, doubtful of the morrow and uncertain even of the day, reflected on the advantages which a bare bodkin can procure, d'Argens hurried to the rescue with comforting maxims. The king listened, but would have his say: "Philosophy, my dear Marquis, is an excellent remedy against the ills of the past or of the future, but it is powerless against those of the present." "And what about the impassibility that

Zeno taught?" "Zeno," answered the king, "was the philosopher of the gods, and I am a man." Nevertheless he took heart again, and all thoughts of the bodkin were dismissed. But d'Argens was not always so comforting. On the eve of the battle of Rosbach, Frederick happening to remark that if he lost it he would go and practice medicine in Venice, Triboulet steadied himself against a table and hissed. "Toujours assassin."

D'Argens and Frederick grew old together. They had disputes which made them faster friends. They played practical jokes on one another, and quarrelled noisily over trifles. The king often acted like a school-boy, and d'Argens not infrequently forgot that he was a philosopher. He remembered, however, that he was not born in Berlin. About Sans-Souci there circled at times an icy wind that made him dream of Provence. One day he asked for his passport. Frederick was vexed; he did not like to be deserted; it diminished him in his own esteem. "Bah!" he exclaimed, "what is a prince born for, unless it be to cause ingratitude?" But he gave the exeat, and d'Argens returned to his early home. Soon after he died—a convert, so it was said. When Frederick heard the rumor, he laughed; he knew d'Argens too well to believe any such gossip as that. "If he received the Last Sacrament," he said, "it is because it was given to him by main strength."

"D'Argens," said Voltaire, "has the wit of Bayle and the charm of Montaigne." The doctrine which he displayed in the Philosophie *du bon sens* is a half-hearted Pyrrhonisn. He, too, saw that there was no criterion of truth, but he could not always keep his eyes on the fact. "How," he asked, "can men pretend to know the essence of things when they are ignorant of their own?" That they cannot may be readily admitted, unless it be that they are willing to supersede judgment with faith, which proceeding is the one that d'Argens recommended. He was deeply purposeful, but he was circumspect. What he shook with one hand, he steadied with the other. When he showed the advantages of belief, he was not in a greater hurry to do anything else than to show its disadvantages. First he honeycombed it with doubt and toppled it over completely. Then he set to work and built it up anew. After which he gave it another shake, and so on indefinitely, until his ink blushed and his pen refused its office. The method employed by M. Renan is not dissimilar.

There are few lands in Europe that have been more fecund in myths than Brittany. The belief in that lost city of Is, whose spires the fishers sometimes saw, whose bells, rung by the waves, clang through the winter nights, and whose magnificence was such that for the capital of France no better name could be found than Par-Is, equal to Is—the belief in that lost city was the origin of many beautiful legends. In few other lands has the faith in the weird and the supernatural been preserved with greater simplicity. Yet through one of those paradoxes of which Nature alone holds the secret, Brittany has been as fertile of doubt as of credulity. Many of the foremost of French anti-theists claim it as their home. Between Maupertuis and Renan there is a parade of familiar names, and of these names few are more significant than that of Lamettrie.

Lamettrie appears to have been an unprincipled saint, a rake without vices. He was brilliant and whimsical, an excellent purveyor of the entremets of the imagination; and as it is the individual and not the topic that makes or unmakes conversation, the great Frederick held him in high favor. Some years before Voltaire appeared in Berlin, Lamettrie had written a book, *l' Histoire naturelle de l' âme*, which had created such a stir that he had been obliged to leave France and seek refuge in Holland. There he published another book, *l'Homme machine*, which created even a greater stir; and while he was wondering where he should hide, Frederick, who had read his writings, and who never let slip an opportunity of adding another philosopher to his collection, invited him to Berlin. "He is a victim of theologians and fools," said the monarch; "let him come here and write what he pleases. I am always sorry for a philosopher in difficulties; were I not born a prince, I would be one myself."

Lamettrie was quite willing to accord to a king the pleasures of his company, and took a seat at the royal supper-table without delay. Frederick was so charmed with him that he made him his salaried reader. "I am delighted with my acquisition," he said; "Lamettrie is as light-hearted and clever as any one can be. He is a sound physician and hates doctors; he is a materialist and not material. He says scandalous things now and then, but we weaken his Epicurean wine with the water of Pythagoras."

Like some other gentlemen of a skeptical turn, Lamettrie announced that vice and virtue were purely relative—a platitude which has been running about the book-shelves ever since books were shelved. But he added something which is worth larger attention: "Away with remorse!" he exclaimed; "it is a weakness, an outcome of education." And if virtue and vice are merely questions of surroundings, it is indeed difficult to view remorse otherwise than as a pre-mediaeval emotion. But virtue, to say nothing of vice, is something more. According to the Buddha, virtue is the agreement of the will and the conscience, a definition which would be matchless if the will were free. Marcus Aurelius called it a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature; but if the boundless immorality of Nature be conceded, as it should, the fine words of the emperor are as empty as the wind. Virtue, said one who had eyed it narrowly, virtue is a name. Perhaps. Yet virtue declines to be dismissed with a phrase; there is a disturbing magnificence about it which routs the most skillful. In describing it, Raphael is a better lexicographer than Shakespeare, though even Raphael, for all his cunning, could not paint a temperament. And virtue is little else than a question of disposition. It may be sunned and watered by a thousand influences, it may be hedged and fortified, but in its essence it is temperamental. However great the outward success may appear, the lessons and precepts of ages will not suffice to keep it unspotted if the inner spirit be adverse. And as with virtue, so too with vice. Standards may differ with the climate, but in each case, it is the conscience that elects itself judge. It is the heart, memory aiding, that gives us a paradise or a hell. If we could hush the conscience and still the heart, we might afford to listen to Lamettrie; and perhaps in future ages, when through the progress of evolution man will lose the lobes of his ears as he has already lost his tail, when he will be as completely bald as he was once entirely hirsute, perhaps then the conscience will go the way of useless possessions; but meanwhile to declaim against it is as profitable as asking alms of statues. We are perfectly free to enjoy our remorse undisturbed.

Lamettrie admitted no other life than this, and not unnaturally sought to make the most of the worst. His ideas are contained in a treatise on Happiness, which he prefixed to a translation of Seneca's thoughts on the same subject. "Our organs," he said, "are susceptible of sensations which render life agreeable. When the impression which a sensation conveys is brief, it is pleasure that we experience; prolonged, it is bliss; permanent, it is happiness. But in every case it is the same sensation, differing merely in intensity and duration. The absence of fear and desire is happiness in its primitive state; but to possess all that one wishes—to have beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory—that is a happiness which is real and perfect."

The spectacle of a eudamonist is as charming as that of a ballerina. Both belong to the category of the Delightful. But even though one be pleasured by a Taglioni, there comes a moment when the pleasure palls. Lamettrie, who was fond of adventurous nights and incursions—not perhaps to the unknowable, but to that which he might have known and did not—was wont to please his readers with the *entrechats* of a lawless imagination. As a consequence, his views, if entertaining, are valueless. The real and perfect happiness of which he speaks is a will-o'-the-wisp of fancy. The possession of all that one wishes, whether the possession is concomitant, as in fairy tales, with the wish, or obtained after years of striving, does not and never will constitute happiness. In its essence, happiness is intangible; the desire for it is insatiable; and consequently, and despite every possession, it is ever unsatisfied. There may be a happiness which is transitory and fugitive, but there is none that is permanent. To say to the contrary is to announce one of the most insolent absurdities that has ever been proclaimed in the privileged aisles of the insane. For the sake of example, let it be supposed that in some one person are united all the factors which Lamettrie mentions—beauty, wit, talent, esteem, wealth, health and glory; if these possessions are what may be termed congenital, as in the case of a poet-prince, they are taken by their possessor as a matter of course, and have never served as preservatives from discontent; on the other hand, if their re-union is accomplished after more or less prolonged endeavors, their possessor, in obtaining them, finds himself as poor as before; he might be able to call the world his own, and yet not know what happiness is. The honors, the riches and glory to which he aspired, are as empty as the hands of the dead. If they are magnificent, it is only from afar. The best that can be, the best that ever has been, is in the discovery and maintenance of contentment. Its factors are two-fold—the first is health; the second, indifference.

Lamettrie's chief titles to recognition rest on the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme* and the *Homme machine*. The first-mentioned work is an argument against the belief in the immortality of the soul. With this doctrine ancient philosophy had little to do. With the exception of Pythagoras and Plato, the thinkers of classic antiquity agreed in one particular—the soul was material. Even to Tertullian its immateriality was unestablished. "*Animam nihil est*," he said, "*sed corpus non sit*;" and not a few of the fathers of the Church held the same opinion. The masses of course thought differently. The belief in a future life was by them unquestioned. It probably arose from the re-appearance of the dead in the dreams of the living. But in Greece, as in the Roman Empire, the life prefigured was one in which there was little charm. The neglect of funeral rites turned it into a dull and restless torture. In this particular the observances of believers were little else than precautionary safeguards, and the *Requiescat in pace* which is to be seen on contemporary tomb-stones is but a forlorn survival of their naïve superstitions. Later, when it was taught that the soul was imperishable, not through an inherent indestructibility, but through the influence of grace divine, its materiality was still undoubted. The soul and the body were considered inseparable. There were casuists who thought otherwise, and their disputes are legendary; but their disputes occurred in an era when faith was well-nigh universal. When the distinction between the soul and the body was at last satisfactorily established—that is, to those who were interested in the establishment of a satisfactory distinction—the believer found himself turning back to Plato. The soul was represented as a resultant of the forces of the body, very much as harmony is known to be won from the strings of the lyre. Yet, as Simmias queried, when the strings are broken and the wood reduced to dust, from what shall the harmony be produced?

In the *Histoire naturelle de l'âme*, little is said on this subject. It was not Lamettrie's intention to narrate what had been thought; what he wished to do was to paint the soul's development, and he put forth his best efforts to show that that which is termed soul is but the outcome of the perfectionment and education of the senses.

In *l'Homme machine* it is again a question of the soul, and the conclusion of course is the same. In spite of Descartes, who taught of two substances precisely as though he had seen and counted them; in spite of Leibnitz, who spiritualized matter instead of materializing the spirit; in spite of every one and everything to the contrary, Lamettrie, in broad paragraphs, proved to his own satisfaction that to think, to feel, to distinguish right from wrong as readily as blue from yellow, and to be but an animal, superior, perhaps, but still a brute, is not a bit more contradictory than it is for a parrot or a monkey to be able to distinguish pleasure from pain.

"Man is a machine," he said, "wound up and kept running by digestion. The soul is the mainspring. Both, of course, are material. As to thought, it is as much a property of matter as is electricity, motricity, impenetrability and breadth. To query with Locke whether matter can think, is tantamount to wondering whether it can tell time. In brief, man is a machine, and throughout the universe there is but one substance diversely modified. Such," he concluded "is my idea, or rather such is the truth. *Dispute qui voudra.*"

Another Breton who found a seat at the royal supper-table was Maupertuis. Before he found it, there had been some discussion among the erudite concerning the sphericity of the globe, and two separate expeditions were sent from France to measure different degrees of longitude. One went to Lapland, the other to Peru. Maupertuis, who was a geometrician, was placed at the head of the Polar expedition. He set out at once for Sweden, and after sixteen months of fatiguing adventures, returned to Paris to find himself the hero of the day. But in a city like Paris, a knowledge of the meridian, however exact, is not an attainment apt to make a man ceaselessly admired; and Maupertuis, who had taken the admiration quite seriously, and had had himself painted, mantled in fur, in the act of flattening the globe, soon found that his glory was so much vapor. Now Maupertuis was not only a geometrician, he was a philosopher, and the occupant of the Prussian throne was, as has been hinted, ever ready to add a new one to his collection; consequently, while Maupertuis was wondering at the inconstancy of his compatriots, a note was brought to him from Frederick. "Come to Berlin," it ran. "You have taught the world the form of the earth; you shall learn from a king how much you are appreciated."

The king at that time, however, happened to be in a battle-field; and to the battle-field Maupertuis, with the true spirit of a courtier, directed his steps. Unfortunately for him, Frederick was obliged to retreat, and Maupertuis was taken prisoner. At first it was thought that he had been killed; but when it was learned that he had been conducted to Vienna and there fêted at court, Voltaire took occasion to say a few smart things, and the world smiled with amusement and relief.

At Vienna, the Queen asked him what his philosophy taught him to think of two princes who wrangled over patches of a planet which he had measured. "I have no right," he answered sedately, "to be more philosophic than kings." To change the subject, her Majesty deigned to inquire whether the Queen of Sweden was not the most beautiful princess in Europe. To which Maupertuis, who was nothing if not regence, answered, with his best bow, "I had always thought so until now." After that, he was returned unransomed to Frederick.

At Berlin, a young Pomeranian lady fell in love with him. His conversation, it appears, was so lively, that women never suspected him of being a savant. The young Pomeranian became his bride; while he, through the king's good offices, was made President of the Berlin Academy,—a sort of Minister of Literature, much as d'Argens was Minister of the Stage. Voltaire, meanwhile, was lounging at Sans-Souci. Maupertuis had not forgotten the smart things he had said, and Voltaire was perhaps a little jealous of the favor shown to a rival. But, be this as it may, it is a part of history that no love was lost between them. When Voltaire had the king's ear, he poured into it scurrilous anecdotes about his compatriot; and when Maupertuis enjoyed a similar privilege, the tale of his grievances never tarried. "They take me for a sewer," said Frederick, with the indulgent smile of a man who has said a good thing.

Frederick sided with Maupertuis. It is possible that in some kingly fashion he, too, was jealous, though in his case the jealousy was of one whose royalty threatened at times to overshadow his own. Voltaire was irascible; he was annoyed at the preference; and after brooding over his discontent, he composed and published a pamphlet entitled *Docteur Akakia*.

In this trifle Maupertuis was lampooned as no one had ever been before; his pet theories—to wit, that there is no other proof of God than an algebraic formula, and that nothing which we see is as we see it—were held up to the laughter of the world. Frederick caused the edition to be seized and burned by the headsman. Voltaire, however, was not easily circumvented. A few copies escaped the *auto-da-fe* and went careering over Europe. Maupertuis was forever ridiculous, but Voltaire was still unsatisfied. He kept pricking him with his pen, until Maupertuis, outwearied with his struggle with an ogre, took to his bed and died of mortification—"between two monks," said the relentless Arouet. "What do you think of him?" he asked d'Alembert; "he has been suffering for a long time from a repletion of pride, but I did not take him either for a hypocrite or an imbecile."

Maupertuis was one of the first of the modern thinkers that have ventured to add up the balance-sheet of pleasure and pain, and also one of the first to discover that the latter largely exceeds the former; indeed, so large did the excess seem, that he had no hesitation in announcing that were all that is painful in life suppressed and only the pleasurable moments counted, the duration of the happiest existence would not exceed a few hours.

He had scanned the *paysages de tristesse* as carefully as another, and the fairest vista that he saw was behind the delinquent hands of death. "*Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil*,"—After death is nothing; death itself is naught,—said Seneca; and Maupertuis, who agreed with him thoroughly, advocated suicide, and praised the stoics for teaching that it was a permissible remedy, and one that was most useful, against the ills of life. "If," he argued, "a man believes in a religion which offers eternal rewards to those that suffer, and which threatens with eternal punishment those that die to avoid suffering, it is not bravery on his part to commit suicide, nor is it cowardice, it is idiocy. On the other hand, a man who has no belief in a future life, and who is solely occupied in making this one as little unpleasant as possible, sees neither rhyme nor reason in submitting to misfortunes from which he can free himself in a trice." Nevertheless, Maupertuis died a natural death, and, as Voltaire said, between two monks at that.

Maupertuis, Lamettrie, d'Argens, even to the philosopher king himself, were dominated and overshadowed by Voltaire. Though purposeful, their influence was slight; it had barely strength enough to cross the Rhine. But on the other side of that muddy river there was then a group of thinkers whose influence can be felt in some of the currents of contemporary thought, and concerning whom a word or two may now be said.

When the foremost of England's skeptics, David Hume, visited Paris, he found a warm welcome at the house of the Baron d'Holbach. It was there, Burton says, that professing he had never met an atheist, Hume was told that he was in the company of seventeen. Of these, the more noteworthy were Diderot, d'Alembert, Naigeon and the host.

The Baron d'Holbach was a German who had been educated in France. He was a man of large wealth, wise, liberal and charitable. His house in the Rue Royale, which was called the Cafe de l'Europe, was a free academy of the freest thinkers; and of free-thinkers, domiciled and transient, d'Holbach was known as the *maître d'hôtel.* But d'Holbach was something more; he was one of the field-marshals of the little army of materialists who were the forerunners of the Revolution, and a lord in the literature of anti-theism. His erudition is said to have been practically unbounded. There was nothing of value written or suggested with which he was unfamiliar. "No matter what system I may imagine," said Diderot, "I am always sure that my friend d'Holbach can find me with facts and authorities to support it."

The doctrine which d'Holbach advocated was as liberal as the sea. It was a doctrine of freedom in all things—in speech, in thought, in politics and in religion. Its tenets are displayed at length in the *Systeme de la Nature*, a work published in Holland, and, through a literary trickery then not infrequent, attributed to a gentleman who, being dead, could not be prosecuted.

"Lost at nightfall in a forest, I have," said Diderot, "but a feeble light to guide me. A stranger happens along: 'Blow out your candle,' he says, 'and you will see your way the better.' That stranger is a theologian."

This squib might have served as epigraph to the *Systeme de la Nature.*

"Man," said d'Holbach, "is miserable, simply because he is ignorant. His mind is so infected with prejudices, that one might think him forever condemned to err... It is error that has forged the chains with which tyrants and priests have manacled nations... It is error that has evoked the religious fears which shrivel up men with fright, or make them butcher each other for chimeras. The hatreds, persecutions, massacres and tragedies of which, under pretext of the interests of Heaven, the earth has been the repeated theatre, are one and all the outcome of error."

These bold words were the prelude to the frankest exposition of anti-theism that France had ever read. Its audacity terrified, but its austerity repelled. Its paragraphs were as Cimmerian to the chamber-maids and hair-dressers of Paris, as the gayeties of Lamettrie had been shocking to the pedantry of Berlin. Then, too, it was rich and elaborate in its materialism. Today it seems a trifle antiquated; the world has thought more deeply since; but with its general outlines contemporary thinkers have had no fault to find. In these outlines Nature is represented as the one-in-all, beyond which is nothing. The main propositions tend to show that throughout the length and breadth of space there is merely force and matter, the infinite interconnection of cause and effect; and that it is through an ignorance of natural laws that divinities have been imagined and made the objects of hope and fear.

On the subject of hope and fear, d'Holbach had much to say. The gist of it may be summarized in the fatalist axiom, Whatever will be, is. Everything that happens, happens necessarily, and in virtue of immutable laws. As to order or disorder, they are empty terms; like time and space, they belong to the categories of thought; there is nothing outside of us which corresponds to them. It is all very well for man to see order in that which is in conformity with his state of being, and disorder in that which is contrary to it; to call one the effect of an Intelligence acting toward a determined end, and the other the play of hazard. But order and disorder are but words used to designate certain states and conditions of being, which if permanent are called after the one, and if transitory after the other. Beside, Nature can have no aim, for there is nothing beyond it to which it can strive. As to hazard, it is meaningless, save in contradistinction to that Intelligence which man himself has conceived. Now man, d'Holbach explains, has always fancied himself the central fact in the universe. He has connected with himself everything that he has seen, and modelled everything after his own image. In this way he grew to believe that the universe is governed by an intelligence like unto his own; yet, being at the same time convinced of his individual incapacity to cause the multiform effects of which he stood a witness, he was forced to distinguish between himself and the invisible producer, and he thought to overcome the difficulty by attributing to that intelligence an aggrandizement of the prowess which he himself possessed.

The belief in the supernatural, which in man is inherent, d'Holbach regarded as a disease to which humanity's greatest misfortunes are attributable. Truth, he was fond of saying, can never harm. Nor can it. But that does not make it a welcome guest. The whole history of religion goes to prove that man would rather be wrong in his beliefs than have none at all. Then, too, the majority have never been provided with such leisure as would enable them to dispense with illusions. The thinker may wave them away, but his gestures leaves the masses unaffected. Perhaps if the world were merely learned, it would be anti-theistic; But fortunately, or unfortunately, as the actual status of affairs may be viewed, it is something more or something less; there is an unstillable longing, an unconquerable expectation of better things, which so exalts the heart, that the serenest of atheists can never witness its effects without experiencing some sudden pang of envy.

In the polite society in which d'Holbach moved, disbelief was so prevalent that it is possible he had no occasion to experience a twinge. And if he did, the emotion has been unrecorded. He was squarely opposed to the idea of God, and at the same time a living contradiction to the theory that an atheist is necessarily a man of lax principles. Walmar, in the *Nouvelle Heloïse*, is the portrait which Rousseau took of him. Yet, as has been already intimated, it is the temperament, and not the point of view, that guides us into paths that are those of virtue or its opposite. And it was d'Holbach's temperament that made him shame the Jew devil as Satan had never been shamed before. On this point the testimony of his contemporaries is unanimous. The purity of his life, and that, too, in a century when immorality was less a vice than a grace, has never been questioned. He was a simple-mannered gentleman, warm of heart, sweet-tempered, endowed with great delicacy of sentiment, and possessed of such tact that even Rousseau, who would have quarreled with an archangel, was unable to find in him any other cause of grievance than his wealth. "He is too rich for me," he said; but he added, "He is a better man, and one more really charitable than many a Christian. *He does good without the hope of reward.*"

The only immortality in which d'Holbach believed was fame. In life there is certainly nothing more exquisite. As Schopenhauer said, it is the Golden Fleece of the elect. But after death, and true glory comes but then, fame and ignominy are to the recipient equally unmeaning. And even were it otherwise, when it is remembered what are the limitations of fame, and when it is considered how small a value can be accorded to public opinion, the immortality in which d'Holbach believed does not seem worth an effort.

D'Holbach was one of the few writers that have had the courage to advocate suicide, and he advocated it as boldly to those who cowered at death, as he advocated virtue to a century whose vice is historic. His main argument in its favor is to the effect that the engagements between man and Nature are neither voluntary on the part of the one nor reciprocal on the part of the other. Man is therefore in nowise bound; and should he find himself unsupported, he can desert a position which has become unpleasant and irksome. As to the citizen, he can hold to his country and associates only by the mortgage on his well-being. If the lien is paid off, he is free. "Would a man be blamed," he asks, "a man who, finding himself useless and without resources in his native place, should withdraw into solitude? Well, then, with what right can a man be blamed who kills himself from despair? And what is death but an isolation?"

Maxims such as these are considered dangerous and provocative. But maxims have never caused a suicide. A man may cut his throat or hang himself to put an end to the agonies of grief or boredom, but not because he has happened on a suggestive quotation. He will look for the great quietus if he wants to, but not because it is recommended. In any case the contempt of death is a useful possession; and it is well for every one to understand that while virtue and happiness are supposed to go hand-in-hand, and that to do good is to receive it, yet after the loss of any one of us the world will go on in quite the same manner as before.

In the days when d'Holbach was giving dinner-parties in the Rue Royale, the flag of France was noticeably black. Some said that it was from the dye of the cassock; others, that it had caught the grime of medieval institutions. At d'Holbach's dinner-table, however, in the salons of Madame Geoffrin—she who was so plain that Greuze exclaimed, "My God, if she annoys me I'll paint her!"—in the salons of Mesdames du Deffand, de Lespinasse and Necker, there assembled from time to time a handful of thinkers who were determined to give the flag of France another hue. These gentlemen were resolute and aggressive. The century they saw, was hungry for ideas, and it was in an effort to give it food of the right quality that the Encyclopædia was produced.

The Encyclopædia—a name coined by Rabelais—displayed the genealogy of thought. It was at once a storehouse of knowledge, an attack on ignorance, an appeal to common-sense, and a plea for liberty. It opposed every abuse, political, theological, ecclesiastical, industrial, fiscal, legal and penal. It sought to establish toleration, to abolish sacerdotal thaumaturgy, to banish the supernatural, and thwart the subornation of the understanding.

It was in no sense free from error, and its erudition presents today a most mildewed appearance; but it served its purpose, and from out its wide bindings burst the torrents of the Revolution.

In its opposition to everything that savored of the illiberal, the Encyclopædia encountered many an obstacle and not a few embarrassments; indeed, the history of the government and literature of the third quarter of the last century is interwoven with that of its vicissitudes and final triumph. Every man of brains wrote for it, and those who had none and wanted some subscribed. The responsibility of its publication was assumed by Diderot and d'Alembert.

Diderot was a giant, whose head was in the clouds and whose feet were in the mud. He wrote obscene stories and anticipated Lamark, Darwin's precursor. History, art, science and philosophy he held in fee, and yet he was not erudite. He had drunk oft, not deep. "I know a great many things," he said, "but there is hardly a man that does not know some one thing better than I." In the activity of his mind may be found the reason of the admiration of his contemporaries and that of posterity's neglect. He has left us twenty volumes of essays and digressions, but not a single book. Yet no one was ever so prodigal with his pen as he. He gave it to any one that asked, to an enemy as readily as to a friend. Grimm asked his opinion on an exhibition of paintings; he gave it in an in-octavo. "I have written a satire against you," said a young man to him one day. "I am poor; will you buy it?" "Ah! sir," he exclaimed, "what a pitiable vocation is yours! but," he continued, "I will tell you what to do. The Duke of Orleans honors me with his dislike; dedicate your book to him; he will pay you well." "A good dedication is a difficult job," said the young black-mailer. "Well, sit down," Diderot answered, "and I will write it for you." And he did, and the youth received his pay.

Diderot being without ambition was known as the Philosopher, but he was so poor that he could hardly buy the cloak.

When he wished to dower his daughter, he found that he had nothing except his library, and his library to him was life itself. Nevertheless, he determined to sell it. Catharine of Russia learned of the determination and bought the library; but with a true sense of what is royal, she left him the use of his books and made him their salaried custodian beside.

At the beginning of his literary career, Diderot was a sincere deist, which, as some one has said, is a proof of what education may do. It was not long, however, before he saw that skepticism is the first step to philosophy; and when the step was taken, he descended without a compunction the precipitate stair of negation. The stages of his thought are well defined. "Aggrandize God," he shouted in his first enthusiasm; "free Him from the captivity of temples and creeds. See Him everywhere, or say that he does not exist." Later—in the "Letter on the Blind for the Use of those who See"—he manifested a classic indifference on the whole subject. "Ask an Indian how the world is suspended in the air, and he will tell you that it rests on the back of an elephant. 'And the elephant?' 'On a turtle.' You pity the Indian, yet one might say to you as to him, 'Admit your ignorance, and don't bother me with a menagerie.'"

But his indifference was transient. "Among the difficulties (of believing in God), there is one," he noted, "which has been agitated since the world began. It is that men suffer without having deserved to do so. To this there has never been an answer. The existence of a Supreme Being is incompatible with evils, moral and physical. What, then, is the safest course? The one which we have taken. Whatever the optimist may say, we answer that if the world could not exist without sentient beings, and sentient beings without pain, the Almighty would have done better to keep quiet." Thereafter he became firmly anti-theistic. "It is," he said, "highly important not to mistake hemlock for parsley, but it is entirely unnecessary to believe in God." "The

Christian religion," he added, "is atrocious in its dogmas. It is unintelligible, metaphysical, intertwisted and obscure. It is mischievous to tranquility, dangerous in its discipline, puerile and unsociable in its ethics, and in its ceremonial dreary, flat, Gothic and most gloomy... If my ideas please no one," he concluded, "it is possible that they are poor; but if they pleased everybody, I would consider them detestable." Yet as he preached tolerance, he practiced it, and was never known to refuse a crutch to those who had no legs.

Among the Encyclopædists, where Diderot was king, d'Alembert was prime minister, a Mazarin, as one may say; but a Mazarin who grew fainthearted, and, fearing the Bastille, left his monarch in the lurch.

D'Alembert was more a mathematician than a philosopher. His mistress was Algebra. History has given the same title to Mile. de l'Espinasse; but if he was unfaithful, the lady in question appears to have paid him back in a better coin than his own. He was not a cheerful person, yet when alone with his books he was happy as though he were dead. "*Qui est-ce qui est heureux?*" someone asked him. "*Quelque misérable,*" he replied. He was an invalid, too; but he hated medicine, and held a physician to be like a blind man who armed with a cudgel strikes at random, and, according as he strikes, annihilates the disease or—the patient.

As has been hinted, he was timid, or perhaps merely cautious, a trait which found little favor with Voltaire. "Philosophers are too lukewarm," he said; "instead of shrugging their shoulders at the errors of mankind, they ought to wipe them out." But apparently d'Alembert did not agree with him. "Philosophers," he retorted, "should be like children, who, when they have done anything wrong, put the blame on the cat." But if for one reason or another he thought it best to keep his views from the public, he had no hesitation in whispering them to the sympathetic ear of Frederick the Great. The latter had written what he called a refutation of the naturalism conveyed in d'Holbach's *Système de la Nature*. The book had annoyed him; but what probably annoyed him most was not its naturalism, but its attack on the sacred caste of royalty. At the same time, as he himself said, if d'Holbach were condemned to be burned, he would be the first to play the hose on the stake.

In the eyes of the liberal monarch, d'Alembert, when answering the refutation, brandished the historic doubt. "Montaigne's motto, What do I know? seems to me," he wrote, "the answer that should be made to all questions in metaphysics... Those who deny the existence of a Supreme Intelligence advance more than they can prove. In treating such a subject, skepticism is the only reasonable standpoint. No one, for instance, can deny that throughout the universe, and particularly in the formation of plants and animals, there are combinations which seem to reveal an Intelligence. That they prove it, as a watch proves a watch-maker, is incontestable. But supposing that one wishing to go further asks, What is this Intelligence? Did it create, or did it merely arrange matter? Is creation possible, or, if it be not, is matter eternal? And if matter is eternal and needed an Intelligence simply to arrange it, is that Intelligence united to matter, or is it distinct? If it is united, matter, properly speaking, is God, and God is matter. If it is distinct, how can that which is material be fashioned by that which is not? Besides, if this Intelligence is infinitely wise and infinitely powerful, why is the world, which is its work, so filled with physical and moral imperfections? Why are not all men happy? Why are not all men just? Your Majesty assures me that this question is answered by the world's eternity. And so perhaps it is, but seemingly merely in this sense, that the world being eternal, and in consequence necessary, everything which is, must be as it is; and at once we enter into a system of fatality and necessity which does not in the least accord with the idea of a God infinitely wise and infinitely powerful. Sire, when these questions arise, we should repeat '*Que sais-je?*' an hundred times. Then, too, there is a consolation for ignorance in the thought that, as we know nothing, it is unnecessary for us to know more."

To which Frederick, who gave a nickname as readily as a pension, answered:

"But, my dear Diagoras, if you fancy that I can give a detailed explanation of the Intelligence that I marry to Nature, you over-estimate my ability. I can say merely that I perceive it as I would an object of which I might happen to catch a glimpse through a mist."

D'Alembert, however, was not to be played with, and he returned to the charge and routed the fat king with a fresh arsenal of queries.

"With the exception of the animal kingdom, the realms of matter with which we are acquainted appear deprived of sentiency, volition and thought. Is it possible that intelligence resides in them without our knowledge? Of this there is no evidence, and I am inclined to think that the block of marble, as well as the plants that are the most delicately and ingeniously organized, are without thought and feeling. But, it is objected, the organization of these bodies discloses visible traces of an intelligence. This I do not deny; but I would be glad to know what has become of this intelligence since these bodies were organized. If it resided within them while they were being formed and in order to form them, and if, as it is supposed, this intelligence is not distinct from them, what has become of it since its work is done? Has the very perfection of the organization been annihilated? To me, such a supposition seems untenable. If, then, the intelligence whose effects we admire in man is merely a resultant of organization, why, in other realms of matter, may we not admit a structure and an arrangement as necessary and as natural as matter itself, and from which, without the intervention of any intelligence, would result the very effects which surround and surprise us? Lastly, in admitting the doctrine that an Intelligence presided over the formation of the world and still watches over its well-being, it is hard to reconcile the theory of that Intelligence with the idea of infinite wisdom and power. For, to the misfortune of humanity, this world of ours, is very far from being the best one possible. With the best of intentions, we are therefore unable to recognize any other God than one who, at most, is material, limited and dependent. I do not know whether this view is the correct one, but certainly it is not that of the Deity's partisans, who would much prefer to have us atheists than the Spinozists that we are. To mollify them, let us turn skeptic and repeat with Montaigne, *Que sais-je?*"

This amiable agnosticism was shared by few of the Encyclopaedists. To Naigeon, who would have nothing to do with half-way measures, it seemed little less than revolting. Naigeon was a Puritan without beliefs; his atheism was as fervent as his life was austere. When he first sat, a stripling, at d'Holbach's table, he was largely ridiculed. He was a pretty boy, with fair skin and curled blonde hair. Diderot's monkey, La Harpe called him, for it was through Diderot that he was brought into notice. But with age the comely lad developed into a tiger. To him Diderot left the care of his unpublished manuscripts, and these Naigeon edited, together with the memoirs of the author. He, too, was a voluminous writer, and scattered essays and treatises with a prodigality which he had caught from his master. But the work which caused the greatest number of people to turn about and look after him in the street was the *Theologie portative*. In it the beliefs and tenets of Christendom were treated in a manner that reminds one of Col. Ingersoll. In the subsequent *Encyclopédie méthodique* he wrote again on these and adjacent subjects, though this time from a broader and more serious standpoint.

Politically, socially and morally untrammelled, he had, meanwhile, been keeping a finger on the public pulse, and he felt that some great, if undetermined, change was at hand. So soon, then, as the National Assembly got to work on its declaration of the rights of man, Naigeon issued an address, in which he prayed the Assembly to banish from the proclamation any suggestion of religion, and in its place to assert man's right to entire freedom of thought and speech. But the petition was unnoticed. It is possible that he made a second appeal to Robespierre; but if he did, it was as unsuccessful as the first. And there is an anecdote that one day during the Terror he looked so much alarmed, that some asked him if he were on the list of the condemned. "Worse than that," he cried. "That monster Robespierre has decreed the existence of a Supreme Being!" To Robespierre, an atheist was an aristocrat.

While Naigeon was addressing the Assembly, a young man named Sylvain Maréchal passed out of Saint-Lazare. A few months previous, he had published a little book entitled, *l'Almanack des honnêtes gens*, in which wise men were given precedence over saints. This disregard of etiquette procured for Marechal an opportunity to meditate on the proprieties of life. When the prison-doors were opened, he passed his time in succoring the indigent and housing the pursued. He fed and sheltered priests and royalists alike, and even paid masses for the repose of the soul of an old woman because he knew that such had been her wish.

Yet Maréchal was one of the fanatics of atheism, and as proud of negation as though he had invented it. The devil, one may see, is rarely as red as he appears on the stage. The thinkers with whom this chapter has had to deal were fervent in their disbelief; but in their disbelief there was room for such charity, tolerance and broad good-will, that one looks in vain for a stone that shall hit them. Perhaps, as some one has said, it is only the just that have a right to be athiests. And yet they were not impeccable;

with one exception, they were guilty of a grievous sin against good manners—they were dogmatic. One may fancy that their voices were seldom modulated; it is probable that they shouted, and there are few among us that care to be shouted at. Then, too, there was a confidence and an assurance in their atheism which is as unpleasant as bigotry. They forgot Montaigne, and they let Pyrrho fall asleep. Maréchal was not better than the others; one may even say that he was worse, for he was dogmatic in rhyme. Since Lucretius, atheism had been without a poet. Leopardi's father was then a bachelor. and Shelley was in the cradle. It was Maréchal that the irreverent muse first ordered to hold the lute. And Maréchal kissed the Muse full upon the mouth, and sang loudly in a strain of boyish bravado. Whether or not Maréchal's notes were listened to, is relatively a matter of small importance. A little later, the Being whose existence Robespierre had decreed was publicly deposed. The cathedral of Notre-Dame was consecrated to the worship of Reason, the crosier and the ring were trampled under foot, and an ass, crowned with a mitre, was led through exulting crowds.

CHAPTER FIVE.

The Protests of Yesterday.

THE LIVES OF PHILOSOPHERS ARE DULL. DESCARTES MIGHT figure as the hero of a romance, but Descartes is an exception. Fichte belongs to the rule. The story of his manhood is one of poverty which is not poignant, and of successes which were not great.

In a work on this thinker, Professor Adamson notes one fact which is palpitant in truth and lucidity; it is to the effect that Europe today does not hold ten students of that marvellous sophist. And yet Fichte is one of the most insolent of dissenters. To the ordinary reader his negations are inexplicable; they comprise the denial of the reality of the external world. This denial, which is known as akosmism, is pantheism's twin-sister. Pantheism admits no other reality than Nature; and akosmism, taking one step further, declines to admit any reality at all. Of the two, pantheism has been the more fruitful. It began with the Vedas; ran through Eleatic and Neo-platonic philosophy; was caught up by Scott Erigena and handed to Bruno, who passed it to Spinoza. Another thread or two runs through the Talmud, the Kabbala, the theories of Maimonides, Gerson and Chesdai Creskas; and there are tangles of it in the beliefs of mediaeval communities, in the heresies of the Beghards and Beguines, the Turlupins and Adamites; but with their unravelment the reader need not be wearied. Akosmism has found fewer adherents. Like pantheism, it began with the Vedas, or, more correctly, with the Vedanta philosophy; left broad traces in Greece; revived for a moment during the Renaissance; and then sank back into obscurity until Fichte, Kant aiding, brought it to light anew. Between the two systems there is this cardinal distinction. Pantheism and science have never been other than the best of friends. There is nothing in the one that has ever been seriously opposed by the other. But akosmism and science look at each other askant. They have as much in common as have the poet and the mathematician.

The clearest idea of Fichte's akosmism, or rather the clearest idea of its charm and futility, is conveyed in a work entitled the *Bestimmung des Menschen*, the Vocation of Man. The work is divided into three parts: Doubt, Knowledge and Faith. The first part, Doubt, opens with an inquiry concerning that mystery within us that calls itself "I," and an examination of Nature that vaunts itself real. From this inquiry and from this examination, Fichte discovers that man is but a link in a chain of necessity, a part of that force which, amid the everlasting revolution and mutation of things, is the sum and substance of all that is.

And that chain of necessity! Was there ever anything more delicately interconnected? One has but to look at it to see that its rivets are so neatly joined that they make it impossible for anything to be other than it is. Take, for instance, a single grain of sand on the sea-shore, and fancy that it lies a few feet further inland than it actually does. The mental operation is, admittedly, most easy to perform; but note the consequences. For that grain of sand to be a few feet further inland, then must the wind which bore it have been stronger than it was; then must the state of the atmosphere which occasioned the wind have been different from what it was, and the previous changes different; in fact, it is necessary to presuppose an entirely different temperature from that which actually existed. We must also suppose a different constitution of the bodies which influence the temperature, the barrenness or fertility of countries, on which depend the health of man and the duration of life. Interfere, therefore, with that grain of sand, and it is within the range of possibilities that in such a state of weather as was necessary to move it but a few feet further inland, some one, long ago, may have died of cold or hunger—long ago, before the birth of that son from whom the sophist himself descended; and behold, Fichte would have been spared the trials of life, and prevented, too, from solving every problem, and leaving the student nothing to do but to bore himself to death.

From Fichte's logic, therefore, the necessity which compels everything to be precisely as it is, is amply demonstrated. Nevertheless, doubt is not yet banished. It is true he has proved the existence of man to be but a manifestation of a force whose operation is determined by the whole of the universe, but into the nature of that force he is unable to look. And even could he, of what use would it be? It would not help him to regulate his actions. Nature is the last one to contradict herself, and she allows no one to contradict her. The force that acts on us and in us makes us what we are; and to attempt to make ourselves otherwise than it has been appointed we should be, is a task which may be pleasant, but which assuredly is useless. In the chain of necessity we are all interlinked: fight free who may. They who have done so have reached that bourne from which no traveller returns.

We may rejoice and repent, we may form good resolutions;

but the joy and the repentance and the good resolutions come to us of themselves, and not until it is appointed that they shall do so. When they do come, however sincere the repentance may be, however magnificent the resolutions, the course of things moves on unchanged and changeless as before. We lie in the lap of necessity. Should Nature destine one man to be wise and to be brave, wise and brave he will be. Should she destine another to be scatterbrained and imbecile, scatterbrained and imbecile will he become. There is no merit, no blame, to be ascribed to her or to them. The wishes that throb in our hearts may rebel, but the great Mother snuffs them out like a candle. She is governed herself. Her laws are ours.

It is in musings of this description that Fichte stretches his hand to Spinoza and denies that man is a free agent. At best he is a conscious automaton. But what if he were not even that? Is there any one thing of which he is certain?

> "Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?"

Fichte asks himself the same question, and looking with introspective eye for an answer, discovers the purely subjective character of all human knowledge. He sees that he has no consciousness of things in themselves, only a consciousness of a consciousness of them. Were he blind, what would he know of color? Were he deaf, what would he know of song? Were he without imagination, doubt, hope and fear would have no meaning. Such knowledge as man possesses is merely a knowledge of himself; beyond it, consciousness never goes. When it seems to do otherwise, when man assumes to be conscious of an object—the sun, for instance—he has merely the consciousness of a supposition of an object, which supposition he identifies with sensation and takes for the object itself.

It has been hinted that akosmism and science are at odds, but on this point they agree. As a matter of fact, and one admitted by all decorous scholars, we none of us see the sun. What we do see are certain modifications of light in immediate relation to our organ of vision. And in this connection it is not improper to note that no two persons see the same modifications of the same light, and that for the reason that each person sees a different complement of rays acting on his own individual retina.

But to return to Fichte, and to put his idea less technically, it is a self-evident proposition that we neither see our sight, feel our touch, nor yet have a higher sense by which things affecting the organs of sense are perceived. It is therefore not difficult to accept the axiom that our consciousness of external existence is merely the product of our presentative faculty. The difficulty lies in the application, for with it all reality vanishes. In that which we call intuitive knowledge, we contemplate only ourselves, and our consciousness is and can be only a consciousness of the modifications of our own existence. If, therefore, the external world arises before us only through our own consciousness, it follows that what is particular and multiform in the external world can arise in no other way; and if the connection between ourselves and what is external to us is simply a connection of thought, then is the connection of the multifarious objects of the external world simply this and no other.

The whole of the material world is, then, but a cerebral phenomenon. There is no being, no real existence. The only things that exist are pictures, and these pictures know themselves after the fashion of pictures. They are pictures which float past, without there being anything past which they float—pictures which picture nothing, images without significance and without an aim. Reality is a dream, without a world of which the dream might be, or a mind that might dream it. It is a dream which is woven together in a dream of itself. Intuition is the dream; thought, the source of fancied reality, is the dream of that dream.

In this charming manner, Fichte, after divesting himself of doubt and attaining perfect knowledge, mounts into a higher sphere which he terms Faith. Into the austerities of this abstraction it is unnecessary to follow him; and it will perhaps suffice to note that the conclusion amounts to the assertion that where the canaille believe that things are as they appear, because they must, the philosopher believes because he will. After a deduction such as that, one may well exclaim against the uselessness of philosophy in general, and the Fichtean branch in particular.

Fichte's metaphysical hysterics excited the wildest hilarity. His formula I = I, on which in an earlier work he had sounded all the changes, was popularly supposed to mean his own individual ego. Fichte, however, meant nothing of the sort. The "I" he used in the impersonal sense which is conveyed in such expressions as "it rains," "it snows." The "I" represented the force that pervades all things, and which in man arrives at a consciousness of self. But Fichte was not a clear writer—few Germans are; and if he was taken *au pied de la lettre*, the fault was his own. In any event, his philosophy was largely ridiculed. Heine is witness to the fact that a cartoon was circulated which represented a goose whose liver had become so big that the bird was undecided whether she was all goose or all liver. Across her Fichtean breast ran the legend I = I. The reality of his idealism, however, was not taken so easily. The Philistines waxed wroth. Heine represents a burgomeister as exclaiming, "That man thinks I don't exist, does he? Why, I'm stouter than he and his superior, too!" The ladies asked, "Doesn't he at least believe in the existence of his wife?" "Of course not." "And does Madame Fichte permit that?"

But with whatever facetiousness the matter may be viewed, the question of an external world has been, and is still, one of the great battle-fields of metaphysics. The realists clamor that their opponents are colossal in their errors; the idealists answer, "*Tu quoque.*" Among the latter, few have been more vehement than Fichte. He defended his belief with all the heavy artillery of the German dictionary, and entrenched himself with logic. It was, however, merely on speculative principles that he contended that our knowledge of mind and matter is only a consciousness of what Sir William Hamilton has christened "various bundles of baseless appearances." He did not deny the veracity of consciousness; he denied the veracity of its testimony, a distinction as subtle as it is valid. For all practical purposes the material world—including Madame Fichte—was to him not only thoroughly real, but it went spinning through space at the rate of nineteen miles a second. And it was merely the certainty of uncertainty, the haunting conviction of the unreliability of the perceptions which in earlier days led Socrates to maintain that the only thing he knew was that he knew nothing, which caused Fichte to discriminate between what he believed and what he saw.

But however unreal the world might be in theory, he was quite sure that for every-day purposes it was the worst one possible. Indeed, Fichte was not only an akosmist, he was a pessimist too, a combination which seemed so alluring to Lammenais, that after a debauch in Fichteana he was pleased to describe the world as a shadow of that which is not, an echoless sound from nowhere, the chuckle of Satan in chaos.

Fichte's successor was Schelling. In place of the abstractions of his precursor, this gentleman presented an adventurous mysticism. Both were idealists; but where the one extracted the real from the ideal, the other reversed the proceeding. The transcendentalism which they professed in common, is the history of consciousness to the highest degree of its development. Fichte tiara'd his system with faith; Schelling crowned his own with æsthetics. To the latter, the universe was a poem whose strophes were writ in metaphysical formulas, a phrase which may be taken to mean that he was exquisitely alive to the beauties of Nature and yet unable to picture them in readable prose. His real master was Spinoza, and his philosophy in consequence presents some of the serenest forms of pantheistic belief.

The harmony to which he was alive prefigured to him the agency of a supreme Principle; of a Being eternally unconscious; veiled from the sight of man by the purity of enveloping light, and apprehensible only through intellectual intuition. On the skirts of this intuition he suspended knowledge. Above it he poised art—"the revelation of that Absolute in which subject and object coincide; in which the conscious and the unconscious unite."

"That which we call Nature," he said, "is a poem writ in mysterious hieroglyphics, but in which, were they decipherable, whoso lists might read the Odyssey of the Spirit, preyed upon by illusion, ever seeking, ever fleeing itself... Nature is to the artist that which it is to the philosopher; the ideal world ceaselessly appearing in finite forms: the wan reflection of a universe which does not stretch beyond the mind, but rests within it."

The fundamental idea of the entire system amounts in brief to this: earth, sea and sky, and all that in them is, are, in their essence, emanations, or, as Leibnitz has it, fulgurations of an eternal and unconscious activity. Detached from the primordial matrix, these manifestations, though interconnected, are without permanent reality. The finite world is an illusion. The infinite alone exists.

This idea, while not unalluring, is passably vague. But vagueness has no terrors for those who wish to be mystified, and that there were many such is evident from contemporary accounts of the enthusiasm with which it was greeted. The enthusiasm, however, was as impermanent as Schelling's own reality. His disciples flocked to a rival teacher, to Hegel, whose name has the sound of a knell.

The doctrine which this gentleman advanced, and which to-day is to be sought for in seventeen massive in-octavos, may be regarded as the apotheosis of the *arrière-pensée*. Hegel was the chameleon of philosophy. He believed in nothing; and not only did he believe in nothing, but he possessed no fixity of disbelief. Whenever it is possible to pin him down, it is always on a contradiction that the pinning is accomplished. He was an anatomist of thought, a midwife of paradox. No phase, no flutter of consciousness, escaped his diagnostic. He analyzed and dissected, but he did not build, or at least only on negations. He created doubts, not convictions. He made disbelievers, not converts. It was he who should have said, "*Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint*."

It may be noted, parenthetically, that the proposition of which Plato caught a glimpse, and which Descartes dimly perceived, the proposition that man is the one centre of thought, formed the sum and substance of Kent's teaching. "Look," he admonished the reader, "look at time and at space. They are but categories of thought. Time is not, nor yet is space. They are appearances which the mind creates, and with which we envelope the universe." This idealism, which in Kant was partial, in Fichte subjective, and in Schelling objective, became absolute with Hegel. To-him, illusion was the one permanency, the one cause, and man but the shadow of its effects.

In its widest sense, Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to make the acquaintence of Schelling's primordial entity—the Absolute. As a necessary preparation he annihilated the finite, or, to use his own language, the categories of the finite which stood in his way; and when he had done so, behold, the Absolute had crumbled with them. The heavens were void. There has been nothing, there is nothing, there will be nothing, save a constant evolution, a continuous development, with death for a goal. And, after all, what is the lesson that history conveys? What, indeed, if it be not this, that whatever is born, is born to die.

The idolatry, the infatuation of Hegel's disciples was without precedent or parallel. The streets and beer-halls echoed with discussions on the identity of contradictories. The Idea, the Absolute, the Ich and the non-Ich, were every-night topics. Metaphysics hung over Berlin like a London fog. Hegel was not only a popular teacher, he was a national idol. His dialectic prestidigitations had all the charm which attaches to the unfathomable. That he was a charlatan is clear, but that he was revered is certain. Among the group of mourners that assembled about his tomb, one, a theologian, likened him to Jesus. More recently, Scherer compared him to Napoleon. Yet on his death-bed Hegel was heard to mutter, "Only one man understood my philosophy, and he only half-caught its import."

After such a confession, one might well offer him the viaticum and hum a requiem over his seventeen in-octavos. And yet in vain. Hegel's influence is too substantial to be quieted by any requiescat, however determined. In spite of the hilarity of the impolite, his spectre looms through the most rational forms of contemporary negation. In the core of his philosophy there broods a sphinx that still defies.

When the bewilderment which Hegel excited subsided, the faith which he had inculcated was questioned; belief soon gave way to heresies, and the metaphysical assembly divided itself into dissenting camps. From one of these issued the philosophy which counted Emerson and Carlyle among its exponents. In the uproar of another, Strauss, Feuerbach, Bruno and Stirner have pointed to an eternal grave and taken the nimbus from a god. It is owing to the instruction of a third that Vacherot has occupied his time in showing that the idea of perfection is God, and that perfection does not exist; and it was something of the original spirit that smoothed the way for the amiable fumisteries of Ernest Renan.

In the days when Hegelism was at its apogee, there appeared in Berlin a young man who declined to take any other part in the general intoxication than that of spectre at the feast. His contempt for the sophist, the pachyderm hydrocephali, and all the pedantic eunuchs who made up what he was wont to term the apocalyptic retinue of the *bestia trionfante*, was sumptuous in its magnificence. So sumptuous even, that he took counsel from an attorney as to the exact limit his contempt might reach without making him amenable to a suit for defamation. Then, reassured, he began an attack. "Hegel's philosophy," he said, "is sufficient to cause an atrophy of the intellect. It is a crystallized paralogism, an abracadabra, a puff of bombast, and a wish-wash of phrases which in its monstrous construction compels the mind to form impossible contradictions." For its preparation he offered a receipt which is homeopathic in its simplicity. "Dilute a minimum of thought in five hundred pages of nauseous phraseology, and for the rest trust to the Teuton patience of the reader."

A few years before, this violent yet cautious young man had written a work which he signed in full letters, Arthur Schopenhauer, and entitled, *Die Weltals With und Vorstellung*. This work, which he thought would shake the sophistry of all civilization, had been left unnoticed and neglected on the back book-shelves of its Leipzig publisher. It is said that he smarted at this inattention, and that his aggressiveness and contempt of Hegel, and not of Hegel alone, but of Fichte and Schelling, the three sophists, as he was pleased to call them, was the outcome of envy. Whether or not this statement is true, is a matter of small importance. The point to be noted is, that thirty years later Hegel was largely forgotten, and the works of his obscure opponent were welcomed with an enthusiasm which has been expanding ever since.

The World as Will and Idea is an atheology compounded of Buddhism, Tauism and Epicurism, a mosaic of Oriental and classic negations worked out by an original and brilliant thinker. If the seventeen in-octavos already alluded to may be regarded as the apotheosis of the *arrière-pensée*, then, in comparison, this philosophy, together with its complementary monographs, represents the renaissance of common-sense.

Schopenhauer was not a pantheist. Had he possessed any of the views of ordinary orthodoxy, the belief, for instance, in

"L'univers
Où règne un Jehovah dont Satan est l'envers,"

he might possibly have read the banns over Nature and Satan, but he never would have identified the former with God. Nor was Schopenhauer a materialist. He was a theorematist of force, but atoms found no place in his system. Yet if he must be cataloged, it will perhaps be safest to say that he was an idealist who saw the inutility of dream. Kant's *Kritik*, from which all German metaphysics proceeds, had shown him that reason must either be confined within the limits of experience, or else let loose into an absolute idealism. The three sophists had disgusted him with the super-sensible, and yet he felt suffocated in the narrow limits of the real. There was yet a middle course, and that course he took. It was useless to ask whence the world comes or whither it tends, but it would not be impertinent to state *what it is;* and the statement which Schopenhauer made to the public was to the effect that the world is but the perception of a perceiver, a simple representation, a mere idea which man carries with him to the tomb, and which in the absence of a thinker to think it would not exist at all.

In the *Cogita*, a note-book of which extracts have been selected by Schopenhauer's literary executor,[*] is the following passage: "Two things were before me, two bodies, regularly formed, beautiful to see. One was a vase of jaspar, with a border and handles of gold. The other was an organism, a man. When I had admired them sufficiently from without, I begged the genie who accompanied me to let me visit within. This permission was accorded. In the vase I found nothing save the pressure of weight, and between the parts some obscure reciprocal tendency which I have heard designated as cohesion and affinity. But when I entered the other object, my surprise was so great as to be almost untellable: in legends and fairy-tales there is nothing more unbelievable than the spectacle which I beheld. In this object, or rather in its upper end, called the head, and which from without looks like anything else, I saw nothing less than the world itself; I saw the immensity of space in which all is contained, the immensity of time in which everything moves, and therewith the prodigious variety of objects that fill both space and time; but, what is most astounding, I saw myself coming and going! That is what I discovered in this object that was barely larger than a large fruit; in this object which the headsman can dissever with a single blow, and that, too, in such wise as to plunge into sudden and eternal night the whole of the world that it contains. And the amusing part of it all is, that if objects of this sort did not sprout like mushrooms, continuously prepared to receive a universe that is ever ready to subside into chaos, and did not give and take like a ball the great idea (Vorstellung) which is identical in each, and of which the identity is expressed with the word objectivity, the world would no longer exist."

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[*] Arthur Schopenhauer. *Von ihm Ueber ihn.* Frauenstadt.

Schopenhauer was not far from agreeing with Berkeley that the world is a phantasmagoria, a transformation-scene existing in fancy, or, as the Brahmins declared, a mirage evoked for the entertainment of the Supreme. The source and origin of the exterior world lay in the representative faculty which creates it and with which it disappears. Matter, according to him, is a lie that is truth; it is not an illusion, it is correlative with the intelligence; the two rise and fall together; separated, they could not exist; one is a reflection of the other. Properly speaking, they are the same thing examined from different points. But what is this same thing? Schopenhauer answers with a word. It is Will.

This Will should not be taken to mean the conscious act of a higher Intelligence. It is a force, invariable, identical and equal, of which gravitation, electricity, heat—in fact, every form of activity from the fall of an apple to the founding of a monarchy, from a cataclysm to a blade of grass, from the choir of planets to the invisible molecule—is merely a derivative and nothing more. In Nature, it is a blind, unconscious power; in man, it is the foundation of being.

This theory, which Schopenhauer expounded with a great luxuriance of vivid argument, and in a style that is crystal in its clarity, coincides in the aptest manner with the doctrine of evolution. During the early ages of the world's formation, the objectivity of this force was, he says, limited to inferior forms; but when the conflict of chemical forces had ended, and the granite, like a tombstone, covered the combatants, it irrupted in the world of plant and forest. The air, decarbonized, was then prepared for animal life, and the Will's objectivity realized a new form. Fish and crustaceans filled the sea, gigantic reptiles covered the earth, and gradually through innumerable forms, each more perfect than the last, the propulsion ascended to man.

Schopenhauer declined to believe that either here or in another planet a being superior to man could possibly exist; and that for the reason that with enlarged intelligence he would consider life too deplorable to be supported for a moment. As a consequence, the Will's objectivity can ascend no higher. Its latest manifestation is even the final term of its progress, for with it has come the possibility of its denial, the possibility that some day it may be throttled into extinction and choked back into the chaos from which it sprang.

In all the grades of its manifestations, Will, he taught, dispenses with any end or aim. It simply and ceaselessly strives, for striving is its sole nature. But as any hindrance of this striving, through an obstacle placed between it and its temporary aim, is called suffering, and the absence of any obstacle, satisfaction—it follows, if the obstacles it meets outnumber the facilities it encounters, that, having no final end or aim, there can be no end and no measure of suffering.

That pain does outbalance pleasure is a fact too well established to need discussion here. Pain begins with the lowest types of animal life, becomes acute with the nervous system of the vertebrates, increases in proportion to the development of the intelligence; and as intelligence attains distinctness, pain advances with it, until what Mr. Swinburne calls the gift of tears finds its supreme expression in man. And man is not a being to be envied. He is the concretion of a thousand necessities. His life, as Schopenhauer has it, is a fight for existence, with the certainty of defeat in the end; and even when his existence is assured, there comes a struggle with a shadowy burden, an effort to kill time, and a vain attempt to escape ennui.

Nor is ennui a minor evil. It is not every one who can get away from himself. Schopenhauer could, it is true; but in so doing he noted that its ravages depicted on the human countenance an expression of absolute despair, and made beings who love each other as little as men do, seek eagerly the society of each other. In this way, between effort and attainment, the life of man rolls on. The wish is in its nature pain, and satisfaction soon begets satiety. No matter what fortune may have done, no matter what a man may be or what he may possess, pain can never be avoided. Efforts to banish it effect, if successful, only a change of form. It may appear as want or care for the maintenance of life. If this preoccupation be removed, back it comes again in the mask of love, jealousy, hatred or ambition; and if it gain entrance through none of these avatars, it comes as simple boredom, against which we strive as best we may. Even in this latter case, if we get the upper hand, we shall hardly do so, Schopenhauer says, without letting pain in again in one of its earlier forms. And then the dance begins afresh; for life, like a pendulum, swings ever backward and forward between pain and ennui.

The one relief, a relief which at best is momentary and accidental, is in that impersonal contemplation in which the individual is effaced, and only the pure, knowing subject subsists. This condition Schopenhauer praises as the painless state which Epicurus described as the highest good, the bliss of the gods. Therein man is freed from the yoke of Will; the penal servitude of daily life ceases as for a Sabbath; the wheel of Ixion stands still. The cause of this he was at no loss to explain, and he did so, it may be added, in a manner poetically logical and peculiar to himself.

"Every desire is born of a need, of a privation or of a suffering. When satisfied, it is lulled; but for one that is satisfied, how many are unappeased! Desire, moreover, is of long duration; its exigencies are infinite; while pleasure is brief and narrowly measured. Pleasure, too, is but an apparition that is destined to be succeeded by another. The first is a vanished illusion; the second an illusion that lingers still. Nothing is capable of appeasing Will, nor of permanently arresting it. The beet we can do is like the alms tossed to a beggar, which, in preserving his life today, prolongs his misery to-morrow. While, then, we are dominated by desires and ruled by Will, so long as we give ourselves up to hopes that delude and fears that alarm, we have neither peace nor happiness. But when an accident, an interior harmony lifting us for the moment from out the torrent of desire, delivers the spirit from the oppression of Will, turns our attention from everything that solicits it, and all things seem as freed from the allurements of hope and personal interest, then repose, vainly pursued, yet ever intangible, comes to us of itself, bearing with open hands the plenitude of the gift of peace."

Contemplation is then an affranchisement. It delivers us for a moment from ourselves; it suspends the activity of Will; and in raising man out of misery into the pure world of ideas, brings him a foretaste of that repose which is the freedom of the non-existent. But the liberation from the trammels of Will which is found in art and disinterested contemplation, is a solace that is momentary and accidental. That which is more desirable is a complete and unfettered freedom. The cause of evil is known; it is the affirmation of the Will-to-live. The remedy is its denial. The Will affirms itself when, after an acquaintance with life, it persists as much in willing as in the first moment when it was a mere blind necessity. The Will denies itself when it renounces life, when it frees itself through a persistent abdication, and abolishes itself of its own accord.

In this there is no question of suicide. For suicide, far from being a denial of the Will-to-live, is one of its strongest affirmations. The man who takes his own life really wants to live.

What he does not want are the miseries and trials attendant on his particular existence. He abolishes the individual, but not the race. The species continues, and pain with it. To be scientifically annihilated, life should be abolished not only in its suffering, but in its empty pleasures as well. Its entire inanity should be recognized, and the whole root cut once and for all. In explaining in what manner this is to be accomplished, Schopenhauer carried his reader far off into the shadows of the Orient. On the one side is the lethargy of the Rishis; on the other, the Tauists drugged with opium; while above all rises the phantasy of the East, the dogma of metempsychosis.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained,* Schopenhauer gives the name of Will to that force which in Indian philosophy is held to resurrect with man across successive lives, and with which the horror of ulterior existence reappears. It is from this nightmare that we are summoned to awake, but in the summons we are told that the awakening can only come with a recognition of the true nature of the dream. The work to be accomplished is therefore less physical than moral. We are not to strangle ourselves in sleep; we are to rise out of it in meditation.

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* *The Philosophy of Disenchantment.*

"In man," Schopenhauer says, "the Will-to-live advances to consciousness, to that point where it can choose between its continuance or abolition. Man is the Saviour. Nature awaits her redemption through him. He is at once the priest and the victim."

If, then, in the succeeding generations the appetite for liberty has been so highly cultivated that a widespread and united compassion is felt for all things, then through continence absolute and universal, that condition will be produced in which subject and object disappear, and—the sigh of the egotist Will once choked thereby into a death-rattle—the world, delivered from pain, will pass into that peace which passeth all understanding, into the Prajna-Paramita, the "beyond all knowledge," the Buddhist goal where nothing is.

"It is this," Schopenhauer exclaims in his concluding paragraph, "it is this that the Hindus have expressed in the empty terms of Nirvana and re-absorption in Brahm. I am, of course, aware that what' remains after the abolition of the Will, is without effect on those in whom it still works. But to those in whom it has been crushed, what is this world of ours, with its suns and stellar systems? *Nothing.*"

Among thinking people, Schopenhauer's admirers are today sufficiently frequent to defy enumeration. The theory of force, which was his chief originality, has found few serious adherents; fewer still are they who pin any faith to his plan for the extinction of humanity; it is his classic insistence on the immedicable misery of life, it is the pessimism which he expounded, but which was no more his own invention than is atheism, that has multiplied the translations and editions of his works. For thirty years these works were unnoticed. But Schopenhauer, who was very blithe in his misanthropy, snapped his fingers at the inattention of the public; he knew that Time, who is at least a gentleman, would bring him his due unasked. "My death," he said, "will be a canonization, the extreme unction, a baptism." Yet before he died, fame and honors came and found him unsurprised. "Time has brought his roses at last," he said. "But see," he added, touching his silvered hair, "they are white."

The most prominent of Schopenhauer's successors is Dr. Eduard von Hartmann. On many points this gentleman separates widely from the master. In matters ontological and teleological there is a variance that is noticeably large. But their pessimism is the same; if any difference is discernible, it is merely in this, that the tone of the later comer has gained from recent science the steadiness and assurance that comes of broader knowledge.

Dr. von Hartmann, who sits at the head of contemporary metaphysicians, is a transcendental realist. His doctrine is a pantheism, or, as he prefers to call it, a monism, in which nihilism and idealism are found in equal parts, and one which has given to Hegelism a new and unexpected activity. Nature to him is truly divine; but the misery of existence is irremediable, or at least will continue to be so until advancing science has taught in what way the clamor of life may be quelled. That which the Hindu termed Atma, that which Spinoza designated as Substance—in short, the universal and indetectable force which has made all things what they are, is called by him the Unconscious. The Unconscious is sovereignly wise, and the world is admirable in every respect; it is existence that is irreclaimable in its misery.

The originality of this philosophy consists in a theory of optimistic evolution as counterbalanced by a pessimistic analysis of life; but the originality is not lost in its conclusion, in which it is argued that, as the world's progressus tends neither to universal nor individual happiness, the great aim of science should be to emancipate man from a love of life, and in this wise lead the world back to chaos. The interest of the Unconscious is opposed to our own. It is to our advantage not to live; it is to the advantage of the Unconscious that we should do so, and that others should be brought into existence through us. The Unconscious, therefore, in the furtherment of its aims, has surrounded man with such illusions as are capable of deluding him into a belief that life is a pleasant thing well worth the living. The instincts within us are the different forms beneath which the desire to live is at work, and with which the Unconscious molds man to its profit. Hence the energy witlessly expended for the protection of an existence which is but the right to suffer; hence the erroneous idea which is formed of the happiness derivable from life; and hence, too, the modification of past disenchantments through the influence of fresh and newer hopes. But when in the old age of the world, when humanity has divested itself of the belief that happiness is obtainable in this life, when it has lost all faith in the promise of another—in fact, when every illusion has been dissipated, when hope, love, ambition and gold are recognized as chimeras, or at least as incentives to activity which cause more pain than pleasure—then, science aiding, humanity will perform its own execution, and Time at last will cease to be.

Such is Dr. von Hartmann's conception of life, and such is the idea he has formed of the destiny of the world. In regard to the latter, nothing need now be said; but it may be noted that to the general public his theory of pleasure and pain has not seemed wholly satisfactory. There have been many attempts to confute his pessimism, and many attempts, to show that life, so far from being immedicable in its misery, is a well-spring of delight. And to many, doubtless, it has so seemed. But a point of view is not an argument. Whether life is held to be valuable, or whether it is held to be valueless, its nature in either case remains unchanged. To the obtuse it is usually the one; to the sensitive it is generally the other. But to the impersonal observer, the disinterested witness, to him who looks back through the shudders of history, and who gazes into a future that will be as inexplicable as the past, to him who feels some sympathy for the suffering, some compassion for the distressed and some pity for those in pain, life seldom seems other than an immense, an unnecessary affliction.

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Why, asked Voltaire, with that leer which de Musset has made immortal, Why is there anything? An answer often given to this question is, that the ultimate reason of things is discoverable only in matter and motion. In theological circles the advocates of this explanation are not in good repute. In polite society it is considered as bad form to hold such theories as it is to carve salad or guillotine asparagus. In fact, beyond the jurisdiction of the scientific world the materialist has a bad name. The pantheist, *passe encore*. Pantheism is vague and poetic, and apprehended with difficulty. But the materialist brings a different guitar. His conception of the universe demands but little study to seem tolerably clear. Besides, in his heart he seems to say, There is no God, and the appearance of that inward speech is not compatible with good manners. Society has a stronger leaning to affirmations than to negations; in fact as Rousseau has pointed out, the average intellect prefers to be wrong in its belief than to have none at all. The materialist, standing as he does in opposition to theological tenets, is therefore eyed askant, and what is more, is called an atheist when his back is turned.

Parenthetically it may be noted that the historical definition of an atheist is a citizen who refuses to worship the gods which the authorities of the state have appointed as worthy of worship.

In modern parlance the word has acquired a sharper tone, and is generally used in reference to whoso disbelieves in the supernatural. In the coming centuries it is possible that it will cease to be a term of reproach. Indeed, its rehabilitation has in certain quarters already begun. But be this as it may, there are still few thinkers who hear themselves called atheists without experiencing some bewilderment. "Tell a philosopher," Heine said, "that his theories are atheistic, and he will be as much surprised as would a geometrician on learning that his triangles were red."

The denomination is as impertinent to the views of the one, as the color is to the triangles of the other. Not every one, however, has had the privilege of sitting at Heine's feet, and the expression continues to be flung, with more or less vigor, at all systems of rationalistic thought, though at none more virulently than at materialism.

As has been hinted in earlier chapters, materialism is as old as philosophy itself. In India, it was a precursor of Buddhism; in China, it antedates Laou-tze. In classic antiquity, Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius were among its advocates. Arrested by Christianity, it was imprisoned all through the middle ages; but when, over a century ago, it at last escaped, thrones and altars fell before it. It is, however, only within recent years that materialism received the endorsements of science. The standard-bearer of this movement, a movement all the more significant in that it was a reaction against Hegelian abstractions, was Moleschott. His principal work, the *Krieslauf des Lebens*, awoke Germany from her stupor. It was attacked, applauded and abused. The thin king world, which since Hegel's death had been twirling its thumbs, turned toward it expectant eyes. The hypothesis of an indefinite circulation of matter passing ceaselessly from life to death and from death to life, was old enough to seem quite new, and the axiom, Without force, no matter; without matter, no force, was listened to with grave attention.

The *Kreislauf des Lebens* inspired any number of affiliated works. Vogt, Lowenthal, Czolbe and Rudolphe Wagner made themselves prominent in its defense. Old-fashioned methods were abandoned. Psychology was put aside. Since there was no psyche, of what use could it be? Metaphysics was relegated to the night from which it had sprung. Modern materialism determined to support its dogmas with the sciences which are called exact. And Büchner, mailed with astronomy, chemistry, geology, physiology and natural history, produced in *Kraft und Stoff* the text-book of the new belief. Thereafter it only needed a hymnal to be complete. The deficiency has been supplied by Richepin's *Blasphèmes*.

The first principle of scientific materialism is the inseparability of matter and force. Matter is not a vague substance on which force grapples from without. In the absence of the one, the other is inconceivable, save perhaps by way of hypothesis. Without force, matter would enter at once into a formless void. Without matter, force would fade into a region of pure abstractions. Endeavor, for instance, to represent matter without force, that is, without the power of cohesion or affinity, attraction or repulsion, and, presto! the very idea of matter disappears. In like measure, an effort to represent force without matter results in a similar *dénouement*.

The second principle is that force and matter are indestructible. There are transformations, there are varieties in their manifestations, but in the sum of their effects the intensity is undiminished. Burn a log of wood, and the scales of a chemist will show that not a particle of matter has been destroyed. "Annihilate a particle of matter," said Spinoza, "and the world will crumble." Not an atom can lose itself in immensity, and to immensity not an atom can be added. The flux and reflux of things show beneath incessant variations the same persistent and invariable aggregate. There is a circulation of materials of which each fortuitous combination has its beginning and its end, but in some one form or another the materials meet again and interconnect anew.

As with matter, so with force. What disappears on one side re-appears on another. Friction produces fire, motion is obtained by steam. The amount of movement expended is recovered in the amount of heat; the amount of heat dissipated is recovered in the amount of motion. Force, then, like matter, is immortal. It may be transformed, but never destroyed. From these considerations, materialism concludes that, as that which is indestructible can have had no beginning, matter and force cannot have been created. *Ex nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti.* The transformation of something into nothing is as inconceivable, says Lebon, as is the creation of something from nothing. And Taine adds, "There is nothing but matter and motion. Space is the infinity of matter, as time is the eternity of motion." Matter and force are, then, eternal. But eternity is shared alone by them. Dust we are, to dust we shall return.

Matter and force being eternal, their laws are immutable. Were it otherwise, the properties of matter would change, and on the tablets of experience no change is recorded. Nature has never varied. Her laws are the mechanical relation of forces which, in disclosing no trace of a higher Will, turn superstition into a vagabond that has not where to lay its head. Time, in which all things unroll, is the great, the one creator.

The novelty of modern materialism, a novelty which distinguishes it from other systems, is that it claims to rest its affirmations on a basis which is strictly scientific. Its explanation of the universe by means of the action of natural forces, its reduction of natural forces to the variable modes of the force inherent in nature, are indeed supported by physics, chemistry and physiology. But into certain regions that it attempts to penetrate, it has not been preceded by any avant-courier that at all resembles exact knowledge.

The hypothesis that the attraction of all ponderable matter which maintains the planets in their orbits, must at one time have been in a condition to mold the universe from the cosmic dust spread through space, is the starting-point of materialistic cosmogony. This hypothesis, hazarded by Kant, signed by Laplace and attested by Herschel, is crowned by another, which is as opulent in vistas as is the retrospect of the first. It is to the effect that the earth, like her lost satellite whose fragments have deluged the globe, will in turn be disemboweled and tossed through space. Historically these hypotheses are not new. Entertaining as the conjunction may appear, they are part of Buddhist lore. But they are a part of Buddhism which is as vague as it is poetic. In materialism, if there is less vagueness, there is also less poetry. Materialism is nothing if not matter-of-fact. Starting, then, from the hypothesis that a mass of cosmic matter originally filled the space which our planetary system occupies, and that, in accordance with the laws of gravitation which draw the parts to the center, the sun was formed by the gradual concentration of its elements, it is not difficult to fancy a fragment of nebulosity detached from the center and shot through space, developing first in a collection of gases, then into molecules that the rotatory movement fused and ignited, and which in cooling formed a crust above an interior furnace. This flight of fancy accomplished, it is yet easier to imagine the condensation of vapors into rain, the growth of plants and the birth of the Monera from which man descends.

And life? Is it then, as Marcus Aurelius in his sceptred melancholy suggested, but a halt between two eternities? Bah! Away with phrases! A bottle containing carbonate of ammonia, chloride of potassium, phosphate of soda, chalk, magnesia, sulphuric acid and silex, is life in its most ideal, in its completest expression.

Some sixty million years ago, when primitive man blinked at a brighter sky than ours, he thought of the archeolithic ape, if he thought at all, as an inferior animal. And, indeed, there could have been little in common between the shuddering orangutan and the speechless yet ferocious troglodyte who with an uprooted tree crushed the skull of a lion and then sucked the fuming brain.

The link between the two was as undiscernible to him as to the theologian of today. And yet, as Huxley has pointed out, the anatomical difference between man and a gorilla is less than between a gorilla and an inferior ape. And, to pursue the same line of argument, the difference between a Shakespeare and a savage is infinitely greater than between a savage and a brute. Why, a magpie is cleverer than the aboriginal Australian; but at the same time the cleverness of a magpie is not a proof of the evolution of man.

The old coquette, this world of ours, conceals her age, but her biography is under our feet. As we read backwards through it, her years mount up into ten hundred millions. The date of that initial catastrophe, her birth, is yet unreached; but we know enough of her past to be sure that it has been long enough and sufficiently immoral for many things to happen of which our philosophy may dream though it cannot prove. Among these things are spontaneous generation and the descent of man. When these are substantiated, materialism will have proved its claims; its sway will be undisputed; but until then, its arguments have as much evidential value as so many astrogals.

In attempting to explain the organic by the inorganic, the main argument was the alleged birth of insects in putrefied matter. This argument was routed by Redi, who enveloped some meat in a light gauze, on which, a little later, eggs were found to have been deposited by passing flies, and at once the mystery was explained. The discovery of the microscope brought new hopes to the materialists. The animalculae which were found in certain infusions appeared to have been produced without the assistance of antecedent germs. The falsity of this conclusion was demonstrated by Schwann, and the hypothesis of abiogenesis was abandoned, until Pouchet brought it again into fashion. But experiments recently made by M. Pasteur contradict those made by Pouchet; and so far as contemporary science is competent to give a decision, the arguments of the anti-vitalists are inadequate to support their case.

But though the theory of spontaneous generation must be abandoned, at least for the moment, the materialists are by no means at their wits'-end. Life has arisen in some manner, and why not from the interaction of molecular forces?

One of the most charming hypotheses on this subject was advanced a few years ago by Sir William Thomson. To this gentleman, life or perhaps it would be better to say a germ potentially alive, that is, having within itself the tendency to assume a definite living form, first visited the earth in a meteor. If it is proper to assume that meteors are fragments of shattered and once peopled worlds, it may be assumed with equal propriety that some of these fragments are partially intact. The moment, then, that it is admitted that beside our own there are a number of life-supporting worlds and that other worlds have existed in anterior epochs, it would not seem improbable that germ-bearing meteors have moved and do still move through space. As a consequence, any germ-bearing meteor which fell upon the earth during the time when it was destitute of life may have been the unconscious cause of the failure which we are now enjoying.

Dr. Zoellner, a German scientist trained in all the illiberalities of official optimism, attempted to refute this hypothesis on the ground that when a meteor enters our atmosphere, the friction of the air makes it incandescent and consequently incapable of preserving and transporting any germ, however potentially alive. To this refutation Helmholtz made answer, that only the surface of meteors becomes heated, and that germs might readily remain unharmed in interior crevices, or if on the surface might on reaching our atmosphere be blown from their conveyance by the wind, and that, too, before the heat was great enough to cause their destruction. But if this solution be accepted, the origin of life on other planets remains still to be explained. It may be then, as Helmholtz has suggested, that life is coeternal with matter, and its germs, transported from one planet to another, develop wherever they find a propitious spot. But this, too, is merely an hypothesis, and one that has not the slightest evidence in its favor. The enigma of life is for the present a part of the unknowable. But whether it will always remain so is another question. The differences which once were supposed to constitute a barrier between the vertebrate and the non-vertebrate no longer exist. The modifications by which the quadrupedal reptile became a bipedal bird have been clearly shown. Forty years ago, there was no evidence that such a demonstration would ever be made. Forty years hence, who shall say but that the missing link may be discovered, or the manufacture of the organic from the inorganic begun? As Professor Huxley has hinted, no one who has watched the gradual development of a complicated animal from the protoplasm which constitutes the egg of a frog or a hen, will deny that a similar evolution of the whole animal world from a like foundation is at least within the bounds of possibility.

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Of the various creeds which man has been pleased to invent, the youngest is positivism. The position which this system of thought has acquired is due to its own merit. It cannot, like pantheism, look back through the terraces of time and claim the quarterings of race. Nor can it, like materialism, bedeck itself with Greek insignia. Among philosophies, positivism is a parvenu. As such it is viewed with scorn, enthusiasm and indifference.

Positivism made its début a little over forty years ago. Its name was its fortune. There was in the sound of it an invitation to nearer acquaintance. But when the acquaintance was made, the name was found to partake of the nature of a lure. Relativism, if less attractive, would have been a clearer description. For positivism, if positive at all, is positive that there is nothing positive. Its sponsor was Auguste Comte.

If the realization of the ambitions of youth may be regarded as the criterion of a successful career, the life of this thinker cannot be considered a failure. At a comparatively early age the outlines of his doctrine appear to have been clearly denned. The outlines sprang of a suggestion of Saint-Simon, who was wont to declare that all knowledge should be co-ordinated into one vast and comprehensive synthesis, but their development was accomplished without material indebtedness. In synthetizing knowledge into a single system of thought, Comte proposed nothing less than the abolishment of theology and metaphysics, and the re-organization of the Occident through a philosophy of his own manufacture. In 1842, the sixth and last volume of this philosophy was given to the public, and with it the knell of all religions was supposed to have been rung. Ten years later, to the utter bewilderment of his disciples, Comte proclaimed the necessity of founding a new religion, of which the sovereign pontiff was to be none other than himself.

In an earlier paragraph it has been hinted that positivism is positive that there is nothing positive, a phrase which, from a Comtist stand-point, may be taken to mean that the essence of things escapes us. We can understand the interconnection of facts—that is, their direct antecedents and immediate sequences—but the initial causes and ultimate results are inaccessible to the intellect. In a word, there is nothing except material phenomena and the laws thereof. As this principle is the pivot on which the entire philosophy turns, a momentary examination may not be without benefit.

Many a skeptic has filled his hours in showing that things are not what they seem, but none of them, however revolutionary, has disputed the reality of consciousness, or denied the phenomena that are manifest in thought, feeling and volition. In affirming, therefore, that the objects apprehended by the senses are the only apprehensible phenomena, positivism apparently displays a radicalism which is as audacious as it is novel. It is of course possible and even proper to regard thought, feeling and volition as products of the body, but it would be a misuse of language to assert that they are material phenomena; and, as positivism's first tenet is that there is nothing except material phenomena, it would seem that, like any other screw, the before-mentioned pivot is loose. On the other hand, it may be objected that the phenomena called internal are unobservable, and that any attempt to distinguish them from their external elements results merely in demonstrating the vainness of the endeavor. If this view be accepted, positivism is found less rickety than it first appeared, and the introductory statement may be welcomed at once and without further hesitation.

If, then, as positivism asserts, the essence of things escapes us, any speculation on the origin and purpose of the world is profitless. On such and kindred subjects the mind should be without conjecture. It is only natural that man should have been on the *qui vive* in his effort to discover efficient and final causes, but his effort has never been successful. "If God did not exist," said Voltaire, "the world would have invented him." "Which," a wit replied, "is precisely what the world has done."

The mobility of phenomena, the fugitiveness of sensations, the impermanency of the actual, the real which each moment ends and begins anew, have, in all ages, incited to a knowledge of the unknowable. But the knowledge has not been obtained, and it was in view of the impracticability of the attempt that Comte ventured to suggest what may be termed a middle course. In the effort to pierce the impenetrable, humanity, he said, has passed and is still passing through certain stages of thought which correspond to those of childhood, adolescence and maturity. The first is the age of theology; the second, of metaphysics; and the third, of science. This doctrine, which is known as the law of the three states, conveys the suggestion alluded to, together with a theory which is as liberal as the sea. It runs somewhat as follows:

In the infancy of thought, Nature is dowered with the same illusions to which man himself is subjected. Every object is animated, and the government of the universe is ascribed, not to invariable laws, but to sentient and intelligent beings. In everything that occurs is seen the manifestation of a direct intention, and each particular event is attributed to forces which are but the aggrandizements of those of man. In the advance of thought, these forces, whose prowess is discernible in effects which man is impotent to produce, become the gods, invisible yet multitudinous. Then, gradually, as arises the capacity of co-ordinating phenomena into separate groups, the number of divinities diminishes, until, through processes of generalization, they are reduced to one, and behold, man has passed out of fetishism into polytheism, and from thence to a belief in a unique Creator.

But there is a further advance of thought, and in its train comes the suggestion that the uniformity noticeable in the universe is incompatible with the theory of an arbitrary Will. The initial conceptions are dismissed, the celestial and inaccessible reason of things is banished, and realized abstractions are accepted instead. Nature is governed, not by an external power, but by internal and occult qualities. The reign of dryads and nymphs is passed, and their place is usurped by entities, by theories which deal with a plastic force and a vital principle. This is the second, or metaphysical state, which is of advantage in being a negation of the first and a preparation for the third, which latter is reached when men, weary of explanations that explain nothing, discover that what is necessary for the mind is not obligatory for things, and that a cause which is conceived by the one need not have a place among the others. Such is the positive, or scientific state of mind, to which, according to Comte, all humanity tends; and such, too, is the middle course which he recommended to thoughtful and decorous persons.

Stripped of its verbal husks, the law of the three states may be reduced to a truism. In seeking the reason of things, men look first above, then within, and finally confess themselves vanquished.

The law of the three states which Stuart Mill called the backbone of the entire philosophy, but which is not particularly new nor particularly convincing—not new, because sketched by Kant in outline, and not convincing, because Comte himself declined to be bound by it—is supplemented by a classification of sciences from out of which was drawn a fresh one, called sociology.

In the study of facts, the interpretation of the experience which is written between the lines of history, sociology was to be the lever in the substitution of science for religion. It was to terminate the conflict between theology, which demands order without progress, and metaphysics, which aims at progress and turns its back on order. It was to arrest the retrogression of the one, and still the anarchy of the other. In the government of life it was to replace religion with science, and give to intelligence the guiding-strings of the world.

In mapping this programme, Comte fancied that sociology could be raised to the level of an exact science, and that through its influence all enlightened nations would join hands in the profession of identical doctrines. In the Utopias in which he then lost himself, he planned a reorganization of society on a basis which, if suggestive of Plato's Republic, is otherwise without value or allurement. There is, he pointed out, no such thing as liberalism in astronomy, physics or chemistry; and if it be otherwise in ethics and politics, it is because neither of them possess established principles. When they acquire them, as they will do when positivism begins its sway, the force of public opinion will disappear. A corporation of philosophers, salaried by the State and treated with the greatest respect, will have the entire charge of education, together with the right to counsel and direct each citizen in his private and public life, and enjoy, moreover, such an amount of authority over students and thinkers as will enable them to prevent the latter from squandering their time and knowledge in speculations that are valueless to humanity, and oblige them to apply themselves to such investigations as may be deemed most important to general prosperity. The decrees which the corporation may formulate are not to be questioned, and, as the idea of the sovereignty of the people is one of the most pernicious that civilization has advanced, but slight attention will be paid to the inclinations of the masses. In each nation there will be a governing body and a body governed, in which latter the citizen will occupy the position for which his abilities have fitted him. Thereafter religion and metaphysics will disappear. Scientific dissidence will be effaced, and an invariable and uniform political dogma will at last be accepted by united and peaceful nations.

To the clear-headed and matter-of-fact audience which was Comte's, theories such as these were viewed with suspicion. The idea that there is no God had in it nothing that was alarming; the prophecy of the overthrow of superstition and the general adoption of positivist tenets seemed not unreasonable; the prohibition against idle speculations and the complimentary recommendation to treat only with the real were received with open favor; but the sturdiest could not look without terror on a future governed by philosophers.

When this horizon was disclosed, it is probable that Comte had already entered into what is known as his pathological period. In earlier years he suddenly lost his reason, and as suddenly recovered it. The border-lands of genius and insanity are never well defined, and it is not unlikely that before the *Cours de philosophie positive* was completed, something of that of which he had too much, something of that weight of thought which obscures the vision and tips the scales of commonsense, was again at work, though this time more dumbly and dimly than before. Thereafter the champion of the actual who had wished to lead God to the frontiers, and there thank him kindly for his provisory services, lapsed into a morbid mysticism. The sceptre of the world which he had given to intellect was transferred to sentiment. It was for the heart to rule and for the intellect to obey.

The *Philosophic politique*, in which his ideas on this subject are conveyed, shows, even amid the luxuriance of luminous thought, the same evidence of mental decadence as is noticeable in Kant's *Kritik der Practischen Vernunft*. Both belong to the senilia of great minds. During the year that intervened between its appearance and the publication of his chief work, Comte conceived what his biographers term a platonic affection for a lady whose influence over him was of such a nature, that, aided by the historical meditations in which his life had been passed, he dreamed of a happiness that should be universal, and of a world that should be ruled, not by a corporation of salaried philosophers, but by love in its purest and most disinterested form.

The pompous Religion of Humanity which he then evolved, and which has no more connection with positivism than an *opera-bouffe* has with logarithms, saddened the boldest among his adherents. It found adepts—what vagary has not? The altruism which it inculcated is certainly not without charm; but the deification of humanity past and future, the transformation of earth into a fetish, space into fate and numbers into virtues, are among the most deplorable instances of the aberrations of genius. After shutting out the unknowable, the door was opened to superstition; after banishing metaphysics, sentiment was beckoned in to occupy its place; religion was superseded by idolatry; and the heavens, that no longer told of the glory of God, were set ablaze with the memories of great men,

In its uncorrupted form, positivism is a modification of materialism. Among theologians there is a disposition to regard both in the same light. But no positivist likes to be called a materialist. He shows as much displeasure at the term as he would were he called a theist or a pantheist. And, indeed, the lines of demarcation, if not always broad, are none the less apparent. At the origin of things, theism places a personal and infinite Being; pantheism sees in all things the immanency of a Being that is infinite but impersonal; and materialism asserts that the cause of all things lies in the arrangement and properties of force and matter. Positivism, on the other hand, knows nothing of an infinite Being, whether personal or impersonal; in the spheres that are inaccessible to it, it recognizes nothing but matter and the properties of matter; but, unlike materialism, it draws no conclusions. According to Littre, positivism is simply a methodical, hierarchic arrangement of the general facts of science, excluding every subjective element, and accepting nothing that is not drawn from experience.

A positivist; moreover, shows no evidence of delight at being called an atheist. As Littré has described him, an atheist is in a certain measure a theologian. He is not entirely emancipated. He has his explanations of things; he knows how they began.

He believes in the chance clash of atoms, or in occult forces, or in a first cause. Of all this the positivist knows nothing. He ignores productive atoms as well as a creating and ordaining force. But whoso thinks that history follows a development that is obedient to a natural law—whoso thinks that the origin of societies, the establishment or mutation of religion, the founding of empires, cities, castes, aristocracies, governments, oracles, prophecies, revelations, theologies, arts and industries, are due, one and all, to the faculties of man—whoso accepts this view has fully accomplished the cycle of mental emancipation. The moment that he leaves no place for the supernatural either in the organic or the inorganic, either among cosmic phenomena or among those of history, that moment he passes initiate into the brotherhood of positivism.

The charm of positivism is the matter-of-fact position which it assumes before the insolvable. If it cuts no old knots, it brings no new tangles. It treats metaphysics with the respect which is due to all that is venerable; in the presence of religion it puts the dialectic broadsword softly back in its sheath. It leaves the great query where it found it. And in this is its wisdom; its agnosticism is its strength. Clamor as we may, there is no answer to our whys and wherefores. There is in us, about and beyond us, an enigma that will defy the Champollions of the future as it has routed the seers of the past. The reason of things lies beyond the sphere of knowledge, and the nearest approach that can be made is in a suspicion that all is relative.

CHAPTER SIX.

A Poet's Verdict.

THERE HAVE BEEN DAYS IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD when the poet was regarded with respect that approached veneration. He was considered the oracle of the gods, and his voice was listened to with reverence. This pleasant custom has fallen into disuse. The gods have disappeared and carried the divine afflatus with them. In an age like the present, the demand for poets is slight. Their titles have been examined, and it has been found that to be useless is their one patent of nobility. As a consequence, the poet's vocation has seemed to many a synonym of the ridiculous. And yet, as Gautier with a charming affectation of naïvete remarked, an inability to write in verse can scarcely be considered as constituting a special talent. But there is another inconvenience: a poet is never rightly appreciated save by his peers; and as his peers are infrequent, the majesty which resides within him often lacks the trumpetings of a herald. Then, too, in an era of remorseless activity, it is only quiet people who live in the country that find leisure to listen to the footfalls of the Muse. For the benefit of such as they, verse may be divided into three broad classes: that which pleases the author's enemies, that which pleases the author's contemporaries, and that which passes unobserved to pleasure the idlesse of posterity. Of these classes, the verse of Leconte de Lisle belongs to the third.

Any one who has taken an interest in French literature during the last decade can hardly have failed to notice the number of new writers that have come into being, and more particularly the inferiority of their work. In explanation of this surge of mediocrity, many theories might be advanced; but perhaps the most palpable would be that the literature of our expiring century, after having passed from youth to virility, has begun to experience the maladies and garrulities of old age. But however the subject may be viewed, it is at least evident that the paladins of 1830, who were as revolutionary in literature as their ancestors were in religion, have passed away, and also that their methods have so far disappeared with them that the day before yesterday Victor Hugo seemed like a living anachronism. Readers latterly have refused to be interested in the phantasies of the romantics, and perhaps their pages were a trifle over-colored; but their excuse lay in the fact that literature had become impoverished through conventionalities; there were synonyms instead of words; and in place of ample vocabularies there were small niceties of expression. All this the romantics did away with. They breathed health and vigor into an enervated dictionary, and startled Europe with the opulence of their adjectives.

It was in those victorious days that Gautier threw aside his brush and went in a famous red waistcoat to guy the philistines at the birth-night of Hernani. In graver years Gautier complained that in the eyes of the bourgeois he had never ceased to wear that crimson garment, and somehow, save among the liberal few, he has always been looked upon more or less askant. It has been said that it was his purpose to seek the hazardous and display it, but it must be admitted that what he had to say he told with a grace such as had been seldom heard before. He chose his words for their color, for their aroma, as one may say; and it is related that he objected now and then to an accent because it took away something from the charm which the grouping of certain letters otherwise conveyed.

Through those days, too, Alfred de Musset passed with the indolence of a dissolute young god. He joined the ranks of the romantics, as did all men of talent, but he joined them more as an amateur than a professional: the familiar ballad in which the moon is represented as suspended over a steeple like a dot over an *i*, opened for him the doors of the cénacle without even giving him the trouble to knock. In a subsequent poem he asked forgiveness for that misdeed; and though he boasted that his Muse went bare of foot like Truth, she might still have been pictured as shod with buskins of gold.

Another of the heroes of this epoch was Alfred de Vigny. Someone has said that the face of a poet is never known until years and sorrow have marred its original beauty; but to this rule de Vigny was an exception. He was famous when quite young, and his bust, as it stands today in the lobby of the Théâtre Français, arrests the attention even of the indifferent. At the time to which allusion is made, he mingled but little with his fellows, appearing only when the moral support of his presence was needed. In later years, in spite of his talent, his beauty and his position, de Vigny, devoured by melancholy, turned his back entirely upon the world, and retired into what Sainte-Beuve has termed his *tour d'ivoire.*

In the wake of these poets came the familiar figure of Charles Baudelaire. Recently he has been described as having had the appearance of a delicate prelate, a trifle depraved. This description might be suggested by the mere reading of his verse. In the work of every poet there is something of the individual, and it is probable that few have studied the chiseled lines which he worked up with even a shrewder eye for the Satanic than that which was given to Edgar Poe, without calling up some such picture of their author. Baudelaire entered the ranks when the battle was won, but nevertheless he managed to flaunt a standard that has troubled the vision of many an after-comer.

So swiftly does time go by, that of these writers little more than tradition now remains. In the eyes of contemporary critics, de Musset is a dislocator of Alexandrines, de Vigny is a memory, Baudelaire a curiosity, and Gautier a model. Yet each of them left a legacy that is still disputed. From de Musset descends the gift of eloquence; in Baudelaire's testament is the heirloom of lurid effect; de Vigny has devised his morbidity; while Gautier's bequest is perfection in form. Taken together, they were the poetic embodiment of the agitation of which Voltaire, Holbach and Diderot were the heralds. "*Je ne crois pas, ô Christ, a ta parole sainte*," cried de Musset, and the cry was echoed by his fellow-workers.

In a literary sense, these poets were, on their first appearance, very generally looked upon as impertinent innovators, and in their assault upon the classicists they caused much rage and rhetoric. Viewed at this distance, the disturbance seems unnecessary; for, after all, what is romanticism but the art of pleasing one's contemporaries, and what is classicism but the art which delighted earlier generations? Turn about is always fair play. In a little while Hugo will be a classic, precisely as Racine is beginning to be considered a romantic. But be this as it may, the seething passion which in 1830 seemed more alluring than the chill restrictions of former years, gradually disappeared, and its place was taken by the serene impassibility of another group of poets who were called the Parnassians.

The advent of this new school was necessarily less boisterous than that of their predecessors: for that matter, they excited more ridicule than anger; and it is related that a cabman in a street row, after having called his adversary everything that was unpleasant, hurled at him with withering contempt as last and supreme reproach, the unavengeable insult, *"Parnassien, va!"*

Of the poets who made up this group, the better known are MM. Sully-Prudhomme and François Coppée. Sully-Prudhomme is an avowed materialist and frankly pessimistic. His poems may be summarized as a series of very delicate impressions intermingled with a fair amount of philosophic suggestion. His repertory is not extensive. It consists in three or four themes and their variations—such, for instance, as the familiar aspiration toward the infinite, man's sentiment of nothingness before the immensity of the universe, the agony of doubt, and the usual communion with Nature. The limits of this range do not necessarily imply a lack of ability. The art in any form of verse consists merely in the skill with which one or more of half-a-dozen old-fashioned sentiments is rendered, and in this respect the work of Sully-Prudhomme is generally irreproachable. In his treatment of purely personal dramas, the mental and moral combats which we all of us wage with ourselves, he leaves little to be desired, and it would be difficult to mention a poet who has entered more deeply than he into the psychological developments of the century. For all this he has received much praise, and if his verse is ever criticized, it is because it is at times a trifle vague. Sully-Prudhomme has been as honestly puzzled by the discord between the real and the ideal as any writer of his class; but in his perplexity his thought floats away to uncertain heights, and there disappears with a flutter of restless inquietude. To put the matter briefly, Sully-Prudhomme very often seems as though he were about to say something well worth the telling, but before he has gotten it safely on paper the force of the idea has vanished.

François Coppée is another of the dispersed Parnassians.

His negations, if more carefully veiled than those of Sully-Prudhomme, are none the less discernible. He is at times dramatic, but his sadness is always insistent. To be sad is admittedly the poet's privilege; yet to be simply sad, and to express such a state of being as who should say, "I hunger" or "I thirst," is not necessarily poetic; rather is it commonplace. To be worth the telling, grief should express a thought that is neither humdrum nor familiar; it should lay bare fresh possibilities or set new limits to resignation: if it does not do this, then, however readily the tears may flow, however gracefully the grief be told, it is what a boulevardier would call *le vieux jeu*—the old story, of which we are most of us thoroughly tired. It is this old story that M. Coppéere tells; and though the telling is managed with much refinement, it is impossible to call it novel. M. Coppée has also much to say about his boredom. Boredom, however, is not a flexible topic; indeed, unless it is handled with unusual dexterity, there is a danger that the reader will find it even more irritating than the writer, and thereupon withdraw his attention and support. Boredom also is more of a fine art than is generally supposed, and not to every one is it given to disentangle original ideas from that which is flat and unprofitable. Leopardi and Baudelaire have done so, it is true; but between them they managed to throttle the subject and share the booty. For a later comer like M. Coppée, nothing was left.

MM. Prudhomme and Coppée have both sat at the feet of Leconte de Lisle. Today they are better known than he, but neither of them has ventured to rate his work above that of the master. In this modesty much good taste is shown. He has none of their faults, and, moreover, he has genius, which both of them lack. In comparison with him they are as concettists to Dante.

Laconte de Lisle is perhaps the most perfect poet of France. It is he who is the rightful heir to the legacies of the romantics, and these possessions he has rounded and improved with an erudition which embraces history, philology, archaeology, anthropology, and doubtless much more beside. In spite of this, or perhaps on that account, his literary luggage is scant. He has translated a few ancient authors, written a drama or two, and published three compact volumes of verse. In speaking of the latter, it is difficult to describe them in a phrase, though this perhaps may be accomplished in saying that they do not contain a commonplace line. The three volumes are respectively entitled, *Poèmes antiques*, *Poèmes barbares*, and *Poèmes tragiques*. The first division, which is largely made up of Vedic hymns and Greek idyls, is one in which the characteristics of the author are best displayed, and in which his impersonality is most strongly marked. Many of the poems in this series bring with them a haunting impression that they are translations from some unknown Valmiki, while others might be taken for the work of Max Müller turned poet.

When these poems were first published, they created among the lettered an intense admiration. It was admitted that lines of such splendor and impersonal serenity had never been hewn before; and certainly, after the ardor of the romantics, their impassibility could not have been other than a refreshing change. It was, however, the fortune of the book to appeal only to scholars; to the newspaper public it was unintelligible; the author had made no effort to please; and, moreover, he had declined to make any concessions to the ordinary reader. The result might have been foreseen; Brahma was declared to lack actuality; and it was held to be tiresome to construe a modern poet with a Greek dictionary. What, it was asked, has Juno done to be called Héré, and why must the sky be ouranos?

As was the case with the series just mentioned, the *Poèmes barbares* found favor only with the few. To the general public they seemed very subversive. They displayed a pessimism which was new to France, and which, being new, was eyed with suspicion. Then, too, Leconte de Lisle was calmly anti-theistic. The bravado of Marechal is boyish in comparison to his grave disdain of things celestial. In the Poemes barbares there are lines that startle and coerce, lines in which the horrible is expressed with such color and yet with such austerity that the reader shudders as he reads and admires as he shudders. Beside them, the declamations of that dissolute Greuze of literature, Alfred de Musset, sound cracked and thin—like a man's laughter, as Mr. Swinburne has it, heard in hell.

The *Poèmes tragiques* are not as satisfactory as are the others. They are made up of a dozen or more recitals which have much to do with the shedding of blood, a few ballads, villanelles, pantoums and sestines, together with a bar or two of pure harmony.

Leconte de Lisle is the Goya of verse, and yet, through a delicious contradiction, one of the most noteworthy characteristics of his work is its constant evocation and suggestion of the beautiful. No other modern poet, except perhaps Mr. Swinburne, has shown a better acquaintance with the road to Paphus. And it would be a task full of charm to follow him from the jungles of the Indian peninsula to the cool lakes of Norway, to fan Leïlah and kiss Glaucé. Unfortunately, the purpose of these pages will not permit of such pleasant digressions, and the beautiful must be neglected that the poet's anti-theism may be the more quickly understood. By way of introduction, a momentary examination of the poem *Qaïn* will not, it is imagined, cause any after reproach of time misspent.

The scenario is simple and audacious. The son of Elam, Thogorma the seer, a captive among the Assyrians, dreams of a night in the mysterious ages when the voice of God echoed through the universe, and in his dream he sees Henokhia, the city of giants, in whose highest tower is the tomb of Cain. Cain's descendants are wending their way homewards from the chase. Thogorma sees them disappear in the immense orb of the ramparts, while night, bringing a vague terror and dumb dread, mantles the great stairways that turn in red broad spirals to the winds. He hears the roar of lions, chained on the ascending steps, and beneath the porticos the clamors of crocodiles rise from the reservoirs. Then, abruptly, from the confines of the outlying desert, a spectre, loosed from Gehenna, surges through the shadows, and Thogorma hears the spirits anathematize Cain and all his race.

Cain awakened, stands upright in the granite sepulchre where for ten centuries he had slept with his face to the sky. His eyes, haunted by one supreme remembrance, contemplate through the preceding epochs the vanished days when the world was young; and with his thoughts rich with the memory of the earth's primal innocence and beauty, he calls to the phantom to be silent and narrates his sombre history. Conceived while his parents were laboring under the divine malediction, his mother, Eve, swooning in the brambles, gave birth with a shriek of horror to Jehovah's victim, to him who was Cain. Nursed with tears, his boyhood knew no smile. What had he done, he wondered, to be punished too? And so, later, in the knowledge of his exile he accosts the angel on guard at the gates of Eden, and learns that on the morrow he is to know the reason of his birth. On the morrow the reason is made apparent. Jehovah arms his hand against Abel, and incites him to kill the brother whom he tenderly loved.

Here ends Cain's account of his life; but immediately, in his awakened thirst for vengeance, he prophesies that when Jehovah is wearied with the world and shall seek by means of the deluge to destroy it, he, Cain, will save the ark—which the poet represents as constructed in spite of Jehovah—whereupon man, no longer brave, but cowardly and envious, will rise from the flood with its mud in his heart. Cain, the avenger, continues:

“Dieu triste, Dieu jaloux qui dérobes ta face,
Dieu qui mentais, disant que ton œuvre était bon,
Mon souffle,ô Pétrisseur de l’antique limon,
Un jour redressera ta victime vivace.
Tu lui diras: Adore! Elle répondra: Non!

. . . .

Afin d’exterminer le monde qui te nie,
Tu feras ruisseler le sang comme une mer,
Tu feras s’acharner les tenailles de fer,
Tu feras flamboyer, dans l’horreur infinie,
Près des bûchers hurlants le gouffre de 1’ Enfer:

Mais . . . .

. . . .

Je ressusciterai les cités submergées,
Et celles dont le sable a couvert les monceaux:
Dans leur lit écumeux j’enfermerai les eaux:
Et les petits enfants des nations vengées,
Ne sachant plus ton nom, riront dans leurs berceaux!

J’effonderai des cieux la voûte dérisoire.
Par delà l’épaisseur de ce sépulchre bas
Sur qui gronde le bruit sinistre de ton pas,
Je ferai bouillonner les mondes dans leur gloire:
Et qui t’y cherchera ne t’y trouvera pas.

Et ce sera mon jour! Et d’étoile en étoile,
Le bienheureux Eden longuement regretté
Verra renaître Abel sur mon coeur abrité;
Et toi, mort et cousu sous la funèbre toile.
Tu t’anéantiras dans ta sterilité.”

. . . .

Apart from the wonder and majesty of the language, and apart, too, from the intuition which in earlier stanzas enabled the poet to call again into being the life of the past, *Qaïn*, on a first reading, seems to be merely a work of cultured and harmonious blasphemy, and, indeed, so far as the blasphemy is concerned, nothing more vehement has been penned since Æschylus; but yet on a re-reading *Qaïn* is found to be little else than an allegory of the protestation of the intellect against the unintelligible, a revolt at the mystery of pain.

This protestation, which is as old as philosophy, and which in recent years seems to have increased in volume and significance, has been conveyed by Leconte de Lisle in other poems with great originality, and with particular power in the parable of the *Corbeau*. Through this poem, as through *Qaïn*, there is a running accompaniment of muffled discontent, which in other verses finds a clear and decided note. Something of this same dissatisfaction was expressed by de Vigny and Alfred de Musset, and yet in their case one is inclined to fancy that the grievance was less reasoned than instinctive; they were at odds, so to speak, with the inevitable; life failed to hold what it had seemed to promise, and in consequence their complaints were more or less personal. But in Leconte de Lisle there is no evidence of personal disappointment, and nothing that can be construed as the outcome of an individual grievance. It is a part of his doctrine that an expression of pleasure or pain deforms the human visage, that the poet's correct attitude is the one which most nearly approaches the impassibility of the statue, and it is this theory which he has carried into his work.

It is difficult to say to what category of antitheism Leconte de Lisle belongs. His pantheism is too evident to permit of his being called a materialist, and yet his materialism is so marked that it is difficult to suspect him of any other sympathies with the ideal than those which are purely poetic. He is too aggressive for an agnostic, and yet there are moments when he might be taken for a positivist. Perhaps if will be safest to say that he is a theoretic pessimist, a denomination which is broad enough to include any of the others, and at the same time is serviceable in conveying the exact shade of his thought.

The pessimism which is manifest in the verse of Leconte de Lisle has nothing of Renan's serenity, and none of the calculations of Von Hartmann. In his case it is the formal protest against the enigma of grief which characterizes the philosophy of the earliest thinkers, but one which is entirely free from the shackles with which they delayed the hope of ultimate emancipation. It is not that the idea of absorption in Brahm, or the extinction in Pari-Nirvana, is disagreeable to him; on the contrary, they are dreams through which he lovingly trails his verse, but they are dreams.

> *"Pleurez, contemplateurs! Votre sagesse est veuve*
> *Viçnou ne siege plus sur le lotus d'azur."*

That of which he seems best convinced is the irremediable existence of what apparently has no reason for being. History is little else than the tale of an uninterrupted shudder; chronicles of private life are merely accounts of combats that individuals have waged with fate: and Leconte de Lisle, who is a patient student, has noted compassionately in both the persistence of the law of evil. He should not, however, be considered a follower of Schopenhauer; the majority of his poems were published before the *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* had crossed the Rhine; moreover, Schopenhauer did not invent pessimism; Kapila was as much occupied with pain as was that Emerson in black; indeed, it is curious to note that the first metaphysician as well as the latest of great poets are agreed that life is an affliction, and it is also curious to note that the tendency of modern thought is to an agreement with their views.

The soul, whose immortality Robespierre decreed in the law known as that of the 18th Floréal, year II; the soul, which all antiquity, Plato included, accorded to beasts, but whose possession Christianity has limited to man; the soul, which is reported to come no one knows whence, and to depart no one knows whither, has for Leconte de Lisle a purely verbal existence. Robespierre, it is true, knew nothing about primitive man; but Leconte de Lisle does, and he knows, too, that a gorilla to which a soul is refused today is not a whit more elevated than was man in the sylvan age—in that age, in fact, when he had no other weapons than the branches which he tore from a tree. And if a soul be refused to primitive man, at what epoch was the gift bestowed? Is it a result of evolution, or, as certain theologasters have asserted, is it naturally one with the body, and only separable and capable of immortality through the influence of grace divine? The last century combatted these theories with logic. Leconte de Lisle has at his disposal not alone the logic of yesterday, but the science of today, and to him the soul is a phantom evoked by the conscience.

"If you do not believe in a soul and in a future life," said some one to Goethe, "what do you consider to be the object of the present?" To which Goethe, with Olympian egotism, answered tersely, "Self-improvement." One may fancy that to Leconte de Lisle the object of life is none other. He was born in the Isle de Bourbon something over sixty years ago, and came to Paris when quite young. From his early home he brought little else than memories of the beauty of Nature and the invincible immensity of her forces, memories that have since served as frames and backgrounds to his verse. In Paris he followed the developments of science, and studied history, religions and life. From them he learned that man has two antagonists, himself and the exterior world; he found, too, that man is a prey to influences which mould him to their profit, and that humanity had aggravated its misfortunes by inventing explanations which it termed beliefs. Since then, in the quietest ways, he has passed his hours in satiating that vague curiosity which besets even the most indifferent, and in convincing himself not only of the nothingness of creeds, but of the nothingness of life. Life, he says:

> *"La vie est comme l'onde oil tombe un corps pesant:*
> *Un cercle etroit s'y forme et va s'elargissant,*
> *Et disparait enfin dans sa grandeur sans terme.*
> *La Māyā te seduit, mais, si ton cceur est ferme,*
> *Tu verras s'envoler comme un peu do vapeur*
> *La colere, l'amour, le desir ct la peur,*
> *Et Je Monde illusoirc aux formes innombrables*
> *S'ecroulera sous toi comme un monceau de sables."*

Gibbon, who was fond of fine paragraphs, declared all religions to be equally true to the vulgar, equally false to the philosopher, and to the statesman equally useful. But Gibbon omitted the poet; and to such an one as Leconte de Lisle no religion can be true, if for no other reason than that there is no criterion of truth; no religion can be wholly false, for every religion has enjoyed an hour of undeniable actuality; and no religion can be deemed useful if the need of it has disappeared. To his thinking, religions have served their purpose. Compounded of fables more or less absurd, and of ethics more or less wholesome, in their obscure origins they were intended to be explanations of natural phenomena with which today we are better acquainted. As to Christianity, it is to Leconte de Lisle an artistic creation, powerfully conceived, venerable in its antiquity, and one whose place is now marked, in the museum of history.

It has been objected, that should this view be accepted, no one would turn to the Bible for instruction, and as a consequence the gateways to immorality would be opened wide. Now Plato said that we should esteem it of the greatest importance that the fictions which children first hear should be adapted in the most perfect manner to the promotion of virtue. There are, however, not a few grave thinkers who have asserted that the Bible is inapt to serve such an end. Admittedly the morality which is displayed in the Synoptic Gospels is admirable, but it is sometimes forgotten that it is an integral part of the teaching of Socrates and the Socratics. M. Havet has shown its sweetest precepts flowing from their lips. In other portions of the Bible there are verses that exalt the spirit like wine; there are delicacies of thought and felicities of expression that both soothe and charm; but one must needs be a paradoxist to claim either as an aid to the promotion of virtue. Beside, as has been hinted in earlier pages, morality is more a question of temperament than of instruction. For that matter, we are most of us well aware that the instruction sometimes defeats its aim. Mr. Froude relates that when St. Patrick preached the gospel on Tarah Hill, the Druids shook their heads. The king, Leoghaire, marked their disapproval wonderingly, and asked, "Why is it that that which the cleric preaches seems so dangerous to you?" "Because," they answered, "he preaches repentance, and the law of repentance is such that a man shall say, 'I may commit a thousand sins, and if I repent it will be not worse with me; I shall be forgiven; therefore will I continue to sin." Leconte de Lisle has therefore put the Bible reverently aside, and in looking back through the dreams from which it came and into the visions which it has evoked, he has murmured with the sadness of the tender-hearted:

"O songe, ô désirs vains, inutiles souhaits,
Ceci ne sera point, maintenant ni jamais."

There is no help there, nor is there any elsewhere. The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals.

In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save perchance in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness which soon hide the tomb grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the just and of the unjust, of kings, of felons and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity, unsatisfied as before and yet impatient for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilize the furrows of space where worlds ferment.

On this vista the curtain may be drawn. Neither poet nor seer can look beyond. Nature, who is unconscious in her immorality, entrancing in her beauty, savage in her cruelty, imperial in her prodigality, and appalling in her convulsions, is not only deaf, but dumb. There is no answer to any appeal. The best we can do, the best that has ever been done, is to recognize the implacability of the laws that rule the universe, and contemplate as calmly as we can the nothingness from which we are come and into which we shall all disappear. The one consolation that we hold, though it is one which may be illusory too, consists in the belief that when death comes, fear and hope are at an end. Then wonder ceases; the insoluble no longer perplexes; space is lost; the infinite is blank; the farce is done.

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HISTORIA AMORIS

By Mr. Saltus

MARY MAGDALEN
THE POMPS OF SATAN
IMPERIAL PURPLE
THE ANATOMY OF NEGATION
THE PERFUME OF EROS
VANITY SQUARE

HISTORIA AMORIS

A History of Love
Ancient and Modern

By

EDGAR SALTUS

NEW YORK
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1922

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HISTORIA AMORIS

Part One

PART I

I

SUPER FLUMINA BABYLONIS

THE first created thing was light. Then life came, then death. In between was fear. But not love. Love was absent. In Eden there was none. Adam and Eve emerged there adult. The phases of the delicate fever which others in paradise since have experienced, left them unaffected. Instead of the reluctances and attractions, the hesitancies and aspirations, the preliminary and common conflagrations which are the beginnings, as they are also the sacraments, of love, abruptly they were one. They were married before they were mated.

The union, entirely allegoric—a Persian conceit—differed, otherwise, only in the poetry of the accessories from that which elsewhere actually occurred.

Primitive man was necessarily speechless, probably simian, and certainly hideous. Women, if possible more hideous still, were joined by him momentarily and immediately forgot. Ultimately, into the desolate poverty of the rudimentary brain there crept a novelty. The novelty was an idea. Women were detained, kept in lairs, made to serve there. Further novelties ensuing, creatures that had learned from birds to talk passed from animality. Subsequent progress originated in a theory that they were very clearly entitled to whatever was not taken away from them. From that theory all institutions proceed, primarily that of family.

In the beginning of things woman was common property. With individual ownership came the necessity of defence. Man defended woman against even herself. He beat her, stoned her, killed her. From the massacre of myriads, constancy resulted. With it came the home: a hut in a forest, a fort on a hill, in the desert a tent, yet, wherever situated, surrounded by foes. The foes were the elements. In the thunderclap was their anger. In the rustle of leaves their threats. They were placatable, however. They could be appeased, as human beings are, by giving them something. Usually the gift was the sacrifice of whatever the owner cared for most; in later days it was love, pleasure, sense, but in these simpler times, when humanity knew nothing of pleasure, less of love, and had no sense, when the dominant sensation was fright, when every object had its spectre, it was accomplished by the immolation of whatever the individual would have liked to have had given to him. As intelligence developed, distinctions necessarily arose between the animate and the inanimate, the imaginary and the real. Instead of attributing a malignant spirit to every element, the forces of nature were conglomerated, the earth became an object of worship, the sun another, that being insufficient they were united in nuptials from which the gods were born—demons from whom descended kings that were sons of heaven and sovereigns of the world.

In the process, man, who had begun by being a brute, succeeded in becoming a lunatic only to develop into a child. The latter evolution was, at the time, remote. Only lunatics abounded. But lunatics may dream. These did. Their conceptions produced after-effects curiously profound, widely disseminated, which, first elaborated by Chaldæan seers, Nineveh emptied into Babylon.

Babylon, Queen of the Orient, beckoned by Semiramis out of myth, was made by her after her image. That image was passion. The city, equivocal and immense, brilliant as the sun, a lighthouse in the surrounding night, was a bazaar of beauty. From the upper reaches of the Euphrates, through great gates that were never closed, Armenia poured her wines where already Nineveh had emptied her rites. In the conjunction were festivals that magnetized the stranger from afar. At the very gates Babylon yielded to him her daughters. He might be a herder, a bedouin, a bondman; indifferently the voluptuous city embraced him, lulled him with the myrrh and cassia of her caresses, sheltering him and all others that came in the folds of her monstrous robe.

In emptying rites into this furnace Nineveh also projected her gods, the princes of the Chaldæan sky, the lords of the ghostland, that, in patient perversities, her seers had devised. Four thousand of them Babylon swallowed, digested, reproduced. Some were nebulous, some were saurian, many were horrible, all were impure. But, chiefly, there was Ishtar. Semiramis conquered the world. Ishtar set it on fire.

Ishtar, whom St. Jerome generically and graphically described as the Dea Meretrix, was known in Babylon as Mylitta. Gesenius, Schrader, Münter, particularly Quinet, have told of the mysteries, Asiatically monstrous, naïvely displayed, through which she passed, firing the trade routes with the flame of her face, adding Tyrian purple and Arabian perfumes to her incandescent robe, trailing it from shore to shore, enveloping kingdoms and satrapies in her fervid embrace, burning them with the fever of her kisses, burning them so thoroughly, to such ashes, that to-day barely the memory of their names endures; multiplying herself meanwhile, lingering there where she had seemed to pass, developing from a goddess into a pantheon, becoming Astarte in Syria, Tanit in Carthage, Ashtaroth in Canaan, Anaïtis in Armenia, yet remaining always love, or, more exactly, what was love in those days.

In Babylon, fronting her temple was a grove in which were dove-cotes, cisterns, conical stones —the emblems of her worship. Beyond were little tents before which girls sat, chapleted with cords, burning bran for perfume, awaiting the will of the first that put a coin in their lap and in the name of the goddess invited them to her rites. Acceptance was obligatory. It was obligatory on all women to stop in the grove at least once. Herodotus, from whom these details are taken, said that the sojourn of those that were fair was brief, but others less favored lingered vainly, insulted by the former as they left.[1]

Herodotus is father of history; perhaps too, father of lies. But later Strabo substantiated his story. There is anterior evidence in the Bible. There is antecedent testimony on a Nineveh brick. There is the further corroboration of Justinus, of St. Augustin, and of Eusebius regarding similar rites in Armenia, in Phœnicia, in Syria, wherever Ishtar passed.[1]

---

[1] Herodotus, I., 199.

The forms of the ceremony and the duration of it varied, but the worship, always the same, was identical with that of the Hindu bayaderes, the Kama-dasi, literally servants of love, more exactly servants of lust, who, for hire, yielded themselves to any comer, and whose dishonorarium the clergy took.

From Phœnicia the worship passed to Greece. Among local articles of commerce were girls with whom the Phœnicians furnished harems. One of their agencies was at Cythera. From the adjacent waters Venus was rumored to have emerged. The rumor had truth for basis. But the emergence occurred in the form of a stone brought there on a Phœnician galley. The fact, cited by Maximus Tyrius, numismatics confirm. On the old coins of Paphos it was as a stone that Venus appeared, a stone emblematic and phallic, similar to those that stood in the Babylon grove.

Venus was even otherwise Phœnician. In Semitic speech girls were called *benoth*, and at Carthage the tents in which the worship occurred were termed *succoth benoth*. In old texts B was frequently changed to V. From benoth came venoth and the final theta being pronounced, as was customary, like sigma, venos resulted and so appears on a Roman medal, that of Julia Augusta, wife of Septimius Severus, where Venus is written Venos.

---

[1] Strabo, XVI., xi., 532. Baruch, VI. Justinus, XVIII. St. Augustin: Civit. Dei, IV., 10. Eusebius: Vita Constantini, III., 53–56. *Cf.* Juvenal, Satir. 9: Nam quo non prostat femina templo?

Meanwhile on the banks of the Indus the stone reappeared. Posterior to the Vedic hymns, it is not mentioned in them. Instead is the revelation of a being purer than purity, excelling excellence, dwelling apart from life, apart from death, ineffably in the solitudes of space. He alone was. The gods were not yet. They, the earth, the sky, the forms of matter and of man, slept in the depths of the ideal, from which at his will they arose. That will was love. The *Mahabhârata* is its history.

There, succeeding the clamor of primal life, come the songs of shepherds, the footfall of apsaras, the murmur of rhapsodies, of kisses and harps. The pages turn to them. Then follow eremites in their hermitages, rajahs in their palaces, chiefs in their chariots, armies of elephants and men, seas of blood, gorgeous pomps, gigantic flowers, marvels and enchantments. Above, on thrones of lotos and gold, are the serene and apathetic gods, limitless in power, complete in perfection, unalterable in felicity, needing nothing, having all. Evil may not approach them. Nonexistent in infinity, evil is circumscribed within the halls of time. The appanage of the gods was love, its revelation light.

That light must have been too pure. Subsequent theology decomposed it. In its stead was provided a glare intolerably crude that disclosed divinities approachable in deliriums of disorder, in unions from which reason had fled, to which love could not come, and on which, in a sort of radiant imbecility, idols semi-Chaldæan, polycephalous, hundred-armed, obese, monstrous, revolting, stared with unseeing eyes.

In the Vedas there is much that is absurd and more that is puerile. The *Mahabhârata* is a fairy-tale, interminable and very dull. But in none of these works is there any sanction of the pretensions of a priesthood to degrade. It was in the name of waters that slake, of fire that purifies, of air that regenerates, of gods dwelling not in images but in infinity, that love was invoked. It was in poetry, not in perversions, that marriage occurred. In the Laws of Manu marriage is defined as the union of celestial musicians,—music then as now being regarded as the food of love.

The Buddhist Scriptures contain passages that were said to charm the birds and beasts.

In the Vedas there are passages which, if a soudra overheard, the ignominy of his caste was abolished. The poetry that resided in them, a poetry often childish, but primal, preceding the Pentateuch, purer than it, chronologically anterior to Chaldæan aberrations, Brahmanism deformed into rites that sanctified vice and did so, on a theory common to many faiths, that the gods demand the surrender of whatever is most dear, if it be love that must be sacrificed, if it be decency that must be renounced. The latter refinement which Chaldæa invented, and India retained, Judæa reviled.

II

THE CURTAINS OF SOLOMON

In the deluge women must have been swept wholly away. If not, then they became beings to whom genealogy was indifferent. The long list of Noah's descendants, which Genesis provides, contains no mention of them. When ultimately they reappear, their consistency is that of silhouettes. It is as though they belonged to an inferior order. Historically they did.

Woman was not honored in Judæa. The patriarch was chieftain and priest. His tent was visited by angels, occasionally by creatures less beatific. In spite of the terrible pomps that surrounded the advent of the decalogue, there subsisted for his eternal temptation the furnace of Moloch and Baal's orgiastic nights. These things—in themselves corruptions of Chaldæan ceremonies—woman personified. Woman incarnated sin. It was she who had invented it. To Ecclesiasticus, the evil of man excelled her virtue. To Moses, she was dangerously impure. In Leviticus, her very birth was a shame. To Solomon, she was more bitter than death. As a consequence, the attitude of woman generally was as elegiac as that of Jephthah's daughter. When she appeared it was but to vanish. In betrothals there was but a bridegroom that asked and a father that gave. The bride was absent or silent. As a consequence, also, the heroine was rare. Of the great nations of antiquity, Israel produced fewer notable women than any other. Yet, that, it may be, was by way of precaution, in order to reserve the strength of a people for the presentation of one who, transcending all, was to reign in heaven to the genuflections of the earth.

Meanwhile, conjointly with Baal and Moloch, Ishtar—known locally as Ashtaroth—circumadjacently ruled. At a period when these abstractions were omnipresent, when their temples were thronged, when their empires seemed built for all time, the Hebrew prophets, who continuously reviled them, foretold that they would pass and with them the gods, dogmas, states that they sustained. So promptly were the prophecies fulfilled that they must have sounded like the heraldings of the judgment of God. But it may be that foreknowledge of the future rested on a consciousness of the past.

There, in the desert, had stood a bedouin preparing the tenets of a creed; in the remoter past a shadow in which there was lightning, then the splendor of the first dawn where the future opened like a book, and, in that grammar of the eternal, the promise of an age of gold. Through the echo of succeeding generations came the rumor of the impulse that drew the world in its flight. The bedouin had put the desert behind him and stared at another, the sea. As he passed, the land leaped into life. There were tents and passions, clans not men, an aggregate of forces in which the unit disappeared. For chieftain there was Might and, above, were the subjects of impersonal verbs, the Elohim, from whom the thunder came, the rain, darkness and light, death and birth, dream too, nightmare as well. The clans migrated. Goshen called. In its heart Chaldæa spoke. The Elohim vanished and there was El, the one great god and Isra-el, the great god's elect. From heights that lost themselves in immensity, the ineffable name, incommunicable, and never to be pronounced, was seared by forked flames on a tablet of stone. A nation learned that El was Jehovah, that they were in his charge, that he was omnipotent, that the world was theirs. They had a law, a covenant, a deity and, as they passed into the lands of the well beloved, the moon became their servant, to aid them the sun stood still. The terror of

Sinai gleamed from their breast-plates. Men could not see their faces and live. They encroached and conquered. They had a home, then a capital, where David founded a line of kings and Solomon, the city of God.

Solomon, typically satrapic, living in what then was splendor; surrounded by peacocks and peris; married to the daughter of a pharaoh, married to many another as well; the husband of seven hundred queens, the pasha of three hundred favorites, doing, as perhaps a poet may, only what pleased him, capricious as potentates are, voluptuous as sovereigns were, on his blazing throne and particularly in his aromatic harem, presented a spectacle strange in Israel, wholly Babylonian, thoroughly sultanesque. To local austerity his splendor was an affront, his seraglio a sin, the memory of both became odious, and in the Song of Songs, which, canonically, was attributed to him, but which the higher criticism has shown to be an anonymous work, that contempt was expressed.

Something else was expressed. The Song of Songs is the gospel of love. Humanity at the time was sullen when not base. Nowhere was there love. The anterior stories of Jacob and Rachel, of Rebekah and Isaac, of Boaz and Ruth, are little novels, subsequently evolved, concerning people that had lived long before and probably never lived at all. To scholars they are wholly fabulous. Even otherwise, these legends do not, when analyzed, disclose love. Ruth herself with her magnificent phrase—"Where thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,"—does not display it. Historically its advent is in the Song of Songs.

The poem, perhaps originally a pastoral in dialogue form, but more probably a play, has, for central situation, the love of a peasant for a shepherd, a love tender and true, stronger than death, stronger at least than a monarch's will. The scene, laid three thousand years ago in Solomon's seraglio, represents the triumph of constancy over corruption, the constancy of a girl, unique in her day, who resisted a king, preferring a hovel to his harem. In an epoch more frankly unmoral than any of which history has cognizance, this girl, a native of Shulam, very simple, very ignorant, necessarily unrefined, possessed, through some miracle, that instinctive exclusiveness which, subsequently disseminated and ingrained, refurbished the world. She was the usher of love. The Song of Songs, interpreted mystically by the Church and profanely by scholars, is therefore sacred. It is the first evangel of the heart.

From the existing text, the original plan, and with it the original meaning, have disappeared. Many exegetes, notably Ewald, have demonstrated that the disappearance is due to manipulations and omissions, and many others, Renan in particular, have attempted reconstructions. The version here given is based on his.[1] From it a few expressions, no longer in conformity with modern taste, and several passages, otherwise redundant, have been omited. By way of proem it may be noted that the Shulamite, previously abducted from her native village—a hamlet to the north of Jerusalem—is supposed to be forcibly brought into the presence of the king where, however, she has thought only of her lover.

THE SONGS OF SONGS.

ACT I.

SOLOMON, IN ALL HIS GLORY, SURROUNDED BY HIS SERAGLIO AND HIS GUARDS.

AN ODALISQUE

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

CHORUS OF ODALISQUES

Thy love is better than delicious wine. Thy name is ointment poured forth. Therefore do we love thee.

---

[1] Renan: Le Cantique des Cantiques.

THE SHULAMITE

(forcibly introduced, speaking to her absent lover.)

The King hath brought me into his chamber. Draw me away, we will go together.

THE ODALISQUES

(*to* SOLOMON.)

The upright love thee. We will be glad and rejoice in thee. We will remember thy love more than wine.

THE SHULAMITE

(*to the* ODALISQUES.)

I am black but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, comely as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Do not disdain me because I am a little black. It is the sun that has burned me. My mother's children were angry at me. They made me keeper of the vineyards. Alas! mine own vineyard I have not kept.

(Thinking of her absent lover.)

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou takest thy flocks to rest at noon that I may not wander among the flocks of thy comrades.

AN ODALISQUE

If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, follow the flock and feed thy kids by the shepherds' tents.

SOLOMON

(*to the* SHULAMITE.)

To my horse, when harnessed to the chariot that Pharaoh sent me, I compare thee, O my love. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of pearls, thy neck with charms of coral. We will make for thee necklaces of gold, studded with silver.

THE SHULAMITE

(*aside.*)

While the King sitteth at his divan, my spikenard perfumes me and to me my beloved is a bouquet of myrrh, unto me he is as a cluster of cypress in the vines of Engedi.

SOLOMON

Yes, thou art fair, my beloved. Yes, thou art fair. Thine eyes are the eyes of a dove.

THE SHULAMITE

(*thinking of the absent one.*)

Yes, thou art fair, my beloved. Yes, thou art charming, and our tryst is a litter of green.

SOLOMON

(*to whom constancy has no meaning.*)

The beams of *our* house are cedar and *our* rafters of fir.

THE SHULAMITE

(*singing.*)

I am the rose of Sharon
The lily of the valley am I.

(ENTER *suddenly the* SHEPHERD.)

THE SHEPHERD

As a lily among thorns, so is my love among daughters.

THE SHULAMITE

(*running to him.*)

As is the apple among fruit, so is my beloved among men. In delight I have sat in his shadow and his savor was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banquet hall and put o'er me the banner of love.

(*Turning to the* ODALISQUES.)

Stay me with wine, strengthen me with fruit, for I am swooning with love.

(*Half-fainting she falls in the* SHEPHERD'S *arms.*)

His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me.

THE SHEPHERD

(*to the* ODALISQUES.)

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the hinds of the field, that ye stir not, nor awake my beloved till she will.

THE SHULAMITE

(*dreaming in the* SHEPHERD'S *arms.*)

My own love's voice. Arise, my fair one, he tells me, arise and let us go. . . .

THE SHEPHERD

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not, nor awake my beloved till she will.

(SOLOMON *motions; the* SHEPHERD *is removed.*)

ACT II.

A STREET IN JERUSALEM.

In the distance is Solomon and his retinue.

CHORUS OF MEN

Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness, exhaling the odor of myrrh and of frankincense and all the powders of the perfumer?

(SOLOMON *and his retinue advance.*)

FIRST JERUSALEMITE

Behold the palanquin of Solomon. Three score valiant men are about it. They all hold swords. . . .

SECOND JERUSALEMITE

King Solomon has had made for him a litter of Lebanon wood. The supports are of silver, the bottom of gold, the covering of purple. In the centre is a loved one, chosen from among the daughters of Jerusalem.

THE CHORUS

(*calling to women in the houses.*)

Come forth, daughters of Zion, and behold the King. . .

ACT III.

THE SERAGLIO.

SOLOMON

(*to the* SHULAMITE.)

Yes, thou art fair, my love, yes, thou art fair. Thou hast dove's eyes. . . . Thou art all fair, my love. There is no spot on thee.

THE SHEPHERD

(*without, in the garden, calling to the* SHULAMITE *and referring in veiled terms to the seraglio and its dangers.*)

Come to me, my betrothed, come to me from Lebanon. Look at me from the top of Amana, from the summit of Shenir and Hermon, from the lion's den and the mountain of leopards.

(*The* SHULAMITE *goes to a window and looks out.*)

THE SHEPHERD

You have strengthened my heart, my sister betrothed, you have strengthened my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the curls that float on thy neck. How dear is thy love, my sister betrothed! Thy caresses are better than wine, and the fragrance of thy garments is sweeter than spice.

THE SHULAMITE

Let my beloved come into his garden and eat its pleasant fruits.

THE SHEPHERD

I am come into my garden, my sister betrothed, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey. I have drunk my wine with my milk.

(*To the chorus.*)

Eat, comrades, drink abundantly, friends.

(*The* SHEPHERD *and the chorus withdraw.*)

ACT IV.

THE SERAGLIO.

THE SHULAMITE

(*musing.*)

I sleep but my heart waketh. I heard the voice of my beloved. He knocked. Open to me! he said. My sister, my love, my immaculate dove, open to me, for my head is covered with dew, the locks of my hair are wet . . . I rose to open to my beloved . . . but he was gone. My soul faileth me when he spoke not. I sought him, but I could not find him. I called him but he did not reply.

(*A pause.* SHE *relates the story of her abduction.*)

The watchman that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me, and the keepers of the walls took away my veil.

(*To the* ODALISQUES.)

I pray you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, tell him that I die of love.

CHORUS OF ODALISQUES

In what is the superiority of thy lover, O pearl among women, that thou beseechest us so?

THE SHULAMITE

My beloved's skin is white and ruddy. He is one in a thousand. . . . His eyes are as doves. . . . His cheeks are a bed of flowers. . . . He is charming. Such is my beloved, such is my dear one, O daughters of Jerusalem.

CHORUS OF ODALISQUES

Whither is thy beloved gone, O pearl among women? Which way did he turn, that we may seek him with thee?

THE SHULAMITE

My beloved is gone from the garden. . . . But I am his and he is mine. He feedeth his flocks among lilies.

(*Enter* SOLOMON.)

(*The* SHULAMITE *looks scornfully at him.*)

SOLOMON

Thou art beautiful as Tirzah, my love, and comely as Jerusalem, but terrible as an army in battle. Turn thine eyes away. They trouble me. . . .

THE SHEPHERD

(*from without.*)

There are sixty queens, eighty favorites, and numberless young girls. But among them all my immaculate dove is unique, she is the darling of her mother. The young girls have seen her and called her blessed. The queens and the favorites have praised her.

THE CHORUS

(*astonished at the* SHULAMITE'S *scorn of the King.*)

Who is it that is beautiful as Tirzah but terrible as an army in battle?

THE SHULAMITE

(*impatiently turning her back, and relating again her abduction.*)

I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the green plants in the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower. But before I was aware of it, I was among the chariots of my princely people.

THE CHORUS

Turn about, turn again, O Shulamite, that we may see thee.

A DANCER

What will you see in the Shulamite whom the King has compared to an army?

SOLOMON

(*to the* SHULAMITE.)

How beautiful are thy feet, prince's daughter, . . . How fair and how pleasant art thou. . . .

THE SHULAMITE

(*impatiently as before.*)

I am my beloved's and he is sighing for me.

(*Exit* SOLOMON. *Enter the* SHEPHERD.)

THE SHULAMITE

(*hastening to her lover.*)

Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the fields, let us lodge in the villages. We will rise early and see if the vine flourishes and the grape is ripe and the pomegranates bud. There will I caress thee. The love-apples perfume the air and at our gates are all manner of rich fruit, new and old, which I have kept for thee, my beloved. Oh, that thou wert my brother, that, when I am with thee without, I might kiss thee and not be mocked at. I want to take and bring thee into my mother's house. There thou shalt instruct me and I will give thee spiced wine and the juice of my pomegranates.

(*Falling in his arms and calling to the* ODALISQUES.)

His left hand is under my head and his right hand doth embrace me.

THE SHEPHERD

(*to the chorus.*)

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not nor awake my beloved till she will.

ACT V.

THE VILLAGE OF SHULAM.

(*The* SHULAMITE, *who has escaped from the seraglio is carried in by her lover.*)

CHORUS OF VILLAGERS

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?

THE SHEPHERD

(*to the* SHULAMITE.)

I awake thee under the apple tree.

(*He points to the house.*)

There thou wert born.

THE SHULAMITE

Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave; the flashes thereof are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord. But many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. The man who seeks to purchase it acquires but contempt.

EPILOGUE.

A COTTAGE AT SHULAM.

FIRST BROTHER OF THE SHULAMITE

(*thinking of a younger sister whom he would sell when she is older.*)

We have a little sister, still immature. What shall we do with her when she is spoken for?

SECOND BROTHER

If by then she is comely, we will get for her silver from a palace. If she is not comely, we will get the value of cedar boards.

THE SHULAMITE

(*ironically intervening.*)

I am comely, yet I made them let me be.

FIRST BROTHER

(*significantly.*)

Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon. He leased it to farmers each of whom was to pay him a thousand pieces of silver.

THE SHULAMITE

But my vineyard which is mine I still have.

(*Laughing.*)

A thousand pieces for thee, Solomon, and two hundred for the others.

(*At the door the* SHEPHERD *appears. Behind him are comrades.*)

THE SHEPHERD

Fair one, that dwelleth here, my companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it.

THE SHULAMITE

Hasten to me, my beloved. Hasten like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of spices.

III

APHRODITE URANIA

GREECE had many creeds, yet but one religion. That was Beauty. Israel believed in hate, Greece in love. In Judæa the days of the righteous were long. In Greece they were brief. Whom the gods loved died young. The gods themselves were young. With the tribes that took possession of the Hellenic hills they came in swarms. Sprung from the depths of the archaic skies, they were sombre and impure. When they reached Olympus already their Asiatic masks had fallen. Hecate was hideous, Hephæstos limped, but among the others not an imperfection remained. Divested of attributes monstrous and enigmatic, they rejuvenated into divinities of joy. Homer said that their laughter was inextinguishable. He joined in it. So did Greece. The gayety of the immortals was appreciated by a people that counted their years by their games.

As the tribes dispersed the gods advanced. Their passage, marked here by a temple, there by a shrine, had always the incense of legends. These Homer gathered and from them formed a Pentateuch in which dread was replaced by the ideal. Divinities, whom the Assyrian priests barely dared to invoke by name, and whose mention by the laity was forbidden, he displayed, luminous and indulgent, lifting, as he did so, the immense burden of mystery and fear under which humanity had staggered. Homer turned religion into art, belief into poetry. He evolved a creed that was more gracious than austere, more æsthetic perhaps than moral, but which had the signal merit of creating a serenity from which contemporaneous civilization proceeds. Greece to-day lies buried with her gods. She has been dead for twenty centuries and over. But the beauty of which she was the temple existed before death did and survived her.

To Homer beauty was an article of faith. But not the divinities that radiated it. He laughed at them. Pythagoras found him expiating his mirth in hell. A later echo of it bubbled in the farce of Aristophanes. It reverberated in the verses of Euripides. It rippled through the gardens of Epicurus. It amused sceptics to whom the story of the gods and their amours was but gossip concerning the elements. They believed in them no more than we do. But they lived among a people that did. To the Greeks the gods were real, they were neighborly, they were careless and caressing, subject like mortals to fate. From them gifts came, desires as well. The latter idea, precocious in its naïve psychology, eliminated human responsibility and made sin descend from above.

Olympus was not severe. Greece was not, either. The solemnity of other faiths had no place in her creed, which was free, too, of their baseness. It was not Homer only, but the inherent Hellenic love of the beautiful that, in emancipating her from Orientalisms, maintained her in an attitude which, while never ascetic, occasionally was sublime. The tradition of Orpheus and Eurydice, the fable of Psyche and her god, had in them love, which nowhere else was known. They had, too, something of the high morality which the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* depict.

In the *Iliad* a thousand ships are launched for the recovery of an abducted wife. The subject is equivocal, but concerning it there is not a dubious remark. In the *Iliad* as in the *Odyssey* love rested on two distinct principles: First, the respect of natural law; second, the respect of lawful marriage. These principles, the gods, if they willed, could abolish. When they did, their victims were not blamed, they were pitied. Christianity could not do better. Frequently it failed to do as well. But the patricists were not psychologists and the theory of determinism had not come.

Aphrodite had. With love for herald, with pleasure for page, with the Graces and the Hours for handmaids, she had come among the dazzled immortals. Hesiod told about it. So did de Musset.

> Regrettez-vous le temps où le Ciel, sur la terre,
> Marchait et respirait dans un peuple de dieux?
> Où Vénus Astarté, fille de l'onde amère,
> Secouait, vierge encor, les larmes de sa mère,
> Et fécondait le monde en tordant ses cheveux!

But Astarte was a stone which Aphrodite's eyes would have melted. It may be that they did. The worship of the Dea Meretrix was replaced by the purer rites of this purer divinity, unconscious as yet of the names and shames of Ishtar.

The Aphrodite whom Homer revealed differed from that of Hesiod. In Hesiod she was still a novice, but less austere than she afterward appeared in the conceptions of Pheidias. The latter succeeded in detaining the fluidity of the gods. He reproduced them in stone, sometimes in gold, always in beauty. He created a palpable Olympus. To die without seeing it was thought a great calamity. The universal judgment of antiquity was that art could go no higher. At the sight of the Pheidian Zeus, a barbarian brute, Æmilius Paulus, the Roman invader and victor, shrank back, awe struck, smitten with sacred terror. The image was regarded less as a statue than as an actual revelation of the divine. To have been able to display it, the general assumption was that either Pheidias had ascended above, or else that Zeus had descended to him. The revelation of Aphrodite Urania which he effected for her temple near the Cerameicus must have been equally august, the celestial in its supremest expression.

Thereafter the decadence of the goddess began. Previously she had ruled through her perfection. Subsequently, though the perfection persisted, the stamp of divinity ceased. In lieu of the goddess was a very pretty woman. If that woman did not, as Hesiod claimed, issue from the sea, she at least emerged from marble. The statues differed. Sometimes there were doves on them, sometimes there was a girdle embroidered with caresses and kisses, at times in the hand was an arrow, at others a lance, again Aphrodite was twisting her hair. But chiefly she was assassinated, not like Lais by jealous wives, but by sheer freedom of the chisel. It was these profaner images that inflamed Phædra and Pasiphae. Among them was Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite, a statue which a king tried vainly to buy and a madman offered to marry. The Pheidian Aphrodite belonged to an epoch in which art expressed the eternal; the Praxitelean, to a period in which it suggested the fugitive.

One was beauty and also love, the other was beauty and passion.

Originally both were one. It was only the idea of her that varied. Each Hellenic town, each upland and valley had its own faiths, its own myths. Uniformity concerning them was not doctrinal, it was ritualistic. Then, too, Aphrodite, Apollo, Zeus himself, the whole brilliant host of Olympus were once monsters of Asia. However august they had since become, memories and savors of anterior rites followed in their ascensions. These things incited them to resume their primal forms. It was pleasurably that they acceded. Therein is the simple mystery of their double lives, the reason why Aphrodite could be degrading and ideal, celestial and vulgar, yet always Philommeis, Queen of Smiles. In Cythera and Paphos she was but a fresh avatar of Ishtar. In other sites she resembled the picture that Dante made of Fortune and which an artist detached.

"Dante," said Saint-Victor, "displays Fortune turning her wheel, distributing good and evil, success and failure, prosperity and want. Mortals upbraid and accuse her. 'But these she does not hear. Tranquil among primordial things, she turns her sphere and ineffably rejoices.' So does Venus indifferently dispense high aims and viciousness. Curses do not reach her, insults do not touch her, the passions she has unchained cannot rise to where she is. In her high place tranquilly she turns her sphere of stars.

> 'Volge sua sfera e beata si gode.' "

It was not that serene divinity, it was the more human Aphrodite of Hesiod, that disturbed the Argive Helen. The story of her, the story of the golden fruit tossed into Olympus with its tag, To the Fairest, the rivalries that resulted, the decision of Paris, corrupt yet just, his elopement with Helen, and the war of the world which ensued, these episodes the hexameters of the *Iliad* unfold.

There, drenched with blood and bathed in poetry, is Helen. There, too, is Paris on his scarlet prow. With them you go from Lacedæmon, past the faint, fair rose of Ida's snow, over the green plain of waters, right to the gates of Ilium and within, and see how each man stopped and stood and mused at Helen's face and her undreamed-of beauty.

Her beauty was no doubt surprising. She trailed admiration but also respect. Homer relates that the seated sages rose at her approach. They did not blame her for the conflagration that her face had caused. They knew, as Priam knew, that responsibility rested not with the woman but with the gods. Perhaps she was not responsible. As in an allegory of beauty which itself is for all and yet for none, already she had passed from hand to hand. When she was but a child she had been abducted. Theseus took her from a temple in which she was dancing. Recovered by her brothers, Achilles got her from them but only to cede her to Patroclus. Later she became the wife of Menelaus. Subsequently Aphrodite gave her to Paris. At that she rebelled. But no mortal may resist the divine. Helen accompanied Paris to Troy, where, during the war that was waged for her, he was killed and she remained in his brother's arms until recovered by Menelaus.

Quintus Smyrnæus[1] represented Menelaus, sword in hand, rushing violently at her. A glance of her eyes disarmed him. In the clatter of the falling sword was love's reawakening. Then presently, as an honored wife, she returned to Lacedæmon. Even there her adventures continued. Achilles, haunted in Hades by the memory of her beauty, escaped, and in mystic nuptials conceived with her a winged child, Euphorion. Clearly, as the sages thought and Priam believed, she could not have been responsible. Nor was she so regarded. The various episodes of her career formed a sort of sacred legend for the polluting of which a poet, Stesichorus, was blinded. The blindness of Homer, Plato attributed to the same cause. To degrade beauty is a perilous thing. To preserve it, to make the legend more sacred still, it was imagined that not Helen, but a phantom of her, accompanied Paris to Troy, and that it was for a phantom that men fought and died.

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[1] Paraleipomena, XIII.

A thousand years latcr Apollonius of Tyana happened on that romance. Apollonius knew all languages, including that of silence, and all things, save the caresses of women. He knew, too, how to summon the dead. To verify the story, he evoked the shade that once before for Helen had emerged from hell. Apollonius asked: "Is it true that Helen went to Troy?" "We thought so," Achilles answered, "and we fought to get her back. But she was actually in Egypt. When we discovered that we fought for Troy itself."[1]

Achilles may have been right. In the *Odyssey*, in connection with Helen, mention is made of nepenthe. Nepenthe was an Egyptian drug that dispelled the memory of whatever is sad. Helen had much to forget and probably did, even without assistance. She was the personification of passivity. Her little rebellion at Aphrodite was very brief. But, assuming the nepenthe, it has been assumed also that in it was the secret of the spell with which she so promptly disarmed Menelaus. To modern eyes his attitude is ambiguous. His complaisance has an air of complicity. But Menelaus lived in an heroic age. Moreover, when Sarah vacated the palace of the Pharaohs, the complaisance of Abraham was the same.

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[1] Philostratus: Apollonius Tyanensis, IV., 16.

In both instances the principle involved was one of ownership. In patriarchal and heroic days woman was an asset. She was the living money of the period. Agamemnon, in devising how he might calm the anger of Achilles, offered him a quantity of girls. They were so much current coin. When stolen, recovery was the owner's chief aim. What may have happened in the interim was a detail, better appreciable when it is remembered that booty was treated, as Helen at Ilium was treated, in the light of Paris' lawful wife; for robbery at that time was a highly legitimate mode of acquiring property, provided and on condition that the robber and the robbed were foes. The idea of enticing the property was too complicated for the simplicity of those days. It was in that simplicity, together with the belief that whatever occurred was attributable to the gods, that the morality of the epoch resided.

In the story of Paris and Helen the morality of Aphrodite is as ambiguous as the attitude of Menelaus. She has the air of an *entremetteuse.* But her purpose was not to favorize frailty. Her purpose was the exercise of her sovereign pleasure. Paris, in adjudging to her the prize of beauty, became the object of her special regard, his people became her people, their enemies her own. The latter prevailed, but that was because Destiny—to whose power the gods themselves had to yield—so willed.

In the *Odyssey* the morality of the *Iliad* is enhanced. The enchantments of Calypso, the sorceries of Circe, the seductions of sirens, long years themselves, wanderings over perilous seas, dangers, hardships, temptations, failed to divert Odysseus from his memories of Penelope, who in turn resisted every suitor for his sake. When the later philosophy of Greece inquired what was woman at her best, it answered its own question in looking back at her. A thousand years after she had been sung, Horace, writing to Lollius, said: "I have been re-reading the poet of the Trojan War. No one has told so well as he what is noble and what is base." St. Basilius, writing later still, declared that the Homeric epics were a perpetual praise of right. The fact, he noted, was particularly obvious in the passage in which Odysseus confronted Nausicaa.

That little princess, historically the first who washed household linen in public, was, when so engaged, surprised by the shipwrecked hero. Instead of being alarmed at the appearance of this man whom the waters had disrobed, she was conscious only of a deep respect. St. Basilius gives the reason. In default of clothing Homer had dressed him in virtue.[1]

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[1] Ethica S. Basilii.

The deduction is so pleasant that the views of the saint concerning Circe and Calypso would be of interest. But they are unrecorded. It may be that he had none. The enchantresses themselves with their philters and enthralments are supposedly fabulous. Yet in the Homeric account of their seas, once thought to be but a dream of fairyland, mariners have found a log book of Mediterranean facts so accurate that a pilot's guide is but a prose rendering of its indications.[1] As with the seas so with the sirens. Their enchantments were real.

At an epoch when women generally were but things, too passively indifferent and too respectfully obedient to care to attempt, even could they have divined how, to captivate, Circe and Calypso displayed the then novel lures of coquetry and fascination. In the charm of their voices, in the grace of their manners, in the harmony of their dress, in the perfume of their lips, in their use of unguents, in their desire to please joined to the high art of it, was a subtlety of seduction so new and unimagined that it was magical indeed. In the violent *Iliad*, women, hunted like game, were but booty. In the suaver *Odyssey* was their revenge. It was they who captured and detained, reducing the hardiest heroes into servants of their pleasure. It is reasonable that their islands should have been thought enchanted and they enchantresses.

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[1] Bérard: Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée.

The story of their spells, of their refinements, and of their consequent dominations, exerted gradually an influence wide and profound. Women began to conjecture something else than marriage by right of might. Into the conjecturings came attempts at emancipation that preoccupied husbands and moralists. Hesiod denounced the new ambitions, and, finding denunciation perhaps ineffective, employed irony. He told of Pandora who, fashioned first out of clay, afterward adorned with a parure of beauty, was then given perfidy, falsehood and ruse, that, in being a delight to man, she should be also a disaster.

The picture, interesting in its suggestion of Eve, was originally perhaps a Chaldæan curio, imported by Phœnician traders. Its first Hellenic setting was due probably to Orpheus, the great lost poet of love, whose songs charmed all nature, all hell as well. From him, through problematic hands, it drifted to Hesiod, as already his lyre had drifted to Lesbos. The picture persisted, the lyre as well. To the latter the Mitylenes attributed the wonder of the beauty of their nightingales, chief among whom was Sappho.

IV

SAPPHO

SAPPHO was contemporaneous with Nebuchadnezzar. While he was chastening the Jews, she was creating love. In her day the condition of Hellenic women differed from what it had been. Generally they were shut apart, excluded from any exercise of their possible minds, restricted to strict domesticity. At Athens a girl might not so much as look from a window. If she did, she saw nothing. The window did not give on the street. But in the temples the candor of her eyes was violated. In the festivals of Ceres the modesty of her ears was assailed. Otherwise, she was securely guarded. If, to her detriment, she eluded guardianship, she could be sold. With marriage she entered into a form of superior slavery. When her husband's friends supped with him, she was not permitted to be present. Without permission she could not go from one apartment to the next. Without permission she could not go out. When she did, it was at her husband's side, heavily veiled. With his permission, she might go to the theatre, but only when tragedy was given. At comedies and at the games she was forbidden to assist. In case of disobedience the penalty was death. Pleasures and privileges were limited to housekeeping and motherhood. At the immanence of the latter her surroundings were embellished with beautiful trifles, with objects of art, with whatever influences might prenatally affect, and, in affecting, perfect the offspring. Otherwise, her existence was simple and severe. The peplos tissue of gold was not for her. Garments colored or flowered were not, either. These were reserved for her inferiors and superiors, for the hierodules of Aphrodite Pandemos and the images of the gods. Though her robes were simple, they had to be heavy. If light, a fine was incurred. If they did not hang properly, another fine was imposed. If, to the detriment of her husband, a man succeeded in approaching her, she could be killed or merely repudiated; in the latter case, she could no longer enter a temple, any one might insult her. Still a slave, she was an outcast as well.

Such were the laws. Their observance is a different matter. In Aristophanes and the comic poets generally Athenian women of position were dissolute when they were not stupid, and usually they were both. They may have been. But poets exaggerate. Besides, divorce was obtainable. Divorce was granted on joint request. On the demand of the husband it could be had. In the event of superscandalous conduct on his part, it was granted to the wife, provided she appeared before a magistrate and personally demanded it. The wife of the wicked and winning Alcibiades went on such an errand. Alcibiades met her, caught her in his arms and, to the applause of the wittiest people in the world, carried her triumphantly home. Aristophanes and Alcibiades came in a later and more brilliant epoch. In the days of Sappho severity was the rigorous rule, one sanctioned by the sentiment of a people in whose virile sports clothing was discarded, and in whose plays jest was too violent for delicate ears.

In Sparta the condition of women was similar, but girls had the antique freedom which Nausicaa enjoyed. Destined by the belligerent constitution of Lacedæmon to share, even in battle, the labors of their brothers, they devoted themselves, not to domesticity, but to physical development. They wrestled with young men, raced with them, swam the Eurotas, preparing themselves proudly and purely to be mothers among a people who destroyed any child that was deformed, fined any man that presumed to be stout, forced debilitated husbands to cede their wives to stronger arms, and who, meanwhile, protected the honor of their daughters with laws of which an infraction was death.

The marriage of Spartan girls was so arranged that during the first years of it they saw their husbands infrequently, furtively, almost clandestinely, in a sort of hide-and-go-seek devised by Lycurgus in order that love, instead of declining into indifference, should, while insensibly losing its illusions, preserve and prolong its strength. Otherwise, the Spartan wife became subject to the common Hellenic custom. Her liberty departed with her girlhood. Save her husband, no man might see her, none could praise her, none but he could blame. Her sole jewels were her children. Her richest garments were stoicism and pride. "What dower did you bring your husband?" an Athenian woman asked of one of them. "Chastity," was the superb reply.[1]

Lesbos differed from Lacedæmon. The Spartans declared that they knew how to fight, not how to talk. They put all their art into not having any. The Lesbians put theirs into the production of verse. At Mitylene, poetic development was preferred to physical culture. The girls there thought more of immortality than of motherhood. But the unusual liberty which they enjoyed was due to influences either Bœotian or Egyptian, perhaps to both. Egypt was neighborly. With

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[1] Xenophon: de Republica Lacedæmoniorum.

Lesbos, Egypt was in constant communication. The liberty of women there, as generally throughout the morning lands, religion had procured. Where Ishtar passed, she fevered, but also she freed. Beneath her mantle women acquired a liberty that was very real. On the very sites in which Islâm was to shut them up, Semiramis, Strantonice, Dido, Cleopatra, and Zenobia appeared. Isis, who was Ishtar's Egyptian avatar, was particularly liberal. Among the cities especially dedicated to her was Naucratis.

Charaxus, a brother of Sappho, went there, met Rhodopis, a local beauty, and fell in love with her. Charaxus was a merchant. He brought wine to Egypt, sold it, returned to Greece for more. During one of his absences, Rhodopis, while lolling on a terrace, dropped her sandal which, legend says, a vulture seized, carried away, and let fall into the lap of King Amasis. The story of Cinderella originated there. With this difference: though the king, after prodigal and impatient researches, discovered the little foot to which the tiny sandal belonged, Rhodopis, because of Charaxus, disassociated herself from his advances. Subsequently a young Naucratian offered a fortune to have relations with her. Because of Charaxus, Rhodopis again refused. The young man dreamed that she consented, dreamed that she was his, and boasted of the dream. Indignantly Rhodopis cited him before the magistrates, contending that he should pay her as proposed. The matter was delicate. But the magistrates decided it with great wisdom. They authorized Rhodopis to dream that she was paid.

Rumors of these and of similar incidents were probably reported in Lesbos and may have influenced the condition of women there. But memories of Bœotia from which their forefathers came was perhaps also a factor. Bœotia was a haunt of the muses. In the temple to them, which Lesbos became, the freedom of Erato was almost of necessity accorded to her priestesses.

Lesbos was then a stretch of green gardens and white peristyles set beneath a purple dome. To-day there is no blue bluer than its waters. There is nothing so violet as the velvet of its sky. With such accessories the presence of Erato was perhaps inevitable. In any case it was profuse. Nowhere, at no time, has emotional æstheticism, the love of the lovely, the fervor of individual utterance, been as general and spontaneous as it was in this early Academe.

In the later Academe at Athens laughter was prohibited. That of Mitylene was less severe. To loiter there some familiarity with the magnificence of Homer may have been exacted, but otherwise a receptive mind, appreciative eyes, and kissable lips were the best passports to

Sappho, the girl Plato of its groves, who, like Plato, taught beauty, sang it as well and with it the *glukupikros*—the bitterness of things too sweet.

Others sang with her. Among those, whose names at least, the fates and the Fathers have spared us, were Erinna and Andromeda. Sappho cited them as her rivals. One may wonder could they have been really that. Plato called Sappho the tenth muse. Solon, after hearing one of her poems, prayed that he might not die until he had learned it. Longinus spoke of her with awe. Strabo said that at no period had any one been known who in any way, however slight, could be compared to her.

Though twenty-five centuries have gone since then, Sappho is still unexceeded. Twice only has she been approached; in the first instance by Horace, in the second by Swinburne, and though it be admitted, as is customary among scholars, that Horace is the most correct of the Latin poets, as Swinburne is the most faultless of our day, Sappho sits and sings above them atop, like her own perfect simile of a bride:

Like the sweet apple which reddens atop on the topmost bough,
Atop on the topmost twig which the pluckers forgot somehow.
Forget it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now.[1]

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[1] Rossetti, D. G.

It is regrettable that one cannot now get Sappho. But of at least nine books there remain but two odes and a handful of fragments. The rest has been lost on the way, turned into palimpsests, or burned in Byzance. The surviving fragments are limited some to a line, some to a measure, some to a single word. They are the citations of lexicographers and grammarians, made either as illustrations of the Æolic tongue or as examples of metre.

The odes are addressed, the one to Aphrodite, the other to Anactoria. The first is derived from Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who quoted it as a perfect illustration of perfect verse. The second was given by Longinus as an example of the sublime in poetry—of the display, as he put it, not of one emotion, but of a congress of them. Under the collective title of *Anactoria*, these odes together with many of the fragments, Swinburne has interwoven into an exquisite whole.

To appreciate it, Sappho herself should be understood. Her features, which the Lesbians put on their coins, are those of a handsome boy. On seeing them one does not say, Can this be Sappho? But rather, This is Sappho herself. They fit her, fit her verse, fit her fame. That fame, prodigious in her own day, is serviceable in ours. It has retained the name of Phaon, her lover; the names of girls for whom she also cared. Of these, Suidas particularly mentioned Atthis and Gorgo. Regarding Anactoria there is the testimony of the ode. There is more. "I loved thee once, Atthis, long ago," she exclaimed in one fragment. In another she declared herself "Of Gorgo full weary." But the extreme poles of her affection are supposably represented by Phaon and Anactoria. The ode to the latter is, apart from its perfection, merely a jealous plaint, yet otherwise useful in showing the trend of her fancy, in addition to the fact that her love was not always returned. Of that, though, there is further evidence in the fragments. Some one she reproached with being "Fonder of girls than Gello." Elsewhere she said "Scornfuller than thou have I nowhere found." But even in the absence of such evidence, the episode connected with Phaon, although of a different order, would suffice.

Contemporaneous knowledge of it is derived from Strabo, Servius, Palæphatus, and from an alleged letter in one of Ovid's literary forgeries. According to these writers, Phaon was a good-looking young brute engaged in the not inelegant occupation of ferryman. In what manner he first approached Sappho, whether indeed Sappho did not first approach him, is uncertain. Pliny, who perhaps was credulous, believed that Phaon had happened on the male root of a seaweed which was supposed to act as a love charm and that by means of it he succeeded in winning Sappho's rather volatile heart. However that may be, presently Phaon wearied. It was probably in these circumstances that the Ode to Aphrodite was written, which, in Swinburne's paraphase—slightly paraphrased anew—is as follows:

I beheld in sleep the light that is
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears;
Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,
Imperishable upon her storied seat;
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,
A mind of many colors and a mouth
Of many tunes and kisses; and she bowed
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,
Bowed down upon me saying, "Who doth the wrong,
Sappho?" But thou—thy body is the song,
Thy mouth the music; thou art more than I,
Though my voice die not till the whole world die,
Though men that hear it madden; though love weep,
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead?
Yet the queen laughed and from her sweet heart said:
"Even he that flees shall follow for thy sake,
And he shall give thee gifts that would not take,
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee" (Yea, kiss me)
"When thou wouldst not"—When I would not kiss thee!

If Phaon heard he did not heed. He took ship and sailed away, to Sicily it is said, where, it is also said, Sappho followed, desisting only when he flung at her some gibe about Anactoria and Atthis. In a letter which Ovid pretended she then addressed to him, she referred to the gibe, but whether by way of denial or admission, is now, owing to different readings of the text, uncertain. In some copies she said, quas (the Lesbian girls) *non* sine crimine (reproach) amavi. In others, quas *hic* (in Lesbos) sine crimine amavi. Disregarding the fact that the letter itself is imaginary, the second reading is to be preferred, not because it is true, but precisely because it is not. Sappho, though a woman, was a poet. Several of her verses contain allusions to attributes poetically praised by poets who never possessed them, and Ovid who had not written a treatise on the Art of Love for the purpose of displaying his ignorance, was too adroit to let his imaginary Sappho admit what the real Sappho would have denied.[1]

Meanwhile Phaon refused to return. At Lesbos there was a white rock that stretched out to the sea. On it was a temple to Apollo. A fall from the rock was, at the time, locally regarded as a cure for love. Arthemesia, queen of Caria, whom another Phaon had rebuffed and who, to teach him better manners, put his eyes out, threw herself from it. Sappho did also. It cured her of the malady, of all others as well.

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[1] Epistolæ Heroïdum, XV.

Such is the story, such, rather, is its outline, one interesting from the fact that it constitutes the initial love-tragedy of the Occident, as, also, because of a climax befitting the singer of the bitterness of things too sweet.

V

THE AGE OF ASPASIA

"Eros is son of earth and heaven, but Persuasion is Aphrodite's daughter." So Sappho sang. The note, new and true as well, became, as fresh truth ever does become, revolutionary. Athens heard it. Even Sparta listened. Corinth and Miletus repeated it in clinging keys.

With the new truth came a new era. Through meditations patient and prolonged Calypso had succeeded in adding coquetry to love. With a distich Sappho emancipated it. To the despotism that insisted she suggested the duty of asking; to the submission that had obeyed she indicated the grace that grants; yet, posing as barrier between each, the right and liberty of choice, which already Rhodopis had exacted.

Then the new era came. The gynæceum was not emptied. Wives were still shut apart. But elsewhere, with that marvel which Atticism was, came the sense of personal dignity, the conception of individuality, the theory of freedom, and, ultimately, in streets where women of position could not venture unaccompanied and unveiled, they were free to come and go at will, to mingle with men, to assist at comedies and games, to become what women are to-day, with this difference, they were more handsome and less pretty. To a people naturally æsthetic the revolution naturally appealed. Led by the irresistible authority of beauty, for support it had the sovereign prestige of the muse.

In stooping to conquer, Erato smiled, supplying, as she did so, another conception, one as novel as the first, the idea that, after all, though love is a serious thing, the mingling of a little gayety in it is not forbidden. It was to Anacreon that Erato offered that chord, threw it rather, laughing, in his face. The poet, laughing too, took and plucked it lightly, producing quick airs, conceits of pleasure and of wine. When Sappho sang, it was with all her fervent soul. When she loved it was with all her fervid heart. She sang as the nightingales of Lesbos sang, because singing was her life, and she sang of love because she could sing of nothing else. Anacreon did not pretend to sing. He hummed as the bees of Hymettus hummed, over this flower and over that, indifferent to each, caring not for them, for their sweets merely, eager to get all he could as quickly as he might, smacking his faunesque lips over the grape, staggering with a hiccough along the lanes of love, trailing among them strophes to Bacchus rather than to Eros, yet managing to combine the two and leaving finally to the world that chord with its notes of pleasure.

These, mounting behind Sappho's songs, spread through Hellas, creating as they spread a caste that borrowed from the girl her freedom, from the bard his wit, and, from the fusion, produced the hetaira.

Hetaira is a term which Sappho applied to her pupils. It means comrade. But either because it was too elusive for history's detention or too fragile for its care, it became corrupted, shoved roughly by stupid hands among the pornai. The latter were the hierodules of Aphrodite Pandemos. The hetairæ were objects of art, patiently fashioned in fastidious convents, a class of highly educated young women to whom marriage did not necessarily appeal but to whom liberty was essential, girls "pleasanter," Amphis said, "than the wife, for she with the law on her side, can sit in your house and despise you."

Such an attitude is not enticing. The hetairæ were an alterative from it, and, at the same time, a protest against existing feminine conditions. These conditions the legislature could not change but the protest the legislature could and did encourage. While the wife sat contemptuous in the severe gynæceum, the hetairæ mingled with men, charming them always, marrying them occasionally, yet only when their own equality and independence was recognized and conserved.

It was into a union of this kind that Pericles entered with Aspasia. He never regretted it, though history has affected to regard it as illicit, and Aspasia as Omphale. The affectation is an injustice. "In all things," Pericles said, "a man's life should be as clean as his hands." What Aspasia said is not recorded. But it is not improbable that she inspired the remark.

Aspasia was born and educated at Miletus. It was chiefly there and at Corinth that the hetairæ were trained. In these cities, seminaries had been established where girls rose from studies as serious as those which the practice of other liberal professions comport. Their instruction comprised everything that concerned the perfectioning of the body and everthing that related to the embellishment of the mind. In addition to calisthenics, there were courses in music, poetry, diction, philosophy, politics, and art. The graduates were admirable. Their beauty was admirable also. But they were admired less for that than because the study of every grace had contributed to their understanding of the unique art, which is that of charming. Charm they exhaled. Gifted and accomplished, they were the only women with whom an enlightened Greek could converse. Their attitude was irreproachable, their distinction extreme, and they differed from other women only in that their manners were more correct. Plato had one of them for muse. Sophocles another. To Glycera, of whom Menander wrote, poetry was an insufficient homage, a statue was erected to her.[1]

These instances, anomalous now, were logical then. To the Greek the gifts of the gods were more beneficent here than hereafter. Of divine gifts none was more appreciated and none more allied to the givers than beauty. The value attached to it, prodigious in peace, was potent in war, potent in law. At Platæa, Callicrates was numbered among the heroes because of his looks. For the same reason Philippus, killed in battle, was nobly buried and worshipped by those who had been his foes. For the same reason Phryne, charged with high crimes, was acquitted.

At the Eleusinian mysteries, beneath the portico of the temple, before assembled Athens, Phryne appeared in the guise of Aphrodite rising from the sea. Charged with parodying the rites, she was summoned before the Areiopagus. Conviction meant death. But her beauty, which her advocate suddenly and cleverly disclosed, was her sole defence. It sufficed for the acquittal of this woman whose statue, the work of Praxiteles, was placed in the temple at Delphi.

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[1] Athenæus, XIII, Musonius: de Luxu. Becker: Charikles.

The tomb of a sister had for epitaph: "Greece, formerly invincible, was conquered and enslaved by the beauty of Lais, daughter of Love, graduate of Corinth, who here rests in the noble fields of Thessaly." For Thais a monument was erected. At Tarsus Glycera had honors semi-divine. In Greece, let a woman be what she might, if beautiful she was deified, if charming she was adored. In either case she represented vivified æstheticism to a people at once intellectual and athletic, temperate and rich, a people who, contemptous of any time-consuming business, supported by a nation of slaves, possessing in consequence that wide leisure without which the richest are poor, attained in their brilliant city almost the ideal. They knew nothing of telegraphs and telephones, but they knew as little of hypocrisy and cant. Art and æsthetics sufficed.

In Corinthian and Milesian convents æsthetics were taught to girls who, lifting their fair hands to Aphrodite, prayed that they might do nothing that should not charm, say nothing that should not please. These studies and rituals were supplemented in the Academe. There they learned that the rightful path in love consisted in passing from beautiful manners to beautiful thoughts, from beautiful thoughts to beautiful aspirations, from beautiful aspirations to beautiful meditations, and that, in so passing, they attained wisdom absolute which is beauty supreme.

It would be excessive to fancy that all graduates followed these precepts and entered with them into the austere regions where Beauty, one and indivisible, resides. It would be not only excessive but unreasonable. Manners were proper for all, but for some revenues were better. Those of Phryne were so ample that she offered to rebuild the walls of Thebes. Those of Lais were such that she erected temples. But Phryne and Lais came later, in post-Aspasian days, when Corinth, in addition to schools, had marts in which beauty was an article of commerce and where pleasure received the same official encouragement that stoicism had at Sparta. In the train of Lais, Ishtar followed. It was Alexander that invoked her.

In the age of Pericles and Aspasia, Athens was too æsthetic to heed the one, too young to know the other. Pallas alone, she who from her crystal parapets saw and foresaw what the years would bring, could have told. Otherwise there was then not a shadow on Athens, light only, light that has never been excelled, light which from high porches, from tinted peristyles, from gleaming temples, from shining statues, from white immortals, from hill to sea, from Olympus itself, radiated, revealing in its intense vibrations the glare of genius at its apogee.

Whatever is beautiful had its apotheosis then. Whatever was superb found there its home. Athens had risen to her full height. Salamis had been fought. A handful of athletes had routed Asia. Reverse the picture and the glare could not have been. Its aurora would have swooned back into darkness. But such was the luminousness it acquired that one ray, piercing the mediæval night, created the Renaissance, art's rebirth, the recall of antique beauty.

Salamis lifted Greece to the skies. In the return was a new epoch, the most brilliant the world has known, a brief century packed with the art of ages, filled to the tips with grace, lit with a light that still dazzles. It was too fair. Willed by destiny, it menaced the supremacy of the divine. "But by whom," Io asked, "is Destiny ruled?" "By the Furies," was the prompt reply.

They were there. From the depths of the archaic skies they were peering, prepared to pounce. After one war, another. After the rout of incoherent Persia, a duel between Athens and Sparta, a duel of jealousy, feminine in rancor, virile in strength, from which Sparta backed, yet only to return and fight again, only to fall at last as Athens did, as Thebes did too, beneath the might of Macedon, expiring all of them in those convulsions that summoned Rome.

Meanwhile there was but light. Death had not come. In between was the unexampled reign of beauty during which, after Æschylus and Pindar, came the splendors of Sophocles, the magnificence of Euripides, Socratic wisdom, and the rich, rare laugh of Aristophanes. That being insufficient, there was Pheidias, there was Plato, art at its highest, beauty at its best, and, that the opulent chain they formed might not sever too suddenly, there followed Praxiteles, Apelles, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Demosthenes. Even with them that chain could not end. Intertwisting with the coil of death, it Hellenized Asia, Atticized Alexandria, girdled Rome, resting in the latter's Lower Empire until recovered by the delighted Renaissance.

The names of the Periclean age are high. There is a higher one yet, that of Pericles. Statesman, orator, philosopher, soldier, artist, poet, and lover, Pericles was so great that, another Zeus, he was called the Olympian. If to him Egeria came, would it not, a poet somewhere asked, be uncivil to depict her as less than he? It would be not only uncivil but untrue.

Said Themistocles, "You see that boy of mine? Though but five, he governs the universe. Yes, for he rules his mother, his mother rules me, I rule Athens and Athens the world." After Themistocles it was Pericles' turn to govern and be ruled. His sovereign was Aspasia.

Aspasia had come from Miletus with another hetaira to Athens which her companion vacated to be bride of a Thessalian king, but where she became the wife of one beside whom mere kings were nothing. It was her beauty that first attracted Pericles. Beauty does attract, but only graciousness can detain. In the home of Pericles there was none, a woman merely of the Xantippe type from whom he separated by common consent and put Aspasia, not in her inferior place, but on a pedestal before which he knelt. Aspasia became not merely his wife but his inspiration, his comrade, his aid. She worked for him and with him. She encouraged him in his work, accompanied him in his battles, consoled him in his fatigues, entertained his friends, talked philosophy with Socrates, frivolity with Alcibiades, art with Pheidias, but love to him, displaying what Athens had socially never seen, the spectacle of delicacy, culture, wit, beauty, and ease united in a woman, and that woman a woman of the world.

The sight, highly novel, established a precedent and with it fresh conceptions of what woman might be. In the *Iliad*, she was money.

Money has a language of its own. In the enchanted islands of the *Odyssey* she was charm. Charm has a more distinct appeal. In Lesbos she was emancipated and that made her headier still. But in the opulent Athenian nights Aspasia revealed her not physically attractive merely, not personally alluring only, not simply free, but spirituelle, addressing the mind as well as the eye, inspiring the one, refining the other, captivating the soul as well as the senses, the ideal woman, comrade, helpmate, and sweetheart in one.

Like the day it was too fair. Presently the duel occurred. Lacedæmon, trailing the pest in her tunic, ravaged the Eleusinian glades. Pericles died. Aspasia disappeared. The duel, waning a moment, was resumed. It debilitated Sparta, exhausted Athens, and awoke Thebes, who fell on both but only to be eaten by Philip.

It would have been interesting to have seen that man and his Epeirote queen who hung serpents about her, played with them among poisonous weeds and who, because of another woman, killed her king, burned her rival alive, and gave to the world Alexander.

It would have been more interesting still to have seen the latter when, undermined by every vice of the vicious East, with nothing left to conquer, with no sin left to commit, with no crime left undone, he descended into the great sewer that Babylon was and there, in a golden house, on a golden throne, in the attributes of divinity was worshipped as a god. Behind him was a background of mitred priests and painted children, about him were the fabulous beasts that roamed into heraldry, with them was a harem of three hundred and sixty-five odalisques apportioned to the days of the year, while above swung the twelve signs of the zodiac. In that picture Rome was to find the prototype of her Cæsars, as in it already Hellas has seen the supplanting of Aphrodite by Ishtar.

Greece, still young, lingered briefly, then without decrepitude, without decadence, ceased, nationally, to be. Aphrodite, young too, died with her. As Venus Pandemos Rome evoked her. The evocation was successful. Venus Pandemos appeared. But even from Olympus, which together with Hellenic civilization, Rome absorbed, Aphrodite had already departed. Those who truly sought her found her indeed, but like the art she inspired only in marble and story.

VI

THE BANQUET

It used to be a proverb that Apollo created Æsculapius to heal the body and Plato to heal the soul. Plato may have failed to do that. But he heightened its stature. It has been loftier since he taught. In his teaching was the consummation of intellect. His mind was sky-like, his speech perfection. Antiquity that thought Zeus must have revealed himself to Pheidias, thought, too, that should the high god deign to speak to mortals, it would be in the nightingale tongue of refinement which Plato employed. The beauty of it is not always apprehensible. His views, also, are not always understood. Yet an attempt must be made to supply some semblance of the latter because of the influence they have had.

"I know but one little thing," said Socrates. "It is love." Socrates was ironical. That which it pleased him to call little, Plato regarded as a special form of the universal law of attraction. His theories on the subject are contained in the *Phædrus* and the *Symposion*, two poetically luxurious works produced by him in the violet-crowned city during the brilliant Athenian day, before Socrates had gone and Sparta had come.

The *Symposion* is a banquet. A few friends, Phædrus and Pausanias, men of letters; Eryximachus, a physician; Aristophanes, the poet; Socrates, the seer, have been supping at the house of Agathon. By way of food for thought love is suggested. Discussion regarding it follows, in which Socrates joins—a simple expedient that enabled Plato to put in his master's mouth the æsthetic nectar of personal views of which the real Socrates never dreamed.

Among the first disputants is Phædrus. In his quality of man of letters he began with extravagant praise of Eros, whom he called the mightiest of all gods, the chief minister of happiness.

To this, Pausanias, also a literary man and therefore indisposed to agree with another, objected. "Phædrus would be right," he said, "if there were but one Eros. But there are two. Love is inseparable from Aphrodite. If there were only one Aphrodite there would be only one love. But there are two Aphrodites. Hence there must be two loves. One Aphrodite is Urania or celestial, the other Pandemos or common. The divinities should all be lauded. Still there is a distinction between these two. They vary as actions do. Consider what we are now doing, drinking and talking. These things in themselves are neither good nor evil. They become one or the other in accordance with the way in which we do them. In the same manner, not every love, but only that which is inherently altruistic, can be called divine. The love inspired by Aphrodite Pandemos is essentially common. It is such as appeals to vulgar natures. It is of the senses, not of the soul. Intemperate persons experience this love, which seeks only its own gross end. Whereas the love that comes of Aphrodite Urania has for object the happiness and improvement of another."

With all of which Eryximachus agreed. Eryximachus was a physician, consequently more naturalistic, and in agreeing he extended the duality of love over all things, over plants and animals as well as over man, claiming for it a universal influence in nature, science, and the arts, expressing himself meanwhile substantially as follows:

In the human body there are two loves, confessedly different, as such their desires are unlike, the desire of the healthy body being one thing, that of the unhealthy something else. The skilful physician knows how to separate them, how to convert one into the other, and reconcile their hostile elements. In music there is the same reconciliation of opposites. This is demonstrable by rhythm, which is composed of elements short and long, and which, though differing, may be harmonized. The course of the seasons is also an example of both principles. When the opposing forces, sunlight and rain, heat and cold, blend harmoniously they bring fertility and health, precisely as their discord has a counter influence. The knowledge of love in relation to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies is termed astronomy. Lastly, religion, through the knowledge which it has of what is pious and what is impious, is love's intermediary between men and gods.

Such is love's universal sway. The origin of its duality Aristophanes then explained. Sages, neighbors of the gods, of whom Empedocles was the last representative, had supposed, that in the beginning of things, those that loved were one. Later they were separated. Thereafter they sought the better half which they had lost. This tradition, possibly Orphic, Aristophanes took for text and embroidered it with his usual grotesqueness. But beneath the humor of his illustrations there was an idea less profound perhaps than delicate. Love, however regarded, may not improperly be defined as the union of two beings who complete each other and who, from the standpoint of the Orphic tradition, reciprocally discover in each other what individually they once had and since have lacked. On the other hand, it may be that in the symbolism which Aristophanes employed was an attempt to apply to humanity the theory which Eryximachus had set forth. At the origin of all things is unity, which divides and becomes multiple only to return to its primal shape. Human nature, as masculinely and femininely exemplified, is primitive unity after division has come, and love is the return to that unity which in itself is of all things the compelling law. In other words, one is many, and, love aiding, many are one.

But whatever Aristophanes may have meant, his views were subsidiary. It was to Socrates that Plato reserved the privilege of penetrating into the essence of love and of displaying its progressus and consummation. "How many things that I never thought of," Socrates on reading his own discourse, exclaimed, "this young man has made me say."

Among them was an exposition of the fundamental law of human nature, the universal desire for happiness. In the demonstrations that followed good was shown to be a means to happiness; consequently, every one, loving happiness, loves good also. In this sense love belongs to all. Every one, in loving happiness, loves good and craves a perpetual possession of both. But different minds have different ways of attaining the same end. One man aspires to happiness through wealth, another through place, a third through philosophy. These are uninfluenced by Eros. The influence of Eros is exerted when the perpetual possession of happiness is sought in immortality.

But life itself comports no continuity. Life is but a succession of phenomena, of which one departs as another appears, and of which each, created by what has gone before, creates that which ensues, the result being that, though from womb to tomb a man be called the same, never, either mentally or physically, is he. The constant disintegration and renovation of tissues correspond with the constant flux and reflux of sensations, emotions, thoughts. The man of this instant perishes. He is replaced by a new one during the next. That proposition true of the individual is equally true of the species, continuance of either being secured only through reproduction. The love of immortality manifests itself therefore through the reproductive impulse. Beauty, in another, exercises an attractive force that enables a gratification of the impulse which ugliness arrests. Hence comes the love of beauty. In some, it stimulates the body, attracting them to women and inducing them to perpetuate themselves through the production of children. In others, it stimulates the mind, inducing the creation of children such as Lycurgus left to Sparta, Solon to Athens, Homer and Hesiod to humanity, children that built them temples which women-born offspring could not erect.

These are the lesser mysteries of love. The higher mysteries, then unveiled, disclose a dialectic ladder of which the first rung touches earth, the last the divine. To mount from one to the other, love should rise as does the mind which from hypothesis to hypothesis reaches truth. In like manner, love, mounting from form to form, reaches the primordial principle from which all beauty proceeds. The rightful order of going consists in using earthly beauties as ascending steps, passing from one fair form to all fair forms, from fair forms to beautiful deeds, from beautiful deeds to beautiful conceptions, until from beautiful conceptions comes the knowledge of beauty supreme.

"There," Socrates continued, "is the home of every science and of all philosophy. It is not, though, initiation's final stage. The heart requires more. Drawn by the power of love, it cannot rest in a sphere of abstraction. It must go higher, higher yet, still higher to the ultimate degree where it unites with beauty divine."

That union which is the true life is not, Socrates explained, annihilation, nor is it unity, or at least not unity which excludes division. The lover and the beloved are distinct. They are two and yet but one, wedded in immaculate beauty.

"If anything," Socrates concluded, "can lend value to life it is the spectacle of that beauty, pure, unique, aloof from earthly attributes, free from the vanities of the world. It is a spectacle which, apprehensible to the mind alone, enables the beholder to create, not phantoms, but verities, and in so doing, to merit immortality, if mortal may."

Socrates, who had been leaning against the table, lay back on his couch. The grave discourse was ended. Aristophanes was preparing to reply. Suddenly there was violent knocking at the door without. A little later the voice of Alcibiades was heard resounding through the court. In a state of great intoxication he was roaring and shouting "Agathon! Where is Agathon? Lead me to Agathon." Then at once, massively crowned with flowers, half supported by a flute girl, Alcibiades, ribald and importunate, staggered in. The grave discourse was ended, the banquet as well.

There is an Orphic fragment which runs: The innumerable souls that are precipitated from the great heart of the universe swarms as birds swarm. They flutter and sink. From sphere to sphere they fall and in falling weep. They are thy tears, Dionysos. O Liberator divine, resummon thy children to thy breast of light.

In the Epiphanies at Eleusis the doctrine disclosed was demonstrative of that conception. The initiate learned the theosophy of the soul, its cycles and career. In that career the soul's primal home was color, its sustenance light. From beatitude to beatitude it floated, blissfully, in ethereal evolutions, until, attracted by the forms of matter, it sank lower, still lower, to awake in the senses of man.

The theory detained Plato. In the *Phædrus*, which is the supplement of the *Symposion*, he made it refract something approaching the splendor of truth revealed. With Socrates again for mouthpiece, he declared that in anterior existence we all stood a constant witness of the beautiful and the true, adding that, if now the presence of any shape of earthly loveliness evokes a sense of astonishment and delight, the effect is due to reminiscences of what we once beheld when we were other than what we are.

"It seems, then," Plato noted, "as though we had found again some object, very precious, which, once ours, had vanished. The impression is not illusory. Beauty is really a belonging which we formerly possessed. Mingling in the choir of the elect our souls anteriorly contemplated the eternal essences among which beauty shone. Fallen to this earth we recognize it by the intermediary of the most luminous of our senses. Sight, though the subtlest of the organs, does not perceive wisdom. Beauty is more apparent. At the sight of a face lit with its rays, memory returns, emotions recur, we think love is born in us and it is, yet it is but born anew."

There is a Persian manuscript which, read one way, is an invocation to love in verse, and which, read backward, is an essay on mathematics in prose. Love is both a poem and a treatise. It was in that aspect Plato regarded it. It had grown since Homer. It had developed since the Song of Songs. With Plato it attained a height which it never exceeded until Plato himself revived with the Renaissance. In the interim it wavered and diminished. There came periods when it passed completely away. Whether Plato foresaw that evaporation, is conjectural. But his projection of the drunken Alcibiades into the gravity of the Banquet is significant. The dissolute, entering suddenly there, routed beauty and was, it may be, but an unconscious prefigurement of the coming orgy in which love also disappeared.

VII

ROMA-AMOR

It was the mission of Rome to make conquests, not statues, not to create, but to quell. Her might reverberated in the roar of her name. Roma means strength. It is only in reading it backward that Amor appears. Love there was secondary. Might had precedence. It was Might that made first the home, then the state, then the senate that ruled the world. That might, which was so great that to ablate it the earth had to bear new races, was based on two things, citizenship and the family. The title Romanus sum was equal to that of rex. The title of matron was superior.

The Romans, primarily but a band of outlaws, carried away the daughters of their neighbors by force. Their first conquest was woman. The next was the gods. In the rude beginnings the latter were savage as they. Revealed in panic and thunder, they were gods of prey and of fright. Rome, whom they mortified, made no attempt to impose them on other people. With superior tact she lured their gods from them. She made love to them. With naïve effrontery she seduced them away. The process Macrobius described. At the walls of any beleaguered city, a consul, his head veiled, pronounced the consecrated words. "If there be here gods that have under their care this people and this city, we pray, supplicate, and adjure them to desert the temples, to abandon the altars, to inspire terror there, to come to Rome near us and ours, that our temples, being more agreeable and precious, may predispose them to protect us. It being understood and agreed that we dedicate to them larger altars, grander games."[1]

It was with that formula that Rome conquered the world. She omitted it but once, at the walls of Jerusalem. The deity whom she forgot there to invoke, entered her temples and overthrew them.

Meanwhile the flatteries of the formula no known god could resist. In triumph Rome escorted one after another away, leaving the forsaken but doorposts to worship, and stimulating in them the desire to become part of the favored city where their divinities were. But in that city everything was closed to them. Deserted by their gods, divested, in consequence, of religion and, therefore, of every right, they could no longer pray, the significance of signs and omens was lost to them, they were plebs. But the Romans, who had captivated the divinities, and who, through them, alone possessed the incommunicable science of augury, were patrician. In that distinction is the origin of Rome's aristocracy and her might.

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[1] Saturnalia, III., 9.

The might pre-existed in the despotic organization of the home. There the slaves and children were but things that could be sold or killed. They were the chattels of the paterfamilias, whose wife was a being without influence or initiative, a creature in the hands of a man, unable to leave him for any cause whatever, a domestic animal over whom he had the right of life and death, a ward who, regarded as mentally irresponsible—*propter animi lævitatem*—might not escape his power even though he died, a woman whom he could repudiate at will and of whom he was owner and judge.[1]

Such was the law and such it remained, a dead letter, nullified by a reason profoundly human, which the legislature had overlooked, but which the Asiatics had foreseen and which they combated with the seraglio where woman, restricted to a fraction of her lord, exhausted herself in contending even for that. But Rome, in making the paterfamilias despotic, made him monogamous as well. He was strictly restricted to one wife. As a consequence, the materfamilias, while theoretically a slave, became practically what woman with her husband to herself and no rivals to fear almost inevitably does become—supreme. Legally she was the property of her husband, actually he was hers. When he returned from forage or from war, she alone had the right to greet him, she alone might console and caress. In the eye of the gods if not of the law she was his equal when not his superior. By virtue of the law he could divorce her at will, he could kill her if she so much as presumed to drink wine. By virtue of her supremacy five hundred and twenty years passed before a divorce occurred.[1]

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[1] Leg. XII Tabularum, Tab. quinta. "Veteres voluerunt fœminas etiam perfectæ ætatis, propter animi lævitatem, in tutela esse. Itaque, si quis filio filiæve testamento tutorem dederit, et ambo ad pubertatem pervenerint, filius quidem desinit habere tutorem, filia vero nihilominus in tutela permanet."

The supremacy was otherwise facilitated. The atrium, unlike the gynæceum, was not a remote and inaccessible apartment, it was the living-room, the sanctuary of the household gods, a common hall to which friends were admitted, visitors came, and where the matron presided. From the moment when, in accordance with the ceremonies of marriage, her hair—in memory of the Sabines—parted by a javelin's point, an iron ring—symbol of eternity—on her fourth finger, the wedding bread eaten, her purchase money paid, and she, lifted over the threshold of the atrium, uttered the sacramental words—Ubi tu Caïus, ibi ego Caïa—from that moment, legally *in manum viri*, actually she became mistress of whatever her husband possessed, she became his associate, his partner, sharing with him the administration of the patrimony, governing the household, the slaves, Caïus himself.

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[1] Valerius Maximus, II., i. Pliny, XIV., 13.

Said Cato: "Everywhere else women are ruled by men, but we who rule all men, are ruled by women." They had done so from the first. The treatment of the Sabines was clearly violent in addition to being mythical. But, even in legend, these young women were not deserted as were the Ariadnes and Medeas of Greece. They became Roman matrons, as such circled with respect. Later, Egeria instituted with symbolic nymphs a veritable worship of women. Thereafter feminine prerogatives developed from the theory and practice of marriage itself. In theory, marriage was an association for the pursuit of things human and divine.[1] In practice, it was the fusion of two lives—a fusion manifestly incomplete if all were not held in common. Community of goods means equality. From equality to superiority there is but a step. The matron took it. She became supreme as already she was patrician.

Between patrician and plebeian there was an abyss too wide for marriage to bridge. Such a union would have been regarded as abnormal. The plebeian did not at first dare to conceive of such a thing. When later he protested against his helotry it was in silence. He but vacated the city where the earth threatened to open beneath him and where his lost gods brooded inimical still. Ultimately, protests persisting, the patricians consented that these nobodies should be somebodies, provided at least they were men. Already Roman by birth, they became Roman by law.

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[1] "Juris humani et divini communicatio."—Modestin.

Whether man or woman, it was a high privilege to be that. The woman who was not, the manumitted slave, the foreigner within the walls, the code disdained to consider. Statutes against shames took no account of her. Beyond the pale even of ethics, the attitude to her of others concerned but herself.

But about the Roman woman were thrown Lycurgian laws. A forfeiture of her honor was a disgrace to the State. Her people killed her—*Cognati necanto uti volent*—as they liked. On the morrow there was nothing that told of the tragedy save the absence of a woman seen no more. If she were seen, if father or husband neglected his duty, public indictment ensued with death or exile for result. From the indictment and its penalties appeal could be had. From the edile could be obtained the *Licentia stupri*, the right to the antique livery of shame. But thereafter the purple no longer bordered the robe of the ex-patrician. She could no longer be driven in chariots or be borne in litters by slaves; the fillet, taken from her, was replaced by a yellow wig; a harlot then, she was civilly dead.[1]

Tacitus has said that under Tiberius a special law had to be enacted to prevent women of rank from such descent. During the austerer days of the republic the derogation was unknown. The Greek ideal of woman which the hetaira exemplified was beauty. Honor, which was the Roman ideal, the matron achieved.

To the matrons reverently Rome bowed. The purple border on their mantle compelled respect. The modesty of their eyes and ears was protected by grave laws. In days of danger the senate asked their aid. The gods could have no purer incense than their prayers. There was no homage greater than their esteem. Such a word as dignity was too colorless to be employed regarding them, it was the term majesty that was used. The vestal was but a more perfect type of these women on whose tomb *univiræ*—the wife of one man—was alone inscribed.

The honor of the Roman matron was a national affair, the honor of a Roman girl a public concern. Because of the one, royalty was abolished. Because of the other, the decemvirs fell. In neither case was there revolution. On the contrary. In the first instance, that of Lucretia, it was the insurrection of Tarquin against the inviolability of virtue. In the second, that of Virginia, it was the insurrection of Appius Claudius against the inviolability of love, dual insurrections, probably mythical, which Rome, with legendary fury, suppressed, and which, whether historic or imaginary, was typical of the energetic character that made her what she was, proud, despotic, sovereign of the world.

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[1] Leg. XII. Tabularum. Valerius Maximus, VI., i. Livy, X., 31; XXV., 2. Tacitus: Annal., II., 85. Ulpianus: de Ritu Nuptiarum.

"The empire that Rome won," St. Augustin, with agreeable ingenuousness, remarked, "God gave her in order that, though pagan and consequently unrewardable hereafter, her virtues should not remain unrecognized below." Nor were they, and that, too, despite the fact that they omitted to endure, except, as Cicero said, in books; "in old books," he added, "which no one reads any more." But in the interim three things had occurred. Greece, wounded to the death, had flooded Rome with the hemorrhages of her expiring art. Asia had undyked the sea of her corruption. Both had cascaded their riches. Rome hitherto had been poor, she had been puritan. Hers had been the peasant's hard plain life. The costume of the matron, which custom had made stately, the lex Oppia had made severe. This statute, passed at the time of the Carthagenian invasion, was a measure of public utility devised to increase the budget of war. Its abrogation coincided with the fall of Macedon and the return of Æmilius Paulus, bringing with him the sack of seventy cities, the prodigious booty of ravaged Greece, the prelude to that of the East. Behind these eruptions was the contagion of fastidious caprices that demoralized Rome.

Heretofore, innocent of excesses, ignorant of refinements, in antique simplicity, Rome had sat briefly and upright before her frugal fare. Thereafter, on cushioned beds were repasts, long and savorous, eaten to the sound of crotal and of flute. There were after-courses of ballerine and song, the refreshment of perfume, the luxurious tonic of the bath, the red feather that enabled one to eat again, the marvels of Asiatic debauchery, the surprises of Hellenic grace. In the charm of foreign spells former austerities were forgot. Romans who had not been initiated in them abroad had the returning victors for tutors at home.

Sylla was particularly instructive. Carthagenian in ferocity, Babylonian in lubricity, Hamilcar and Belshazzar in one, the ugliest and most formidable Roman of the lot, his life, which an ulcer ravaged, was a succession of massacres, orgies, and crimes. Married one after another to three women of wealth, who to him were but stepping stones to fortune, on a day when he was preparing to give one of those festivals, the splendor and the art of which he had learned from Mithridates, his third wife fell ill. Death discourages Fortune. Sylla sent her a bill of divorce and ordered her to be taken from the house, which was done, just in time, she was dying. Sylla promptly remarried, then married again, and yet again. Meanwhile, he had a daughter and an eye on the promising Pompey. His daughter was married. So too was Pompey. He forced his daughter from her husband, forced Pompey to repudiate his wife, and forced them to marry.

Sylla had brought with him from the East its curious cups in which blood and passion mingled, and spilled them in the open streets. Crassus outdid him in magnificence, and Lucullus eclipsed them both. Asia had yielded to these men the fortune of her people, the honor of her children, the treasure of her temples, the secrets of their sin. The Orientalisms which they imported, their deluge of coin, their art of marrying cruelty to pleasure, set Rome mad.

Among the maddest was Catiline. That tiger, in whose vestibule were engraved the laws of facile love, affiliated women of rank, others of none, soldiers and slaves, in his convulsive cause. Shortly, throughout the Latin territory, a mysterious sound was heard. It was like the clash of arms afar. The augurs, interrogated, announced that the form of the State was about to change. The noise was the crackling of the republic.[1]

Before it fell came Cæsar. Sylla told him to repudiate his wife as Pompey had. Cæsar declined to be commanded. The house of Julia, to which he belonged, descended, he declared, from Venus. Venus Pandemos, perhaps. But the ancestry was typical. Cinna drafted a law giving him the right to marry as often as he chose. After the episodes in Gaul, when he entered Rome, his legions warned the citizens to have an eye to their wives. Meanwhile, he had repudiated Pompeia, his wife, not to please Sylla but himself, or rather because Publius Claudius, a young gallant, had been discovered disguised as a woman assisting at the mysteries of the Bona Dea, held on this occasion in Cæsar's house. To these ceremonies men were not admitted. The affair made a great scandal. Pompeia was suspected of having helped Publius to be present. The suspicion was probably unfounded. But Cæsar held that his wife should be above suspicion. He divorced her in consequence and married Calpurnia, not for love but for place. Her father was consul. Cæsar wanted his aid and got it. Then, after creating a solitude and calling it peace, after turning over two million people into so many dead flies, after giving geography such a twist that today whoso says Cæsar says history—after these pauses in the ascending scale of his unequalled life, at the age of fifty, bald, tired, and very pale, there was brought to him at Alexandria a bundle, from which, when opened, there emerged a little wonder called Cleopatra, but who was Isis unveiled.[1]

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[1] Cicero: de Arusp. Quod in agro Latiniensi auditus est strepitus cum fremitu. *Ibid:* Providete ne reipublica status commutetur.

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[1] Michelet: Histoire Romaine. Saltus: Imperial Purple.

VIII

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

In Greece beauty was the secret of life. In Egypt it was the secret of death. The sphinxes that crouched in the avenues, the caryatides at the palace doors, the gods on their pedestals, had an expression enigmatic but identical. It was as though some of them listened, while others repeated the story of the soul's career. In the chambers of the tombs the echo of the story descended. The dead were dreaming, and draining it. Saturated with aromatics, wound about with spirals of thin bands, they were dressed as for nuptials. On their faces was the same beatitude that the statues displayed.

Isis typified that beatitude. The goddess, in whose mysteries were taught both the immortality of the soul and the secret of its migrations, was one of Ishtar's many avatars, the only one whose attributes accorded even remotely with the divine. Egypt adored her. There were other gods. There was Osiris, the father; Horus, the son, who with Isis formed the trinity which India and Persia both possessed, and which

Byzance afterward perpetuated. There were other gods also, a hierarchy of great idle divinities with, beneath them, cohorts of inferior fiends. But the great light was Isis. Goddess of life and goddess of death, she had for sceptre a lotos and for crown a cormorant; the lotos because it is emblematic of love, and the cormorant because, however replete, it says never Enough.

Isis was the consort of Osiris. She was also his sister. It was customary for the queens of Egypt to call themselves after her, and, like her, to marry a brother. Cleopatra followed the usual custom. In other ways she must have resembled her. She was beautiful, but not remarkably so. The Egyptian women generally were good-looking. The Asiatics admired them very much. They were preferred to the Chinese, whose eyes oblique and half-closed perturbed sages, demons even, with whom, Michelet has suggested, they were perhaps akin. Cleopatra lacked that insidiousness. Semi-Greek, a daughter of the Ptolomies, she had the charm of the Hellenic hetaira. To aptitudes natural and very great, she added a varied assortment of accomplishments. It is said that she could talk to any one in any tongue. That is probably an exaggeration. But, though a queen, she was ambitious; though a girl, she was lettered; succinctly, she was masterful, a match for any man except Cæsar.

Cleopatra must have been very heady. Cæsar knew how to keep his head. He could not have done what he did, had he not known. Dissolute, as all men of that epoch had become, he differed from all of them in his epicureanism. Like Epicurus, he was strictly temperate. He supped on dry bread. Cato said that he was the first sober man that had tried to overthrow the republic. But, then, he had been to school, to the best of schools, which the world is. His studies *in anima vili* had taught him many things, among them, how to win and not be won. Cleopatra might almost have been his granddaughter. But he was Cæsar. His eyes blazed with genius. Besides, he was the most alluring of men. Tall, slender, not handsome but superb—so superb that Cicero mistook him for a fop from whom the republic had nothing to fear—at seventeen he had fascinated pirates. Ever since he had fascinated queens. In the long list, Cleopatra was but another to this man whom the depths of Hither Asia, the mysteries that lay beyond, the diadems of Cyrus and Alexander, the Vistula and the Baltic claimed. There were his ambitions. They were immense. So were also Cleopatra's. What he wanted, she wanted for him, and for herself as well. She wanted him sovereign of the world and herself its empress.

These views, in so far as they concerned her, did not interest him very greatly. His lack of interest he was, however, too well bred to display. He solidified her throne, which at the time was not stable, left her a son for souvenir, went away, forgot her, remembered her, invited her to Rome, where, presumably with Calpurnia's permission, he put her up at his house, and again forgot her. He was becoming divine, what is superior, immortal. Even when dead, his name, adopted by the emperors of Rome, survived in Czars and Kaisers. His power too, coextensive with Rome, persisted. Severed as it was like his heart when he fell, the booty was divided between Octavius, Lepidus, and Marc Antony.

Their triumvirate—duumvirate rather, Lepidus was nobody—matrimony consolidated. Octavius married a relative of Antony and Antony married Octavius' sister. Then the world was apportioned. Octavius got the Occident, Antony the Orient. Rome became the capital of the one, Alexandria that of the other. At the time Alexandria was Rome's rival and superior. Rome, unsightly still with the atrocities of the Tarquins, had neither art nor commerce. These things were regarded as the occupations of slaves. Alexandria, purely Greek, very fair, opulent, and teeming, was the universal centre of both, of learning too, of debauchery as well—elements which its queen, a viper of the Nile, personified.

Before going there Antony made and unmade a dozen kings. Then, presently, at Tarsus he ordered Cleopatra to come to him. Indolently, his subject obeyed.

Cæsar claimed descent from Venus. Antony's tutelary god was Bacchus, but he claimed descent from Hercules, whom in size and strength he resembled. The strength was not intellectual. He was an understudy of genius, a soldier of limited intelligence, who tried to imitate Cæsar and failed to understand him, a big barbarian boy, by accident god and satrap.

Ant.

At Rome he had seen Cleopatra. Whether she had noticed him is uncertain. But the gilded galley with the purple sails, its silver oars, its canopy of enchantments in which she went to him at Tarsus, has been told and retold, sung and painted.

At the approach of Isis, the Tarsians crowded the shore. Bacchus, deserted on his throne, sent an officer to fetch her to him. Cleopatra insisted that he come to her. Antony, amused at the impertinence, complied. The infinite variety of this woman, that made her a suite of surprises, instantly enthralled him. From that moment he was hers, a lion in leash, led captive into Alexandria, where, initiated by her into the inimitable life, probably into the refinements of the savoir-vivre as well, Bacchus developed into Osiris, while Isis transformed herself anew. She drank with him, fished with him, hunted with him, drilled with him, played tricks on him, and, at night, in slave's dress, romped with him in Rhakotis—a local slum—broke windows, beat the watch, captivating the captive wholly.[1]

Where she had failed with Cæsar she determined to succeed with him, and would have succeeded, had Antony been Cæsar. Octavius was not Cæsar, either. Any man of ability, with the power and resources of which Antony disposed, could have taken the Occident from him and, with Cleopatra, ruled the world.

Together they dreamed of it. It was a beautiful dream, inimitable like their life. Rumors of the one and of the other reached Octavius. He waited, not impatiently and not long. Meanwhile Antony was still the husband of Octavia. But Cleopatra had poisoned her brother-husband. There being, therefore, no lawful reason why she and Antony should not marry, they did. Together, in the splendid palace of the Bruchium —an antique gem of which the historic brilliance still persists—they seated themselves, he as Osiris, she as Isis, on thrones of gold. Their children they declared kings of kings. Armenia, Phœnicia, Media, and Parthea were allotted to them. To Cleopatra's realm Antony added Syria, Lydia, and Cyprus. These distributions constituted just so many dismemberments of the res publica. Antony thought them so entirely within the scope of his prerogatives that he sent an account of the proceedings to the senate. With the account there went to Octavia a bill of divorce. Rome stood by indignant. It was precisely what Octavius wanted.

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[1] Plutarch: Antonii vita. *Cf.* Michelet, *op. cit.*

Octavius had divorced his wife and married a married woman. According to the ethics of the day, he was a model citizen, whereas Antony throning as Osiris with a female Mithridates for consort, was as oblivious of Roman dignity as of conjugal faith. In addition, it was found that he had made a will by which Rome, in the event of capture, was devised as tributary city to Cleopatra. Moreover, a senator, who had visited Antony at the Bruchium, testified that he had seen him upholding the woman's litter like a slave. It was obvious that he was mad, demented by her aphrodisiacs. But it was obvious also that the gods of the East were rising, that Isis with her cormorant, her lotos and her spangled arms, was arrayed against the Roman penates.[1]

War was declared. At Actium the clash occurred. Antony might have won. But before he had had time to lose, Cleopatra, with singular clairvoyance, deserted him. Her reasons for believing that he would be defeated are not clear, but her motive in going is obvious. She wanted to rule the world's ruler, whoever he might be, and she thought by prompt defection to find favor with Octavius.

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[1] Suetonius: Augustus, XVIII. Velleius Paterculus, II., lxxxiii. Vergil: Æneid, VIII. Horace: Epod., 9.

At the sight of her scudding sail Antony lost his senses. Instead of remaining and winning, as he might have, he followed her. Together they reached Alexandria. But there it was no longer the inimitable life that they led, rather that of the inseparables in death, or at least Antony so fancied. Cleopatra intoxicated him with funereal delights while corresponding in secret with Octavius who had written engagingly to her. In the Bruchium the nights were festivals. By day she experimented on slaves with different poisons. Antony believed that she was preparing to die with him. She had no such intention. She was preparing to be rid of him. Then, suddenly, the enemy was at the gates. Antony challenged Octavius to single combat. Octavius sent him word that there were many other ways in which he could end his life. At that the lion roared. Even then he thought he might demolish him. He tried. He went forth to fight. But Cleopatra had other views. The infantry, the cavalry, the flotilla, joined the Roman forces. The viper of the Nile had betrayed him. Bacchus had also. The night had been stirred by the hum of harps and the cries of bacchantes bearing the tutelary god to the Romans.

Antony, staggering back to the palace, was told that Cleopatra had killed herself. She had not, but fearful lest he kill her, she had hidden with her treasure in a temple. Antony, after the Roman fashion, kept always with him a slave who should kill him when his hour was come. The slave's name, Plutarch said, was Eros. Antony called him. Eros raised a sword, but instead of striking his master, struck himself. Antony reddened and imitated him. Another slave then told him that Cleopatra still lived. He had himself taken to where she was, and died while attempting to console this woman who was preparing for the consolations of Octavius.

It is said that she received the conqueror magnificently. But his engaging letters had been *ruses de guerre*. They had triumphed. The new Cæsar wanted to triumph still further. He wanted Cleopatra, a chain about her neck, dragged after his chariot through Rome. He wanted in that abjection to triumph over the entire East. Instead of yielding to her, as she had expected, he threatened to kill her children if she eluded him by killing herself. The threat was horrible. But more horrible still was the thought of the infamy to be.

Shortly, on a bed of gold, dressed as for nuptials, she was found dead among her expiring women, one of whom even then was putting back on her head her diadem which had fallen. At last the cormorant had cried "Enough!"

Said Horace: "Nunc est bibendum."

IX

THE IMPERIAL ORGY

DEATH, in taking Cleopatra, closed the doors of the temple Janus. After centuries of turmoil, there was peace. The reign of the Cæsars had begun. Octavius became Augustus, the rest of the litter divine. The triumvirs of war were succeeded by the triumvirs of love. These were the poets.

Catullus had gone with the republic. In verse he might have been primus. He was too negligent. His microscopic masterpieces form but a brief bundle of pastels. The face repeated there is Lesbia's. He saw her first lounging in a litter that slaves carried along the Sacred Way. Immediately he was in love with her. The love was returned. In the delight of it the poet was born. His first verses were to her, so also were his last. But Lesbia wearied of song and kisses, at least of his. She eloped with his nearest friend. In the *Somnambula* the tenor sings *O perchè non posso odiarte*—Why can I not hate thee? The song is but a variant on that of Catullus. Odi et amo, I love and hate you, he called after her. But, if she heard, she heeded as little as Beatrice did when Dante cursed the day he saw her first. Dante ceased to upbraid, but did not cease to love. He was but following the example of Catullus, with this difference: Beatrice went to heaven, Lesbia to hell, to an earthly hell, the worst of any, to a horrible inn on the Tiber where sailors brawled. She descended to that, fell there, rather. Catullus still loved her.

At the sight of Cynthia another poet was born. What Lesbia pulchra had been to Catullus, Cynthia pulchrior became to Propertius. He swore that she should be his sole muse, and kept his word, in so far as verse was concerned. Otherwise, he was less constant. It is doubtful if she deserved more, or as much. Never did a girl succeed better in tormenting a lover, never was there a lover so poetically wretched as he. In final fury he flung at her farewells that were maledictions, only to be recaptured, beaten even, subjugated anew. She made him love her. When she died, her death nearly killed him. Nearly, but not quite. He survived, and, first among poets, intercepted the possibility of reunion there where all things broken are made complete, and found again things vanished—*Lethum non omnia finit.*

Horace resembled him very remotely. A little fat man—brevis atque obesus, Suetonius said—he waddled and wallowed in the excesses of the day, telling, in culpable iambics, of fair faces, facile amours, easy epicureanism, rose-crowned locks, yet telling of them—and of other matters less admissible—on a lyre with wonderful chords. At the conclusion of the third book of the *Odes*, he declared that he had completed a monument which the succession of centuries without number could not destroy. "I shall not die," he added. He was right. Because of that flame of fair faces, lovers turn to him still. Because of his iambics, he has a niche in the hearts of the polite. Versatile in love and in verse, his inconstancy and his art are nowhere better displayed than in the incomparable *Donec gratus eram tibi*, which Ponsard rewrote:

HORACE.

Tant que tu m'as aimé, que nul autre plus digne
N'entourait de ses bras ton col blanc comme un cygne,
J'ai vécu plus heureux que Xerxès le grand roi.

LYDIE.

Tant que tu n'as aimé personne plus que moi,
Quand Chloé n'était pas préférée à Lydie,
J'ai vécu plus illustre et plus fière qu'Ilie.

HORACE.

J'appartiens maintenant à la blonde Chloé,
Qui plait par sa voix douce et son luth enjoué.
Je suis prêt à mourir pour prolonger sa vie.

LYDIE.

Calais maintenant tient mon âme asservie,
Nous brûlons tous les deux de mutuels amours,
Et je mourrais deux fois pour prolonger ses jours.

HORACE.

Mais quoi! Si j'ai regret de ma première chaine?
Si Vénus de retour sous son joug me ramène?
Si je refuse à l'autre, et te rends mon amour?

LYDIE.

Encor que Calais soit beau comme le jour,
Et toi plus inconstant que la feuille inconstante,
Avec toi je vivrais et je mourrais contente.

Horace was the poet of ease, Catullus of love, Propertius of passion, Tibullus of sentiment. Ovid was the poet of pleasure. A man of means, of fashion, of the world, what to-day would be called a gentleman, he might have been laureate of the Empire. Corinna interfered. Corinna was his figurative muse. Whether she were one or many is uncertain, but nominally at least it was for her that he wrote the suite of feverish fancies entitled the "Art of Love" and which were better entitled the "Art of not Loving at all." Subsequently, he planned a great Homeric epic. But, if Corinna inspired masterpieces, she gave him no time to complete them. She wanted her poet to herself. She refused to share him even with the gods. It is supposed that Corinna was Julia, daughter of Augustus. Because of her eyes, more exactly because of her father's, Ovid was banished among barbarian brutes. It was rather a frightful penalty for participating in the indiscretions of a woman who had always been the reverse of discreet. Corinna, as described by Ovid, was a monster of perversity. Julia, as described by Tacitus, yielded to her nothing in that respect.

The epoch itself was strange, curiously fecund in curious things that became more curious still. Rome then, thoroughly Hellenized, had become very fair. There were green terraces and porphyry porticoes that leaned to a river on which red galleys passed, there were bronze doors and garden roofs, glancing villas and temples more brilliant still. There were spacious streets, a Forum curtained with silk, the glint and evocations of triumphal war. There were theatres in which a multitude could jeer at an emperor, and arenas in which an emperor could watch a multitude die. On the stage, there were tragedies, pantomime, farce. There were races in the circus and, in the sacred groves, girls with the Orient in their eyes and slim waists that swayed to the crotals. Into the arenas patricians descended, in the amphitheatre were criminals from Gaul, in the Forum, philosophers from Greece. For Rome's entertainment the mountains sent lions; the deserts giraffes; there were boas from the jungles, bulls from the plains, hippopotami from the rushes of the Nile, and, above them, beasts greater than they—the Cæsars.

There had been the first, memory of whose grandiose figure lingered still. Rome recalled the unforgettable, and recalled, too, his face which incessant debauches had blanched. After him had come Augustus, a pigmy by comparison, yet otherwise more depraved. He gone, there was the spectacle of Tiberius devising infamies so monstrous that to describe them new words were coined. That being insufficient, there followed Caligula, without whom Nero, Claud, Domitian, Commodus, Caracalla, and Heliogabalus could never have been. It was he who gave them both inspiration and incentive. It was he who built the Cloacus Maximus in which all Rome rolled.

Augustus had done a little digging for it himself, but hypocritically as he did everything, devising ethical laws as a cloak for turpitudes of his own. Mecænas, his minister and lackey, divorced and remarried twenty times. Augustus repudiated his own marriages, those of his kin as well. Suetonius said of Caligula that it was uncertain which were viler, the unions he contracted, their brevity, or their cause. With such examples, it was inevitable that commoner people united but to part, and that, insensibly, the law annulled as a caprice a clause that defined marriage as the inseparable life.[1]

Under the Cæsars marriage became a temporary arrangement, abandoned and re-established as often as one liked. Seneca said that women of rank counted their years by their husbands. Juvenal said that it was in that fashion that they counted their days. Tertullian added that divorce was the result of marriage. Divorce, however, was not obligatory. Matrimony was. According to the Lex Pappea Poppœa, whoso at twenty-five was not married, whoso, divorced or widowed, did not remarry, whoso, though married, was childless, *ipso facto* became a public enemy, incapable of inheriting or of serving the State. To this law—an Augustan hypocrisy—only a technical attention was paid. Men married just enough to gain a position or inherit a legacy. The next day they got a divorce. At the moment of need a child was adopted. The moment passed the brat was disowned. As with men so with women. The univira became the many-husbanded wife, occasionally a matron with no husband at all, one who, to escape the consequences of the lex Pappea Poppœa, hired a man to loan her his name, and who, with an establishment of her own, was free to do as she liked, to imitate men at their worst, to fight like them and with them for power, to dabble in the bloody dramas of State, to climb on the throne and kill there or be killed; perhaps, less ambitiously, whipping her slaves, summoning the headsman to them, quieting her nerves with drink, appearing on the stage, in the arena even, contending as a gladiator there, and remaining a patrician meanwhile.

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[1] Cod. 2, de inutil. Stipulat.

In those days a sin was a prayer, and a prayer, Perseus said, was an invocation at which a meretrix would blush to hear pronounced aloud. Religion sanctioned anything. The primal gods, supplemented with the lords and queens of other skies, had made Rome an abridgment of every superstition, the temple of every crime. Asiatic monsters, which Hellenic poetry had deodorized, landed there straight from the Orient, their native hideousness unchanged. It was only the graceful Greek myths that Rome transformed. Eros, who in Arcady seemed atiptoe, so delicately did he tread upon the tender places of the soul, acquired, behind the mask of Cupid, a maliciousness that was simian. Aphrodite, whose eyes had been lifted to the north and south, and who in Attica was draped with light, obtained as Venus the leer of the Lampsacene. Long since from Syria Astarte had arrived, as already, torn by Cilician pirates from Persia, Mithra had come, while, from Egypt, had strayed Apis from whose mouth two phalluses issued horizontally.

These were Rome's gods, the divinities about whom men and maidens assembled, and to whom pledges were made. There were others, so many, in such hordes had they come, that Petronius said they outnumbered the population. The lettered believed in them no more than we do. But, like the Athenians, they lived among a people that did. Moreover, the lettered were few. Rome, brutal at heart, sanguinary and voluptuous, fought, she did not read. She could applaud, but not create. Her literature, like her gods, her art, her corruption, had come from afar. Her own breasts were sterile. When she gave birth, it was to a litter of monsters, by accident to a genius, again to a poet, to Cæsar and to Lucretius, the only men of letters ever born within her walls.

Meanwhile, though the Pantheon was obviously but a lupanar, the people clung piously to creeds that justified every disorder, tenaciously to gods that sanctified every vice, and fervently to Cæsars that incarnated them all.

The Cæsars were religion in a concrete form. Long before, Ennius, the Homer of Latium, had announced that the gods were but great men. The Cæsars accepted that view with amplifications. They became greater than any that had been. Save Death, who, in days that precede the fall of empires, is the one divinity whom all fear and in whom all believe, they alone were august. In the absence of the aromas of tradition, they had something superior. The Olympians inspired awe, the Cæsars fright. Death was their servant. They ordered. Death obeyed. In the obedience was apotheosis. In the apotheosis was the delirium that madmen know. At their feet, Rome, mad as they, built them temples, raised them shrines, created for them hierophants and flamens, all the phantasmagoria of the megalomaniac Alexander, and, with it, a worship which they accepted as their due perhaps, but in which their reason fled. That of Cæsar withstood it. Insanity began with Antony, who called himself Osiris. The brain of Tiberius, very steady at first, was insufficiently strong to withstand the nectar fumes. The latter intoxicated Caligula so sheerly that he invited the moon to share his couch. Thereafter, the palace of the Cæsars became a vast court in which the wives and daughters of the nobility assisted at perversions which a Ministry of Pleasure devised, and where Rome abandoned whatever she had held holy, the innocence of girlhood, patrician pride, everything, shame included.

In post-pagan convulsions there was much that was very vile. But there is one aspect of evil which subsequent barbarism reproved, and in which Rome delighted. It was the symbolized shapes of sin, open and public, for which in modern speech there is no name, and which were then omnipresent, sung in verse, exhibited on the stage, paraded in the streets, put on the amulets that girls and matrons wore, put in the nursery, consecrated by custom, art, religion, and since recovered from disinterred Pompeii. "The mouth," said Quintillian, "does not dare describe what the eyes behold." Rome that hâd made *orbis* and *urbs* synonymous was being conquered by the turpitudes of the quelled.

"I have told of the Prince," said Suetonius, "I will tell now of the Beast." It was his privilege. He wrote in Latin. In English it is not possible. Gautier declared that the inexpressible does not exist. Even his pen might have balked, had he tried it on the imperial orgy. The ulcer that ravaged Sylla, gangrened a throne, and decomposed a world. Less violent under Tiberius than under Caligula, under Nero the fever rose to the brain and added delirium to it. In reading accounts of the epoch you feel as though you were assisting at the spectacle of a gigantic asylum, from which the keepers are gone, and of which the inmates are omnipotent. But, in spite of the virulence of the virus, the athletic constitution of the empire, joined to its native element of might, resisted the disease so potently that one must assume that there was there a vitality which no other people had had, a hardiness that enabled Rome to survive excesses in which Nineveh and Babylon fainted. From the disease itself Rome might have recovered. It was the delirium that brought her down. That delirium, mounting always, increased under Commodus, heightened under Caracalla, and reached its crisis in Heliogabalus. Thereafter for a while it waned only to flame again under Diocletian. The virus remained. To extirpate it the earth had to produce new races. Already they were on their way.

Meanwhile, though there were reigns when, in the words of Tacitus, virtue was a sentence of death, the emperors were not always insane. Vespasian was a soldier, Hadrian a scholar, Pius Antoninus a philosopher, and Marcus Aurelius a sage. Rome was not wholly pandemoniac. There is goodness everywhere, even in evil. There was goodness even in Rome. Stoicism, a code of the highest morality, had been adopted by the polite. Cicero, in expounding it, had stated that no one could be a philosopher who has not learned that vice should be avoided, however concealable it may be. Aristotle had praised virtue because of its extreme utility. Seneca said that vices were maladies, among which Zeno catalogued love, as Plato did crime. To him, vice stood to virtue as disease does to health. All guilt, he said, is ignorance.

Expressions such as these appealed to a class relatively small, but highly lettered, whom the intense realism of the amphitheatre, the suggestive postures of the pantomimes, and the Orientalism of the orgy shocked. There are now honest men everywhere, even in prison. Even in Rome there were honest men then. Moreover, paganism at its worst, always tolerant, was often poetic. Then, too, life in the imperial epoch, while less fair than in the age of Pericles, was so splendidly brilliant that it exhausted possible glamour for a thousand years to come. Dazzling in violence, its coruscations blinded the barbarians so thoroughly that thereafter there was but night.

X

FINIS AMORIS

THE first barbarian that invaded Rome was a Jew. There was then there a small colony of Hebrews. Porters, pedlers, rag-pickers, valets-de-place, they were the descendants mainly of former prisoners of war. The Jew had a message for them. It was very significant. But it conflicted so entirely with orthodox views that there were few whom it did not annoy. A disturbance ensued. The ghetto was raided. A complaint for inciting disorder was lodged against a certain Christos, of whom nothing was known, and who had eluded arrest.

Rome, through her relations with Syria, was probably the first Occidental city in which the name was pronounced. Though the message behind it annoyed many, others accepted it at once. These latter, the former denounced. Some suppression ensued. But it had no religious significance. The purport of the message and the attitude of those who accepted it was seditious. Both denied the divinity of the Cæsars. That was treason. In addition, they announced the approaching end of the world. That was a slur on the optimism of State. A law was passed—*Non licet esse Christianos.* None the less, they multiplied. The message that had been brought to Rome was repeated throughout the Roman world. It crossed the frontiers. It reached races of whom Rome had never heard. They came and peered at her. Over the context of the message they drank hydromel to her fall.

The message, initially significant, dynamic at birth, developed under multiplying hands into a force so disruptive that it shook the gods from the skies, buried them beneath their ruined temples, and in derision tossed after them their rites for shroud. In the convulsions a page of history turned. The great book of paganism closed. Another opened. In it was a new ideal of love.

Realization was not immediate. Entirely uncontemplated and equally unforeseen, the ideal was an after-growth, a blossom among other ruins, a flower that developed subtly with the Rosa mystica from higher shrines.

Meanwhile, the message persisted. Titularly an evangel, it meant good news. The Christ had said to his disciples: "As ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of God is at hand—for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come."

"All these things shall come upon this generation," were his subsequent and explicit words. After the incident in the wilderness he declared: "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand." Later he asserted: "Verily I say unto you that there be some of them that stand by which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God come with power."[1]

In repeating these tidings, the evangelists lived in a state of constant expectation. Their watchword was "Maran atha"—the Lord cometh. In fancy they saw themselves in immediate Edens, seated on immutable thrones.

The corner-stone of the early Church was based on that idea. When, later, it was recognized as a misconception, the coming of the Kingdom of God was interpreted as the establishment of the Christian creed.

Jesus had no intention of founding a new religion. He came to prepare men not for life, but for death. He believed that the world was to end. Had he not so believed, his condemnation of labor, his prohibition against wealth, his injunction to forsake all things for his sake, his praise of celibacy, his disregard of family ties, and his abasement of marriage would be without meaning. Observance of his orders he regarded as a necessary preparation for an event then assumed to be near. It was exacted as a means of grace.

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[1] Matthew xvi. 21.

On the other hand, it may be that there was an esoteric doctrine which only the more spiritual among the disciples received. The significant threat, "In this life ye shall have tribulation," contains a distinct suggestion of other views. Possibly they concerned less the termination of the world than the termination of life. Life extinct, obviously there must ensue that peace which passeth all understanding, the Pratscha-Paramita, or beyond all knowledge, which long before had been taught by the Buddha, in whose precepts it is not improbable that Jesus was versed.

To-day there are four gospels. Originally there were fifty. In some of them succincter views may have been expressed. The possibility, surviving texts support. These texts are provided by Clement of Alexandria. They are quoted by him from the Gospel according to the Egyptians, an Evangel that existed in the latter half of the second century and which was then regarded as canonical. In one of them, Jesus said: "I am come to destroy the work of woman, which is generation and death." In another, being asked how long life shall continue, he answered: "So long as women bear children." [1]

These passages seem conclusive. Even otherwise, the designed effect of the exoteric doctrine was identical. It eliminated love and condemned the sex. In the latter respect, Paul was particularly severe. In violent words he humiliated woman. He enjoined on her silence and submission. He reminded her that man was created in the image of God, while she was but created for him. He declared that he who giveth her in marriage doth well, but he that giveth her not doth better.[1]

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[1] Stromata, III., 6–9.

Theoretically, as well as canonically, marriage thereafter was regarded as unholy. The only union in which it was held that grace could possibly be, was one that in its perfect immaculacy was a negation of marriage itself. St. Sebastian enjoined any other form. The injunction was subsequently ratified. It was ecclesiastically adjudged that whoso declared marriage preferable to celibacy be accursed.[2] St. Augustin, more leniently, permitted marriage, on condition, however, that the married in no circumstance overlooked the object of their union, which object was the creation of children, *not to love them*, he added, but to increase the number of the servants of the Lord.[3]

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[1] Timothy ii. 11–12. 1 Corinthians ix. 9. 1 Corinthians vii. 38.

[2] Concil. Trident., sess. XXIV., canon 10.

[3] Augustin: De bono conjugio.

St. Augustin was considerate. But Jesus had been indulgent. In the plentitudes of his charity there was both commiseration and forgiveness. Throughout his entire ministry he wrote but once. It was on an occasion when a woman was brought before him. Her accusers were impatient. Jesus bent forward and with a finger wrote on the ground. The letters were illegible. But the symbol of obliteration was in the dust which the wind would disperse. The charge was impatiently repeated. Jesus straightened himself. With the weary comprehension of one to whom hearts are as books, he looked at them. "Whoever is without sin among you, may cast the first stone."

The sins of Mary Magdalen were many. He forgave them, for she had loved much. His indulgence was real and it was infinite. Yet occasionally his severity was as great. At the marriage of Cana he said to his mother: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" In the house of the chief of the Pharisees he more emphatically announced: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Elsewhere he advocated celibacy enforced with the knife. John, his favorite disciple, beheld those who had practised it standing among the redeemed.[1]

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[1] Matthew xix. 12. Revelations xiv.

That vision peopled the deserts with hermits. It filled the bastilles of God, the convents and monasteries of pre-mediæval days. The theory of it was adopted by kings on their thrones. Lovers in their betrothals engaged to observe it reciprocally. Husbands and wives separated that they might live more purely apart.

The theory, contrary to the spirit of paganism, was contrary also to that of the Mosaic law. The necessity of marriage was one of the six hundred and thirteen Hebraic precepts. The man who omitted to provide himself with heirs became a homicide. In the Greek republics celibacy was penalized. In Rome, during the republic, bachelors were taxed. Under the empire they could neither inherit nor serve the State. But the law was evaded. Even had it not been, the people of Rome, destroyed by war or as surely by pleasure, little by little was disappearing. Slaves could not replace citizens. The affranchised could be put in the army, even in the senate, as they were, but that did not change their servility, and it was precisely that servility which encouraged imperial aberrations and welcomed those which Christianity brought.

The continence which the Church inculcated was not otherwise new. The Persians had imposed it on girls consecrated to the worship of the Sun. It was observed by the priests of Osiris.

It was the cardinal virtue of the Pythagoreans. It was exacted of Hellenic hierophants. Gaul had her druidesses and Rome her vestals. Celibacy existed, therefore, before Christianity did. But it was exceptional in addition to being not very rigorously enforced. Vesta was a mother. All the vestals that faltered were not buried alive. There was gossip, though it be but legend, of the druidesses, of the muses as well. Immaculacy was the ideal condition of the ideal gods. Zeus materially engendered material divinities that presided over forces and forms. But, without concurrence, there issued armed and adult from his brain the wise and immaculate Pallas.

Like her and the muses, genius was assumed to be ascetic also. Socrates thought otherwise. His punishment was Xantippe, and not a line to his credit. A married Homer is an anomaly which imagination cannot comfortably conjure. A married Plato is another. Philosophers and poets generally were single. Lucretius, Vergil, and the triumvirs of love were unmarried. In the epoch in which they appeared Rome was aristocratically indisposed to matrimony. To its pomps there was a dislike so pronounced that Augustus introduced coercive laws. Hypocrite though he were, he foresaw the dangers otherwise resulting. It was these that asceticism evoked.

The better part of the tenets of the early Church

—sobriety, stoicism, the theory of future reward and punishment, pagan philosophy professed. Adherents could, therefore, have been readily recruited. But the doctrine of asceticism and, with it, the abnegation of whatever Rome loved, angered, creating first calumny, then persecution.

Infanticide at the time was very common. To accuse the Christians of it would have meant nothing. They were charged instead with eating the children that they killed. That being insufficient they were further charged with the united abominations of Œdipus and Thyestes.[1]

Thereafter, if the Tiber mounted or the Nile did not, if it rained too heavily or not enough, were there famine, earthquakes, pests, the fault was theirs. Then, through the streets, a cry resounded, *Christianos ad leonem!*—to the arena with them. At any consular delay the mob had its torches and tortures. Persecution augumented devotion. "Fast," said Tertullian. "Fasting prepares for martyrdom. But do not marry, do not bear children. You would only leave them to the executioner. Garment yourselves simply, the robes the angels bring are robes of death."

The robes did not always come, the executioner did not, either. The Kingdom of God delayed. The world persisted. So also did asceticism. Clement and Hermas unite in testifying that the immaculacy of the single never varied during an epoch when even that of the vestals did, and that the love of the married was the more tender because of the immaterial relations observed.[1] Grégoire de Tours cited subsequently an instance in which a bride stipulated for a union of this kind. Her husband agreed. Many years later she died. Her husband, while preparing her for the grave, openly and solemnly declared that he restored her to God as immaculate as she came. "At which," the historian added, "the dead woman smiled and said, 'Why do you tell what no one asked you.'"

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[1] St. Justin: Apolog., I., 14, 35.

The subtlety of the question pleased the Church. The Church liked to compare the Christian to an athlete struggling in silence with the world, the flesh, and the devil. It liked to regard him as one whose life was a continual exercise in purification. It liked to represent his celibacy as an imitation of the angels. At that period Christianity took things literally and narrowly. Paul had spoken eloquently on the dignity of marriage. He authorized and honored it. He permitted and even counselled second marriages. But his pre-eminent praise of asceticism was alone considered.

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[1] Clement: Strom., III., 6. Hermas: Similit., IX., ii. "Nobiscum dormi non ut maritus, sed ut frater." Hermas: Visio, I., 2. "Conjugi tuæ quæ futura est (incipit esse) soror tua."

Celibacy became the ideal of the early Christians who necessarily avoided the Forum and whatever else was usual and Roman. It is not, therefore, very surprising that they should have been defined as enemies of gods, emperors, laws, customs, nature itself, or, more briefly, as barbarians.

Yet there were others. At the north and at the west they prowled, nourished in hatred of Rome, in wonder, too, of the effeminate and splendid city with its litters of gold, its baths of perfume, its inhabitants dressed in gauze, and its sway from the Indus to Britannia. From the day when a mass of them stumbled on Marius to the hour when Alaric laughed from beneath the walls his derision at imperial might, always they had wondered and hated.

In the slaking of the hate Christianity perhaps unintentionally assisted. The Master had said, "All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." His believers omitted to do either. When enrolled, they deserted. On the frontiers they refused to fight. The path of the barbarians was easy. In disorganized hordes they battened on Rome and melted away there in excesses. Tacitus and Salvian rather flattered them. They were neither intelligent or noble. They must have lacked even the sense of independence. They pulled civilization down, but they fell with it—into serfdom.

Already from the steppes of Tartary had issued cyclones of Huns. Painted blue, wrapped in cloaks of human skin, it was thought that they were the whelps of demons. Their chief was Attila. The whirlwind that he loosed swept the world like a broom. In the echoes of his passage is the crash of falling cities, the cries of the vanquished, the death rattle of nations, the surge and roar of seas of blood. In the reverberations Attila looms, dragging the desert after him, tossing it like a pall on the face of the earth. "But who are you?" a startled prelate gasped. Said Attila, "I am the Scourge of God."

Satiated at last, overburdened with the booty of the world, he galloped back to his lair where, on his wedding couch, another Judith killed him. In spite of him, in spite of preceding Goths and subsequent Vandals, Rome, unlike her gods that had fled the skies, was immortal. She could fall, but she could not die. But though she survived, antiquity was dead. It departed with the lords of the ghostland.

HISTORIA AMORIS

Part Two

PART II

I

THE CLOISTER AND THE HEART

In the making of the world that was Rome, ages combined. Centuries unrolled in its dissolution. Step by step it had ascended the path of empire, step by step it went down. The descent completed, Rome herself survived. The eternal feminine is not more everlasting than the Eternal City. Yet, in the descent, her power, wrested from a people who had but the infirmities of corruption, by others that had only the instincts of brutes, left but vices and ruins. From these feudalism and serfdom erupted. Humanity became divided into beasts of burden and beasts of prey.

Feudalism was the transmission of authority from an overlord to an underlord, from the latter to a retainer, and thence down to the lowest rung of the social ladder, beneath which was the serf, between whom and his master the one judge was God.

The resulting conditions have no parallel in any epoch of which history has cognizance. Except in Byzance, the glittering seat of Rome's surviving dominion, and in Islâm, the glowing empire further east, nowhere was there light. Europe, pitch-black, became, almost in its entirety, subject to the caprices of a hierarchy of despots who managed to be both stupid and fierce, absolute autocrats, practically kings. To the suzerain they owed homage at court, assistance in war; but in their own baronies, all power, whether military, judiciary, or legislative, centred in them. They had the further prerogative, which they abundantly abused, of maintaining centuries of anarchy and intellectual night. The fief and the sword were the investiture of their power. The donjon—a pillory on one side, a gibbet on the other—was the symbol of their might. The blazon, with its sanguinary and fabulous beasts, was emblematic of themselves. Could wolves form a social order, their model would be that of these brutes, to whom God was but a bigger tyrant. Their personal interest, which alone prevented them from exterminating everybody, was the determining cause of affranchisement when it came, and, when it did, was accompanied by conditions always hard, often grotesque, and usually vile, among which was the *jus primæ noctis* and the affiliated *marchetum*, subsequently termed droit du seigneur, the dual right of poaching on maidenly and marital preserves.[1]

With that, with drink and pillage for relaxations, the chief business of the barons was war. When they descended from their keeps, it was to rob and attack. There was no security, not a road was safe, war was an intermittent fever and existence a panic.

In the constant assault and sack of burgs and keeps, the condition of woman was perilous. Usually she was shut away more securely and remotely than in the gynæceum. If, to the detriment of her lord, she emerged, she might have one of her lips cut off, both perhaps, or, more expeditiously, be murdered. She never knew which beforehand. It was as it pleased him. Penalties of this high-handedness were not sanctioned by law. There was none. It was the right of might. Civilization outwearied had lapsed back into eras in which women were things.

The lapse had ecclesiastical approbation. At the second council of Macon it was debated whether woman should not be regarded as beyond the pale of humanity and as appertaining to a degree intermediary between man and beast. Subsequent councils put her outside of humanity also, but on a plane between angels and man. But in the capitularies generally it was as *Vas infirmius* that she was defined. Yet already Chrysostom, with a better appreciation of the value of words, with a better appreciation of the value of woman as well, had defined her as danger in its most delectable form. Chrysostom means golden mouth. His views are of interest. Those of the mediæval lord are not recorded, and would not be citable, if they were.

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[1] Boetius, Lib. XVII. Quidam dominus quem vidi, primam sponsarum carnalem cognitionem ut suam petebat. Du Cange: *Marchetum.* Marcheto mulieris dicitur virginalis pudicitiæ violatio et delibatio.

From manners such as his and from times such as those, there was but one refuge—the cloister, though there was also the tomb. They were not always dissimilar. In the monasteries, there was a thick vapor of crapulence and bad dreams. They were vestibules of hell. The bishops, frankly barbarian, coarse, gluttonous, and worse, went about armed, pillaging as freely as the barons. Monks less adventurous, but not on that account any better, saw Satan calling gayly at them, "Thou art damned." Yet, however drear their life, it was a surcease from the apoplexy of the epoch. Kings descended from their thrones to join them. To the abbeys and priories came women of rank.

In these latter retreats there was some suavity, but chiefly there was security from predatory incursions, from husbands quite as unwelcome, from the passions and violence of the turbulent world without. But the security was not over-secure. Women that escaped behind the bars, saw those bars shaken by the men from whom they had fled, saw the bars sunder, and themselves torn away. That, though, was exceptional. In the cloister generally there was safety, but there were also regrets, and, with them, a leisure not always very adequately filled. To some, the cloister was but another form of captivity in which they were put not of their own volition, but by way of precaution, to insure a security which may not have been entirely to their wish. Yet, from whatever cause existence in these retreats was induced, very rapidly it became the fashion.

There had been epochs in which women wore garments that were brief, there were others in which their robes were long. It was a question of mode. Then haircloth came in fashion. In Greece, women were nominally free. In Rome, they were unrestrained. In Europe at this period, they were cloistered. It was the proper thing, a distinction that lifted them above the vulgar. Bertheflede, a lady of very exalted position, who, Grégoire de Tours has related, cared much for the pleasures of the table and not at all for the service of God, entered a nunnery for no other reason.

There were other women who, for other causes, did likewise. In particular, there was Radegonde who founded a cloister of her own, one that within high walls had the gardens, porticoes, and baths of a Roman villa, but which in the deluge of worldly sin, was, Thierry says, intended to be an ark. There Radegonde received high ecclesiastics and laymen of position, among others Fortunatus, a poet, young and attractive, whom the abbess, young and attractive herself, welcomed so well that he lingered, supping nightly at the cloister, composing songs in which were strained the honey of Catullus, and, like him, crowned with roses.[1]

But Radegonde was not Lesbia, and Fortunatus, though a poet, confined his licence to verse. Together they collaborated in the first romance of pure sentiment that history records, one from which the abbess passed to sanctity, and the poet to fame. Thereafter the story persisting may have suggested some one of the pedestals that antiquity never learned to sculpture and to which ladies were lifted by their knights.

Meanwhile love had assumed another shape. Radegonde, before becoming an abbess, had been a queen. As a consequence she had prerogatives which other women lacked. It was not every one that could entertain a tarrying min-

[1] Récits des Temps Mérovingiens.

strel. It was not every one that would. The nun generally was emancipated from man as thoroughly at the hetaira had been from marriage. But the latter in renouncing matrimony did not for that reason renounce love and there were many cloistered girls who, in renouncing man, did not renounce love either. One of them dreamed that on a journey to the fountain of living waters, a form appeared that pointed at a brilliant basin, to which, as she stooped, Radegonde approached and put about her a cloak that, she said, was sent by the girl's betrothed.

Radegonde was then dead and a saint. The dream of her, particularly the gift, more especially its provenance, seemed so ineffable that the girl could think of nothing else save only that when at last the betrothed did come, the nuptial chamber should be ready. She begged therefore that there be given her a little narrow cell, a narrow little tomb, to which, the request granted, other nuns led her. At the threshold she kissed each of them, then she entered; the opening was walled and within, with her mystic spouse, the bride of Christ remained.[1]

At Alexandria, something similar had already occurred. There another Hypathia, fair as she, refused Christianity, refused also marriage. God did not appeal to her, man did not either. But a priest succeeded in interesting her in the possibility of obtaining a husband superior to every mortal being on condition only that she prayed to Mary. The girl did pray. During the prayer she fell asleep. Then beautiful beyond all beauty the Lord appeared to whom the Virgin offered the girl. The Christ refused. She was fair but not fair enough. At that she awoke. Immortally lovely and mortally sad she suffered the priest to baptize her. Another prayer followed by another sleep ensued in which she beheld again the Christ who then consenting to take her, put on her finger a ring which she found on awakening.

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[1] Acta Sanctorum.

The legend, which afterward inspired Veronese and Correggio, had a counterpart in that of St. Catherine of Sienna. To her also the Christ gave a ring, yet one which, Della Fonte, her biographer, declared, was visible only to herself. The legend had also a pendant in the story of St. Theresa, a Spanish mystic, who in her trances discovered that the punishment of the damned is an inability to love. In the *Relacion de su vida* the saint expressed herself as follows:

"It seemed to me as though I could see my soul, clearly, like a mirror, and that in the centre of it the Lord came. It seemed to me that in every part of my soul I saw him as I saw him in the mirror and that mirror, I cannot say how, was wholly absorbed by the Lord, indescribably, in a sort of amorous confusion."

The mirror was the imagination, the usual reflector of the beatific. It was that perhaps to which Paul referred when he said that we see through a glass darkly. But it was certainly that which enabled Gerson to catalogue the various degrees of ravishment of which the highest, ecstasy, culminates in union with Christ, where the soul attaining perfection is freed.

Gerson came later but theories similar to his, which neoplatonism had advanced, were common. In that day or more exactly in that night, the silver petals of the lily of purity were plucked so continuously by so many hands, so many were the eyes strained on the mirror, so frequent were the brides of Christ, that the aberration became as disquieting as asceticism. Then through fear that woman might lose herself in dreams of spiritual love and evaporate completely, an effort was attempted which succeeded presently in deflecting her aspirations to the Virgin who, hitherto, had remained strictly within the limits originally traced. Commiserate to the erring she was Regina angelorum, the angel queen. In the twelfth century suddenly she mounted. From queen she became sovereign. Ceremonies, churches, cathedrals, were consecrated uniquely to her. In pomp and importance her worship exceeded that of God. When Satan had the sinner in his grasp, it was she who in the prodigalities of her divine compassion rescued and redeemed him.[1]

In the art of the period, such as it was, the worship was reflected. The thin hands of saints, the poignant eyes of sinners, were raised to her equally. The fainting figures that were painted in the ex-voto of the triptiques seemed ill with love. The forms of women, lost beneath the draperies, disclosed, if anything, emaciation. The expression of the face alone indicated what they represented and that always was adoration. They too were swooning at the Virgin's feet.

Previously Paul had been studied. It was seen that a thorn had been given him, a messenger of Satan, from which, three times he had prayed release. But the Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient to thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Wherefore," said Paul, "most gladly will I glory in my infirmities.[2]

Precisely what the apostle meant is immaterial. But from his words the inference was drawn that in weakness is salvation and in sin the glory of God.

The early Church had not interpreted the evangels with entire correctness. It is possible that in the Græco-Syrian dialect which the apostles employed, their meaning was sometimes obscure. It is presumable for instance that the coming of the Kingdom of God which they proclaimed was not the material termination of a material world but the real Kingdom which did really come in the hearts of those that believed. "Comprends, pécheur," Bossuet thundered at a later day, "que tu portes ton paradis et ton enfer en toi-même." The patricists were not Bossuets. They were literal folk. They stuck to the letter. Having discovered what they regarded as a divine command for abstinence, asceticism in all its rigors ensued. Subsequent exegetes finding in Paul a few words not over precise, discovered in them a commendation of sin as a means of grace. The discovery, amplified later by Molinos, had results that made man even less attractive than he had been.

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[1] Michelet: Histoire de France.

[2] 1 Corinthians xii. 7–9.

Meanwhile, between insanity and disorder, woman, indifferent as always to texts, had found a form of love which, however impossible, was one that in its innocence obscured the stupidities and turpitudes of the day. Then, after the substitution of the Rosa mystica for the mystic lily, tentatively there began an affranchisement of communes, of women and of thought.

Hitherto it had been blasphemy to think. The first human voice that the Middle Ages heard, the first voice distinguishable from that of kings, of felons and of beasts, was Abailard's. Whatever previously had been said was bellowed or stuttered. It was with the forgotten elegance of Athens that Abailard spoke, preaching as he did so the indulgence of God, the rehabilitation of the flesh, the inferiority of fear, love's superiority.

Abailard, fascinating and gifted, was familiar with Greek and Hebrew, attainments then prodigious to which he added other abilities, the art of calming men while disturbing women —among others a young Parisian, Héloïse, herself a miracle of erudition and of beauty.

Abailard at the time was nearly thirty-eight, Héloïse not quite eighteen. Between them a liaison ensued that resulted in a secret marriage which Abailard afterward disavowed and which, for his sake, Héloïse denied. It ruined their lives and founded their fame. Had it been less catastrophic no word or memory of them could have endured. Misfortune made immortal these lovers, one of whom took the veil and the other the cowl and whose story has survived that of kingdoms.

In separation they corresponded. The letters of Héloïse are vibrant still. Only Sappho, in her lost songs to Phaon, could have exceeded their fervor. "God knows," she wrote, "in you I sought but you, nothing but you. You were my one and only object, marriage I did not seek, nor my way but yours uniquely. If the title of wife be holy, I thought the name of mistress more dear. Rather would I have been called that by you than empress by an emperor."

Abailard's frigid and methodical answers were headed "To the bride of Christ," or else "To my sister in Christ, from Abailard, her brother." The tone of Héloïse's replies was very different. "To my master, no; to my brother, no; to my husband, no; his sister, his bride, no; from Héloïse to Abailard." Again she wrote: "At every angle of life God knows I fear to offend you more than Him, I desire to please Him less than I do you. It was your will not His that brought me where I am."

It was true. She took the veil as though it were poison. She broke into the priory violently as the despairful plunge into death. Even that could not assuage her. But in the burning words which she tore from her breaking heart the true passion of love, which nothing earthly or divine can still, for the first time pulsated.

II

THE PURSUIVANTS OF LOVE

There is no immaculate history. If there were it would relate to a better world. Unable to be immaculate, history usually is stupid, more often false. Concerning the Middle Ages it has contrived to be absurd. It attributed the recovery of light to the Tiers état. Darkness was dispersed by love, whose gereralissimi were the troubadour and the knight. Concerning the latter history erred again. Tacitus aiding, it derived chivalry from Germany. Chivalry originated in the courts of the emirs. The knight and the troubadour came from Islâm. Together they resummoned civilization.

The world at the time was divided. Long since Europe and Asia had gone their separate ways. When at last they caught sight of each other, the Church sickened with horror. There ensued the Crusades in which the Papacy pitted Christianity against Muhammadanism and staked the authenticity of each in the result. The result was that Muhammadanism proved its claim. On the way to it was Byzance.

Beside the bleak burgs, squalid ignorance and abysmal barbarism of Europe, Byzance isolated and fastidious, luxurious and aloof, learned and subtle, Roman in body but Greek in soul, contrasted almost supernaturally. Set apart from and beyond the mediæval night, her marble basilicas, her golden domes, her pineapple cupolas covered with colors, her ceaseless and gorgeous ceremonial, gave her the mysterious beauty of a city shimmering on uplands of dream. It was a dream, the final flower of Hellenic art. The people, delicately nurtured on delicate fare, exquisitely dressed in painted clothes, rather tigerish at heart but exceedingly punctilious, equally contemptuous and very well bred, must have contrasted too with the Crusaders.

Contiguous was Persia which, taken by Muhammad, had, with but the magic wand of her own beauty, transformed his trampling hordes into a superb and romantic nation, fanatic indeed, quick with the scimitar, born fighters who had passed thence into Egypt, Andalusia, Syria, Assyria and beyond to the Indus. The diverse lands they had subjugated and united into one vast empire. Baghdad was their caliphate.

Before the latter and on through the Orient were strewn in profusion the marvellous cities of the Thousand and One Nights, the enameled houses of the Thousand and One Days. There, in courtyards curtained with cashmeres, chimeras and hippogriffs crouched. The turbans of the merchants that passed were heavy with sequins and secrets. The pale mouths of the blue-bellied fish that rose from the sleeping waters were aglow with gems. In the air was the odor of spices, the scent of the wines of Shiraz. Occasionally was the spectacle of a faithless favorite sewn in a sack and tossed by hurrying eunuchs into the indifferent sea.

The sight was rare. The charm of Scheherazade and Chain-of-Hearts prevailed. The Muslim might dissever heads as carelessly as he plucked an orange, they were those of unbelievers, not of girls. Among the peris of his earthly paradise he was passionate and gallant. It is generally in this aspect that he appears in the *Thousand and One Nights*, which, like the *Thousand and One Days*, originally Persian in design, had been done over into arabesques that, while intertwisting fable and fact, none the less displayed the manners of a nation. Some of the stories are as knightly as romaunts, others as delicate as lays; all were the unconsidered trifles of a people who, when the Saxons were living in huts, had developed the most poetic civilization the world has known, a social order which, with religion and might for basis, had a superstructure of art and of love.

It was this that louts in rusty mail went forth to destroy. But though they could not conquer Islâm, the chivalry of the Muslim taught them how to conquer themselves. From the victory contemporaneous civilization proceeds.

With the louts were women. An army of Amazons set out for the Cross where they found liberty, new horizons, larger life, and, in contact with the most gallant race on earth, found also theories of love unimagined. In the second crusade Eleanor, then Queen of France, afterward Queen of England, alternated between clashes and amours with emirs. The example of a lady so exalted set a fashion which would have been adopted any way, so irresistible were the Saracens.[1]

It was therefore first in Byzance and then in Islâm that the Normans and Anglo-Normans who in the initial crusade went forth to fight went literally to school. They had gone on to sweep from existence inept bands of pecculant bedouins and discovered that the ineptity was wholly their own. They had thought that there might be a few pretty women in the way, only to find their own women falling in love with the foe. They had thought Tours and Poictiers were to be repeated.

It was in those battles that Europe first encountered Islâm. Had not the defeat of the latter resulted, the world might have become Muhammadan, or, as Gibbon declared, Oxford might to-day be expounding the Koran. But though the Moors, who otherwise would have been masters of Europe, retreated, it is possible that they left a manual of chivalry behind. Even had the attention been overlooked, already from Andalusia the code was filtering up through Provence. Devised by a people who of all others have been most chivalrous in their worship of women it surprised and then appealed. Adopted by the Church, it became the sacrament of the preux chevalier who swore that everywhere and always he would be the champion of women, of justice and of right.

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[1] Michaud: Histoire des Croisades.

The oath was taken at an hour when justice was not even in the dictionaries—there were none—at an epoch when every man who was not marauding was maimed or a monk. At that hour, the blackest of all, there was proposed to the crapulous barons an ideal. Thereafter, little by little, in lieu of the boor came the knight, occasionally the paladin of whom Roland was the type.

Roland, a legend says, died of love before a cloister of nuns. Roland himself was legendary. But in the *Chanson de Roland* which is the right legend, he died embracing his sole mistress, his sword. Afterward a girl asked concerning him of Charlemagne, saying that she was to be his wife. The emperor, after telling of his death, offered the girl his son. The girl refused. She declined even to survive. In the story of Roland that is the one occasion in which love appeared. It but came and vanished with a hero whose name history has mentioned but once and then only in a monkish screed,[1] yet whose prowess romance ceaselessly celebrated, inverting chronology in his behalf, enlarging for his grandiose figure the limits of time and space, lifting his epic memories to the skies.

What Jason had been in mythology, Roland became in legend, the first Occidental custodian of chivalry's golden fleece, which, he gone, was found reducible to just four words—Death rather than dishonor.

Dishonor meant to be last in the field and first in the retreat. Honor meant courage and courtesy, the reverencing of all women for the love of one. It meant bravery and good manners. It meant something else. To be first in the field and last in the retreat was necessary not merely for valor's sake, but because courage was the surest token to a lady's favor, which favor fidelity could alone retain. Hitherto men had been bold, chivalry made them true. It made them constant for constancy's sake, because inconstancy meant forfeiture of honor and any forfeiture degradation.

When that occurred the spurs of the knight were hacked from his heels, a ceremony overwhelming in the simplicity with which it proclaimed him unfit to ride and therefore for chivalry.

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[1] Eginhard: Vita Karoli, IX.

Yet though a man might not be false to any one, to some one he must be true. If he knew how to break a lance but not how to win a lady he was less a knight than a churl. "A knight," said Sir Tristram, "can never be of prowess unless he be a lover." "Why," said the belle Isaud to Sir Dinadan, "are you a knight and not a lover? You cannot be a goodly knight except you are?" "Jesu merci," Sir Dinadan replied. "Pleasure of love lasts but a moment, pain of love endures alway."

Sir Dinadan was right, but so was Sir Tristram, so was the belle Isaud. A knight had to be brave, he had to be loyal and courteous in war, as in peace. But he had to be also a lover and as a lover he had to be true.

> "L'ordre demande nette vie
> Chasteté et curtesye."

The demand was new to the world. Intertwisting with the silver thread which chivalry drew in and in throughout the Middle Ages, it became the basis of whatever is noble in love to-day. The sheen of that thread, otherwise dazzling, shines still in Froissart and in Monstrelet, as it must have shone in the tournaments, where, in glittering mail, men dashed in the lists while the air was rent with women's names and, at each achievement, the heralds shouted "Loyauté aux Dames," who, in their tapestried galleries, were judges of the jousts.

Dazzling there it must have been entrancing in the halls and courts of the great keeps where knights and ladies, pages and girls, going up and down, talked but of arms and amours, or at table sat together, two by two, in hundreds, with one trencher to each couple, feasting to the high flourishes of trumpets and later knelt while she who for the occasion had been chosen Royne de la Beaulté et des Amours, awarded the prizes of the tourney, falcons, girdles or girls.

Life then was sufficiently stirring. But the feudal system was not devised for the purposes of love, and matrimony, while not inherently prejudicial to them, omitted, as an institution, to consider love at all. Love was not regarded as compatible with marriage and a lady married to one man was openly adored by another, whom she honored at least with her colors, which he wore quite as openly in war and in war's splendid image which the tournament was.

In circumstances such as these and in spite of ideals and injunctions, it becomes obvious if only from the *Chansons de geste*, which are replete with lovers' inconstancies, that the hacking of spurs could not have continued except at the expense of the entire caste. The ceremony was one that hardly survived the early investitures of the men-at-arms of God. It was too significant in beauty.

The fault lay not with chivalry but with the thousand-floored prison that feudalism was. In it a lady's affections were administered for her. Marriage she might not conclude as she liked. If she were an heiress it was arranged not in accordance with her choice but her suzerain's wishes and in no circumstances could it be contracted without his consent. Under the feudal system land was held subject to military service and in the event of the passing of a fief to a girl, the overlord, whose chief concern was the number of his retainers, could not, should war occur, look to her for aid. The result being that whatever vassal he thought could serve him best, he promptly gratified with the land and the lady, who of the two counted least.[1]

The proceeding, if summary, was not necessarily disagreeable. Girls whose accomplishments were limited to the singing of a lai or the longer romaunt and who perhaps could also strum a harp, were less fastidious than they have since become. Advanced they may have been in manners but in delicacy they were not. Their conversation as reported in the fabliaux and novelle was disquietingly frank. When, as occasionally occurred, the overlord omitted to provide a husband, not infrequently they demanded that he should. As with girls, so with widows. Usually they were remarried at once to men who had lost the right to kill them but who might beat them reasonably in accordance with the law.[1]

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[1] Summa Hostiensis, IV. De Sponsalibus.

The law was that of the Church who, in authorizing a reasonable beating, may have had in view the lady's age, which sometimes was tender. Legally a girl could not be married until she was twelve. But feudalism had evasions which the Church could not always prevent. Sovereign though she were over villeins and vassals and suzerains as well, yet the high lords, sovereign too, married when and whom they liked, children if it suited them and there was a fief to be obtained.

They married the more frequently in that marriage was easily annulled. Even the primitive Church permitted divorce. "Fabiola," said a saint, "divorced her husband because he was vicious and married again."[2] In the later Church matrimony was prohibited within the seventh degree of consanguinity in which the nominal relationship of godfather and godmother counted equally with ties of blood and created artificial sets of brothers, sisters, cousins and remoter relatives, all of whom stood within the prohibited degrees. Relationship of some kind it was therefore possible to discover and also to invent, or, that failing, there was yet another way. A condition precedent to matrimony was the consent, actual or assumed, of the contracting parties. But as in the upper classes it was customary to betroth children still in the cradle, absence of consent could readily be alleged. As a consequence any husband that wished to be off with the old wife in order to be on with the new, might, failing relationship on his part, advance absence of consent on hers, the result being that the chivalric injunction to honor all women for the love of one, continued to be observed since one was so easily multiplied.[1]

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[1] Beaumanoir, LVII. "Tout mari peut battre sa femme, pourvu que ce soit modérément et sans que mort s'ensuivre."

[2] St. Jerome: Vita S. Fabiolæ.

Thereafter began the subsidence of the order which at the time represented what heroism had in the past, with the difference, however, that chivalry lifted sentiment to heights which antiquity never attained. The heights were perhaps themselves too high. On them was the exaltation of whatever is lofty—honor, courage, courtesy and love. It was the exaltation of love that made Don Quixote station himself in the high road and prevent the merchants from passing until they acknowledged that in all the universe there was no one so beautiful as the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso. But it was the exaltation of humor that made him answer a natural inquiry of the merchants in regard to the lady by exclaiming: "Had I shown her to you what wonder would it be to acknowledge so notorious a truth? The importance of the thing lies in compelling you to believe it, confess it, swear it, and maintain it without seeing her at all."

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[1] Juris Pontificii Analecta.

Exaltation lifted to a pitch so high could but squeak. The world laughed. Chivalry outfaced by ridicule succumbed. It had become but a great piece of empty armor that needed but a shove to topple. In the levelling democracy of fire-arms it fell, pierced by the first bullet, yet surviving itself in the elements of which the gentleman is made and in whatever in love is noble.

III

THE PARLIAMENTS OF JOY

The decalogue of the Zend-Avesta mentions many strange sins. The strangest among them is sorrow. The Persian abhorred it. His Muhammadan victor, who had learned from him much, learned also its avoidance. If it ever perturbed the Moors, by the time Andalusia was theirs it had vanished. Joy was a creed with them. Their poets made it the cardinal virtue. The Aragonese and Provençals, whom they indoctrinated, made it the basis of the *gaya cienca* —the gay science of love, and chivalry the parure of the knight.

Before chivalry departed and very shortly after it appeared, that joy, lifted into joie d'amour, glowed like a rose in the gloom of the world. It humanized very notably. It dismissed much that was dark. It brought graces hitherto unknown. It inspired loyalty, fealty and parage —the nobility of noble pride—but particularly the worship of woman.

In the East, woman had also been worshipped. But not as she was in Europe at this period.

At no epoch since has she been as sovereign. Set figuratively with the high virtues in high figurative spheres, she ruled on earth only less fully than she reigned in heaven. The cultus, instituted first by the troubadours, then adopted by royals, connected consequently with pride of place, became fashionable among an aristocracy for whose convenience the rest of humanity labored. Too elevating for the materialism of the age that had gone and too elevated for the democracy of the age that followed, it was comparable to a precipitate of the chemistry of the soul projected into the heart of a life splendid and impermanent, a form of existence impossible before, impossible since, a social order very valiant, very courteous, to which the sense of rectitude had not come but in which joy, unparalleled in history, really, if unequally, abounded. Never more obvious, never either was it more obscure. It was abstruse. It had its laws, its jurists, its tribunals and its code.

Chivalry required of the novice various proofs and preliminaries before admitting him to knighthood. The gay science had also its requirements, preparatory tests which young men of quality gave and primary instruction which they received, before their novitiate could terminate. The tests related to women married and single. By address in the lists, by valor in war, by constant courtesy and loyalty, it was the duty of the aspirant to please them. Pending the novitiate no word of love was permitted and any advancement might be lost through an awkwardness of speech or gesture. But the caprices of a lady properly endured and the tests undergone unfalteringly, relations might ensue, in which case, if the lady were single, the connection was not thought contrary to the best traditions, provided that it was a prelude to marriage, nor, if the lady were already married was it thought at variance with those traditions, provided that the articles of the code were observed.[1]

Concerning the origin of the code history stammers. The chief authority, Maître André, said that in Broceliande—a locality within the confines of the Arthurian myth—a vavasour—quidam miles—met a lass—formosa puella—who agreed to accept his attentions on condition that he outjousted the Knights of the Round Table and got a falcon from them for her. These labors accomplished and the vavasour rewarded—plenius suo remuneravit amore—there was found attached to the falcon's claw, a scroll, a holy writ, a code of love, a corpus juris amoris.[2]

The story is as imaginary as Broceliande.

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[1] Ste. Palaye: L'ancienne Chevalerie.

[2] Maître André, chapelain de la cour royale de France. Manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale, No. 8758.

The code was probably derived from some critique of pure courtesy then common in manuals of chivalry. But its source is unimportant. Gradually promulgated throughout Christendom it resulted in making love the subject of law for the administration of which courts open and plenary were founded. These courts which were at once academies of fine sentiments and parliaments of joy, existed, Maître André stated, before Salahaddin decapitated a Christian and lasted, Nostradamus declared, until post-Petrarchian days.[1]

The code is as follows:

I. Causa conjugii ab amore non est excusatio recta.

II. Qui non celat amare non potest.

III. Nemo duplici potest amore ligari.

IV. Semper amorem minui vel crescere constat.

V. Non est sapidum quod amans ab invito sumit amante.

VI. Masculus non solet nisi in plena pubertate amare.

VII. Biennalis viduitas pro amante defuncto superstiti præscribitur amanti.

VIII. Nemo, sine rationis excessu, suo debet amore privari.

IX. Amare nemo potest, nisi qui amoris suasione compellitur.

X. Amor semper ab avaritia consuevit domiciliis exulare.

XI. Non decet amare quarum pudor est nuptias affectare.

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[1] "Des personnages de grands renoms estant venus visiter le pape Innocent III à Avignon, furent ouïr les definitions et sentences d'amour prononcées par les dames."—Nostradamus.

XII. Verus amans alterius nisi suæ coamantis ex affectu non cupit amplexus.

XIII. Amor raro consuevit durare vulgatus.

XIV. Facilis perceptio contemptibilem reddit amorem, difficilis eum parum facit haberi.

XV. Omnis consuevit amans in coamantis as pectupallescere.

XVI. In repentina coamantis visione, cor tremescit amantis.

XVII. Novus amor veterem compellit abire.

XVIII. Probitas sola quemcumque dignum facit amore.

XIX. Si amor minuatur, cito deficit et raro convalescit.

XX. Amorosus semper est timorosus.

XXI. Ex vera zelotypia affectus semper crescit amandi.

XXII. De coamante suspicione percepta zelus interea et affectus crescit amandi.

XXIII. Minus dormit et edit quem amoris cogitatio vexat.

XXIV. Quilibet amantis actus in coamantis cogitatione finitur.

XXV. Verus amans nihil beatum credit, nisi quod cogitat amanti placere.

XXVI. Amor nihil posset amori denegare.

XXVII. Amans coamantis solatiis satiari non potest.

XXVIII. Modica præsumptio cogit amantem de coamante suspicari sinistra.

XXIX. Non solet amare quem nimia voluptatis abundantia vexat.

XXX. Verus amans assidua, sine intermissione, coamantis imagine detinetur.

XXXI. Unam feminam nihil prohibet a duobus amari et a duabus mulieribus unum.

Of these articles, the translation of a few may suffice.

> The allegation of marriage is an insufficient plea against love.
>
> No one should love two people at the same time.
>
> Without exceeding good reason no one should be forbidden to love.
>
> No one need love unless persuasion invite.
>
> It is not seemly to love one whom it would be unseemly to marry. – center of Christian Morality
>
> A new love banishes an old one.
>
> Love readily yielded is lightly held.

The establishment of courts for the maintenance of principles such as these may seem unnecessary. Yet they had their raison d'être. In cases of tort and felony the lord of a fief possessed the right of justice high and low. There are crimes now which the law cannot reach. It was the same way then. There were controversies which no mere man could adjust. To remedy the defect the wives of the lords created tribunals of their own.

In the English dominions on the Continent generally, as also in Flanders, Champagne and Provence, these courts were frequent. In describing them Nostradamus said that "disputes arising from the beautiful and subtle questions of love were submitted to illustrious ladies who, after deliberation, rendered judgments termed, 'Lous arrêsts d'amours.'"

Of the beautiful and subtle questions here is one: A confidant charged by a friend with messages of love found the lady so to his liking that he addressed her in his own behalf. Instead of being repulsed he was encouraged. Whereupon the injured party brought suit. Maître André, prothonotary of the court, relates that the plaintiff prayed that the fraud be submitted to the Countess of Champagne, who, sitting in banco with sixty ladies, heard the complaint and, on deliberation, rendered judgment as follows: "It is ordered that the defendants henceforth be debarred the frequentation of honest people." Here is another instance. A knight was charged by a lady not to say or do anything in her praise. It so fell about that her name was lightly taken. The knight challenged the defamer. Thereupon the lady contended that he had forfeited all claim to her regard. Action having been brought the court decided that the defence of a lady being never illicit the knight should be rehabilitated in favor and reinstated in grace. Which, the prothonotary states, was done.

It was over these delicate matters, over others more delicate still, that the Courts of Love claimed and exercised jurisdiction. Execution of the decrees may seem to have been arduous. But judgments were enforced not by a constabulary but by the community. Disregard of a decision entailed not loss of liberty but loss of caste. In the case of a man, entrance was denied him at the tournaments. In the case of a woman, the drawbridges were up. Throughout the land there was no one to receive her. As a result the delinquent was rare. So too was contempt of the jurists. Sometimes a girl appeared before them. Sometimes a king.

To-day it all seems very trivial. But at the time marriage was a matter concerning which the party most interested had the least to say. Love was not an element of it and disinclination a detail. Moreover in the apoplectic conditions of the world a woman's natural guardians were not always at hand, the troubadour always was; the consequence being that a lady was left to do more or less as she saw fit and it was in order that she might do what was fittest that decretals were made.

They served another purpose. They set a standard which is observed to-day. Article XI of the code: Non decet amare quarum pudor est nuptias affectare,—It is not seemly to love one whom it would not be seemly to marry, is one of the pivots of modern ethics. On it was constructed *Ruy Blas*. The tale is tragic but then the entire realm of love is choked with tragic tales, though it is less so when the precept is observed and still less when there is regard for the injunction against double loving.

In addition, the provisions of the code were instrumental in originating that regard for appearances which society previously had neglected and from which contemporaneous refinement proceeds. Chivalry came with the crusades; with the Courts of Love, good manners.

They had another merit. In guiding the affections they educated them. To love and to be loved is not simple but complex. Love may come from mutual attraction. That is common. It may come of natural selection, which is rare. Natural selection presupposes a discernment that leads a man through mazes of women to one woman in particular, to a woman who to him is the one woman in all the world, to the woman who has been awaiting him and who recognizes him when he comes. Or *vice versa.* In the Middle Ages it was usually from the woman that the initial recognition proceeded. It was she who did the selecting. In the best society she does so still.

To encourage her the Courts of Love authorized a form of contemplative union in which lovers exchanged vows similar to those taken at the investiture of a vassal. The knight knelt before the lady, put his hands in hers and acknowledged himself her liegeman. The homage was formally accepted. The knight received a kiss which was renewable every year. But nothing more. In theory at least. Any further reward of fealty being due to the sheer generosity of the lady who then was lord. The kiss however was collectable. In the event of deferred payment action could be brought. One was. By way of defence the defendant alleged that Mr. Danger was present. Mr. Danger was the defendant's husband.[1]

These hymens of the heart, instituted by virtue of Article I, Causa conjugii ab amore non est excusatio recta—Against love marriage is an insufficient excuse—resulted in a sort of moral bigamy that was sanctioned generally by custom, in Provence by the clergy, and which, like marriage was contracted in the presence of witnesses. Gérard de Roussillon, a mediæval writer, described a lady who while marrying one man coincidentally gave a ring and promise of love to another. The proceeding was strictly in accordance with the sentiment of the day which regarded love as incompatible with marriage.

A case in point is contained in the reports of Martial d'Auvergne. A knight loved a lady who could not accept his vows inasmuch as she loved some one else. But she promised to do so if it so happened that she lost the other man—a contingency which to-day would mean if he died or ran away. Very differently the jurisprudence of the epoch interpreted it. The lady married the man she loved whereupon the knight exacted fulfilment of the agreement. Queen Eleanor, before whom the case was heard, decided in his favor, on the ground, perhaps subtle, that the lady's husband, in becoming her husband, became *ipso facto*, by that very act, amatorially defunct.

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[1] Martial d'Auvergne: Les Arrêts d'Amour.

In a case not similar but cognate, judgment rendered by the Countess of Champagne was as follows: "By these presents we declare and affirm that love cannot exist between married people for the reason that lovers grant everything unconstrainedly, whereas married people are obliged to submit to one another. Wherefore shall this decision, reached prudently in conformity with the opinion of many other ladies, be to you all a constant and irrefragible truth. So adjudged in the year of grace 1174, the third day of the calends of May, seventh indiction."

In another case Ermengarde of Narbonne decided that the addition of the marriage tie cannot invalidate a prior affair, *nisi*—unless the lady has in mind to have done with love forever.

Decretals of this nature, however absurd they may seem, were at least serviceable in the reforms they effected. According to the civil law if a husband absented himself for ten years, the wife had the right to remarry. According to the law of love, the absence of a lover, however prolonged, did not release the lady from her attachment. The civil law authorized a widow to remarry in a year and a day. The law of love exacted for the heart a widowhood of twice that period. The civil law permitted a husband to beat his wife reasonably. The law of love enforced for the lady respect.[1]

The resulting conditions, perhaps analogous to those of eighteenth-century Italy where every woman of position had, in addition to a husband a *cavaliere servente*, succeeded none the less in developing outside of marriage and directly in opposition to it, the ideal of what marriage is, the union not only of hands but of hearts. The Courts of Love might go, their work endured. They made woman what she had been in republican Rome and what she is to-day, the guide and associate of man.

Slowly thereafter they followed knight-errantry to its grave without however meanwhile becoming what Hallam described as "fantastical solemnities." "I never had," Hallam declared, "the patience to look at the older writers who discussed this tiresome subject." In view of which his opinions are not important, particularly as the Courts of Love so far from becoming fantastic went to the other extreme. Instead of questions beautiful and subtle, there arose others, highly realistic, together with investigations *de visu* which young gentlewomen treated in terms precise.

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[1] Assises de Jérusalem.

Before decadence set in, at a time when these establishments were at their best and notwithstanding the ethical purport of their decisions, misadventures occurred. Of these, one, commonly reported by all authorities, is curious.

The Lord Raymond of Castel-Roussillon had for wife the Lady Marguerite. Guillaume de Cabstain, a lad of quality, came to their court where he was made page to the countess and where, after certain episodes, he composed for her the lai which runs:

> "Sweet are the thoughts
> That love awakes in me."

Etc. When Raymond heard the song he led Guillaume far from the castle, cut his head off, put it in a basket, cut his heart out, put it also in a basket, returned to the castle, had the heart roasted and had it served at table to his wife. The Lady Marguerite ate without knowing what it was. The repast concluded, Raymond stood up. He told his wife that what she had eaten was the heart of the page. He fetched and showed her the head and asked how the heart had tasted.

The Lady Marguerite, recognizing the head, replied that the heart had been so appetizing that never other food or drink should take from her its savor. Raymond ran at her with his sword. She fled away, threw herself from a balcony and broke her skull.

The story, though commonly reported, has not been substantiated. It occurred a long time ago and, it may be, never occurred at all. But as a picture of mediæval love, life and death, it is exact. If it did not occur, it might have. Joy's fingers are ever at its lips bidding farewell. It was in that attitude that its parliaments departed.

IV

THE DOCTORS OF THE GAY SCIENCE

BEFORE joy and its parliaments had dispersed the general gloom, minstrels went about singing distressed maidens, imprisoned women, jealous husbands, the gamut of love and lore. Usually they sang to ears that were indifferent or curious merely. But occasionally a knight errant overheard and at once, lance in hand, he was off on his horse to the rescue. The source of the minstrel's primal migration was Spain.

In the mediæval night, Spain, or, more exactly Andalusia, was brilliant. On the banks of the Great River, Al-Ouad-al-Kebyr, subsequently renamed Guadalquivir, twelve hundred cities shimmered with mosques, with enamelled pavilions, with tinted baths, alcazars, minarets. From three hundred thousand filigree'd pulpits, the glory of Allah and of Muhammad his prophet were daily proclaimed.

At Ez Zahara, the pavilion of the pleasures of the Caliphs of Cordova, forty thousand workmen, working for forty years, had produced a stretch of beauty unequalled then and unexceeded since, a palace of dream, of gems, of red gold walls; a court of alabaster fountains that tossed quick-silver in dazzling sheafs; a patio of jasper basins in which floated silver swans; a residence ceiled with damasquinures, curtained with Isfahan silks; an edifice filled with poets and peris, an establishment that thirteen thousand people served.[1]

Ez Zahara, literally, The Fairest, a caliph had built to the memory of a love. It was regal. The caliphs were also. The reigns of some of them were so prodigal that they were called honeymoons. At Seville and Granada were other palaces, homes as they were called, but homes of flowers, of whispers, of lovers or of peace. Throughout the land generally there was a chain of pavilions and cities through which minstrels passed, going up and down the Great River, serenading the banks that sent floating back wreaths of melody, the sound of clear voices, the tinkle of dulcimers and lutes. But most beautiful was Cordova. Under the Moors it eclipsed Damascus, surpassed Baghdad, outshone Byzance. It was the noblest place on earth.

Throughout Europe at that time, the Moors and the Byzantines alone had the leisure and the inclination to think. They alone read and alone preserved the literature of the past. Together they supplied it to the Renaissance. But from the Moors went poetry of their own. It was they who invented rhyme.[1] Charmed with the novelty, they wrote everything in it, challenges, contracts, treaties, diplomatic notes, and messages of love. The composition of poetry was an occupation, usual in itself, which led to unusual honors, to the dignity of office and high place. Ordinary conversation not infrequently occurred in verse, which was otherwise facilitated by the extreme wealth of the language. Some of the dictionaries—known generally from their immensity as Oceans—which, escaping later the unholy hand of the Holy Office,[2] the Escorial preserved, were arranged not alphabetically but in sequence of rhyme. In addition to the latter the Moors invented the serenade and for it the dulcimer and guitar. They not only lived poetry and wrote it and talked it but died of it. The unusual honors to which it led, and which resulted in a government of poets, left them defenceless. Verse which was their glory was also their destruction.

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[1] Conde: Historia de la dominacion de los Arabes en España.

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[1] "Ex Arabibus versum simili sono concluendorum artem accepimus." Huet.

[2] "De orden del cardenal Cisneros se abrazaron mas de ochenta mil volûmenes como si no tuvieran mas libros que su Alcoran."—Aledrès; Descripcion de España.

Meanwhile it was from them that the world got algebra and chivalry besides.

Chivalry has been derived from Germany. The Teutons invented the false conception of honor—revenge for an affront, the duel and judgment by arms. That is not chivalry or even bravery, it is bravado. Bravery itself, perhaps the sole virtue of the early Teuton, was not the only one or even the first that was required of the Moorish Rokh. To merit that title which was equivalent to that of knight, many qualities were indispensable: courtesy, courage, gentility, poetry, diction, strength, and address. But courtesy came first. Then bravery, then gentility, in which was comprised the elements that go to the making of the gentleman—loyalty, consideration, the sense of justice, respect for women, protection of the weak, honor in war and in love.[1]

These things the Teutons neither knew nor possessed. The Muslim did. Prior to the first crusade, the male population of Christendom was composed of men-at-arms, serfs, priests, monks. The knight was not there. But in Sicily, at the court of the polished Norman kings

[1] ". . . Fue muy buen caballero, y se decia de él que tenia las diez prendas que distinguen â los nobles y generosos, que consisten en bondad, valentia, caballeria, gentileza, poesia, bien hablar, fuerza, destreza en la lanza, en la espada y en el tirar del arco." Conde, II., 63.

where Saracens had gone, particularly in Spain, and certainly at Poictiers, the knight had appeared. The chivalry which he introduced was an insufficient gift to barbarism. To it the Moors added perfumery and the language of flowers.

Muhammad's biographers state that there were but two things for which he really cared—women and perfume. His followers the Moors could not do more than do better. Other inventions of theirs being inadequate, they joined to them the art of preserving perfume by distillation and the art, higher still, of perfuming life with love. Muhammad was unable to convert humanity to a belief in the uniqueness of Allah, but the Moors, for a while at least, converted Europe to a belief that love was unique. Muhammad created a paradise of houris and musk. More subtly the Moors created a heaven on earth. It had its defects as everything earthly must have, but such were its delights that the courtesan had no place in its parks. For the first time in history a nation appeared that renounced Venus Pandemos. For the first time a nation appeared among whom woman was neither punished nor bought.[1]

In the Koran it is written: "Man shall have pre-eminence over woman because of the advantages wherein God hath caused one of them to excel the other. The honest women are obedient, careful in the absence of their hubsands. But those whose perverseness ye shall be apprehensive of, rebuke, remove into separate apartments and chastise."

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[1] "Dans les pays soumis à l'Islam on ne voit aucune femme publique."—Viardot: Hist. des Arabes.

The Moors were devout. They were also schismatic. They had separated from Oriental Islâm. Even in the privacy of the harem they would not have struck a woman with a rose.

The harem was not a Muhammadan invention. It was a legacy from Solomon. Originally the Muslim faith was a creed of sobriety that included a deference to women theretofore unknown. Its subsequent corruption was due to Assyria and the ferocious apostolicism of the Turk. The Islâmic seclusion of women came primarily from an excess of delicacy. It was devised in order that their beauty might not excite desires in the hearts of strangers and they be affronted by the ardor of covetous eyes. That ardor the Moors deflected with a talisman composed of the magic word Masch-Allah which, placed in filigree on the forehead of the beloved was supposed to indicate—and perhaps did—that her heart was not her own. In Baghdad where men are said to have been so inflammable that they fell in love with a woman at the rumor of her beauty, at even the mere sight of the impress of her hand, it was not entirely unnatural that they should have secluded those for whom they cared. With finer jealousy the Moors suggested to the women who cared for them the advantage of secluding themselves. To-day a woman who loves will do that unprompted.

In the suggestion of the Moors there was nothing emphatic. Usually girls of position saw, to the day of their marriage, but relatives and womenfolk whom the husband and his friends then routed with daggers of gold. But access to Chain-of-Hearts was not otherwise always impossible. In default of gold daggers there were silk ladders let down from high windows and up which one might climb. In the local tales of love and chivalry, in the story, for instance, of *Medjnoun and Leïlah*, in that of the *Dovazdeh Rokh*—the Twelve Knights—many such ladders and windows appear, many are the kisses, multiple are the furtive delights. Apart from them history has frequent mention of Andalusian Sapphos, free, fervid, poetic, charming the leisures of caliphs, or, after an exacter pattern of the Lesbian, instructing other girls in what were called the keys of felicities—the *divans* of the poets, the art and theory of verse; more austerely still, in mathematics and law.[1]

To please young women of that distinction, a man had to be something more than a caliph, something else than violently brave. Necessarily he had to be expert in fantasias with arms and horse, but he had to be also discreet; in addition he had to be able to contend and successfully in the moufâkhara, or tournaments of song—struggles of glory that proceeded directly from Mekke where the verses of the victors were affixed with gold nails to the doors of the Mosque. From these tournaments all modern poetry proceeds. Acclimatized, naturalized and embellished in Andalusia, they were imitated there by the encroaching Castilians who proudly but falsely called themselves *los primeros padres de la poesia vulgar*.

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[1] Conde, II., 93.

At that time, the Provençal tongue, called the Limosin or Langue d'oc, was spoken not only throughout the meridional provinces of France but generally in Christian Spain.[1] Whatever was common to Spanish poetry was common to that of Provence: both drank from the same source, the overflowing cup of the Moors. The original form of each is that employed in the *divans* of the latter. There is in them also the tell-tale novelty rhyme which, unknown to Greece and Rome, lower Latinity had not achieved. In addition the Provençal and Spanish tensons, or contentions of song, are but replicas of the moufâkhara, or struggles of glory, while the minstrel going up and down the Great River is the obvious father of the itinerant poets whom Barbarossa welcomed in Germany and from whom the Minnesänger came. In Italy, Provençal verse was the foundation of that of Dante and Petrarch. From it in England Chaucer proceeds. In Aragon it founded the *gaya cienca*—the gay science, which passing into Provence overspread the world. The passing was effected by the troubadour, a title derived from *trobar*, to compose, whence troubadour, a composer of verse.

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[1] Escolano: Historia de Valencia. "La lengua maestria de la España es la lemosina."

Technically the troubadour was not only a composer but a knight and not merely that but the representative of chivalry in its supreme expression. Poetry was the attribute of his order as joy was the parure of the preux chevalier. But though except in bearing and appearance the knight did not have to be poetic, the troubadour had to be poetic and chivalrous as well. The vocation therefore, which in addition to these characteristics presupposed also rank and wealth, was such that while a troubadour might disdain to be king, there were kings, Alfonso of Aragon and Cœur-de-Lion among others, who were proud to be troubadours.

Rank was not essentially a prerequisite. Poetry, exalting and fastidious, occasionally stooped, lifting from the commonality a man naturally though not actually born for the sphere. The Muse aiding, Bernard de Ventadour, a baker's son, was raised to the lips of the rather volatile Queen Eleanor. But the process, hazardous in itself, was infrequent. Royals were not necessarily on a footing with troubadours, but the latter, who were the peers of kings, required, for the maintenance of their position, abundant means. They held it becoming to be ceaselessly lavish, to play high and long, to dazzle not only in the tensons but in the banquets and jousts. Impoverishment supervening they went forth in the crusades to die, or, less finely, dropped back among the jongleurs, minstrels, strollers and mere poets with whom subsequently they were generally confused. These latter, sometimes stipendiary, sometimes donatable like jesters and fools, told in their verse of great ladies whom they had never seen, or in the quality of handy man attached themselves to women of rank, to whom they gave songs in return for graces which included largesse, acquiring in their society a knowledge more or less incomplete of the niceties of love and occasionally, if their verse were good, the title of Maestro d'Amor. Even so, only in the embroidery of legend were they troubadours.

The troubadours, the true masters and real doctors of the gay science, in full armor, the visor up, the lance in bucket, rode from keep to keep, from court to court, from one to another of the long string of castles that stretched throughout Provence, throughout the English districts on the Continent, throughout England as well, celebrating as they passed the beauty of this châtelaine and of that, breaking lances for women, devising new lays to their eyes, contending with rivals in duels of song, challenging them in the tourneys, singing and killing with equal satisfaction, leading generally a life vagabond, prodigal, puerile, delightful, absurd and humanizing in the extreme.

Previously keeps and castles were lairs of rapine and of brutes, conditions which chivalry and the Courts of Love remodelled. But the coincidental influence of poetry expressed by the best and richest men of the day had an effect so edulcifying that whatever crapulousness the knight overlooked the troubadour extinguished.

Nothing is perfect. The system like all others had its defects. In keeps, when tilts, feasts, and entertainments were over, the boudoir's more relaxing atmosphere, that of the adjoining balconies and outlying gardens as well, had also their effect. The presence there of a man whose one object was to sing love and make it, the fact that he was a stranger and of all men the stranger who but comes and passes, disturbs the imagination most; the further fact that if he but so pleased he could in his lays trail the fame of a lady from Northumbria to Lebanon, the perfectly natural wish for such renown, the equally feminine disinclination to be ignored when others were praised, the concomitant desire to have a troubadour or a part of one, as one's very own, these stimulants had consequences that were not always very ethical.

The troubadour's religion, intoxicating in itself, was love. That was his creed, his vocation, his life, his death. Song was its vehicle, his presence its introduction. He exhaled it. The perfume, always heady, but which in its first fragrance had mended manners, turned acid and ended by dissolving morals. They melted before it. The social conditions that prevailed in the Renaissance and later in the Restoration and Regency, proceeded directly from these poets who, meanwhile, in a cataclysm had vanished.

Their terrific ablation was due to an interconnection with the Albigenses, a Languedoc sect who, in a jumble of Gnosticism and Manicheism, professed that since evil is coeval with good it must be just as justifiable; hence there is nothing blamable, everything is relative and morality—unobligatory—a matter of taste.

Provence, always receptive to Orientalisms, was charmed with theories that gave a mystic sanction to troubadourian views. Caught up and repeated, discussed in tournament and tenson, the opinions of ladies and lovers on the subject would have disturbed nobody, history would have ignored them, had the original heretics been satisfied with the plaything they had found. But they compared it to official religion. They also questioned the prerogatives of the Holy See.

Indignantly the Papacy pitted Christianity against it, as already it had pitted the latter against Islâm. In this instance with greater success. From a thousand pulpits a new religious war was preached. The fanaticism of Europe was aroused. Provence was stormed. Châteaux were levelled, vines uprooted, the harvests of poetry and song destroyed. Sixty thousand people were massacred. The Inquisition was founded. Plentifully the doctors of the gay science were burned. In spite of chivalry, in spite of love, in spite of verse, in spite of Muhammad, the Moors and the Madonna, Europe was barbarous still.

The smoke, obscuring the sky, left but darkness. If anywhere there was light, it was in Sicily, always volcanic, or in Tuscany, another Provence. There surviving troubadours escaped and left a legacy which Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio diversely shared.

V

THE APOTHEOSIS

In the boyhood of Dante, Florence, the Flower City, was a place of much beauty, of perfect calm, of almost perfect equality, of pleasurable and polished life. There a brigade, the *Brigata Amorosa,* formed of a thousand people, had a lord who was a Lord of Love. During one of their recurrent festivals an entertainment was held at the home of Folco Portinari. To such entertainments Boccaccio said that children frequently accompanied their parents. To this particular entertainment, Dante, then a lad of nine, came with his father. He found there a number of boys and girls, among whom was Folco's daughter, Beatrice, a child with delicate features whose speech and attitude were perhaps superserious for her age.

Dante looked at her. "At that moment," he afterward wrote, "I may truly say that the spirit of life which dwells in the most secret chambers of my heart, trembled in such wise that the least pulses of my being shook. . . .

So noble was her manner, that assuredly one might repeat of her the words of Homer: 'She seemed born not of mortal but of God.' "

Years passed during which often he encountered her, without, however, a word being interchanged. Subsequently, at a festival, she recognized him and bowed—"so virtuously," he said, "that I thought myself lifted to the limits of beatitude."

Another interval ensued. Again she met him. Dante was then twenty, Beatrice nineteen. On this occasion she omitted to bow. The omission affected him profoundly. It was even inspirational. He began to write, "so well" said Boccaccio "that he effaced the fame of poets that had been and menaced that of those to be."

In promenading his young glory he again encountered Beatrice, this time in a house where a betrothal was being celebrated. On entering he was so emotionalized that he had to lean against a wall. The women who were present divined the reason. Beatrice was there. The situation amused them. They laughed. Beatrice also laughed.[1] Whether or not it was her betrothal that was being fêted is uncertain. It may have been. Shortly she became the wife of Simon dei Bardi, *gentiluomo*.

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[1] "Con l'altre donne mia vista gabbate."

Dante more profoundly affected than ever cursed the day on which they met:

> Io maledico il di ch'io vidi imprima
> La luce de' vostri occhi traditori.

To the melody of the imprecation, Petrarch, in honor of Laura, added a variant:

> Benedetto sia l'giorno, e l'mese, e l'anno.

Both were unfortunate in their loves but of the two Dante's was the least favored. It had nothing for sustenance. Yet, save for that one reproach, it persisted. Its continuance was fully justified by the code, though, in the absence of any reciprocity whatever, it was perhaps more vaporous than any that the codifiers had considered.

Hitherto Dante had hoped but for a bow. Thereafter the hope seemed ambitious. He ceased to expect so much. A woman, cognizant, as all Florence was, of the circumstances said to him: "Since you barely dare to look at Beatrice, what can your love for her be?" Dante answered: "The dream of my love was in her salutation but since it has pleased her to withhold it from me, my happiness now resides in what cannot be withdrawn." "And what is that?" the donna asked. "In words that praise her," he replied.

Seemingly instead of that, instead rather of limiting his previous ambition to a salutation he might have supplanted Dei Bardi. Dante too was *gentiluomo.* In addition he was famous. Had he asked, doubtless it would have been given. But Dante, nourished on troubadourian verse and views, held love to be incompatible with marriage. Afterward, if any Provençal suggestion of extra-matrimonial possibilities presented itself, it was too incongruous with the ideal to be detained. Even otherwise, shortly and speedily Beatrice died and he very nearly died also.

The distraction of writing of her, of drawing angels that resembled her, these occupations, combined with other incidents, consoled. Then presently he had visions, among them one in which he saw that which decided him to write nothing further until he could do so more worthily. "To that end," he said, "I labor all I can, as she well knows. Wherefore if it please Him, through whom all things live, that my life be suffered to continue yet awhile, I hope one day to say of her what has not been said of any woman. After which may it please the Lord of Grace that my soul go hence in quest of the Blessed Beatrice who now gazes continuously on the countenance of Him qui est omnia secula benedictus. Laus Deo!"

With these words, with which the *Vita Nuova* ends, the *Divina Commedia* is announced. Voltaire commended an imbecile for calling the latter a monster. It is regrettable that there are not more like it. Other imbeciles have called Beatrice an abstraction. That she lived is fully attested. Dante admired a child who became a young woman from whom he asked next to nothing, which, being refused, he asked nothing at all, contenting himself with laudations. From that moment, Beatrice, who had really been, ceased to really be. She became a personified worship. Finally she died and her death was her assumption, an apotheosis in which typifying the Eternal Feminine, she lifted the poet from sphere to sphere, from glory to glory, to the heights where, imperishable, he stands.

Said Tennyson:

> King that hast reigned six hundred years and grown
> In power and ever growest . . .
> I, wearing but the garland of a day
> Cast at thy feet one flower that fades away.

The tribute, perfect in itself, was perfectly deserved. There never was such tenderness as Dante's. There never was such intensity. Save only in the case of the human oceans that men call Homer and Shakespeare, there never has been such greatness.

Homer engendered antiquity. From Dante

modernity proceeds. Of Shakespeare, England was born. Without resemblance to one another, on their thrones in the ideal each sits alone. Behind them is the past, at their feet the present, before them the centuries unroll. They are the immortals. They have all time as we all have our day. It is from them we get our daily bread. Their genius feeds our starving souls. Talent has never done that. Talent makes us laugh and forget and yawn. Talent is agreeable, it provides us with pleasures, with means of getting rid of time. But to the heart it brings no message, for the soul it has no food. It is ephemeral, not eternal. Only genius and its art endure.

The genius of Dante, Beatrice awoke, of his art she was the inspiration. For that be she, as he called her, Blessed,—thrice Blessed since she did not love him. Had she loved him, he could not have done better, that is not possible, and he might have omitted to do as well.

Dante made Francesca say of Paolo:

> Questi che mai da me non fia diviso,
> La bocca mi baciò tutto tremente.

Francesca added:

Quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante—we read no more that day. Nor on any other. Had she, from whom Dante is equally inseparable, tremblingly kissed his mouth, it may be that not their reading merely but his writing would have ceased. But Dante, whom Petrarch called a miracle of nature, was not Paolo. Far from attempting to kiss Beatrice he did not even aspire to such a grace. He had, as the genius should have, everything, even to sex, in his brain, a circumstance that might have preserved him from Gemma Donati and la Gentucca,—the first, his wife; the second, another's—dual infidelities for which, at the summit of Purgatory, Beatrice, who, in the interim, had become very feminine, reproached him with slow scorn.

For punishment he beheld her. The spectacle of her beauty was such that memories of his sins seared him like thin flames. He was in Purgatory. But Beatrice who in a cloud of flowers—*un nuvola di fiori*—had come, forgave him. Together then their ascension began. *Ella guardava suso, ed io in lei.* She looked above and he at her. In the mounting his sins fell by. As they did so her beauty increased. In proportion to his redemption she became more fair.

That picture, at once real and ideal, displayed in its exquisiteness the miracle of two hearts saving and embellishing each other. Set at the threshold of modern life it prefigured what love was to be, what it is now when it truly appears, but what it was long in becoming.

It had no part in the conceptions of Cecco Angioleiri, a poet contemporaneous, very vulgar, consequently more popular, who "sat" his heart on a donna and flung at her cries that were squeaks.

Io ho in tal donna lo mio core assiso,
Che chi dicesse: Ti fo imperadore,
E sta che non la veggi per due ore,
Io li direi: Va che tu sia ucciso.

Other was Petrarch,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

The One was Laura. Petrarch, young, good-looking, already aureoled, saw her first at matins in a church at Avignon. She too was young. Married, a woman of position, of probable beauty, she was dark-eyed, fair-haired, pensive, serene. With spells as gossamer as those of the Monna Bice, at once she imparadised his heart. Precipitately he presented it to her. She refused it.

Hughes de Sade, her husband, was a perfectly unsympathetic person, jealous without reason, notoriously hard. Yet his excuse, if he had one, may have resided in local conditions. Avignon stately and luxurious, was, Petrarch declared, the gully of every vice. "There is here," he said, "nothing holy, nothing just, nothing human. Decency and modesty are unknown."[1]

Yet he found them there. Laura represented both. In the profligacy of the Papal city she at least was pure. She would have none of Petrarch, or, more exactly, so little that hardly can it be said to count. Rebuffed he departed. She beckoned him back, rebuffed him again and, alternately, for twenty-one years, rebuffed and beckoned, preserving his love without according her own, giving him an infrequent smile, now and then a nod from a window, on one memorable occasion as much as the touch of her hand. Once only, and that at their last interview her eyes looked longly in his. That was all.

To be near her he purchased at Vaucluse an estate so gloomy that his servants forsook him and where, such women as he saw, it mortified him to look at. The expression is his own. Day after day he stood before her gates, which he never entered, fully repaid, if among the orange trees there, he but caught sight of her. On one occasion he met her by accident, on another he was fortunate enough to be able to restore a glove which she had dropped, again in a reunion where were assembled the ladies of Avignon, a foreign prince marched up to the woman whom Petrarch's verses had made famous and kissed her on the eyes. It was a prince's privilege. Petrarch related the occurrence in a sonnet. It was incidents of this character that form the bundle of poetry that immortalized them both.

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[1] Epistolæ sine titulo.

Sometimes he rebelled. He went away, travelled, studied, worked. Whatever he did, whereever he were, always, in haunting constancy, she was before him. Always her presence inhabited his eyes. He tried to vanquish the love of woman in the love of God. In the struggle it was he who was defeated. Even age, even death could not aid him. Laura ultimately had nine children. She was growing old, certainly she was worn. To Petrarch always she was in the first festival of her beauty.

Blessed be the day and the month and the year,
And the season, the hour, the minute,
And the fair land and the spot itself where
Her beautiful eyes subjected my spirit.

It was that which he had ever before him. It was that which made him what he was, the foremost personality of his day. It was that which distinguished him from other poets. Unlike anybody, every one wanted to resemble him. It was love that did it. Dante told of love with an intensity that was divine. Petrarch wrote with a comprehensiveness that was human. There have been thousands of poets and but one

Dante, myriads of lovers and but one Petrarch. Whether Laura deserved his devotion must be a matter of opinion. This alone is obvious. She made his life a combat which antiquity would not have understood, which chivalry would not have appreciated and which Dante did not experience. In antiquity love had for form but the senses. That form chivalry draped with graces and Dante dematerialized. In Petrarch, love was both of the flesh and of the spirit in addition to being sincere. That was a great step. With him for the first time there entered into history an honest man ardently in love with an honest woman. To the superficial she has seemed but a coquette and he merely sentimental. He were perhaps better regarded as creative, the founder of the real love which is the love of the heart, the "*amour éternel en un moment conçu.*"

The quality of Laura's love, whether she loved him or whether she did not, whether for that matter she was capable of loving at all, whether on the other hand while loving him wholly she, like the woman in the sonnet of Arvers who inspired the "*amour éternel*" preferred to remain "piously faithful to the austere devoir," is immaterial and unimportant. Another man would have abandoned her completely or carried her violently away.

Petrarch, too sincere for treason and too poetic for vulgarity, unfit in consequence for either enterprise, became obsessed with a love that developed into a delicate malady, a disease that sent him from his studies, tormenting him into an incessant struggle with the most terrible of all combatants—one's self. The malady had its compensations. It made him the source of modern lyricism and the most conspicuous figure of his day. In Milan when he appeared every head was uncovered. On the Pô, a battle was interrupted that he might pass. At Venice his seat was at the right of the doge. Rome's ghost revived in beauty for him and put a laurel on his brow. It was his verse that induced these tributes. The verse was inspired by love.

To Dante, love was what it had been to Plato, a mysterious initiation into the secrets of the material world. To Petrarch it was a rebellion against those very things. In Dante it was sublimated, in Petrarch it was distilled. Laura stood at the parting of the roads, midway between the symbolism of the *Divina Commedia* and the freedom of the *Decamerone*.

The *Decamerone* is the chronicle of a society in extremis of which the Divine Comedy is the Last Judgment. One is the dirge of the past, the other the dawn of the future. Between the gravity of the one and the unconcern of the other is the distance of the poles. Separated but by half a century the cantos are the antipodes of the novellas. In the former is gloom, palpable and thick. In the latter is light, frivolous and clear. One is mediæval, the other, modern. But one was constructed for all time, the other for a day. If the *Decamerone* still survive, it is through one of Time's caprices.

Boccaccio wrote endlessly. He produced treatises theological, historical, mystical. With his pen he built a vast monument. Time passed and in passing loosed from the edifice a single stone. The rest it reduced to dust. But that stone it sent rolling into posterity, regarding it, wrongly or rightly as a masterpiece. A masterpiece is a thing that seems easy to make and which no one can duplicate. The Queen of Navarre tried and failed augustly. Indolent reviewers have summarized both efforts as gossip. Boccaccio's work was at once that and something else. It was a viaticum for the Middle Ages and a signal for the Renaissance.

Through Florence at that hour stalked the Black Pest. The narrow streets were choked with corpses. The people were dying. So too was an epoch. While grave-diggers were at work a page of history was being turned. On the other side was a dawn which now is day. The knell of expiring night Boccaccio answered with laughter. Into a shroud he tossed flowers. Of these many were frail, some blood-red, others toxic; a few only were white. From them come the odors that formed the moral atmosphere of indifferent Italy, of careless France, of England after the Restoration. They were the parterre on which gallantry grew.

VI

BLUEBEARD

Before the parterre of gallantry budded, at an epoch when the Middle Ages were passing away, there appeared a man, known to amateurs of light opera and of fairy tales as Bluebeard, but who, everywhere, save in the nursery and the study, has been regarded as unreal.

Bluebeard was no more a creation of Perrault or of Offenbach than Don Juan was a creation of Mozart or of Molière. Both really lived, but Bluebeard the more demoniacally. According to the documents contained in what is technically known as his *procès*, his name was Gilles de Retz and, at a period contemporaneous with the apparition of Jehanne d'Arc, he was a great Breton lord, seigneur of appreciable domains.[1]

At Tiffauges, one of his seats, the towers of the castle have fallen, the drawbridge has crumbled, the moat is choked. Only the walls remain. Within is an odor of ruin, a sensation of chill, a savor of things damned, an impression of space, of shapes of sin, of monstrous crimes, of sacrilege and sorcery. But in his day it probably differed very little from other keeps except in its extreme fastidiousness. Gilles de Retz was a poet. In a land where no one read, he wrote. At a time when the chief relaxation of a baron was rapine, he preferred the conversation of thinkers. Very rich and equally sumptuous, the spectacle which he presented must have been that of a great noble living nobly, one who, as was usual, had his own men-at-arms, his own garrison, pages, squires, the customary right of justice high and low, but, over and above these things, a taste for elegancies, for refinements, for illuminated missals, for the music of grave hymns. He was devout. In addition to a garrison, he had a chapel and, for it, almoners, acolytes, choristers. Necessarily a soldier, he had been a brave one. In serving featly his God he had served loyally his king. At the siege of Orléans, Charles VII rewarded him with the title and position of Maréchal de France. It was lofty, but not more so than he. Meanwhile, during the progress of the war, for which he furnished troops; subsequently, in extravagant leisures at court; later, at Tiffauges, where he resided in a manner entirely princely, he exhausted his resources.

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[1] Lobineau: Histoire de Bretagne.

The one modern avenue to wealth then open was matrimony. Gilles followed it. But insufficiently. The dower of one lady, then of others, however large, was not enough. He needed more. To get it he took a different route. Contiguous to the avenue was a wider highway which, descending from the remotest past, had at the time narrowed into a blind alley. In it was a cluster of alchemists. They were hunting the golden chimera which Hermes was believed to have found, and whose escaping memories, first satraps, then emperors, had tried vainly to detain.

These memories Bacon sought in alembics, Thomas Aquinas in ink. Experiments, not similar but cognate, had resulted in the theory that, at that later day, success was impossible without the direct assistance of the Very Low. The secret had escaped too far, memories of it had been too long ablated to be rebeckoned by natural means. For the recovery of the evaporated arcana it was necessary that Satan should be invoked. Satan then was very real. The atmosphere was so charged with his legions, that spitting was an act of worship. In the cathedrals, through shudders of song, his voice had been heard inviting maidens to swell the red quadrilles of hell. From encountering him at every turn man had become used to his ways, and had imagined a pact whereby, in exchange for the soul, Satan agrees to furnish whatever is wanted.

To get gold, Gilles de Retz prepared to enter into that pact. What were the preliminary steps, more exactly, what were the preliminary thoughts, that led this man, who had been devout and a poet, into the infamies which then ensued, is problematic. It is the opinion of psychologists that the most poignant excesses are induced by aspirations for superterrestrial felicities, by a desire, human, and therefore pitiable, to clutch some fringe of the mantle of stars. Psychologists may be correct, but pathologists give these yearnings certain names, among which is hæmatomania, or blood-madness. Caligula, Caracalla, Attila, Tamerlane, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Philip II had it. Complicated with another disorder, it manifested itself in the Marquis de Sade. It was that which affected Gilles de Retz.

Actuated by it, he lured alchemists to Tiffauges. With them from the confines of the Sabbat, magicians came. Conjointly it is not improbable that they succeeded then in really evoking Satan, whose response to any summons consists, perhaps, not in a visible apparition, but in making men as base as they have conceived him to be.

In the horrible keep something of the kind must have occurred. Gilles de Retz became actually obsessed. His soul turned a somersault. Where the scholar had been, a vampire emerged. Satan was believed to enjoy the blood of the young. To minister to the taste, Gilles killed boys and girls.

For fourteen years he stalked them. How many he bagged is conjectural. He had omitted to keep tally.

His first victim was a child whose heart he extracted, and with whose blood he wrote an invocation to Satan. Then the list elongated immeasurably. That lair of his echoed with cries, dripped with gore, shuddered with sobs. The oubliettes were turned into cemeteries, the halls reeked with the odor of burning bones. Through them the monster prowled, virtuoso and vampire in one, determining how he might destroy not merely bodies but souls, inventing fresh repasts of flesh, devising new tortures, savoring tears as yet unshed, and, with them, the spectacle of helpless agony, of unutterable fear, the contortions of little limbs simultaneously subjected to hot irons and cold steel. Witnesses deposed that some of the children cried very little, but that the color passed from their eyes.[1]

There is a limit to all things earthly. Precisely as no one may attain perfection, so has infamy its bounds. There are depths beneath which there is nothing. To their ultimate plane Gilles de Retz descended. There, smitten with terror, he tried to grope back. It was too late. Leisurely, after fourteen years of Molochism, the echo of the cries and odor of the calcinated reached

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[1] Manuscrit de la Bibl. nationale, No. 493, F.

Nantes, with, for result, the besieging of Tiffauges, the taking of Gilles, his arrest, trial, confession—a confession so monstrous that women fainted of fright, while a priest, rising in horror, veiled the face on a crucifix which hung from the wall—a confession followed by excommunication and the stake.[1]

In this super-Neronian story Bluebeard is not apparent. Yet he is there. It is he that is Gilles de Retz. Years ago at Morbihan in a Breton church that dates from the fourteenth century, there was found a series of paintings. One represents the marriage of Trophine, daughter of the Duc de Vannes to a Breton lord. In another the lord is leaving his castle. As he goes he warningly intrusts to his wife the key to a forbidden door. It is spotted with blood. The scenes which follow represent the lady opening the forbidden door and peering into a room from the rafters of which six women hang. Then come the return of the lord, his questioning and menacing glance, the tears of the lady, her prayers to her sister, the alarm given by the latter, the irruption of her brothers and her rescue from that room.

The story which the paintings tell still endures in Brittany. It has Gilles de Retz for villain. Yet for the honor of his race and of the land, instead of his name that of Bluebart, the cognomen of a public enemy, was given.[1]

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[1] Saltus: The Pomps of Satan.

In the story, Gilles de Retz, after marrying Catherine de Thouars, one of the great heiresses of the day, subsequently and successively married six other women. Whether he murdered them all or whether they died of delight is not historically certain. The key spotted with blood obviously is fancy. But like other fancies it might be truth. It symbolizes the eternal curiosity of the eternal Eve concerning that which has been forbidden.

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[1] Michelet: Hist. de France.

VII

THE RENAISSANCE

NOMINALLY with Bluebeard the Middle Ages cease. In the parturitions of that curious period order emerged from chaos, language from dialects, nations from hordes, ideals from dirt. Mediævalism was the prelude, mediocre and in minor key, to the great concert of civilization of which the first chorus was the Renaissance, the second the Reformation, the third the Revolution, and of which Democracy, the fourth, but presumably not the last, is swelling now.

Meanwhile the world was haggard. The moral pendulum, that had oscillated between mud and ether, was back again at the starting point. Death, Fortune, Love, the three blind fates of life, were the only recognized divinities. But beyond the monotonous fog that discolored the sky beauty was waiting. With the fall of Constantinople it descended. The result was the Renaissance. To the Renaissance many contributed; mainly the dead, the artists of the past, but also the living, the prophets of the future. Mediævalism was a forgetting, the Renaissance a recovery. It was an epoch from which the mediocre, in departing, saw as it went the re-establishment of altars to beauty. In the midst of feudal barbarism, at an hour when France was squalid, Germany uncouth, when English nobles could barely read, when Europe generally had a contempt for letters which was not due to any familiarity with them, but when Italy—a century in advance of other lands—was merely corrupt, at that hour, the wraiths of Greece mingling with the ghosts of Rome, made the mistress of the old world sovereign of the new. Not in might but in art and intellect, again the Eternal City ruled supreme.

From the annals of the epoch bravi peer and swarm—soldati di gran diavolo, men more fiendish than animal, artists that contrived to drape the abominable with cloths which, if crimson, were also of gold; poets refined by generations of scrupulous polish but disorganized by a form of corruption that was the more unholy in that it proceeded not from the senses but the mind.

For centuries luxury had been reaccumulating about them. To it, after the fall of Byzance, an unterrified spirit of beauty came. In between was a sense of equality, one that a recently discovered hemisphere was to assimilate, but which meanwhile enabled a man of brains to rise from nowhere to anything, permitting a mercer to breed popes and an apothecary Lorenzo the Magnificent. These factors, generally unconsidered, induced a tone that could change instantly from the suave to the tragic, the tone of a people that had no beliefs except in genius and no prejudices except against stupidity, a tone ethically nul and intellectually great, the only imaginable one that could produce combinations artistic and viperish as the Borgias, æsthetic and vulperine as the Medici. Monsters such as they, did not astonish. Columbus, in enlarging the earth, and Copernicus in unveiling the skies, had so astounded that the ability to be surprised was lost. Men could only admire and create.

These occupations were not hindered by the pontiffs. What the latter were, diarists and historians—Infessura and Gregorovius—have told. As their pages turn, pagan Rome revives. The splendid palaces had crumbled, the superb porticoes were dust. The victorious eagles of the victorious legions had flown to their eyries forever. The shouting throngs, the ivory chariots, the baths of perfume and of blood, these things long since had vanished. There were friars where gladiators had been, pifferari in lieu of augurs, imperias instead of vestals, in place of an emperor there was a pope. In details of speech, costume and mode there were further differences. Otherwise Rome was as pagan, murderous and gay. In the thick air of the high-viced city the poison of the antique purple dripped.

But into the toxic a new ingredient had entered, a fresh element, a modern note. In the Rome of Nero a sin was a prayer. In the Rome of Leo X it was a taxable luxury. Anything, no matter what, was lawful provided an indulgence were bought. The Bank of Pardons was established for the obvious proceeds, but the latter were sanctified by their consecration to art. Among the results is St. Peter's.

It was in a very different light that Luther contemplated them. The true founder of modern society, radical as innovators must be, dangerous as reformers are, it was with actual fury that he attacked the sale, attacked confession, the entire doctrine of original sin. The hysteria of asceticism was as inept to him as the celibacy of the priesthood; love he declared to be no less necessary than food and he preached to men, saying, "If women are recalcitrant, tell them others will consent; if Vashti refuse, let Esther approach."[1]

Beauty, emerging meanwhile from her secular tomb, had uttered a new Fiat Lux. Spontaneously as the first creation there resulted another in which art became an object of worship. Suddenly, miraculously yet naturally, there sprang in-

[1] Luther: Tisch-Reden.

to being a race of sculptors inferior only to Pheidias, a race of painters superior even to Apelles, real artists who were great men in an epoch really great. It was said of Raphael that he had resuscitated the corpse of Rome. Benvenuto Cellini was absolved of a murder by Paul III on the ground that men like him were above the law. Julius II launched anathemas at any sovereign who presumed, however briefly, to lure from him Michel Angelo. Charles V, ruler of a realm wider than Alexander's, stooped and restored a brush which Titian had dropped, remarking as he did so, that only by an emperor could an artist be properly served.

The epoch in which appeared these exceptional beings and with them lettered bandits comparable only to tigers in the gardens of Armide—the age which produced in addition to them, others equally, if differently, great, approached in its rare brilliance that of Pericles. Even Plato was there.

"Since God has given us the Papacy," said Leo X, "let us enjoy it." In the enjoyment he had Plato for aid. An estray from Byzance, tossed thence on the shores of the mediæval Dead Sea, translated in the Florentine Academy, printed in the Venetian metropolis of pleasure and dedicated to the scholar pope, no better aid to enjoyment could he or any one have had. In the mystic incense of the liturgy to Aphrodite was what prelates and patricians, the people and the planet long had needed, a doctrine of love.

In the *Republic* Plato stated that those who contemplate the immutable essence of things possess knowledge not views. That was precisely what was wanted. But what was wanted Plato did not perhaps very adequately supply. Hitherto love had been regarded sometimes as the fusion of souls sometimes as that of the senses. There had been asceticism. There had also been license. Plato, from whom something more novel was wanted, seemed to offer but an antidote to both. In the *Symposion* love was represented as the rather vulgar instinct of persistence and beauty, one and indivisible, alone divine. Moreover, from the austere regions of that abstraction came no explanation of the charm which feminine loveliness exercises over man. On the other hand, Plato had told of two Aphrodites, one celestial, the other common, a distinction which doctors in quintessences utilized for the display of two forms of love, one heavenly, the other mundane, simianizing in so doing, what is human, humanizing that which is divine and succeeding between them in producing for the world the modern conception of platonic affection, which, in so far as it relates to the reciprocal relations of men and women, not for a moment had entered Plato's sky-like mind.

The doctors were Ficino—a Hellenist whom

Cosmo dei Medici had had trained for the sole purpose of translating Plato—and Bembo, a prelate, who already had written for Lucrezia Borgia a treatise on love. What Ficino advanced Bembo expounded.

Bembo's commentary was to the effect that earthly loveliness is a projection of celestial beauty irradiated throughout creation. Falling as light falls it penetrates the soul and repercuted creates love, which consequently is a derivative of divine beauty transmitted through a woman's eyes. To man the source of that beauty is, however, not the soul but the flesh. From this error disillusion proceeds. For the rightful enjoyment of beauty cannot consist in material satisfaction from which satiety, weariness, and aversion result, but rather in disinterestedness, which is the chief factor in abiding delight.[1]

The theory, casuistic and subtle, appealed momentarily to a society that had no theories at all. It particularly appealed to women. Matrimony had not always been propitious to them. Barring death or annulment the brand of the ceremony was ineffaceable. In England Henry VIII maintained the brand but, by means of divorce which he prescribed for himself, he rendered it cumulative, a process which Parliament, subsequently petitioned by Milton, regularized. In Italy meanwhile the pseudo-platonism which Ficino and Bembo were expounding, omitted any interference with it. In the corpus juris amoris matrimony was held to be incompatible with love and pseudo-platonism, going a step further, eliminated even the possibility of it. Pseudo-platonism maintained that if happiness consists in love and love consists in yielding, yielding itself has its degrees. There is the yielding of the body and of the soul, the yielding of the one without the other, the yielding of the second without the first. Platonism, as interpreted by pseudo-platonists, was the yielding of the second, matrimony the yielding of the first. But into that yielding it had already shown that not delight but its contrary enters.

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[1] Castiglione: Il Cortegiano. Ficino: Il comento sopra il convito."

On fanciful tenets such as these the moral bigamy of Provence returned, with the difference that it enabled a lady to be as intangible to her husband as she had supposedly been to her knight. A historian has related that a woman of position, married to a man morally inferior and otherwise objectionable, encountered these tenets and coincidentally, in a person of greater distinction, encountered also her ideal. Together, in the most perfect propriety, they departed and, with analogous couples of their acquaintance, assembled in a villa where, reversing the *Decamerone*, they philosophized agreeably on the charm of the new distinction between love and love, one of which, the love matrimonial, was worldly and mortal while the other, vivifying to the soul, was divine.[1]

Thereafter spiritual elopements became frequent. But not general. It was not every woman that was capable of putting but her soul in the arms of a lover nor was it every lover whom the ethereality of the proceeding pleased. Dilettantes of crystal flirtations became, like poets, omnipresent and yet rare. The majority that entered the mazes of the immaterial did so with no other object than that of getting out. When one of the parties did not lose her head the other lost his temper.

La Bruyère had not then come, but there are maxims which do not need expression to be appreciated and then as since men contended that when a woman's heart remained unresponsive it was because she had not met the one who could make it beat. Others, less finely, insisted that a woman who could love and would not should be made to. Love then had its martyrs, platonism its agnostics. That, though, was perhaps inevitable. Platonism, whether real or imaginary, has always been less a theory than a melody; as such unsuited to every voice. But at the time it was serviceable. It deodorized, however partially, an atmosphere supercharged with pagan airs. It turned some women into saints, others into sisters of charity that penetrated the poverties of the heart and distributed there the fragrance of a divine largesse. In that was its beauty and also its defect. Being in its essence poetic, it could appeal only to epicures. To mere kings like Henry VIII, to felons like Henri III, to the vulgar generally, to people incapable of sentiment and eager only for sensations, as the vulgar always are, it was Greek, unapproachable when not unknown. There were virtuose that drew from it delicious accords, there were others that with it executed amazing *pas seuls*. Otherwise its exponents in attempting to convert life into a fancy ball and love in a battle of flowers failed necessarily. The flowers wilted, the dancers departed, the music ceased. The moral pendulum swung again from ether to earth.

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[1] Firenzuola: Ragionamenti.

In the downward trend Venice perhaps assisted. Venice then was a salon floored with mosaics where Europe and Asia met. Suspended between earth and sky, unique in construction, orientally corrupt, byzantinely fair, a labyrinth of liquid streets and porphyry palaces in which masterpieces felt at ease, it was the ideal city of the material world, a magnet of such attraction that the hierodules of the renaissant Aphrodite, whose presence Rome had found undesirable, made it their home. Qualified, naïvely, perhaps, but with much courtesy, as Benemeritæ, they exercised a sway which history has not forgotten and became the renegades of pseudo-platonic love. To enjoy their society, to sup for instance with the bella Imperia, whose blinding beauty is legendary still, or with Tullia d'Aragona, who had written a tract of the "Infinity of Perfect Love," princes came and lingered enchanted by their meretricious charm.

Platonism had its renegades but it had also its saints—Leonora d'Este, Vittoria Colonna, Marguerite of France, the three Graces of the Renaissance.

Marguerite of France, surnamed the Marguerite des Marguerites, was a flower that had grown miraculously among the impurities of the Valois weeds. Slightly married to a Duc d'Alençon and, at his death, as slightly to a King of Navarre, she held at Pau a little court where, Marot, her poet and lackey, perhaps aiding, she produced the *Heptaméron*, a collection of nouvelles modelled after the *Decamerone*, a bundle of stories in which the characters discuss this and that, but mainly love, particularly the love of women "qui n'ont cherché nulle fin que l'honnesteté."

Honnesteté was what Marguerite also sought. In days very dissolute, a sense of exclusiveness which whether natural or acquired is the most refining of all, suggested, it may be, her device: —*Non inferiora secutus.* She would have nothing inferior. One might know it from her portraits which bear an evident stamp of reserve. In them she has the air of a great lady occupied only with noble things. All other things, husbands included, were to her merely abject.

The impression which her portraits provide is not reflected in the phraseology of the *Heptaméron.* The fault was not hers. She used the current idiom. Prelates at the time employed in the pulpit expressions which to-day a coster would avoid. Terms that are usual in one age become coarse in the next. But, if her language was rude, her sentiments were elevated. In her life she loved but once and then, idolatrously. The object was her brother, the very mundane François I^{er}, who, on a window-pane wrote with a diamond—the proper pen for a king—Toute femme varie, an adage to which legend added Bien fol est qui s'y fye and Shakespeare variously adapted.

Neither the adage nor its supplements applied to Marguerite. The two loves of pseudo-platonism she disentangled from their subtleties and, with entire simplicity, called one good, the other evil. Hers was the former. She was born for it, said Rabelais.

In the *Heptaméron* it is written: "Perfect lovers are they who seek the perfection of beauty, nobility and grace and who, had they to choose between dying and offending, would refuse whatever honor and conscience reprove."

There is the *Non inferiora secutus* expounded. The device may have appealed to Leonora d'Este. Tasso said that when he was born his soul was drunk with love. Leonora intoxicated it further. Of a type less accentuated than Marguerite she was not more feminine but more gracious. At Ferrara, in the wide leisures of her brother's court, Tasso, Stundenlang, as Gœthe wrote, sat with her.

"Vita della mia vita," he called her in the easy rime amorose with which in saluting her he saluted the past, Dante and Petrarch, and saluted too the future, preluding behind the centuries the arias wherewith Cimarosa, Rossini and Bellini were to enchant the world. A true poet and a great one, Byron said of him:

> Victor unsurpassed in modern song
> Each year brings forth its millions but how long
> The tide of generations shall roll on
> And not the whole combined and countless throng
> Compose a mind like thine?

The treasures of that mind he poured at Leonora's feet. The cascade enraptured her and Italy. Rome that for Petrarch had recovered the old crown of pagan laurel saw there another brow on which it might be placed. Before that supreme honor came Leonora died and Tasso, who for fifteen years had served her, was insane.

Beauty may be degraded, it cannot be vulgarized. With the beauty of their lives and love, time has tampered but without marring the perfection of which both were made and to which at the time the love of Vittoria Colonna and Michel Angelo alone is comparable.

Michel Angelo, named after the angel of justice, as Raphael was after the angel of grace, separated himself from all that was not papal and marmorean. Only Leonardo da Vinci who had gone and Ludwig of Bavaria who had not come, the one a painter, the other a king, but both poets were as isolating as he. He was disfigured. Because of that he made a solitude and peopled it grandiosely with the grandeur of the genius that was his, displaying in whatever he created that of which art had hitherto been unconscious, the sovereignty not of beauty only but of right.

Balzac wrote abundantly to prove the influence that names have on their possessors. In the curious prevision that gave Michel Angelo his name there was an ideal. He followed it. It led him to another. There he knelt before Vittoria Colonna who represented the soul of the Renaissance as he did the conscience. The love that thereafter subsisted between them was, if not perfect, then almost as perfect as human love can be; a love neither sentimental nor sensual but gravely austere as true beauty ever is.

Since the days of Helen, love had been ascending. Sometimes it fell. Occasionally it lost its way. There were seasons when it passed from sight. But always the ascent was resumed. With Michel Angelo and Vittoria Colonna it reached a summit beyond which for centuries it could not go. In the interim there were other seasons in which it passed from sight. Meanwhile like Beauty in the mediæval night it waited. From Marguerite of France it had taken a device: —*Non inferiora secutus.*

VIII

LOVE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THE modern history of love opens with laughter, the rich faunesque laugh of François I^{er}. In Italy he had lost, as he expressed it, everything—fors l'honneur. For his consolation he found there gallantry, which Montesquieu defined as love's light, delicate and perpetual lie.

Platonism is the melody of love; gallantry the parody. Platonism beautifies virtue, gallantry embellishes vice. It makes it a marquis, gives it brilliance and brio. However it omit to spiritualize it does not degrade. Moreover it improves manners. Gallantry was the direct cause of the French Revolution. The people bled to death to defray the amours of the great sent in their bill. Love in whatever shape it may appear is always educational.

Hugo said that the French Revolution poured on earth the floods of civilization. Mignet said that it established a new conception of things. Both remarks apply to love. But before it disappeared behind masks, patches, falbalas and the guillotine, to reappear in the more or less honest frankness which is its Anglo-Saxon garb to-day, there were several costumes in its wardrobe.

In Germany, and in the North generally, the least becoming fashions of the Middle Ages were still in vogue. In Spain was the constant mantilla. Originally it was white. The smoke of the auto-da-fé had, in blackening it, put a morbid touch of hysteria beneath. In France, a brief bucolic skirt, that of Amaryllis, was succeeded by the pretentious robes of Rambouillet. In England, the Elizabethan ruff, rigid and immaculate—when seen from a distance—was followed by the yielding Stuart lace. Across the sea fresher modes were developing in what is now the land of Mille Amours.

In Italy at the moment, gallantry was the fashion. François I^{er} adopted it and with it splendor, the magnificence that goes to the making of a monarch's pomp. In France hitherto every castle had been a court than which that of the king was not necessarily superior. François I^{er} was the first of French kings to make his court first of all courts, a place of art, luxury, constant display. It became a magnet that drew the nobility from their stupid keeps, detaining them, when young, with adventure; when old, with office, providing, meanwhile, for the beauty of women a proper frame. Already at a garden party held on a field of golden cloth the first

Francis of France had shown the eighth Henry of England how a king could shine. He was dreaming then of empire. The illusion, looted at Pavia, hovered over Fontainebleau and Chambord, royal residences which, Italian artists aiding, he then constructed and where, though not emperor, for a while he seemed to be.

Elsewhere, in Paris, in his maison des menus plaisirs—a house in the rue de l'Hirondelle—the walls were decorated with salamanders—the fabulous emblems of inextinguishable loves; or else with hearts, which, set between alphas and omegas, indicated the beginning and the end of earthly aims. The loves and hearts were very many, as multiple as those of Solomon. Except by Brantôme not one of them was compromised. François I^{er} was the loyal protector of what he called l'honneur des dames, an honor which thereafter it was accounted an honor to abrogate for the king.[1]

"If," said Sauval, "the seraglio of Henri II was not as wide as that of François I^{er}, his court was not less elegant."

The court at that time had succumbed to the refinements of Italy. Women who previously were not remarkable for fastidiousness, had, Brantôme noted, acquired so many elegancies, such fine garments and beautiful graces that they were more delectable than those of any other land. Brantôme added that if Henri II loved them, at least he loved but one.

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[1] Sauval: Mémoires Historiques concernant les amours des rois de France.

That one was Dianne de Poytiers. Brantôme suspected her of being a magician, of using potable gold. At the age of seventy she was, he said, "aussy fraische et aussy aymable comme en l'aage de trente ans." Hence the suspicion, otherwise justified. In France among queens—de la main gauche—she had in charm but one predecessor, Agnes Sorel, and but one superior, La Vallière. The legendary love which that charm inspired in Henri II had in it a troubadourian parade and a chivalresque effacement. In its fervor there was devotion, in its passion there was poetry, there was humility in its strength. At the Louvre, at Fontainebleau, on the walls without, in the halls within, on the cornices of the windows, on the panels of the doors, in the apartments of Henri's wife, Catherine de' Medici, everywhere, the initials D and H, interlaced, were blazoned. Dianne had taken for device a crescent. It never set. No other star eclipsed it. When she was sixty her colors were still worn by the king who in absence wrote to her languorously:

Madame ma mye, je vous suplye avoir souvenance de celuy quy n'a jamais connu que ung Dyeu et une amye, et

> vous assurer que n'aurez poynt de honte de m'avoyr donné le nom de serviteur, lequel je vous suplye de me conserver pour jamès.[1]

Dianne too had but ung Dyeu et un amy—one God and one friend. It was not the king. More exactly it was a king greater than he. This woman who fascinated everybody even to Henri's vampire-wife was, financially, insatiable. The exactions of the Pompadour and the exigencies of the Du Barry were trumpery beside the avidity with which she absorbed castles, duchies, provinces, compelling her serviteur to grant her all the vacant territories of the realm—a fourth of the kingdom. At his death, beautiful still, "aussy fraische et aussy belle que jamais," she retreated to her domain, slowly, royally, burdened with the spoils of France.

Brantôme was right. She did drink gold. She was an enchantress. She was also a precedent for women who in default of royal provinces for themselves got royal dukedoms for their children.

By comparison Catherine de' Medici is spectral. In her train were perfumes that were poisons and with them what was known as mœurs italiennes, customs that exceeded anything in Suetonius and with which came hybrid-faced youths whose filiation extended far back through Rome, through Greece, to the early Orient and who, under the Valois, were mignons du roi. Apart from them the atmosphere of the queen had in it corruption of decay, an odor of death from which Henri II recoiled as from a serpent, issued, said Michelet, from Italy's tomb. Cold as the blood of the defunct, at once sinister and magnificent, committing crimes that had in them the grandeur of real majesty, the accomplice if not the instigator of the Hugenot massacre, Satan gave her four children:—François II, the gangrened husband of Mary Stuart; Charles IX, the maniac of St. Bartholomew; Henri III who, pomp deducted, was Heliogabalus in his quality of Imperatrix, and the Reine Margot, wife of Henri IV.

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[1] Guiffrey: Lettres inédites.

It would have been interesting to have seen that couple, gallant, inconstant, memorable, popular, both, to employ a Gallicism, franchement paillards. But it would have been curious to have seen Margot, as a historian described her, carrying about a great apron with pockets all around it, in each of which was a gold box and in each box, the embalmed heart of a lover—memorabilia of faces and fancies that hung, by night, at her bed.[1]

"All the world published her as a goddess," another historian declared, "and thence she took pleasure all her life in being called Venus Urania, as much to show that she participated in divinity as to distinguish her love from that of the vulgar, for she had a higher idea of it than most women have. She affected to hold that it is better practised in the spirit than in the flesh, and ordinarily had this saying in her mouth: 'Voulez-vous cesser d'aimer, possédez la chose aimée.' "[1]

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[1] Tallemant des Reaux: Historiettes.

The historian added: "I could make a better story about it than has ever been written but I have more serious matters in hand."

What Dupleix omitted Brantôme supplied. To the latter the pleasure of but beholding Margot equalled any joy of paradise.

Henri IV must have thought otherwise. He tried to divorce her. Margot objected. The volage Henri had become interested in the beaux yeux of Gabrielle d'Estrées. Margot did not wish to be succeeded by a lady whom she called "an ordinary person." But later, for reasons dynastic, she consented to abdicate in favor of Marie de Medici, and, after the divorce, remained with Henri on terms no worse than before, visited by him, a contemporary has stated, reconciled, counselled, amused.[2]

Gabrielle, astonishingly delicate, deliciously pink, apparently very poetic, but actually prosaic in the extreme, entranced the king who ceaselessly had surrendered to the fair warriors of the Light Brigade. But to Gabrielle the surrender was complete. He delivered his sword to mes chers amours, as he called her, mes belles amours, regarding as one yet multiple this fleur des beautés du monde, astre clair de la France, whose portrait, painted as he expressed it in all perfection, was in his soul, his heart, his eyes —temporarily that is, but, while it lasted, so coercive that it lifted this woman into a sultana who shared as consort the honors of the triumphal entry of the first Bourbon king into the Paris that was worth to him a mass.

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[1] Dupleix: Histoire de Louis XIII.

[2] Pierre de l'Estoile: Mémoires et journaux.

"It was in the evening," said L'Estoile, "and on horseback he crossed the bridge of Notre Dame, well pleased at the sight of all the people crying loudly 'Live the King!' And, it was laughingly, hat in hand, that he bowed to the ladies and demoiselles. Behind him was a flag of lilies. A little in advance, in a magnificent litter, was Gabrielle covered with jewels so brilliant that they offended (offusquoient) the lights."

However much or little the gems then affected the lights, later they pleased the Medician Marie. She draped herself with them. In the interim a divorce had been got from Margot. Death had brought another from Gabrielle. The latter divorce poison probably facilitated. Gabrielle through the sheer insolence of her luxury had made herself hated by the poverty-stricken Parisians. The detail is unimportant. There was another hatred that she had aroused. Not Henri's however. When she died he declared that the root of his love, dead with her, would never grow again —only to find it as flourishing as ever, flourishing for this woman, flourishing for that, budding ceaselessly in tropic profusion, until the dagger put by Marie in the hand of Ravaillac, extirpated it, but not its blossoms, which reflowered at Whitehall.

Henri's daughter, Henriette de France, was mother of Charles the Second.

The latter's advent in Puritan England effected a transformation for which history has no parallel. In the excesses of sanctimoniousness in which the whole country swooned, it was as though piety had been a domino and the Restoration the stroke of twelve. In the dropping of masks the world beheld a nation of sinners where a moment before had been a congregation of saints.

Previously, in the Elizabethan age, social conditions had made up in winsomeness what they lacked in severity. Whitehall, under James, became a replica, art deducted, of the hermaphroditisms of the Valois court. Thereafter the quasi-divinity of the sovereign evaporated in a contempt that endured unsatiated until Charles I, who had discovered that a king can do no wrong, discovered that he could lose his head. In the amputation a crown fell which Cromwell disdained to gather. Meanwhile the false spirit of false godliness that generated British cant and American hypocrisy made a nation, as it made New England, glum. In Parliament where a Bible lay open for reference, it was resolved, that no person should be admitted to public service of whose piety the House was not assured. In committees of ways and means, members asked each other had they found the Lord. Amusements were sins; theatres, plague-spots; trifles, felonies; art was an abomination and love a shame.[1]

Israel could not have been more depressing than England was then. A reaction was indicated. Even without Charles it would have come. But when the arid air was displaced by the Gallic atmosphere which he brought, England turned a handspring. The godliness that hitherto had stalked unchecked was flouted into seclusion. Anything appertaining to Puritanism was jeered away. Only in the ultra-conservatism of the middle-classes did prudery persist. Elsewhere, among criminals and courtiers, the new fashion was instantly in vogue. The memoirs and diaries of the reign disclose a world of rakes and demi-reps, a life of brawls and assignations, much drink, high play, great oaths, a form of existence summarizable in the episode of Buckingham and Shrewsbury in which the former killed the latter, while Lady Shrewsbury, dressed as a page, held the duke's horse, and approvingly looked on.

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[1] Macaulay: History of England.

The Elizabethan and intermediate dramatists, mirroring life as they saw it, displayed infidelity as a punishable crime and constancy as a rewardable virtue. By the dramatists of the Restoration adultery was represented as a polite occupation and virtue as a provincial oddity. Men wooed and women were won as readily as they were handed in to supper, scarcely, Macaulay noted, with anything that could be called a preference, the men making up to the women for the same reason that they wore wigs, because it was the fashion, because, otherwise, they would have been thought city prigs, puritans for that matter. Love is not discernible in that society though philosophy is. But it was the philosophy of Hobbes who taught that good and evil are terms used to designate our appetites and aversions.

Higher up, Charles II, indolent, witty, debonair, tossing handkerchiefs among women who were then, as English gentlewomen are to-day, the most beautiful in the world, was suffering from that nostalgia for mud which affected the fifteenth Louis.

The Du Barry, who dishonored the scaffold as well as the throne, has a family likeness to Nell Gwynne. Equally canaille, the preliminary occupations of these grisettes differed only in taste. One sold herrings, the other hats. The Du Barry's sole heirs were the cocottes of the Second Empire. From Nell, the dukes of St. Albans descend. From Barbara Palmer come the dukes of Grafton; from Louise de la Querouaille, the dukes of Richmond; from Lucy Walters, the dukes of Buccleuch. These ladies, as Nell called them, were early miniatures of the Chateauroux and the Pompadour. Like them they made the rain and the fine weather, but, though dukes also, not princes of the blood. Charles cared for them, cared for others, cared for more but always cavalierly, indifferent whether they were constant or not, yet most perhaps for Nell, succumbing ultimately in the full consciousness of a life splendidly misspent, apologizing to those that stood about for the ridiculous length of time that it took him to die, asking them not to let poor Nelly starve and bequeathing to the Georges the excellence of an example which those persons were too low to grasp.

Anteriorly, before Charles had come, at the period of London's extremest piety, Paris was languishingly sentimental. Geography, in expanding surprises, had successively disclosed the marvels of the Incas, the elder splendors of Cathay and the enchantments of fairyland. Then a paradise virgin as a new planet swam into the general ken. In Perrault's tales, which had recently appeared, were vistas of the land of dreams. Directly adjoining was the land of love. Its confines extended from the Hôtel de Rambouillet.

In that house, to-day a department store, conversation was first cultivated as an art. From the conversation a new theory of the affections developed. For the first time people young and old learned the precious charm of sentiment. The originator, Mme. de Rambouillet, was a woman of much beauty who, in days very lax, added to the allurement of her appearance the charm of exclusiveness. It was so novel that people went to look at it. Educated in Italy, imbued with its pretentious elegancies, saturated with platonic strains, physically too fragile and temperamentally too sensitive for the ribald air of a reckless court, she drew society to her house, where, without perhaps intending it she succeeded in the chimerical. Among a set of people to whom laxity was an article of faith she made the observance of the Seventh Commandment an object of fashionable meditation. She did more. In gallantry there is a little of everything except love. To put it there is not humanly possible. Mme. de Rambouillet did not try. She did better. She inserted respect.

In her drawing-room—historically the first salon that the world beheld—this lady, in conjunction with her collaborators, exacted from men that deference, not of bearing merely, but of speech, to which every woman is entitled and which, everywhere, save only in Italy, women had gone without. Hitherto people of position had not been recognizable by their manners, they had none; nor by their language which was coarse as a string of oaths. They were known by the elegance of their dress. In the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and thereafter little by little elsewhere, they became known by the elegance of their address. It was a great service and an enduring one and though, through the abolition of the use of the exact term, it faded the color from ink, it yet induced the lexical refinement from which contemporaneous good form proceeds. In polishing manners it sandpapered morals. It gave to both the essential element of delicacy which they possess to-day. Subsequently, under the dissolvent influences of Versailles and through ridicule's more annihilating might, though manners persisted morals did not. But before the reaction came attar of rose was really distilled from mud. Gross appetites became sublimated. Instead of ribaldry there were kisses in the moonlight, the caress of eyes from which recklessness had gone. Petrarchism returned, madrigals came in vogue, the social atmosphere was deodorized again. Into gallantry an affected sentimentality entered, loitered awhile and languished away. Women, hitherto disquietingly solid, became impalpable as the Queens of Castile whom it was treason to touch. Presently, when, in the *Précieuses Ridicules*, Molière laughed at them, the shock was too great, they disintegrated. In the interim, sentiment dwindled into nonsense and love, evaporating in pretentiousness, was discoverable, if anywhere, only on a map.

That surprising invention was the work of Mlle. de Scudéry, one of the affiliated in the Hôtel de Rambouillet. A little before, Honoré d'Urfé had written a pastoral in ten interminable volumes. Entitled *Astrée* it was a mirror for the uncertain aspirations of the day, a vast flood of tenderness in which every heart-throb, every reason for loving and for not loving, every shape of constancy and every form of infidelity, every joy, every deception, every conscience twinge that can visit sweethearts and swains was analyzed, subdivided and endlessly set forth. To a world still in fermentation it provided the laws of Love's Twelve Tables, the dream after realism, the high flown after the matter of fact. Its vogue was prodigious. Whatever it omitted Mlle. de Scudéry's *Clélie*, another novel, equally interminable, equally famous, equally forgotten, supplied.

The latter story which was translated into all polite tongues, Arabic included, taught love as love had never been taught before. It taught it as geography is taught to-day, providing for the purpose a Carte du Tendre, the map of a country in which everything, even to I hate you, was tenderly said.

A character described it.

> The first city at the lower end of the map is New Friendship. Now, inasmuch as love may be due to esteem, to gratitude, or to inclination, there are three cities called Tenderness, each situated on one of three different rivers that are approached by three distinct routes. In the same manner, therefore, that we speak of Cumes on the Ionian Sea and Cumes on the Sea of Tyrrhinth, so is there Tenderness-on-Inclination, Tenderness-on-Esteem, and Tenderness-on-Gratitude. Yet, as the affection which is due to inclination needs nothing to complete it, there is no stopping place on the way from New Friendship there. But to go from New Friendship to Tenderness-on-Esteem is very different. Along the banks are as many villages as there are things little and big which create that esteem of which affection is the flower. From New Friendship the river flows to a place called Great Wit, because it is there that esteem generally begins. Beyond are the agreeable hamlets of Pretty Verses and Billets Doux, after which come the larger towns of Sincerity, Big Heart, Honesty, Generosity, Respect, Punctuality, and Kindness. On the other hand, to go from New Friendship to Tenderness-on-Gratitude,

the first place reached is Complaisance. then come the borough of Submission. and. next, Delicate Attentions. From the latter Assiduousness is reached and. finally. Great Services. This place, probably because there are so few that get there. is the smallest of all. But adjoining it is Obedience and contiguous is Constancy. That is the most direct route to Tenderness-on-Gratitude. Yet, as there are no routes in which one may not lose one's way, so, if, after leaving New Friendship, you went a little to the right or a little to the left, you would get lost also. For if, in going from Great Wit, you took to the right, you would reach Negligence, keeping on you would get to Inequality, from there you would pass to Lukewarm and Forgetfulness, and presently you would be on the lake of Indifference. Similarly if, in starting from New Friendship you took to the left, one after another you would arrive at Indiscretion, Perfidiousness, Pride, Tittle-Tattle, Wickedness and, instead of landing at Tenderness-on-Gratitude, you would find yourself at Enmity, from which no boats return.

The vogue of *Astrée* was enormous. That of *Clélie* exceeded it. Throughout Europe, wherever lovers were, the map of the Pays du Tendre was studied. But its indications, otherwise excellent, did not prevent Mlle. de Scudéry from reaching Enmity herself. The Abbé d'Aubignac produced a history of the Kingdom of Coquetry in which were described Flattery Square, Petticoat Lane, Flirtation Avenue, Sweet Kiss Inn, the Bank of Rewards and the Church of Good-by. Between the abbé and the demoiselle a conversation ensued relative to the priority of the idea. It was their first and their last. The one real hatred is literary hate.

Meanwhile the puerilities of *Clélie*, platitudinously repeated across the Channel, resulted at Berlin in the establishment of an Academy of True Love. Then, into the entire nonsense, the *Cid* blew virilly a resounding note.

In that splendid drama of Corneille, Rodrigue and Chimène, the hero and heroine, are to love what martyrs were to religion, all in all for it and for nothing else whatever. They moved to the clash of swords, to the clatter of much duelling, a practice which Richelieu opposed. Said Boileau:

> En vain contre le Cid un ministre se ligue,
> Tout Paris pour Chimène a les yeux de Rodrigue.

They merited the attention. Theirs was real love, a love struggling between duty and fervor, one that effected the miracle of an interchange of soul, transferring the entity of the beloved into the heart of the lover and completed at last by a union entered into with the pride of those who recognize above their own will no higher power than that of God. Admirable and emulative the beauty of it passed into a proverb:—"C'est beau comme le Cid."

The Cid was a Spaniard. But of another age. Melancholy but very proud, the Spaniard of the seventeenth century lived in a desert which the Inquisition had made. The Holy Office that had sent Christ to the Aztecs brought back Vizlipoutzli, a Mexican deity whose food was hearts. His carnivorousness interested the priests at home. They put night around them, a night in which there was flame, fireworks of flesh at which a punctilious etiquette required that royalty should assist and which, while inducing the hysteria that there entered into love, illuminated the path of empire from immensity to nothingness.

At the close of the seventeenth century, Spain, bankrupt through the expulsion of the Jews, barren through loss of the Moors, was a giant, moribund and starving. Only the Holy Office, terribly alive, was terribly fed. Every man was an object of suspicion and every man was suspicious. The secret denunciation, the sudden arrest, the dungeon, the torture, the stake, these things awaited any one. The nation, silent, sombre, morbid, miserably poor, none the less was draped proudly enough in its tatters. The famine, haughty itself, that stalks through the pages of Cervantes is the phantom of that pride. Beside it should be placed the rigid ceremonial of an automaton court where laughter was neither heard nor permitted, where men had the dress and the gravity of mutes, where women counted their beads at balls, where a minutious etiquette that inhibited a queen from looking from a window and assumed that she had no legs, regulated everything, attitudes, gifts, gestures, speech, the etiquette of the horrible Escorial through which gusts of madness blew.

Other courts had fools. The court of Spain had Embevecidos, idiots who were thought to be drunk with love and who, because of their condition, were permitted, like grandees, to wear the hat in the presence. On festivals there were other follies, processions semi-erotic, wholly morbid, through cathedrals haunted by entremetteuses, through chapels in which hung Madonnas that fascinated and shocked, Virgins that more nearly resembled Infantas serenaded by caballeros than queens of the sky and beneath whose indulgent eyes rendez-vous were made by lovers whom, elsewhere, etiquette permitted only the language of signs.[1]

To journey then from Madrid to Paris was like passing from a picture by Goya to a tale of Perrault. Paris at the time was marvelling at two wonders, an earthly Olympus and real love. The first was Versailles, the second La Vallière. Louis XIV created the one and destroyed the other. Already married, attentive meanwhile to his brother's wife, he was coincidentally épris with their various maids of honor. Among them was a festival of beauty in the festival of life, a girl of eighteen who had been made for caresses and who died of them, the only human being save Louis XIV that ever loved the fourteenth Louis. Other women adulated the king. It was the man that Louise de la Vallière adored. To other women his sceptre was a fan. To her it was a regret. Could he have been some mere lieutenant of the guards she would have preferred it inexpressibly. The title of duchess which he gave her was a humiliation which she hid beneath the name of Sœur Louise de la Miséricorde. For her youth which was a poem of love had the cloister for climax. That love, a pastime to him, was death to her. At its inception she fled from it, from the sun, from the Sun-King, and flinging at him a passionate farewell, flung herself as passionately into a convent.

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[1] Saint-Victor: L'Espagne sous Charles II.

Louis stormed it. If necessary he would have burned it. He strode in booted and spurred as already he had stalked into Parliament where he shouted:—"L'Etat c'est moi." Mlle. de la Vallière c'était lui aussi. The girl, then prostrate before a crucifix, was clinging to the feet of a Christ. But her god was the king. He knew it. When he appeared so did she. For a moment, Louis, he to whom France knelt, knelt to her. For a moment the monarch had vanished. A lover was there. From a chapel came an odor of incense. Beyond, a knell was being tolled. For background were the scared white faces of nuns, alarmed at this irruption of human passion in a retreat where hearts were stirred but by the divine. A moment only. Louis, with his prey, had gone.

Thereafter for a few brief years, this girl who, had she wished could have ruled the world, wanted, not pomp, not power, not parade, love, merely love, nothing else. It was very ambitious of her. Yet, precisely as through fear of love she had flung herself into a cloister, at the loss of it she returned there, hiding herself so effectually in prayer that the king himself could hardly have found her—had he tried. He omitted to. Louis then was occupied with the Marquise de Montespan. Of trying he never thought. On the contrary. Mme. de Montespan was very fetching.

A year later, in the Church of the Carmélites, in the presence of the patient queen, of the impatient marquise, of the restless court—complete, save for Louis who was hunting—Mlle. de la Vallière, always semi-seraphic but then wholly soul, saw the severe Bossuet slowly ascend the pulpit, saw him bow there to the queen, make the sign of the cross and, before he motioned the bride to take the black veil which was a white shroud, heard, above the sobs of the assistants, his clear voice proclaim:—

> 'Et dixit qui sedebat in throno: Ecce nova facio omnia.'

Behind the bars, behind the veil, wrapped in that shroud, for thirty-six years Louise de la Miséricorde, dead to love and dead to life, expiated her ambition.

The fate of Louis Quatorze was less noble. The Olympus in which he was Jupiter with the Montespan for Juno became a prison. The jailer was Mme. de Maintenon. Intermediately was the sun. That was his emblem. About him the spheres revolved. To him incense ascended. A nobody by comparison to Alexander, unworthy of a footnote where Cæsar is concerned, through sheer pomp, through really royal magnificence, through a self-infatuation at once ridiculous and sublime, through the introduction of a studied politeness, a ceremonial majestic and grave, through a belief naïvely sincere and which he had the ability to instil, that from him everything radiated and to him all, souls, hearts, lives, property, everything, absolutely belonged, through these things, in a gilded balloon, this pigmy rose to the level of heroes and hung there, before a wondering world, over a starving land, until the wind-inflated silk, pierced by Marlborough, collapsed.

In the first period Versailles was an opera splendidly given, the partition by Lully, the libretto by Molière, in which the monarch, as tenor, strutted on red heels, ogling the prime donne, eyeing the house, warbling airs solemn yet bouffe. In the second the theatre was closed. Don Juan had turned monk. The kingdom of Louis XIV was no longer of this world. It was then only that he was august. In the first period was the apogee of absolutism, the incarnation of an entire nation in one man who in pompous scandals, everywhere imitated, gave a ceremonious dignity to sin. Over the second a biblical desolation spread.

IX

LOVE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

To the cradle of the eighteenth century came the customary gifts, in themselves a trifle unusual. Queen Anne sent the dulness of perfect gentility. Queen Maintenon gave bigotry. Louis XIV provided the spectacle of a mythological monster. But Molinos, a Spanish fairy, uninvited at the christening, malignantly sent his blessing. The latter, known as quietism, was one of love's aberrations. It did not last for the reason that nothing does. Besides, the life of a century is long enough to outgrow many things, curses as well as blessings. For the time being, however, throughout Europe generally and in certain sections of America, quietism found adherents.

The new evangel, originally published at Rome, had a woman, Mme. Guyon, for St. Paul. Its purport Boileau summarized as the enjoyment in paradise of the pleasures of hell. As is frequently the case with summaries, that of Boileau was not profound. Diderot called it the true religion of the tender-hearted. Diderot sometimes nodded. Quietism was not that. A little before rose-water had been distilled from mud. Quietism reversed the process. From the lilies of mysticity it extracted dirt. In itself an etherealized creed of predeterminism, it put fatalism into love. The added ingredient was demoralizing. Already Maria d'Agreda, a Spanish nun, had written a tract that made Bossuet blush. The doctrine of Molinos made him furious. Against it, against Mme. Guyon, against Fénelon who indorsed her, against all adherents, he waged one of those memorable wars which the world has entirely forgotten. It had though its justification. Morbid as everything that came from Spain, quietism held that temptations are the means that God employs to purge the soul of passion. It taught that they should not be shunned but welcomed. The argument advanced was to the effect that, in the omnisapience of the divine, man is saved not merely by good works but by evil deeds, by sin as well as by virtue.

In the Roman circus, the Christian, once subtracted from life, was subtracted also from evil. What then happened to his body was a matter of indifference to him. In quietism that indifference was solicited before subtraction came. It was disclosed as a means of grace to the living. Through the exercise of will, or, more exactly through its extinction, the Christian was told to separate soul from body. The soul then, asleep in God, lost to any connection between itself and the flesh, was indifferent, as the martyr, to whatever happened.

The result is as obvious as it was commodious. The body, artificially released from all restraint and absolved from any responsibility, was free to act as it listed.

In discussing the doctrine, Fénelon declared that there are souls so inflamed with the love of God and so resigned to His will that, if they believed themselves damned, they would accept eternal punishment with thanksgiving.

For propagating this insanity Fénelon was accorded the honors of a bishopric which was exile. Mme. Guyon received the compliment of a *lettre de cachet* which was prison. The Roman Inquisition cloistered Molinos. That was fame. The doctrine became notorious. Moreover, there was in it something so old that it seemed quite new. Society, always avid of novelties, adopted it. But presently fresher fashions supervened. In France these were originated by the Regent, in England by Germany.

At the accession of Louis XIV, Germany, for nearly thirty years, had been a battlefield. The war waged there was in the interests of religion. The Holy Office was not unique in its pastimes. There was fiendishness everywhere, cruelty married to mania, in which Germany joined. Germany employed the serviceable rack, the thumbscrew, the wheel, vats of vitriol, burning oil, drawing and quartering. Occasionally there were iron cages in which the wicked were hung on church steeples with food suspended a little higher, just out of reach. Occasionally also criminals were respited and released when, through some miracle of love there were those that agreed to marry them.[1]

That indulgence occurred after the Peace of Westphalia. Germany, then, decimated and desolate, was so depopulated that the Franconian Estates legalized bigamy. Every man was permitted two wives. Meanwhile barbarism had returned. Domestic life had ceased. Respect for women had gone. Love had died with religion. From the nervous strain recovery was slow. It was a century before the pulse of the people was normal. Previously love, better idealized by the Minnesänger than by the minstrel, had been put on a pedestal from which convulsive conditions shook it. Later, when it arose again, it was in two forms which, while distinct, were not opposed. In one was the influence of France, in the other the native Schwärmerei. The former affected kings, the latter appealed to urbaner folk among whom it induced an attitude that was maudlin when not anarchistic. The anarchistic attitude was represented by artists generally. For these love had no laws and its one approach was the swift current running from New Friendship to Tenderness-on-Inclination. Similarly the conservatives landed at a village that Clélie overlooked, Tenderness-on-Sympathy, a spot where, through sheer contagion, everybody engaged in duels of emotion during which principals and seconds fell on each other's neck, wept, embraced, swore affection auf immerdar—beyond the tomb and, in the process, discovered elective affinities, the Wahlverwandtschaften of which Gœthe later told, relationships of choice that were also anarchistic.

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[1] Menzel: Germany.

The influence of France brooded over courts. At Versailles love strolled on red heels through a minuet. In the grosser atmosphere of the German Residenzen it kicked a chahut in sabots. In all the world there was but one Versailles. In Germany there were a hundred imitations, gaunt, gilded, hideous barracks where Louis Quatorze was aped. In one of them, at Karlsruhe, the Margrave Karl Wilhelm peopled a Teuton Trianon with nameless nymphs. In another, at Dresden, the Elector Augustus of Saxony became the father of three hundred and fifty children. At Mannheim, Bayreuth, Stuttgart, Brunswick, Darmstadt, license was such that the Court of Charles the Second would have seemed by comparison puritan. Beyond them, outside their gates and garden vistas, the people starved or, more humanely, were whipped off in herds to fight and die on the Rhine and Danube. But within, at the various Wilhelmshöhe and Ludwigslust, kinglets danced with their Frauen. At Versailles it was to the air of Amaryllis that the minuet was walked. In the German Residenzen it was to the odor of schnapps that women chahuted.

The women lacked beauty. They lacked the grace of the Latin, the charm of the Slav, the overgrown angel look of the English, the prettiness that the American has achieved. But in girlhood generally they were endearing, almost cloying, naturally constant and, when otherwise, made so by man and the spectacle of court corruption.

European courts have always supplied the neighborhood with standards of morals and manners. Those of eighteenth-century Germany were coarse. The tone of society was similar. "Berlin," an observer wrote, "is a town where, if fortis may be construed honest, there is neither vir fortis nec fœmina casta. The example of neglect of all moral and social duties raised before the eyes of the people by the king show them vice too advantageously.[1] In other words and in another tongue, similar remarks were made of Hanover.[2] From there came George the First. After him trooped his horrible Herrenhausen harem.

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[1] Earl Malmesbury's Diaries and Correspondence.

[2] Scherr: Deutsche Kulturgeschichte.

Since the departure of Charles the Second, London life had been relatively genteel. Throughout the Georgian period it was the reverse. The memoirs of the period echo still with shouts and laughter, with loud, loose talk, with toasts bawled over brimming cups, with the noise of feasting, of gaming and of pleasure. The pages turn to the sound of fiddles. From them arises the din of an immense Sir Roger de Coverley, in which the dancers go up and down, interchanging hearts and then all hands round together. In England at the time a king, however vulgar, was superterrestrial, a lord was sacro-sanct, a gentleman holy and a lady divine.

The rest of the world was composed of insects, useful, obsequious, parasitic that swarmed beneath a social order less coarse than that of Germany, less amiable than that of France, but as dissolute and reckless as either, a society of macaronis and rouged women, of wits and prodigals, of dare-devils and fatted calves, a life of low scandals in high places, of great fortunes thrown into the gutter, of leisurely suppers and sudden elopements—runaways that had in their favor the poetry of the post-chaise, pistol-shots through the windows and the dignity of danger—a life mad but not maudlin, not sober but strong, free from hysteria and sentimentality, and in which, apart from the bacchanalian London world, there must have been room, as there always is, for real love and much sweetness besides, yet which, in its less alluring aspect was very faithfully followed by colonial New York. Meanwhile the world that made the pace and kept it, saw it reflected back from boards and books, in plays and novels, some of which are not now even mentionable. That pace, set by a boozing sovereign is summarizable in a scene that occurred at the death-bed of Queen Caroline, when the latter told old George II. to marry again, while he blubbered: "Non, non, j'aurai des maîtresses," and she retorted, "Ah! mon Dieu! Cela n'empêche pas."[1]

These Germans talked French. It was the fashion, one adopted in servile homage of the Grand Monarque. At the latter's departure the Regency came. With the Restoration England turned a moral handspring. With the Regency, France turned a double one. The Regency was the first act of the Revolution. The second was Louis Quinze. The third was the Guillotine—a climax for which great ladies rehearsed that they might die, as they had lived, with grace.

Moscow, meanwhile, was a bloody sewer, Vienna a reconstruction of the cities that overhung the

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[1] Hervey: Memoirs.

Bitter Sea. In Paris were the beginnings of humanitarianism, the commencements of to-day, preludes quavering and uncertain, hummed over things intolerably base, but none the less audible, none the less there. In them was the dawn of liberty, the rebirth of real love, an explosion of evil but also of good.

Said Tartuffe:

> Le scandale du monde est ce qui fait l'offense
> Et ce n'est pas pécher que pécher en silence.

Under the Maintenon régime the theory had been very fully exploited. Multiple turpitudes were committed but in the dark. Under the Regency they occurred openly, unhypocritically, in the daylight. The mud that was there was dried by the sun. It ceased to be unwholesome. Though vile it was not vicious. Moreover, in the air was a carnival gayety, put there by the Regent, who, while not the best man in the world was not the worst, an artistic Lovelace that gave the tone to a Neronian society, already in dissolution, one that Law tossed into the Niagara of bankruptcy and Cartouche held up, a society of which Béranger said:

> Tous les hommes plaisantaient,
> Et les femmes se prêtaient
> A la gaudriole.

Mme. de Longueville being in the country was asked, would she hunt. Mme. de Longueville did not care for hunting. Would she fish, would she walk, would she drive? No, she would not. Mme. de Longueville did not care for innocent pleasures. Mme. de Longueville was a typical woman of the day. Life to such as she was a perpetual bal d'opéra and love, the image of Fragonard's Cupid, who, in the picture of the Chemise enlevée, divested it of modesty with a smirk.[1]

Modesty then was neither appreciated nor ingrained. The instinct of it was lacking. It was a question of pins, a thing attachable or detachable at will. Women of position received not necessarily in a drawing-room, or even in a boudoir but in bed. In art and literature there was an equal sans-gêne. In affairs of the heart there was an equivalent indifference. There was no romance, no dream, no beyond. Chivalric ideals were regarded as mediæval bric-a-brac and fine sentiments as rubbish. Even gallantry with its mimic of being jealous and its pretended constancy was vieux jeu. Love, or what passed for it, had become a fugitive caprice, lightly assumed and as readily discarded, without prejudice to either party.

On s'enlace. Puis, un jour,
On s'en lasse. C'est l'amour.

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[1] Goncourt: La Femme au dix-huitième siècle.

It had, however, other descents, a fall to depths of which history hitherto had been ignorant. Meanwhile the Regent had gone. Louis XV had come. With him were the real sovereigns of the realm, Mme. de Chateauroux, Petticoat I; the Pompadour, Petticoat II; the Du Barry, Petticoat III—legitimatized queens of love, with courts of their own, with the rights, prerogatives and immunities of princesses of the blood, the privilege of dwelling with the king, of receiving foreign ambassadors and of pillaging France.

"Sire," said Choiseul, "the people are starving." Louis XV answered: "I am bored."

The boredom came from precocious pleasures that had left him, without energy or conviction, a cold, dreary brute, Asiatic and animal, a sort of Oriental idol gloomy and gilded, who, while figuratively a spoke in the wheel of monarchy then rolling down to '89, personally was a minotaur in a feminine labyrinth which he filled, emptied, renewed, indifferent to the inmates as he was to his wife,[1] wringing for the various Petticoats prodigal sums from a desolate land, supplying incidentally to fermiers généraux and grands seigneurs an example in Tiberianism which, assured of immunity, they greedily followed and, generally, making himself so loathed that when he died, delight was national.

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[1] "Il lui fit sept enfants sans lui dire un mot."—d'Argenson.

It was in those days that Casanova promenaded through palace and cottage, convent and inn, inveigling in the course of the promenade three thousand women, princesses and soubrettes, abbesses and ballet girls, matrons and maids. The promenade, which was a continuous sin, he recited at length in his memoirs. During the recital you see a hideous old man, slippered and slovenly, fumbling in a box in which are faded ribbons, rumpled notes, souvenirs and gages d'amour.

Richelieu was another of that type which the example of the throne had created and which de Sade alone eclipsed. It was then there appeared in Petersburg, in Vienna, in London, wherever society was, a class of men, who depraved women for the pleasure of it, and a class of women who destroyed men for destruction's sake, men and women who were the hyenas of love, monsters whose treachery was premeditated and malignant, and who, their object attained, departed with a laugh, leaving behind but ruin. Ruin was insufficient. Something acuter was required. That something was found by de Sade.

In ways which Bluebeard had but outlined, the Marquis de Sade, lineal descendant of Petrarch's Laura, mingled kisses with blood. Into affection he put fright, into love he struck terror, he set the infernal in the divine.

It was the logical climax to which decadence had groped and to it already the austere guillotine was attending.

There love touched bottom. It could not go lower. But though it could and did remount it did not afterward reach higher altitudes than those to which it had previously ascended. In the eighteenth century the possible situations of its infinite variety were, at least temporarily, exhausted. Thereafter the frailties of great ladies, the obscurer liaisons of lesser ones, attachments perfect and imperfect, loves immaculate and the reverse, however amply set forth, disclose no new height. As the pages of chronicles turn and faces emerge, lovers appear and vanish. In the various annals of different lands their amours, pale or fervid as the case may be, differ perhaps but only in atmosphere and accessories. On antecedent types no advance is accomplished. Recitals of them cease to enlighten. Love had become what it has since remained, a harper strumming familiar airs, strains hackneyed if delicate, melodies very old but always new, so novel even that they seem original. To the music of it history discloses fresher mouths, further smiles, tears and kisses. History will always do that. Wrongly is it said that it repeats itself. Except with love it never does. In life as in death change is the one thing constant. Between them love alone stands changeless. Since it first appeared it has had many costumes, a wardrobe of tissues of every hue. But in character it has not altered. Influences favorable or prejudicial might degrade it or exalt. In abasements and assumptions love, like beauty, being one and indivisible, remained unchangeably love. What varied was the costume.

X

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

"To renounce your individuality, to see with another's eyes, to hear with another's ears, to be two and yet but one, to so melt and mingle that you no longer know are you you or another, to constantly absorb and constantly radiate, to reduce earth, sea, and sky and all that in them is to a single being, to give yourself to that being so wholly that nothing whatever is withheld, to be prepared at any moment for any sacrifice, to double your personality in bestowing it—that is love."

So Gautier wrote, very beautifully as was his beautiful custom. But in this instance inexactly. That is not love. It is a description, in gold ink, of one of love's many costumes. Every poet has provided one. All give images and none the essence. Yet that essence is the sphinx's riddle. Its only Œdipus is philosophy.

Philosophy teaches that the two fundamental principles of thought are self-preservation and the preservation of the species. Every idea that has existed or does exist in the human mind is the result of the permutations and combinations of these two principles and their derivatives. Of the two the second is the stronger. Its basis is a sentiment which antiquity deified, primitive Christianity scorned, chivalry nimbused and the Renaissance propelled over the paths easy or perilous which it has since pursued. But into the precise nature of that sentiment metaphysics alone has looked. Plato was the first that analyzed it. For the few thereafter the rich courses of his Banquet sufficed. They regaled themselves on it. But for humanity at large, to whom the feast was Greek, there was only the descriptions of poets and the knowledge, agreeable or otherwise, which personal experience supplied. In either case the noumenon, the Ding an sich, the thing in itself, escaped. It was too tenuous perhaps for detention or else too obvious. Plato himself did not grasp it.

The omission Schopenhauer discerned. Schopenhauer was an idealist. The forms of matter and of man he arranged in two categories, which he called Representation and Will. In his system of philosophy everything not produced by the one is the result of the other. Among the effects of the latter is love.[1]

This frivolity—the term is Schopenhauer's—is, he declared, a manifestation of the Genius of the Species, who, behind a mask of objective admiration, deludes the individual into mistaking for his own happiness that which in reality concerns but the next generation. Love is Will projecting itself into the creation of another being and the precise instant in which that being emerges from the original source of whatever is into the possibilities of potential existence, is the very moment in which two young people begin to fancy each other. The seriousness with which on first acquaintance they consider each other is due to an unconscious meditation concerning the child that they might create. The result of the meditation determines the degree of their reciprocal inclinations. That degree established, the new being becomes comparable to a new idea. As is the case with all ideas it makes an effort to manifest itself. In the strength of the effort is the measure of the attraction. Its degrees are infinite while its extremes are represented by Venus Pandemos and Venus Urania—ordinary passion and exalted affection. But in its essence love is always and everywhere the same, a meditation on the composition of the next generation and the generations that thence proceed—*Meditatio compositionis generationis futuræ e qua iterum pendent innumeræ generationes.*

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[1] Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung.

The character of the meditation, its durability or impermanence, is, Schopenhauer continued, in direct proportion to the presence of attributes that attract. These attributes are, primarily, physical. Attraction is induced by health, by beauty, particularly by youth, in which health and beauty are usually combined, and that because the Genius of the Species desires above all else the creation of beings that will live and who, in living, will conform to an integral type. After the physical come mental and temperamental attributes, all of which, in themselves, are insufficient to establish love except on condition of more or less perfect conformity between the parties. But as two people absolutely alike do not exist, each one is obliged to seek in another those qualities which conflict least with his or her own. In the difficulty of finding them is the rarity of real love. In connection with which Schopenhauer noted that frequently two people, apparently well adapted to one another, are, instead of being attracted, repelled, the reason being that any child they might have would be mentally or physically defective. The antipathy which they experience is induced by the Genius of the Species who has in view only the interests of the next generation.

To conserve these interests, nature, Schopenhauer explained, dupes the individual with an illusion of free will. In affairs of the heart the individual believes that he is acting in his own behalf, for his own personal benefit, whereas he is but acting in accordance with a predetermined purpose for the accomplishment of which nature has instilled in him an instinct that moves him to her ends, and so forcibly that rather than fail he is sometimes compelled to sacrifice what otherwise he would do his utmost to preserve—honor, health, wealth and reputation. It is illusion that sets before his eyes the deceiving image of felicity. It is illusion which convinces him that union with some one person will procure it. Whatever efforts or sacrifices he may consequently make he will believe are made to that end only yet he is but laboring for the creation of a predetermined being who has need of his assistance to arrive into life. But, once the work of nature accomplished, disenchantment ensues. The illusion that duped him has vanished.

According to Schopenhauer love is, therefore, but the manifestation of an instinct which, influenced by the spirit of things, irresistibly attracts two people who, through natural conformity, are better adapted to conjointly fulfil nature's aims than they would be with other partners. Schopenhauer added that in such circumstances, when two individuals complete each other and common and exclusive affection possesses them both, their affection represents a special mission delegated by the Genius of the Species, one which consequently assumes a character of high elevation. In these cases, in addition to physical adaptation there is, he noted, a mental and temperamental concordance so adjusted that the parties alone could have achieved nature's aims. In actuating them to that end the Genius of the Species desired, for reasons which Schopenhauer described as inaccessible, the materialization of a particular being that could not otherwise appear. In the series of existing beings that desire had no other sphere of action than the hearts of the future parents. The latter, seized by the impulsion, believe that they want for themselves that which as yet is but purely metaphysical, or, in other words, beyond the circle of actually existing things. In this manner, from the original source of whatever is, there then darts a new being's aspiration for life which aspiration manifests itself in the actuality of things by the love of its potential parents, who, however, once the object of the Genius of the Species attained, find, to their entire astonishment, that that love is no more. But meanwhile, given that love, and the potential parents may become so obsessed by it that they will disregard anything which, ordinarily, would interfere.

This disregard, Schopenhauer further explained, is due to the Genius of the Species to whom the personal interests of the individual, laws, obstacles, differences of position, social barriers and human conventions are so many straws. Caring only for the generation to be lightly he dismisses them. It is his privilege, Schopenhauer declared. Our existence being rooted in him, he has over us a right anterior and more immediate than all things else. His interests are supreme.

"That point," Schopenhauer concluded, "antiquity perfectly understood when it personified the Genius of the Species as Eros, a divinity who, in spite of his infantile air, is hostile, cruel, despotic, demoniac and none the less master of gods and of man.

'Tu, deorum hominumque tyranne, Amor!'"

For a philosopher Schopenhauer is very graphic. It is his great charm and possibly his sole defect. In the superabundance of his imagination there was not always room for the matter of fact. Then too he had a theory. Everything had to yield to it. The trait, common to all metaphysicians, von Hartmann shared. In the latter's *Philosophie des Unbewussten* the Genius of the Species becomes the Unconscious, the same force with a different name, a sort of anthropomorphic entity lurking on the back stairs of Spencer's Unknowable and from there ruling omnipotently the lives and loves of man.

Both systems are ingenious. They are profound and they are admirable. They have been respectfully received by the doct. But in their metaphysics of the heart there is a common error. Each confounds instinct with sentiment. Moreover, assuming the validity of their hypothetical idol, there are phenomena left unexplained, the ordinary case for instance of an individual inspiring but not requiting another's love. In one of the two parties to it the entity obviously has erred. According to Schopenhauer and von Hartmann the entity is the unique cause of love, which itself is an instinct that deludes into the furtherment of nature's aims. But in an unrequited affection such furtherment is impossible. In which event if philosophy is not at fault the entity must be; the result being that it lacks the omnipotence claimed. Demonstrably it has some power, it is even clear that that power is great, but in the same sense that occultists deny that death is, so may true lovers deny that the entity exists. For them it is not. Without doubt it is the modern philosophic representative of Eros, but of Eros Pandemos, son and heir of the primitive Aphrodite whom Plato described.

Love does not proceed from that source. The instinct of it certainly does but not sentiment which is its basis. Commonly instinct and sentiment are confused. But, if a distinction be effected between their manifestations, it will be recognized that though desire is elemental in both, in instinct desire is paramount while in sentiment it is secondary and frequently, particularly in the case of young women, it is dormant when not absent, even though they may be what is termed "wildly in love." Instinct is a primitive and general instigation, coeval and conterminous with life. Love is a specific emotion, exclusive in selection, more or less permanent in duration and due to a mental fermentation in itself caused by a law of attraction, which Plato called imeros and Voltaire the myth of happiness invented by Satan for man's despair.

Imeros is the longing for love. The meditation which Schopenhauer described may enter there, and usually does, whether or not the parties interested are aware of it. But it need not necessarily do so. When Héloïse was in her convent there could have been no such meditation, yet she loved Abailard as fervently as before. Moreover, when the work of nature is accomplished, disenchantment does not, as Schopenhauer insisted, invariably ensue. Disenchantment results when the accomplishing is due to instinct but not when sentiment is the cause. Had instinct alone prevailed humanity would hardly have arisen from its primitive state. But the evolution of the sentiment of love, in developing the law of attraction, lifted men from animality, angels from the shames of Ishtar, and heightened the stature of the soul.

The advance effected is as notable as it is obvious, but its final term is probably still remote. Ages ago the sphinx was disinterred from beneath masses of sand under which it had brooded interminably. In its simian paws, its avian wings, in its body which is that of an animal, in its face which it that of a sage, before Darwin, before history, in traits great and grave, the descent of man was told.

There remains his ascent. Future monuments may tell it. Meanwhile evolution has not halted. Undiscernibly but indefatigably its advance proceeds. Its culmination is not in existing types. If humanity descends from apes, from humanity gods may emerge. The story of Olympus is but a tale of what might have been and what might have been may yet come to pass. Even now, if the story were true and the old gods could return, it is permissible to assume that they would evaporate to ghostland eclipsed. The inextinguishable laughter which was theirs is absent from the prose of life. Commerce has alarmed their afflatus away. But the telegraph is a better messenger than they had, the motor is surer than their chariots of dream. In contemporary homes they could have better fare than ambrosia and behold faces beside which some of their own might seem less divine. The prodigies of electricity might appear to them more potent than the thunderbolts of Zeus and, at the sight of modern engines, possibly they would recall the titans with whom once they warred and sink back to their sacred seas outfaced.

In the same manner that we have exceeded them it is also permissible to assume that posterity will exceed what we have done. From its parturitions gods may really come, beings that is, who, could contemporaneous man remain to behold them, would regard him as he regards the ape.

That advance, if effected, love will achieve. In its history, already long, yet relatively brief, it has changed the face of the earth. It has transformed laws and religions. It has reversed and reconstructed every institution human and divine. As yet its evolution is incomplete. But when the final term is reached, then, doubtless, the words of the Apocalypse shall be realized, for all things will have been made anew.

FINIS HISTORIÆ AMORIS

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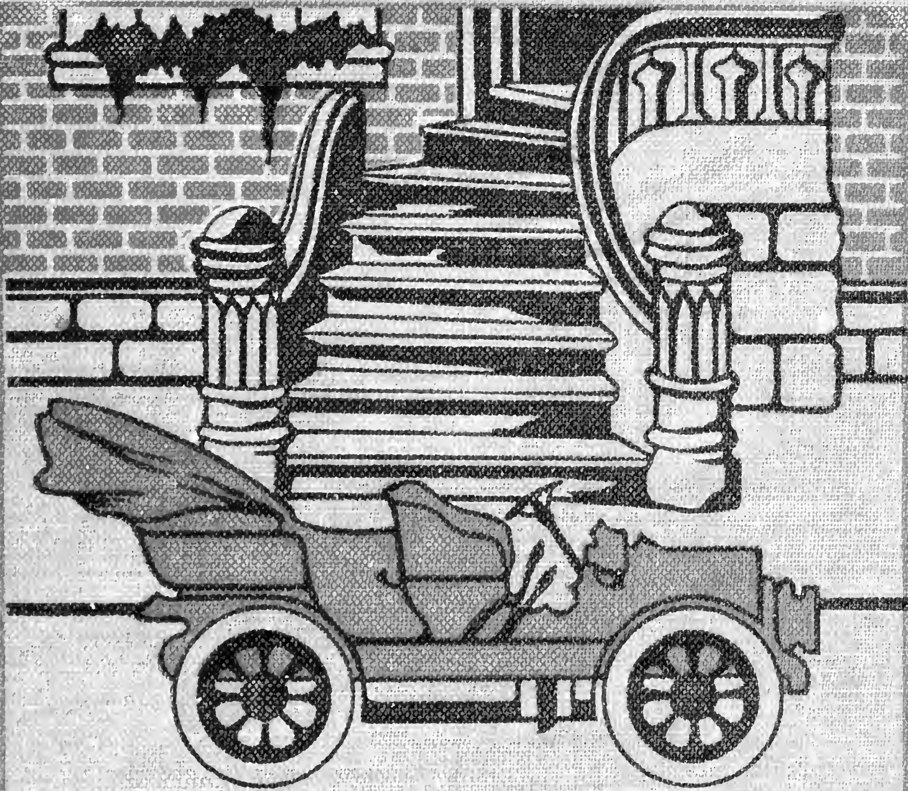

Vanity Square

Edgar Saltus

First Edition

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VANITY SQUARE

A STORY OF FIFTH AVENUE LIFE

BY

EDGAR SALTUS

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
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1906

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PART I

THE MAN WHO DID NOT EXIST

VANITY SQUARE

I.

WHEN the last guest had gone, Uxhill, with a yawn of boredom unrelieved, dropped in a chair.

"Add six zeros and see what they come to. Add sixty. Add six hundred. The result is the same. They amount to nothing."

He looked at the ceiling. It was charming. Cupids sprawled there, laughing idly at the carpet beneath. He looked at his wife. She, too, was charming. Although the mother of a big-little girl, she seemed a girl herself. He looked about the room. It was charming also, long and wide, fitted with things harmonious. They bored him.

"Nothing," he repeated. Gloomily he considered his fingers. "Instead of pottering away in New York, we might be in Cairo, in Java, in Peru. But you won't go anywhere. Supposing we do happen to have a few pennies. Every one else has. They are the essentials of existence. But without something more, something to take you out of yourself, they have the value of zeros. String them out all you like. The sum total is nothing."

Maud Uxhill got from her seat. Her not going anywhere must have been an exaggeration. In any event it could not have included the dressmaker. Her frock, the color of fried smelt, was distinctly ruedelapaixian. She kissed the palm of her hand and waved it at him. Then down the room she sauntered.

Uxhill watched her. She had the face of a fay, the waist of a willis, hair of burnt orange, and vesuvian eyes. At a piano presently she was strumming something, a strain sweet and sad and slow, haunting and cloying, one that suggested a minuet of lovers who already are ceasing to love.

For a moment it detained his thoughts, then vaporizing them, it took him back years before to the torrid August day when from his yacht he had landed at the hot little village on the Massachusetts coast, met her, wooed her violently, and on that yacht of his, like a pirate, had carried her away.

The rapture of the midsummer highwayry lay in his memory, green as the ocean and relatively just as strong. It had, too, its proper and relieving touch of the grotesque, the consternation of a cleric further down the coast, noisily awakened at midnight to wed them,—a tall, pale, white old man, who, in the shadows of candles suddenly arranged, looked like a ghost with a stomach-ache, and whom Uxhill bundled through the service with a haste which he denounced as "positively, sir, indecent."

That, though, in view of his cloth and its indulgence, ultimately, no doubt, he forgave. To forgive is always easy. But it is particularly easy to forgive youth and beauty ardent and rash. Only ardent youth and rash beauty are not afterward invariably so forgiving to themselves. What is worse, occasionally there are others still more unrelenting.

Maud's father, a cleric himself, a bishop-to-boot, a Massachusetts bishop; Bishop Upjohn, whose people—when such people were—believed in witches and burned them, too, would have none of Uxhill. Uxhill's name, a trifle unusual, was at the start against him. Had it been Brown now, or Jones or Robinson, or even all three, it may be that the bishop would not at the time have caught on, and if later he did get his bearings, why, then, in the interim, instead of the "I disown you" which he flung after his daughter, the girl would have had his blessing and, all things being possible, his prayers for the best.

But Uxhill had figured in press accounts of certain social and highly uncivil proceedings that now and then occur in the upper circles of New York life. In so figuring he had been represented as a man about town, which, without being quite sure of our Latinity, we may assume is a loose fish; he had been further represented as etcetera and so forth, which cover whatever you like, or, as it happened in this case, everything that the bishop particularly abhorred.

The bishop, sharp-sighted, was hard of hearing. Uxhill had been in the village four days and in and out of the bishop's house forty times before the latter got his name straight. When he did point blank he let fire. "Are you the man who and so forth etcetera?"

Uxhill admitted that he was the man, but denied that he was etcetera and so forth. As a matter of fact he was not. That, though, for the moment is a detail. It was not, however, a detail to the bishop. It was an aggravation. When he saw a statement in print he believed it. We are many of us quite like him. Believing what he had read and regarding the denial as on a par with the rest, "What, then, may I ask," he immediately and menacingly inquired, "is the object of your visit?"

"Your daughter," was Uxhill's unemollient reply.

The bishop, flaming and furious, showed him the door, a very pretty door, the prettiest in the village, one well worth being shown. But Uxhill did not stop to admire. Straight out, his head in the air, he marched. On the other side was Maud. It was then the highwayry occurred. Without a thing save the clothes on her back, and the "I disown you" flung after like a slipper, violently he carried her off and that night, the indignant cleric in the shadows and candles officiating, made her his own.

It was all like some predatory swoop of a Barbary bey, hallowed only by the brief mad wooing of the lovely girl who had loved Uxhill as suddenly and as insanely as he loved her.

As the strain, haunting and cloying, that told of lovers who are ceasing to love, drifted from the piano to him, it must have stirred a memory, awakened an echo. The recollection of the rapture returned. Time had not dulled it. He still loved the girl who had loved him. Better even than before. But,—for a but there is always.

Epictetus, who knew a good deal more than most of us, said that we should wish things to be as they are. The majority of us want things to be as they are not: There is the main source of common boredom, individual exasperation, and general progress. It is foolish, but it is human. Uxhill, who was a poet and consequently unfitted to balance himself on the tight-ropes of philosophy, rebelled at life, or, more exactly, at the life to which circumstances had condemned him. However censorious, we cannot blame him for that. The metropolitan existence of a man of means and no occupation is the most maddening that civilization has devised,—a form of earthly damnation in which you are forced to consort with people who have scandals and stocks for sole topics, and, what is worse, for sole joys. Uxhill abominated it. Like a bull in a stall with garlands on his horns, instead of blood, he felt that from the heath he had been banished. He complained of it. His complaining did not stop there. His sister, a lady who had married the last of the Gemine, and who lived with her prince abroad, jeered at him for a stick-in-the-mud. He knew, or, what amounts to the same thing, he thought he knew, that the jeer was deserved. The chef in his kitchen, the footman in the hall, the grooms and the horses in the stable, wearied him. He was tired of the whole lot. But what irked him most was his durance in the precinct in which he lived, and which, with Central Park on one side, Madison Avenue on the other, Seventy-second Street for frontier, and the Plaza for approach, is colloquially known as Vanity Square.

And so it fell about that his house, together with the life that he led in it, bored him, and of that boredom he complained.

He complained, though, to indolent ears. Maud, innately epictetian, was satisfied with things as they were. Other lands, other scenes with adventures concomitant might be agreeable or the reverse, she had no wish for them. The easy, uneventful routine of her days contented her completely. She was happy in it, and that happiness radiated from her in the serenity of unalterable smiles.

You cannot fight very well with people who won't fight back. Against cheerfulness complaints are impotent. Conscious of which, Uxhill, homesick for the windy heath, for the bold, roving life of wild beasts, bellowed in his stall, but he bellowed at a ceiling on which cupids sprawled.

The cupids paid no attention to him. Maud paid none either. At his initial fractiousness she had tried to argue. It was just what he wanted. It was no trouble to him whatever; on the contrary, it was a pleasure to prove to her that two and two make five, which perhaps after all they do. Discerning which, thereafter she kissed a hand at him and sauntered away.

Women are the very devil, he announced to the cupids on discovering how he was being led. But the announcement, though true, was not otherwise of any value. It did not alter a situation which, being wholly to Maud's liking, she omitted to disturb.

At first, before the big-little girl was born, they had gone out. To Uxhill it was the thing to do. But, when the child came, Maud let go. She had supped on society, she declared. By that time Uxhill, too, had had his fill. He had become quite domestic, and not as some men are, in the homes of other people, but in his own. He preferred it to any other, and so preferring, preferred also to have Maud to himself.

At this preference a woman less in love would have been annoyed, a woman more worldly would have been alarmed. Both would have known that men weary of all dishes, particularly of the best, especially when served at each meal. But that fact, however commonplace, Maud did not grasp. In her past experience there had been nothing to prepare her for it. The accessories and surroundings of her girlhood had been too Puritan for such epicureanism. To her father it would have been just so much Coptic. The girl's mother had long been dead; she was without sisters or brothers, and her friends, although

Bostonians and therefore supposedly learned, were winsomely ignorant, as winsome girls should be, that one can have ever a surfeit of sweets. Then also, though the Puritan flower transplanted bloomed with fresh beauty in Vanity Square, and although the flower united in itself every sort of suave perfume, serenity, sympathy, sweetness, and strength, yet that odor, a trifle heady, which we call worldliness, this Massachusetts rose never exhaled. It was her great defect, one that directly precipitated the drama which these pages unfold.

Meanwhile, that preference of Uxhill neither annoyed nor alarmed. On the contrary. Of her many pleasures the chiefest was the fact that he had no other occupation than herself. In Wall Street he had a big box to which he went infrequently, and from which laboriously he cut coupons. That practically was his sole toil. In Rhode Island, where he was born and where his predecessors had accumulated a very large fortune, he and his sister had interests which, conveniently, were managed for them. Otherwise he had no business or pursuits. Maud liked that. She liked to feel that thus it would be always, into the remotest future, until they both were dead.

So it was that she loved a life which to a woman more worldly would have been unendurable. In its uniformity was its charm. In winter there was this house in the upper sixties. In summer there was a villa on the sea. Maud's ambition did not extend beyond the monotony of those dual homes. The crumpled roseleaf of her life had come when at the monotony he had rebelled and tried to persuade her that they would both be better off in some place other than where they were. But with the conservatism of a woman who really loves she shrank from fresh fields, from the distracting forms and faces there. Now and then she had people in to dine. Now and then she and Uxhill dined out. Apart from that nothing there was to disturb the closely guarded atmosphere that she loved save only the roseleaf, latterly crumpled afresh each day and each day smoothed anew.

When this drama begins she was smoothing it again with a slow, cloying air from which now at last little quivering bubbles of gayety emerged, and, as her fingers strayed from one strain into another, a woman with gimlet eyes, tall, angular, prim as a Puritan Sunday, appeared at the drawing-room door.

Maud, without staying the notes, beckoned her with an uplift of the chin.

"What is it, Nora?"

The woman bent to her, whispering something. She had been her nurse, now she was nurse to her child.

Maud looked over at Uxhill, motioned Nora away, stood up, followed her. But presently she reappeared.

"Gerald," she said in the low, sweet voice that was hers, "ring up Sayce. Mowgy is ill."

II.

MOWGY was in a little bright bed. She was six years old. Her hair, the color of ripe chestnuts, was abundant. Her eyes of porcelain blue, charged ordinarily with question-marks and mischief, now were troubled. Their long lashes drooped heavily.

The room, large, high-ceiled, gave to the south and west. Opposite the bed was a mantel on which roamed a herd of elephants in ivory, guarded by minute ivory men. Beneath was a doll-house that contained many things, infinitely precious, which Mowgy allowed no one but herself to touch. Nearby, in little chairs, a harem of dolls sat upright. They were all very dear, as a rule, very good, and, according as Mowgy regarded their behavior, so, in turn, were they rewarded by sharing her bed. But they must have all misbehaved that day. There were none of them with her.

That afternoon she had returned from the park listless, without appetite for bread and butter; symptoms of which Maud, who had been out, was ignorant. But not Nora. When Maud did return, she had to hurry. There were guests that evening. Later, the guests gone, the symptoms accentuating, the alarm was given. Then shortly Sayce came.

Sayce, general practitioner in Vanity Square, had a face in which there was not a line, a profusion of white hair, a skin of brick, and an air of such immateriality that you would have said a breath and he would blow away. He was a great friend of the Uxhills. He was a great friend of everybody. Without being a wizard, he understood himself;

what was better, his patients. When the latter were little people he added to these advantages the further ability of understanding their parents. It takes a physician to do the one, a psychologist to do the other. Sayce boasted he was both. But the boast was always attenuated by the admission that he was not infallible. In the present instance he was uncertain. Methodically but swiftly he had examined the child.

"Perhaps but a cold," he announced to Uxhill and Maud, indicating as he did so the usual remedies, recommending the usual precautions, displaying the usual smile.

"Goodnight, Mowgy," he added.

But the child's thoughts were occupied with other things than civilities.

"When I grow up will I be sick and disagreeable and married?" she anxiously asked.

"Not if you go to sleep and take now what Nora gives you."

"And to-morrow may I play with my dollies?"

"To-morrow, if you lie very still and don't talk, you may do anything you like," Sayce, in his uncertainty, answered.

But diphtheria was very prevalent just then. The possibility of it he disclosed to the Uxhills.

"In which case," he resumed, as they passed from the room, "I will get you Miss Sixmith, who knows quite as much as I do; in some things, more."

"Sixmith!" Uxhill repeated. "Is she any connection of the Canadian scientist?"

"His daughter."

"But—"

"I know. A man like that! How is it that his daughter is a trained nurse? Everybody asks the same thing. But he is dead, and he died bankrupt. Bacteriologists are not financiers."

"He left nothing, then?"

"Not even his title. For the British Government made a peer of this man—who had none, in his own particular line; that is, save perhaps Pasteur. But, as he had no male heir, the title lapsed. Though, by courtesy, his daughter is, of course, the Honorable Miss Sixmith. You would not suspect it, however. She is a plain-spoken girl, without airs or pretences. She knows her duties and attends to them."

"Ugliness and antiseptics unadorned," said Uxhill. "I can see her and I can smell her from here. But perhaps—"

"Perhaps, as you say," Sayce interrupted, "you may be spared the infliction. I shall know better shortly. Did you hear about Besalul?"

They had reached the hall below, where a footman was helping the physician with his coat.

Sayce, buttoning his gloves, continued: "The day before yesterday, Besalul came in with Madame from a drive. She went upstairs. He looked over an evening paper. The butler announced dinner. Besalul sent him after Madame. The butler could not find her. Nobody has been able to since. How? Why? You know as much as I do. Jones told me about it at dinner."

"Yoda Jones?" Maud asked.

"Yes, he and I were dining together at the Athenæum Club."

"When you see him next," said Maud, "tell him that he neglects me shamefully."

"I shall abuse him for it properly," the physician answered.

Then he, too, vanished.

"I know Besalul," Uxhill announced as he and Maud reëntered the drawing-room. "He is just so much buttered toast and he married some mush-and-milk from Cleveland."

"What a delightful union," Maud absently replied.

"The point is that the milk appears to have turned. I suppose it wanted a change. By the way, a change might do Mowgy good."

"Yes, dear, we will see what Sayce says to-morrow. But I must go to her. You stop here. I will be back in a little while."

Like the Besalul of the tale, Uxhill gathered up an evening paper. It bored him. He threw it down, entered the dining-room, a charming extension of the charming house; rummaged about, found a cigar and lit it.

The lighting occurred before a mirror

that ran up from the floor between two wide windows. In it he looked at himself. What he saw was superiorly satisfactory. Without being good-looking, he was good to look at,—tall, bright, obviously high-strung. Even in the colorlessness of evening-dress he had an air of polished peremptoriness, the appearance of one accustomed to be immediately obeyed. That appearance, joined to his manner, which, when not earnest, was urbanely contemptuous, had, in the bad buccaneer days, effected plenty of execution.

But since the final highwayry, this corsair, who in earlier nights had written a sequence of sonnets that is quoted still, had become so tame that the bishop, had he known, might perhaps have forgiven. The elopement had been simply outrageous. Time, though, is a great emollient. But, Boston and New York are fully five hours apart. The bishop had little affection for trains and less for Vanity Square. Having disowned his daughter, he stuck to it, salving his conscience, if he had a conscience, by wondering occasionally whether she had repented. Before he found out, other and more momentous matters ensued.

Coming events, we are told, cast their shadows before. But it is wrong to believe everything we hear. Destiny has no messengers, or, if it have, it does not use them. It is too cruel for that or too kind. As Uxhill turned from the mirror he was as ignorant as the bishop of what the morrow held. He knew only that the day was tedious. The substance of it was expressed in the six zeros at which he had flouted. Their nothingness irked. With the imagination from which the sonnets had resulted, he compared himself to a *pot-au-feu* with wings. At the epoch when the verses were shaping themselves he had sailed the Ægean, skirted Paphos, visited Cytherea, loitered among the lovely shrines. Latterly they had been claiming him and this not because, to put it delicately, he was contemplating any migratory system of domestic experiences, but simply and solely because he was bored. We always want what we lack. The hour was not remote when he was to look back on the tranquillity which induced the boredom as life's full delight.

Even then it was departing. That night Mowgy grew worse. Shortly thereafter the suspicion of Sayce was confirmed. Toxæmia appeared, diphtheria with it; Miss Sixmith as well.

III.

IT is the opinion of moralists that when a girl has succeeded in being good-looking she has fulfilled every duty in life. This opinion was one which the Honorable Miss Sixmith made it very obvious that she did not share. When Uxhill first saw her he was conscious of a new conception of beauty. His trained eye followed her. But to such things she was used.

The fact that her appearance was uncommon, even as a child, strangers turning after her on the street had made her aware. It had made her aware, too, of the pleasure of long meditations before the looking-glass that showed back the perfect profile of her perfect face. In these meditations she got at times so close to the glass that the vapor of her breath, obscuring it, hid her from herself. She rubbed it off and looked again.

The pleasure was too puerile to endure. But admiration, always ambient and sometimes audible, she trailed as a torch trails smoke. It gratified her greatly until, as she matured, it provoked advances,—attempts at acquaintance so odious that when she went out unaccompanied she went veiled, forced to hide her beauty as though instead of a glory it were a shame.

These things she confided to Maud, not at once but much later, when Mowgy was convalescent and the community of the sick-room had made the two women friends. During the progress of the disease, up to and over its crisis, she had thought for nothing but the child, tending her with a solicitude which Maud herself could not have exceeded; with a competence which Sayce had not forecast; tending her wearilessly, sleeping, when she had to sleep, like a dog on guard, with one eye open; it may be with both.

The attack, brief but vicious, finally was repulsed. Such danger as there had been retreated, leaving Mowgy like a little battlefield, devastated but secure. Yet the honors of victory, titularly Sayce's, all, except Nora—unmollifiably jealous and therefore profoundly distrustful—accorded to this girl, who had behaved like a hero and who looked like a saint.

It was then only that she found time to tell Maud a little concerning herself, among other things that her name was Stella.

"It suits you," said Maud. "It describes you. Besides there is music in it. In choosing a name for a girl parents should think of the lover who will one day pronounce it."

"I hardly fancy that my parents gave much thought to that, and it would not have mattered much if they had."

The girl's voice was bell-like in clarity. As she spoke she looked about the room. It was Maud's room, a very charming room, fitted with delightful things, among which was a silver bed. It seemed to please her.

But Maud, with that interest which all women take in the interests of other women, particularly when they are beautiful, persisted.

"Surely you will meet, if indeed you have not already met, some one who—"

Miss Sixmith smiled, displaying glimpses of teeth small, firm, white as white paper.

"It is the calling of most girls to meet that some one, to marry and bear children. Were it otherwise, life would cease. But I have a different vocation.

Without being presumptuous, I hope, if I may, to continue my father's work."

"That will be very fine. No doubt you will succeed. But I think that love alone brings happiness."

Again there was a glimpse of those teeth. "My father used to say that happiness was not meant for us, that we are souls in the guise of animals, and therefore unfitted for it."

Of this conception of things Maud would have none. Like a fly she brushed it away. "I am happy. You have helped to make me so. The way you pulled Mowgy out is a thing which Uxhill and I can never repay."

"I did but my duty," the girl, rising as she spoke, replied.

Though not tall, she seemed so. Though nobody, she impressed. The regulation costume which she wore was not unbecoming, but it jarred. In it she suggested the passionless abbess of some passionless priory dressed for a masquerade. The quality of her beauty, perfectly and coldly austere, as true beauty ever is, was humanized, however, by her eyes, luminously blue, and by her smile, which, when she wished, was one of rare seduction.

"Don't go," Maud pleaded. "I love to look at you. Your face is so unusual."

"Unfortunately, yes."

"Unfortunately! How can you say so? Do sit again and tell me."

It was then the confidences were made. At their conclusion Maud had a remedy.

"While you are with us I will go out with you, and Uxhill shall follow with a stick. By the way, he has been complaining. He says that since you have been here he has seen you but twice. I consoled him by saying that you were to dine with us to-night. I shall send Adelaide to you to help you dress."

Adelaide was the maid, and presumably a very good one. But the girl would have none of her.

"Thank you, I have got on too long alone to need assistance now. Besides, my one evening-dress is easy enough to fasten."

"And very becoming, too, I am sure."

Maud was right. Though a black dress it was becoming. But everything became her. In it, with her lithe arms and bare neck, she needed but a shower of diamonds to have suggested the ideal Astrafiamente, who, as you may remember, was Queen of Night. Yet that, of course, was because of the wearer. A plain girl in a gown so plain would have seemed even plainer. The simple severity of it set Stella off. When she entered the drawing-room, Uxhill, who had fed on entrancing apparitions, blinked.

"To look at you, Miss Sixmith, one should have smoked-glasses."

Stella utterly ignored the remark. It was perhaps a trifle *fade*. She turned to Maud. But at once a diversion was supplied. Dinner was announced. At a glance the girl already had taken in the things, costly and futile, with which the drawing-room was filled. Before she was seated in the dining-room, everything there, the lustres, the gold and silver service, the tulipwood sideboard, the perfectly appointed table, the butler in hierarchic black, the undermen in livery, everything was as quickly absorbed.

"We have been having such a learned talk," Maud, in her low, sweet voice, announced. "Miss Sixmith says we are souls in disguise."

In Uxhill's glass a servant was pouring red Hungarian champagne.

"That is rather an optimistic view, don't you think?"

Stella's glass which the man was attempting to fill she covered with her hand.

"I meant to say souls in the guise of animals. It seems to me that the majority of people get through life very much as brutes do,—in a sort of torpid sleep. They do not appear to know where they are going,—or to care. All they require is to be comfortable. That is so degrading. Besides, they are very tedious, particularly in conversation."

Uxhill laughed. "They are, indeed. Especially in Vanity Square. A lot of damned nobodies, talking about nothing. That is my opinion of them."

"Not damned," Stella corrected, "but ignored. God, I am sure, does not know that they exist. To God they have the significance that ants have for us. What ants do we do not know, we do not care. In relation to the Infinite, humanity is just as obscure. God surely is unaware of our existence. Otherwise there would be no pain, no poverty. He would not let sorrow and suffering be."

Uxhill leaned forward. "Without being indiscreet, Miss Sixmith, was that your father's idea?"

"My father used to say that it is very unimportant what we do; that what alone imports is what we become. He used also to assign as a reason for our inability to see things as they are to the fact,—but forgive me, *j'abuse.*"

"But we are immensely interested!" Uxhill exclaimed. "What is the reason?"

"That we are asleep in a prison."

To that, though, Maud objected.

"A very agreeable prison, then. Personally I would not exchange it for a palace."

Uxhill laughed again. "Yes, there is the devil of it. Maud has not yet awaked. I have. I don't mean by that that as yet I am suited for the life eternal, but I do feel that I am not suited for the infernal existence which one leads in New York, where you are baked in summer, frozen in winter, and bored to death all the year round."

To this Miss Sixmith assented. "It is certainly very tiresome not to have anything to do."

"Yes," said Uxhill, "it is as bad as trying to be comfortable."

A servant was approaching with a tray.

"What is that?" he asked.

"A letter, sir."

"I never read letters. Give it to Mrs. Uxhill."

"It is for me as it is," said Maud, when the note reached her. "Do you mind?" she continued to Stella. Then, after reading it, she added, "It's from Grace Amsterdam. She wants us to dine on Wednesday."

"The day after to-morrow! Somebody has backed out. Tell her we can't."

"Patmore," Maud asked of the butler, "is anyone waiting?"

"Yes, mem."

Maud stood up. "I shall have to send her a line." She turned to Stella. "You will forgive me, won't you?"

A swish of silk. She had gone.

Again Uxhill leaned toward the girl.

"Maud has lost her heart to you. So have I. I have been urging her to go abroad. If she consents, will you join us?"

Stella, with her starlike eyes, looked at him, at his empty glass, then across the room. It was her answer, or, rather, her rebuke, one which a girl more *mondaine* might have omitted.

But Uxhill, with his polished peremptoriness, persisted. Once more she looked at him and once more away. Before progress were possible,—if possible it were,—Maud reappeared.

"I told Grace that we have people to dine. That's you," she added to Stella. "Now tell me do you care for music?"

"I know I ought to. But I don't. Not in the least."

Uxhill threw his head back.

"Then one thing is certain, you have never loved."

"And I never shall," the girl distantly replied.

"It is such a pity, too," said Maud. "Why," she exclaimed with a prettily affected indignation, "you are just the kind of a girl a man would feel like cutting his throat for."

"Yes," said Uxhill, looking as he spoke into those starlike eyes, "and when a man does not feel that way, he has no feeling at all."

Further platitudes followed. Courses succeeded each other. Sweets came and went. Finally, under pretext of leaving Uxhill to smoke, Maud took Stella away.

But though in the dining-room they left one man, in the drawing-room they found another.

IV.

THE dining-room was in an extension, because of which, because, too, of intervening portières, those who happened to be there could not hear anything that might be occurring elsewhere in the house. It was for this reason that, on preparing to vacate it, Maud and Stella were unaware that on leaving one man they were to meet another.

But others knew. As they entered the drawing-room a voice announced,—

"Mr. Jones."

Whereat, inaudibly, with the silent tread that felines and acrobats, who have good shoemakers, share, there entered one who had gray, determined eyes, an unmoustached, determined mouth, a face of bull-dog tenacity, and a bandbox air. The fastidiousness of his evening-clothes, a fastidiousness recognizable, however, only in the mere modelling of them, yet, nonetheless, denoting prolonged meditations, contrasted curiously with the strength that he exhibited and the vigor that he exhaled.

In the bad buccaneer days he had been a pal of Uxhill's. Since the transplanting of the Massachusettian rose he had become her servant, spreading always and openly before her feet the mantle of his admiration. Professionally he was a lawyer, in training for the Bench. Personally he was an athlete never out of trim.

"Yoda," said that rose, in her low, sweet voice, giving him a hand, the wrist of which he raised and over which he bent.

She turned to Stella, introducing him. Then at some memory she laughed.

"Make her your best bow, do,—the one I like."

"It might alarm Miss Sixmith," he answered, and looked at the girl. But her appearance reassured him.

Backward to the further end of the room he ran, ran forward, touched the carpet lightly with his hands and as lightly tossed a somersault, landing a few steps from Stella, easily without apparent effort, his bandbox air unmarred.

Stella gave him the rare seduction of her smile. From beyond came applause. Uxhill, emerging from the dining-room, was clapping his hands. Advancing, he rested familiarly an arm on the acrobat's shoulder.

"Here," he said to Stella, "here is the unusual. Brains and brawn combined. The women are all crazy about him,—beginning with Maud. It will be your turn next."

"No, Gerald," Maud interrupted; "it is your turn now. We are having a little vaudeville and you come next."

"Yes," said Jones, "with one of your sonnets."

"The one on history," Maud suggested.

Amiably Uxhill assented. "Very good, but I'll skip the octave. It only beats about the bush. Here is the tail of it:

"'And as there to me from its pages streams
The incoherent story of the years,
The aimlessness of what men undertake,
I think our lives are surely but the dreams
Of spirits, dwelling in the distant spheres,
Who, as we die, do one by one awake.'"

Jones applauded. Stella, too. Uxhill turned to the girl.

"A little in line with what we were talking about, don't you think? That is what interested me. I used to believe in reincarnation; do you?"

"It is difficult not to. It explains everything. That is its great defect. Yet, in the infinite, there is room for so much, for so many combinations, that no doubt, ultimately, when the world has dissolved and reformed, sooner or later we shall all find ourselves here again precisely as we are."

"Jones throwing somersaults and I spouting sonnets? That is a very gloomy prospect."

Jones lifted a finger. "If Miss Sixmith will permit me, I will venture to disagree with her. Precisely as we are descended from gorillas, so from us will gods be born. Mythology is merely a story of what might have been, and that which might have been will yet be. Evolution may be slow, but it is sure. It seems in us to have accomplished its final achievement. That is because we have such flattering notions of ourselves. But if we could only wait long enough, beings as superior to us as we are to the primal anthropoid would put us in a back seat. Whose turn is it next?"

"Mine," said Maud.

She moved to the piano, where Jones followed. As she played, he talked, Stella and Uxhill meanwhile forming a separate conversational group of their own, which at last Jones disrupted. He was going.

Then presently Stella, too, disappeared.

A little later as Uxhill sat in Maud's room, in which Adelaide with gold-backed brushes was brushing his wife's burnt-orange hair, she said to him:

"Wouldn't it be dear if they were to fall in love? It is high time Yoda married, and she would be just the girl."

This program had not occurred to Uxhill before. Now that it was presented he dismissed it.

"Nonsense!" he exclaimed.

"But, Gerald, I don't see why you say that."

Nor did he.

V.

"DON'T you think," said Maud the next day, "that if any one were to take her up and bring her out she would be a success?"

The she, of course, was Stella. It was to Uxhill that Maud was speaking. They were at luncheon, a go-as-you-please repast, served in this house in the White Cat fashion, invisibly, by servants who had brought the food and gone.

"Success is a big word," Uxhill replied. "But a girl with a soul above scandal, and what is more above chiffons, would certainly surprise."

"I was thinking of her looks."

"Yes, no doubt. They are surprising also. An old chemist decomposed society into beautiful women and intellectual men. But old chemists don't go out much. The essential ingredient of a society woman is charm. This girl lacks the *désir de plaire*. Her intellect is obvious. But intellect in a woman is like beauty in a man. It is incongruous. No," Uxhill, after a momentary interlude with knife and fork, resumed, "she would not make a hit in society. The men would be scared by her brains and the women by her looks. She is too disquieting for either. Where is she?"

"Reading to Mowgy. She said she would join us shortly. Mowgy adores her. That is such a test. A child's instinct is unerring."

At this, Uxhill, occupied with a *mousse* of ham, shook his head. He was not so sure. The worst men may have the best dogs. The instincts of the latter are also unerring. Having finished the *mousse*, he was about to say as much. But abruptly the girl entered.

Uxhill jumped up, drew a chair and shoved it a bit as the girl seated herself.

"'Blossom of branches!' he exclaimed.

> "'Blossom of branches and words
> That bring tears swiftest and the long notes of birds,
> Violently singing till the whole world sings;
> I, Sappho, shall be one with all these things,
> With all high things forever.'

"There," he resumed, "that is what you remind me of. It has puzzled me since I saw you first. You suggested somebody or something, though what I could not tell. But as you entered I knew. You bring with you gusts of song that blew through Mitylene."

Stella looked at Maud. The latter was laughing. Over the girl's Madonna face there crept a thin, chill smile.

"Because of a little man, Sappho, I believe, was foolish enough to drown herself. I am quite sure no man, little or big, could make me as foolish as that."

"Or foolish at all," Uxhill interjected. "The quotation in that respect is not very appropriate, but—"

"Appropriate!" Maud interrupted. "It is not even right. You haven't got it straight. It begins, 'Blossom of branches and on each high hill.' I remember well enough. You used to quote it at me."

But her laughter had oddly subsided.

With superior tact Stella intervened. "I see they have dug up some of the lady's verses somewhere. But, then, nowadays we either dig up or pull down. We do not build. Scientifically the world has advanced, but otherwise we are no wiser than the Greeks. We represent a very curious case of arrested development."

Stella had before her an egg cooked in

a potato. It was to the potato her remarks were addressed.

"You say 'we,'" Uxhill rejoined. "The plural is singular. There has been no arrest in your development. And there is just the oddity of it, for you look as though you had stept from the Golden Legend, and talk as though you came from Mars."

"Why Mars?" the girl negligently inquired.

"I would have said Venus, but it seemed less subtle."

"You mean more stupid," Maud from across the table threw at him. "Stella, don't pay any attention to him. That is the way he talks to Mowgy. He puts you on her level."

"Mowgy's level is a very high one," the girl replied. "I read to her a story of a very terrible person who devoured toys and children, and who for his crimes was changed into a candlestick. She told me it was amusing but improbable."

"Ah," said Uxhill, "there are no children any more."

"Not at this table at any rate," said Maud. "Not at this end of it, I mean. Come, Stella, let us leave him. This afternoon I want to take you to Mrs. Amsterdam's."

"That is very kind of you; but may I ask why?"

"In order that you may enjoy the spectacle of the richest woman in the world."

"Will Mr. Amsterdam also be on view?"

"Dear me, no," Uxhill explained. "Years ago an unpleasant story came out about him and he died, his friends said, of exposure."

"What a sensitive person!" said Stella, getting from her seat.

As she did so she raised a hand and

adjusted her hair, or, perhaps, a comb that was in it. But one hand must have been insufficient. She raised the other, and with both arms uplifted, her fingers on the back of her head, followed Maud from the room.

Uxhill watched her go. When she had gone, he still saw her, saw, too, something that he had not seen before: the reason of love expressed by a woman merely in raising her arms.

In that movement of hers, unpremeditated and natural, made without thought of him, one which she could not have known that he had noticed, was an incitement generating the insanity of the desire to crush his lips against the ice of hers and taste the perfume of their frozen flower. No shape of sweet could be acuter than its savor. And at the chimera of it the room turned round.

In the heart of every one there is evil.

Were it otherwise, in all creation the heart would be unique. In one sense, however, the heart is unique. There, influences that we know nothing of, impulses which some of us never feel, watch and wait. Usually, through one factor or another they are controlled, sometimes forgotten, more often ignored, but never banished. They are there. It is the distinguishing trait of a gentleman that he never betrays their presence.

Uxhill was a gentleman. He was also a human being. He could not rid himself of instincts inherited from primitive ancestors to whom woman was a prey. Yet, though he could not do that, he could prevent their expression.

In a moment the room ceased to revolve. Then, in irritation at himself, he gnawed at his moustache, and, after the manner of man, took a stroll on the uplands of self-communion.

"I seem to be entertaining what I think I have seen described as a guilty passion." In the sotto voce of thought he added, "At my age, too!"

For the solace of smoke he sought a cigar. The cabinet in which the cigars were kept stood in front of a mirror into which not long before he had looked. He looked again. He saw a man with whose appearance he was perfectly familiar,—tall, bright, dressed with that extreme distinction which certain New Yorkers occasionally attain; thirty-five years old, a touch of gray over the ears, a touch which he had been told—and believed—accentuated his natural distinction, and at which he now looked with eyes that he could render insolent or tender, and which in his corsair days women had admired very much.

No; he was not Methuselah yet.

He found a cigar, lighted it, dropped

back in his seat, and contemplated his beautifully varnished shoes.

"A girl like that!" he told them. "Why, there ought to be a law against it. A piece of diabolic incandescence left to roam about unchecked! It is not safe. If I had met her earlier I would have eaten her. But now she is not eatable. She is not even to be nibbled at. A mere peck and if eyes could kill, hers would. I can see them at it. What is worse yet, I can see Maud's."

At the beautifully varnished shoes he bowed. "*Non, Monsieur, soyons sage et brisons là.*"

Uxhill stood up, balanced himself on his heels, sauntered out into the hall, had himself helped into a coat, had his gloves handed to him, his hat, finally his stick, had doors opened for him, doors that were not closed until he had reached the street and wandered on, quickening his steps for a six-mile spin.

But it was brutally cold. He thought five might do, compromised on three, after which he entered the Athenæum Club, where any afternoon he could lose at bridge as much as he liked.

On this afternoon, instead of losing, he won. Miracles make us superstitious. He told himself that luck at cards means ill luck in love. He was just as well pleased. The post-luncheon commotion had gone. The desire for so much as a peck had gone with it. In its place was a rightful yet illogical irritation. At the unwitting girl he was vexed. But in some way the conscience must be salved.

Uxhill, having salved his own, had himself helped again to his things, helped into a cab and sent home. There he looked in on Mowgy, admired the things, very precious, which she allowed no one but herself to touch, and improvised for her a few extraordinary tales. When she had her fill of stories and bread and butter, he dressed, went to the drawing-room, and examined the evening papers. But he was getting hungry. He looked at a clock. In looking, he saw Stella. She was entering the room.

Instantly the vexation returned. On the spur of the moment, with some unformed idea of having it out with her, he got up, went to her, peered into her eyes, and in a voice that was hardly above a whisper, said very swiftly, "At luncheon I could have said to you, kiss me and kill me, but kiss me first. Since then—"

With the air of a divinity offended at being but looked at, the girl interrupted him. "Once and for all, I forbid you to address me as you have."

Suddenly Maud appeared. Had Uxhill and the girl been exchanging vows they could not have separated more awkwardly.

With heightening wonder Maud looked at them. But Uxhill made a remark. Stella another. Conversation became general. Though general, it was dull. At dinner, which shortly ensued, it was duller.

VI.

THE dulness was due perhaps to Maud. She was not quite up to the mark. That afternoon she had provided Stella with the spectacle of the richest woman in the world presiding richly in her own rich house. But any success which Maud may have anticipated for Stella the girl failed to score. From a case of gems you get a glare in which the brilliance of the brightest is diffused. To appreciate that brilliance the stone must be detached. In the radiant rooms there was a lavishness of radiant women in which the girl was lost. Her beauty was of a quality that required, like a jewel, relief.

By Mrs. Amsterdam she was greeted most amicably and instantly forgot.

Onward from her with Maud she passed. In passing a man joined them, stopped them ; the group was reinforced. An American peeress, who, on a honeymoon trip with her earl to Canada, had met Stella at the governor-general's, recalled to her that pleasurable fact. When Stella turned from her to Maud the latter had disappeared. But the man remained. He had a pink skin, a fair, curled moustache and the endearing manner of an affectionate little dog.

"You must help me find Mrs. Uxhill," Stella told him. She had not caught his name, but she fancied it might be Fido.

"I but live your behests to obey," he promptly and ingratiatingly replied. "We will circumvent her at one of the buffets."

Gambolling at her side, he accompanied her through crowded suites. But the buffets were not reached, or at least not then. Down on them bore a large rapacious woman, wonderfully befurred. Stella could see her teeth, long, wide and even. Then what happened to the little man; whether he was but purloined or gobbled whole, she never knew. A faint yelp and he had vanished. But now, beyond was Maud, talking very earnestly to a man whom Stella recognized as Jones. Presently, after a little effort, she got to where they stood. Then Jones sank back. A sea of millinery had engulfed him.

The hall, though, was neighborly, and through it shortly, through an odor of flowers, of food, of finery, into which notes from an orchestra fell, the two women got away; or, rather, tried to. It was a minute or so before the Uxhill groom was discernible, and a minute or so more elapsed before he got to the brougham and got it back to where they were. After the conservatory atmosphere from which they had come the bite of the air was polar. Maud may have caught cold. In any event, at dinner she complained of not feeling quite well. Afterward, at Uxhill's suggestion, Stella got and gave her a simple preparation of quinine.

The preparation, though, failed to work wonders. The next day Maud was languid, slightly depressed, occasionally chill.

But Sayce was very neighborly. Summoned, he came, and a diagnosis was pronounced.

"A touch of coryza,—in short, nothing whatever. All the same," he added, "I am glad Miss Sixmith is still here."

At the time, Uxhill, the physician, and the girl were in Maud's room, where the latter lay in a big silver bed which Uxhill had found in Bengal.

"I had intended to go this afternoon," Stella rejoined.

"That would be barbarous," said Uxhill; "we shan't let you."

"No, you had best remain," Sayce authoritatively ordered; "at least, until Mrs. Uxhill is up."

Maud said nothing. Her eyes were closed. It may be that she had not heard.

"Very good," Stella docilely answered.

As always, she was simply dressed; on this occasion in gray. Its sombreness did not detract from her beauty. Nothing could. But with her dense black hair, her starlike eyes, the scarlet of her mouth, the pallor of her face, her perfect features, her slender form that pulsated with health and youth,—with these attributes she looked in a sick-room a bit out of place.

Of that she may have been conscious. After Sayce had given his directions and he and Uxhill had gone, she, too, left the room. When she returned her appearance was chastened. She had put on again the regulation garb.

She looked at Maud. "I have sent to the chemist's. The medicine will be here shortly."

But Maud did not seem to care.

"Perhaps," the girl resumed, "I had better see. It may have come."

Again she left the room. When she returned she brought a little package.

"Here it is. Mr. Uxhill had it. He was fetching it himself."

Stella undid the package. In it was a little bottle. From the bottle she poured some of the contents into a spoon which she gave to Maud. Then, putting the bottle down, she seated herself.

"How is Mowgy?" Maud asked.

"Very well."

"I think I will have her come here."

"Dr. Sayce said he preferred you did not. Coryza is infectious."

For a while there was silence. From the back of the silver bed hung a button.

Maud pressed it.

Adelaide knocked and entered.

"Tell Nora I want her."

A moment or two and the nurse appeared.

"Nora, I—"

The sentence was never completed. Maud's eyes closed. Her head fell back. She had fainted.

Through the joint efforts of the two nurses soon she recovered. But recovery from a swoon is a sensation peculiarly disagreeable. In your ears is the roar of returning life. Yet, in it you cannot tell who you are or where you are. You are conscious only that you are agonizing in some place undefined. Then up you swim.

Maud had never fainted before.

The sensation was new to her, so bewildering even that she did not know quite what had occurred, and it was absolutely with anger that Nora told her. But no one likes to be superseded. The old nurse was jealous.

Maud did not faint again that day. But though gradually thereafter the coryza departed, the languor remained.

A few days later Sayce diagnosed again and prescribed anew.

"You are a bit anæmic," he told her. "We will soon cure that. A tonic is what you need."

On his way out he got alone with Uxhill. "What has she on her mind?" he asked.

"On her mind!" repeated Uxhill.

"Nothing. Nothing that I know of. Why?"

It is never judicious to put a flea in anyone's ear. In a harum-scarum place like New York it is not only injudicious, it is stupid. Besides, if a man does not know what his wife has on her mind, it is obviously not her wish that he should. Then, too, there are mysteries that are better ignored than elucidated.

"Oh!" Sayce exclaimed. "She gave me the impression of being a bit absent. But that may have been due to her anæmic condition."

"No doubt. But I can't understand why she should be anæmic. Always her health has been perfect. Not since Mowgy was born has there been a thing the matter with her."

"Precisely. She has overdone it. Metropolitan life would do up a football team."

"Bah! We go nowhere. We just sit about and twirl our thumbs."

"It may be due to that, then. What your wife needs is a change."

"A change!" cried the exasperated Uxhill. "A change! For a year and a day I have done nothing but beg her to go with me anywhere, anywhere at all,—to the pampas, to the sierras, to Tahiti, to Borneo. She has only to choose. But, no. She prefers this sordid city."

Sayce passed a hand over his eyes. Grand almoner of Vanity Square, he was viewing things, or thought he was, which he thought, too, Uxhill could not.

"Well," he concluded, "it is never wise to urge a lady against her will. It may be that your very persistence has told on her. Anyway, don't let her have any bothers."

Getting into his coat, he added, "I will look in again shortly."

He was as good as his word. But he did not find that Maud had improved. When he again left her he was perplexed. Her condition presented symptoms which, though obscure in themselves, did not coincide with his original diagnosis.

Of that, however, he said nothing to Uxhill, who that morning seemed very busy.

VII.

UXHILL was even busier than he seemed. He had a great job on his hands, the bother of going to Wall Street, getting into a cage, cutting off coupons, putting them into envelopes, entering them on a slip, adding up how much they came to, handing them to a man in another cage; with, meanwhile, the bother of getting the big bondbox out of the vault and back again.

It was a job that he loathed, and which always he put off as long as possible, depositing to the teller's never-failing surprise bundles of coupons, six, twelve, and sometimes eighteen months after the date on which they were payable, and then only because of the receipt of some polite warning of possible deficit.

An intimation of this kind had reached him the evening before. Already he had spoken to Maud about it. On previous occasions when he had done so there had always been some little jest between them regarding it, he maintaining that he had to work like a drayman, and she admitting that it was dreadful. But on this occasion there was no jesting, nor was there any when, after Sayce had gone, he looked in on her again.

She was lying propped up in the silver bed. Beyond at a window Stella was seated. Together they formed a little group which, ordinarily, would have been charming. When a woman is exquisite, the white of pillows and the sheen of silks make her look like a flower in a garden, a rose chimerically fair. When she is beautiful, any severity of costume will, through sheer contrast, make her more beautiful still. Here were two women, differently, yet equally fetching; one that, despite her beauty, seemed all mind, and one who, because of her charm, seemed all heart.

That heart, though, must have been aching. As Uxhill entered, Maud turned to him. Her eyes were full of tears. She raised a handkerchief and held it to them. But if the swoon she had had was new to her, her tears were new to him. In that face of hers, that was made for smiles and kisses, never had he seen them there before.

From Maud, he turned to Stella. With an air of slight displeasure, the girl raised her perfect brow and, much as though Maud were a wilful child, told him that she would not take her medicine.

"Well," said Uxhill with affected lightness, "I can't blame her for that. I keep in trim for no other reason than that I shan't have to take any of the stuff myself. But where is it?"

Stella stood up, indicating a bottle as she did so.

"Come, Maud," said Uxhill, as with it he approached the bed. "I might have known that I would have to give it to you. Come!"

Maud still held a hand to her eyes. But at this she let it fall, and from the pillows looked at him. Her eyes wet, circled and drawn, had in them the expression sad and tender of a beaten dog. There was pain in them, and with it something else which Uxhill, occupied with the medicine, did not see.

"Will you take it?"

"If you wish me to."

But a little of it spilled. She put the handkerchief to her mouth and turned away.

"I have to go to Wall Street," Uxhill

continued. He did not specify for what; already he had told her. "It will be four before I can get back."

Maud said nothing. Her head was still turned.

"It is the devil's own job," he added and hesitated, expecting the usual reply.

Maud, though, could not have been in the mood for it. She still said nothing.

"But when I do get back," Uxhill resumed, "I want to hear very good accounts of you, very good, indeed,—that you have taken your medicine and done what you have been told. We want to get you up, little girl. Don't we, Miss Sixmith?"

"I am sure we do," the girl in her bell-like voice replied. "I am sure, too, that when you return I shall have a good report of her for you."

Along the silk covering of the bed Maud's hand lay. Uxhill took it, pressed it, felt it press his own; then turning, he left the room.

What then occurred there it was some time before he could discover. For when the devil's own job of which he had spoken was over and he got back, it was by no means the same room as before.

The silver bed was there, but it was empty. The chair on which Stella had sat was empty, too. Things, also, had gone. Gold-backed brushes, for instance, usually very obvious on the dressing-table, had disappeared; other things, the absence of which he did not notice at the time, had disappeared as well. It was only the emptiness of the silver bed that he saw, and concluding that Maud must be in Mowgy's room, he went there.

The little bright crib, the elephants and guards across the way, the house filled with precious things beneath, the seraglio of dolls,—all these were unchanged. But Maud was not among them, nor was Mowgy.

They were somewhere else, he told himself. Perhaps in his rooms, or in the library, or in the drawing-room below. Anyway, they were somewhere.

In search of them, he left the nursery. In the hall, vacating a room beyond, Stella appeared. She had a hat on, a coat of black fur, and she was gloved.

"Where are they?" he asked.

At sight of him the girl stopped, and in a frightened way looked at him as people look, or are reported to look, at ghosts. With the fingers of her gloved hand, she made a little backward gesture.

"Don't you know?" she inquired.

"Why, no; how should I? I've just got in."

At this the girl, resting a steadying

hand on the banister, answered dumbly, "Then I don't."

"Don't know where they are?" Uxhill repeated.

Stella shook her head. "No," she said dumbly. "I don't."

"But they must be somewhere, you know."

At that Stella nodded, yet so uncertainly, and with a lack of confidence so apparent, that for the first time Uxhill noticed the singularity of her attitude. It was as though something were affecting her, and that something,—fright.

Perplexedly he gnawed at his moustache. "But— "

Stella interrupted him. "A little after you went out they told me luncheon was served, and I went to the dining-room. Then one of the men told me that there had been an accident. It was quite a while before they brought anything.

Afterward, when I came up here, there was no one."

At the brief climax of the simple tale, Uxhill stared. He did not at all understand. That something unusual had occurred was clear. Yet, however unusual the occurrence might be, he felt that it was but some mystification, which presently would be explained.

"They're in my rooms, then!" he declared.

"But they're gone!"

"Gone!" Uxhill cried. "Gone where?"

"That's it. I thought you knew."

"But I don't know. I don't even know why you say they are gone. Where is there for them to go to? Why do you say they are not here?"

"Adelaide told me. She helped them; she and one of the footmen. Nora packed while Adelaide helped your wife to dress, and the footman carried down the bags and boxes to a cab. Then Mrs. Uxhill took Mowgy and, with Nora, drove away. It was all done while I was in the dining-room. You can't hear in there, you know, what is going on anywhere else."

Uxhill leaned against the wall. In the palms of his hands and about his ears perspiration had started. He was in the thick of something, yet what?

"She is crazy," he announced at last, "or I am." But immediately he rallied. "She must have left some word. Will you come with me to the drawing-room? Though, first, I will see if there is no note here. In a moment I will join you below."

Down the stair slowly Stella went, while fruitlessly Uxhill rummaged, first in Maud's room, then in his own. But there was no note, not a line, nothing save the muteness of the deserted rooms, their dumb disorder, the silent tokens of a hurried flight, drawers emptied and unclosed, a dress of Maud's rumpled in a corner, a shoe of Mowgy's discarded or forgot.

Save that, save, too, his own consternation, there was nothing. But there are times when nothing is so much that the weight of it becomes unbearable.

In search of something that might serve to remove it, Uxhill got to the floor below, got the servants in the drawing-room, and got from them what they knew. That, though, was not a great deal, little more than what Stella had already told, except that the delay in serving luncheon had been caused by Nora, who, in Mrs. Uxhill's name, had bundled them all about; sending one footman to the Grand Central for a cab with a gallery, another to the apothecary; upsetting, meanwhile, a tray which the kitchen-maid was taking to the pantry,—an accident that had necessitated a recooking of the lunch; details supplemented by an account of the haste with which Mrs. Uxhill had had Adelaide help dress her, and then, the cab arriving, with Mowgy and Nora, had driven away.

These details, which afterward became highly significant, did not at the time clarify matters in the least; on the contrary, they made darkness deeper, so deep, indeed, that, in the depths of it, Uxhill inwardly felt himself going to pieces.

"It is like the Besalul affair," he muttered at Stella, when, the questioning over, the servants had gone.

During the examination of the latter, during the story which had unfolded, and which had but amplified without elucidating the tale which the girl herself had told, her frightened look had retreated. From her shoulders responsibility was lifted. Her composure returned. She was as coldly beautiful as ever,—an icicle in a parlor; in this instance in the parlor of a man.

"It is just like it," Uxhill added. "Mrs. Besalul disappeared not long ago quite as inexplicably as Maud."

He paused, gnawed at his moustache, looked down and away, then up at the girl.

"Have you any idea why she did this?"

"I, Mr. Uxhill?"

"Oh, if I ask," he nervously resumed, "it is only because I am threshing about for a possible clew. I can't fancy that she has run off with a man. Barring Jones, who no more counts than Patmore does, I have never seen her so much as look at one."

At Mrs. Amsterdam's, Stella had thought that Jones did count. But of the incident she said nothing. She had been seated. Now she stood up.

"It is inexplicable. I don't understand, at all. At first, I am ashamed to say, I could only think of my own connection with it. Nominally, at least, your wife was in my care. Yet, even had I known, how could I have prevented her from leaving her house?"

In the unanswerableness of the query, she hesitated. "No, I could not have," she presently continued. "But, now I must leave it. I will send for my things."

Stella moved forward, a gloved hand extended, and with, in her face, an expression which Uxhill had not seen there before.

"At first I thought of myself. But, now I think of you. Believe me, you have my deepest sympathy."

"Thank you. I appreciate that you cannot stay. I thank you again. But, of course, you cannot go like this."

He touched a bell, ordered the

brougham. When shortly it arrived, he accompanied her to the door, saw a footman precede her to the carriage, saw her enter it, saw her drive away, and, turning, saw that he was alone.

VIII.

IN circumstances not similar, but cognate, women have sought consolation in prayer, men in drink. Uxhill made for the dining-room, where in decanters liquor stood. To him it was as though the end of the world had come. That Maud should get from a sick-bed, pick up the child, and go off as she had without a word of explanation, without the semblance of a pretext, without any cause whatever, without the formality of with-your-leave, or by-your-leave, without a line of farewell, without an expression of regret,—that she should do that, in a moment, after years of devotion, seemed to him as dynamic and disintegrating as though forces superterrestrial had torn the planet to bits.

The analogy, if imaginative, was natural. His own little world had sundered. In the wreck of it he helped himself to brandy. At once from the glass there jumped the inevitable Why.

Hitherto, since his return from Wall Street, or more exactly since it had become obvious that those who composed his little world were gone, he had been conscious of a curious conviction that somehow, shortly, it would be all explained and set right; that the disappearance was but an illusion which he was tricked into regarding as real. But, in crises, that is always the way. Human nature is so constituted that it must become at home with a catastrophe before it can credit that a catastrophe has occurred. The unawaited, when it chooses and pounces on a victim, does so with a celerity that stuns. There is a sense of nightmare, not of actuality, for that and the pain of it come later. At the shock you are but grappling with the intangible and the void, with things that you feel must be dream, though you know they are death.

It was precisely the temporary absence of pain, which makes men suddenly maimed unaware at first that they are even hurt, that had enabled Uxhill to comport himself before Stella and the servants almost phlegmatically. Not until the girl had left the house and he had breathed its atmosphere of desolation, did he realize that the worst that could be had been done.

Then, from the brandy, there jumped the Why.

It is conscience that disturbs the sinner, not the sin. The first Because on which Uxhill hit was a memory, finger-pointed, of the emotions that the headiness of Stella had induced. Yet, of these emotions the girl herself was ignorant. They could not have precipitated this catastrophe, for Maud was ignorant of them also,—unless, indeed, she had suddenly developed the power of clairvoyance.

That, of course, was impossible. And yet, in his quality of ex-freebooter, he knew, and none better, that in affairs of the heart a woman who really loves becomes really clairvoyant. But, clairvoyants make mistakes; they know they do and admit it. Maud, he reflected, was too just to have abandoned him because of a doubt generated by what at best, or at worst, could be but a suspicion.

Then at once another query presented itself. Why had Maud gone without letting Stella know that she was going? Why, too, had she gone at a moment when the girl was practically in the one part of the house where she would be unaware that Maud was leaving it? Why, indeed, he decided, unless Maud believed that she was in league with him and would telephone him or otherwise circumvent her. Yet, in that event, if through some vagary of the sick-room, Maud did believe the girl in league with him, why should she believe also that the girl would attempt to detain her? In a presumable league of this kind, Maud's departure would be the one result desired,—there would have been no attempt at circumvention; facilities rather. The deduction, obviously, was inadmissible. Obviously, also, there was something else. But, what?

Uxhill, casting about, drank again. From the brandy an idea emerged tortuously, vaguely, without form at first, but which, little by little, assumed proportions dim yet monstrous,—that Maud, far from fancying Stella in league with him, was herself in league with Stella.

In league for what he did not at the time stop to consider. What he alone considered was the fact that he knew nothing whatever about this girl except what Sayce had told, and the sum and substance of that she might have invented for him.

At the idea he entered a cabinet where the telephone stood, rang up, got Sayce, and asked could he come to him.

Sayce said he would. Uxhill turned away.

The sheer contrast between the girl's position and appearance had necessarily occurred to him before, but not as it then did, revealing suddenly inordinate possibilities, and among them the idea that for some reason, at present elusive but perhaps presently apprehensible, she had first got Maud to go, and then, while arranging to join her, had stayed behind to throw dust in his eyes. In what manner, through what lures and wiles, she had induced Maud to go at all, was, indeed, incomprehensible; yet, was not the entire episode so extraordinary that only the most extravagant conjecture could hit it?

Besides,—for here was a matter which until then he had not recalled,—the conjecture, however extravagant, elucidated the tears of the morning. By what had they been induced except by regret? The plot to leave him must have been long conceived. When he had pressed her hand as it lay on the silk there had been an answering pressure from it. The tears were tears of remorse at what she was planning to do, and the pressure of her hand on his meant that he was to forgive and forget her.

Yet, what was he to forgive, and why forget? Assuming that it was all as it appeared,—that she had, indeed, arranged to go with that girl, why had she done so, and where?

Where, indeed! Before his imagination could vagabond again, a servant, announcing Sayce, appeared.

"How are we?" said the physician, who, however, had an air of knowing pretty well in advance.

Although the servant knew, too, it was not until the man was out of hearing that Uxhill spoke.

"My wife has left me."

At this, Sayce, who had been standing, sat down, and Uxhill, who had been seated, stood up.

"She has taken Mowgy and, I fancy, Miss Sixmith, unless it should appear that Miss Sixmith took them."

Sayce, always red in the face, got, if possible, redder. He sprang to his feet.

"You have been drinking," he announced, though not at all by way of accusation,—as a statement simply, one which, an effect produced, disclosed the cause.

"Yes," Uxhill answered. "A thimbleful or two. But, I did not begin until they had gone. Moreover, I am not drunk. I wish I were."

"No; not that, perhaps. But, certainly not yourself. Otherwise, not for a moment would you connect a noble, true-hearted girl with a matter unfortunate enough already. Not ten minutes ago, when you called me up, she had just told me of it. She feels it keenly, not only on your account, who have spoken of her so outrageously, but because of Mrs. Uxhill."

"Ah!" said Uxhill. He found but that. Yet, then the sense of desertion had increased. Sayce's outburst had carried away his only theory. "As a matter of fact," he added lamely, "I don't now quite see how I did come to suspect her. But, I did not suspect, either, that you would take it so to heart."

"I could not help myself," Sayce, fuming still, replied. "If you knew her as I do, you would know, too, that there is not any one anywhere with ideals loftier than hers. But, no matter about that. Do you want me to advise you?"

"Advise me! I wish to God you would."

"Get the police to find the cabman—"

"And have it all in the papers?"

"It will probably get there anyway. No; find the cabman; then you will know, if not where they are, at least where they have gone, after which you will be the best judge of what to do."

"You see," said Uxhill, "what I don't understand is, why they are anywhere but here."

At the table before him, Sayce looked down, and on it with his fingers beat a brief tattoo. But, shortly he looked up at Uxhill.

"You remember, do you not, my telling you that your wife had something on her mind?"

"I do. But, if you mean by that, that what she had there was a man, you are wrong. She is not that kind."

Sayce nodded. "The mind has many a cellar. In them strange tenants prowl. Tenants so strange that, for lack of a better term, we call them secondary personalities. Frequently they are inert. You only know that they are about when they make you wonder why you did this, or why you said that. But, in certain cases of shock, of cerebral excitement,—in other cases, too, of which the causes are more obscure,—from inert they become active and produce just such mysterious disappearances as that of your wife."

Significantly Uxhill tapped his forehead. "You mean that she—"

"I mean that there are men, and also women, who develop a sort of spontaneous somnambulism in which their former individuality lapses and a new one appears,—an individuality so distinct from the former that it requires and leads a totally different life. From certain indications which Miss Sixmith observed, and which she reported to me, I might attribute your wife's disappearance to that, were it not that she took the child, a nurse for the child as well. In cases of this kind such forethought is unusual. Even so it does not invalidate the possibility. There is nothing that is not possible. The impossible is a term which psychology long since dropped from its lexicon. Hence, therefore, my suggestion about the cabman. Damn the papers! Supposing the facts do appear? They are not to your wife's discredit. She is not a free agent, and, beside her welfare, what is a little talk?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Only I don't like the idea of the police. I would rather not have them. I don't know whether you appreciate, but—"

"I do appreciate. Leave it to me. I know of a man on whom we can rely. He thinks I saved his life. I did not, but I have omitted to disabuse him of the idea. Let me see if I can get him."

Sayce went to the telephone. Uxhill ambled out into the adjoining room. Behind the theory which Sayce had presented there lay, of course, the intimation that Maud was out of her head. Yet, otherwise could she have left him as she had? Of course, she was out of her head, he told himself. But, he told himself, too, that when he found her he would call her back.

This project Sayce interrupted. "He is not in. But his wife is. She tells me he is sure to be home for supper, and that then she will send him to me. I will go now to my office. When he comes I will set him to work at once."

Uxhill put a hand in a pocket. "Tell him that expense is of no moment. I have not much with me, but give him this."

A small roll of big bills which was then produced Sayce waved back.

"He won't require anything at present. When he does you shall know."

IX.

SAYCE gone, up and down the drawing-room Uxhill stalked, feverishly, like a stricken animal that is trying to get away from its wound and from itself.

The possibility which Sayce had evoked, and which, while Sayce was there, he had accepted, fell away. It seemed to him stupid. On the subject of insanity he was not particularly posted, but he took it for granted that it does not nail you like that. In all the years of his life with Maud not once had she exhibited an eccentricity of demeanor.

From what he had read and remembered he rather felt that there must be a preliminary impairment of the brain, a predisposition due to heredity, to some long strain or sudden shock. In the absence of something of that kind, people do not, he assured himself, go mad, causelessly, in five minutes. Sayce, of course, had not said she was mad; at least, not in so many words. But, the phrases in which the hint was enveloped amounted to that. He had talked about a form of somnambulism in which the individual evaporates and another appears.

Though Uxhill had swallowed the statement, he found now that it would not digest. Metaphorically he threw it up. In fiction it might go down. Unfortunately, this was not fiction,—it was fact. Yet, a fact, he immediately reflected, more inexplicable than any that the fiction with which he was familiar could show.

In an effort to solve the enigma ot it, to get at the core of the thing and find there the Why, up and down the room he strode, reviewing the past, interrogating the future, floundering in a sea of memories and conjectures, his mind tossed by a storm of doubts in which he tried to see light somewhere, tried and failed,—tortured the while by the two great dissolvents, uncertainty and suspense.

Above, on the ceiling, the cupids lounged and laughed. It was only a little before that he had been yawning at them. It was only a little before that, at the piano there, Maud had been playing a gavotte, and in the pauses of the dance he had been urging a folding of tents, an escape to the blue of other skies. But, no; she had preferred her home. Now she had left it. Yet, why?

Always Uxhill got back to that. In the desolateness of the recurrent query he dropped on a sofa.

Someone came, asking would he dress, and getting no answer, departed. Someone returned, telling him dinner was served. But, if Uxhill heard, he did not heed. He sat in a heap, staring at nothing; hungry, indeed, but only for an answer to that Why.

Again someone came. Uxhill looked up. Sayce was before him.

"A lady has been found," Sayce announced. "I presume that another will be."

He paused, eyeing Uxhill. Then he added, "On leaving here I found our man, told him what had occurred. He went off with his nose to the ground. Ten minutes ago he telephoned me that he was on the trail. I told him that if he got to where it led to, to-night, to telephone here."

Uxhill stood up. Time must have touched him. He looked worn and gray.

"I misunderstood you. For a moment I thought you meant Maud."

"I said a lady," Sayce answered, eyeing Uxhill as before. "But not this lady. It is Mrs. Besalul who has been found. In a rose-garden on the Pacific, if you please, and with a person whom no one had ever heard of."

"A secondary person, I suppose. Do you know, Sayce, I have been thinking that over. Whatever may or may not be the matter with Maud, it is not that. She hadn't a vagary to her name."

Sayce smiled. "So you think, forgetting that you yourself told me that she had a marked aversion to going anywhere. That is more than a vagary. It is a disorder, one of the many phobies that pathology has learned to recognize, and to which, in sheer elation, perhaps, it has given Greek names. There is oikophobia, which is the antithesis of your wife's aversion. Oikophobia is the dread of going home. You may have noticed cases of it in club-land. Then there is phronemophobia, or dread of thought, which I have noticed in Vanity Square. Then, too, there are the antipathies for open places, for closed places, for heights, complicated occasionally by dread of boats and cars. These phobies are obsessions. Generally they are benign. But sometimes they become acute. They lead to what we call fixed ideas. The presence of an idea fixed, but erroneous, is one of the tests of dementia."

"Do you mean that a vagary of this kind induces the spontaneous somnambulism of which you spoke?"

"By no means. But the presence of the one is not incompatible with the appearance of the other. On the contrary."

"All the same," said Uxhill dropping wearily again on the sofa, "I cannot credit it."

"You cannot credit what?" Sayce asked, as he also sat down.

"Secondary personality. Have you ever met a case of it in your practice?"

"In my own, no. But in the practice of others, yes. I met, for instance, a Miss Marchbanks. This young woman, who is collectively known as the Misses Marchbanks, has successively disclosed six distinct personalities. If ever, like some of my colleagues, I go in for writing novels, there would be the type I would take. In fiction, as you get it to-day, a man more often than not is discovered wearying of one lady and falling in love with another. The occurrence is common, and therefore trite. Nevertheless, a proper appreciation of our national hypocrisy curbs any desire on the part of the fabulist to make the man in love with both. No right-thinking reader would stand for that. But, what opportunities there would be were the hero, when wearying of the heroine, to fall in love with a secondary personality whom, conveniently, she had developed, and so on through successive multiplications of herself? A story such as that would provide a rational interpretation of paradise. Mohammed, you know, promised the faithful a fresh houri every day. Every day is, perhaps, excessive. We may assume that the faithful could diet if they chose. But, a story of this kind would show that paradise is realizable here. It would show that, but win the hand of a multiple lady, and there you are."

"You would hardly be there with Miss Sixmith," Uxhill, with curious inappositeness, remarked. "Nor I," he added, "with Maud."

"Miss Sixmith!" Sayce exclaimed, "has a nature that is at once very simple and very direct. It could no more deviate than could a star from its course. But—" he paused, a finger raised. "Isn't that the telephone?"

He stood up. Uxhill got up also. Together they went to the cabinet beyond.

"Here," Uxhill said, after a moment, handing as he spoke the receiver to Sayce. "It is for you."

"Is that you, John?" Sayce called. "Well?"

A moment elapsed, another passed. Then the physician, putting the receiver down, turned to Uxhill.

"Your wife and child left for Boston on the three-o'clock to-day."

Surprise lifted Uxhill visibly like a lash. "The devil! She has gone to her father." Then vexation sank him. "But," he cried, "they have not spoken in years. What did she go to him for?"

Yet manifestly he was pleased. In his

tired eyes was a smile, weary and relieved.

Sayce consulted his watch. "It is late—for Boston. It seems to me, though, that—"

"Why, of course," Uxhill, divining what he was about to suggest, exclaimed, "I will call them up."

It was a little, though, before the number could be got, a little more before the connection was made. Finally he called: "Is this Bishop Upjohn's? Yes; very good. I am Mr. Uxhill. Please tell Mrs. Uxhill that I want to speak to her."

He turned to Sayce. "It is all right. Whoever is at the other end says, hold the wire."

Uxhill did hold it. He held it until he found that he had been rung off. Assuming a mistake, he asked for the connection again, desisting only when, after repeated calls, he was told that they did not answer.

Whether by "they" was meant the bishop or Maud, or both, or whoever had answered in the first instance, was, of course, uncertain. There remained, though, a fact which at once consoled and irked, the fact that you can be audible to people who are not audible to you. It made him feel like a blind man talking to a deaf mute,—a man, purposely blinded, talking to one whose deafness and muteness were assumed.

But, as Sayce had said, it was late—for Boston. Besides, Maud, tired by the trip, presumably had gone to bed. Nonetheless, the balm of the sudden relief, after the torture of the long suspense, was rather impaired. It was as though just as he was putting a hand on Maud, she had evaporated.

Uxhill felt cheated. What he felt he looked. What he looked, Sayce saw, and, seeing, prescribed for.

"It is eleven-thirty. There is a train at midnight. Take it. Anything is better than inaction."

By way of answering Uxhill pressed a button.

In reply Patmore appeared. "Will you dine, sir?"

"Get some things into a bag, enough for a day or two, and have a cab here at once."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. But, won't you eat anything at all, sir?"

Uxhill turned on his heel. Patmore disappeared.

When presently he reappeared it was to say that the bag was on the cab, and the latter at the door.

In the interim Sayce scrawled a note.

"Here," he said, "is something for you. There is not a chance in a hundred that you will need it. But should the chance occur it may be handy."

X.

IN Beacon Street, the next morning, Uxhill was standing at the door of a little house. After the metallic roar of New York the calm of Boston is sedative.

Uxhill did not notice it. On arriving a few hours previous, he had gone to a hotel and had tried to sleep. On the train he had been unable to. Hitherto, once his head on the pillow and he was off, immediately, for a ten-hour stretch. Such a thing as not getting to sleep was a novelty, a strange one, as now everything else was. But at the hotel he had seen a little man, with sneering eyes, who appeared to be making faces at him. The little man vanished vaporously as he had come. Uxhill awoke. He had slept fully ten minutes. Then he tubbed abundantly, ordered coffee, dressed leisurely, and, going forth to a shop on the Common, got some toys, got a cab for them. Now he was at the door of a house in which there was a telephone that at times did not answer.

The door opened. On the wide flagging of the hall a maid stood, aproned and capped, very white in her gingham.

"This is Bishop Upjohn's, is it not? Yes. Will you please say to Mrs. Uxhill that Mr. Uxhill is here."

Retreating before him, the maid reached a room at the left of the hall, in which, though she said nothing, he inferred that he was to wait. There a window gave on the street and from it he looked out. But, while he had not noticed the quiet of that street, he noticed now the quiet of this house. It was soundless. Mowgy, he reflected, would ruffle it. At thought of her, he remembered the toys and looked at the cab where they were.

"Mr. Uxhill, I believe?"

Noiselessly there had entered a man, in undertaker black, with a high clerical waistcoat, a thin face, and inquiring eyes. He was rubbing his hands, his back a trifle bent, his head a bit to one side, in an attitude jesuitically civil.

"The bishop charges me to say that he is unable to receive you."

Uxhill started. "No one wants him to. I did not come for him. I came for my wife."

"Quite so. But Mrs. Uxhill is not here."

"She was here last night."

"Regarding that I have no information."

"You mean you have none for me. What is your name, sir?"

"Wix."

"Wix, is it? Well, Mr. Wix, I charge

you to tell the bishop that I am at the Touraine, and that if, within an hour, I do not receive information regarding my wife and my child, I shall proceed against him for harboring the one and sequestrating the other."

At this, Mr. Wix, who was still rubbing his hands, smiled and arched his eyebrows. It seemed to Uxhill that he curiously resembled the little man who had come to him in dream. But, obviously, everything there was to say had been said. He made for the hall and to the door, yet that door Wix reached before him.

"Permit me," he said, his eyebrows arched, smiling still, and opened it. "Good morning," he said as Uxhill passed out, and noiselessly behind him closed it.

Uxhill told the cabman to go to the hotel, and got in among the toys.

Here was a fresh kettle of fish. He felt as men do who have taken *cannabis indica.* Everything that was not out of proportion was blurred. Matters of supreme importance were occurring, matters of which he was the starting-point, matters that concerned him vitally; and yet, between him and them, was an interposition intangible and malign that shrouded what it did not distort.

To the enigma of Maud's disappearance was superposed the puzzle of the bishop's affront. Uxhill knew well enough that if Maud had not gone to her father, then the mere fact of his inquiring for her would have demonstrated that there was a screw loose; to the adjustment of which, the bishop, however at odds with him, would have joined. On the other hand, if Maud had not gone to her father, it was nevertheless clear that the latter knew where she had gone, and knew also the Why. One person, therefore, who was behind the scenes refused to come out.

"But," Uxhill muttered, "by God, I'll make him."

At the moment, he regretted that the restraining conventionalities which dwarf us all had prevented him from forcing his way to the bishop and compelling him to disgorge. But the enervating civility of Wix, who had managed to be both obsequious and insolent, had exasperated him. Instead of going to work, he had dissolved into threats.

Anything of that kind is always very stupid. But it is, perhaps, stupider to make threats and then omit to enforce them. Particularly, if you have the ability. The ability was in Uxhill's pocket. He got out the letter which Sayce had given him and redirected the cabman to the address that it bore. The address was that of Tatum & Tate, attorneys and counsellors-at-law, neither of whom, when Uxhill reached their office, happened to be about.

Uxhill waited. The office, dingy and green, lighted by gas, the walls wainscoted with high shelves of brown books, was tenanted by two clerks, a small boy and a girl. On one side was a door with a glass panel, on which was inscribed "Mr. Tatum." Opposite was another door dedicated to Mr. Tate. As Uxhill sat, the girl looked at him covertly from a typewriter. To her, with his worldly air, his handsome head, his appearance indicative of all the accessories of wealth, he seemed to have stepped from a story. Rather a sad one, had she known, which, of course, she did not, and she told herself how "elegant" it would be to have him for beau.

Of these sentiments, Uxhill was entirely unconscious. In his heart was anger, in his head an ache. He got up, strode about, examining the books, until finally he found himself contemplating the small boy, who was telling him that Mr. Tatum was in.

Mr. Tatum was a large, fierce man, who looked like a chuckerout, and whose voice, which was infantile in its gentleness, contrasted almost tragically with the aggressiveness of his appearance.

"And so," he lisped, when Uxhill had told him what there was to tell, "you would like to have Bishop Upjohn hanged. That is the proper spirit. But we have no evidence. We have only hearsay and supposition. Your wife may or may not be in Boston. If we can learn that she is in Beacon Street, the best course will be to get a writ and send it with a sheriff. If Mrs. Uxhill has any defence, I presume she will produce it; and if not, the child will be awarded to you, and where a child goes, usually the mother follows. But, however consoling it would be to hang the bishop, we cannot do so at this minute. Hanging, if hanging there is to be, must come later. Meanwhile, I enjoy relations, both personal and professional, with Mr. Forster, who is his legal representative. He will appreciate the situation, which is most unusual; and I can almost guarantee that he will aid me to rearrange it without the necessity for proceedings which, if possible, it is always best to avoid."

"It is a damned outrage, all the same," said Uxhill.

"Now, if I understand you correctly," Tatum, in his purring voice, resumed, "you are unaware of any good and sufficient reason why this lady should have left you."

"I am aware of no reason of any kind,

nature, or description; good, bad, or indifferent."

"And—pardon me—no ground for supposing that she had any interest in—er—well, elsewhere?"

"Still less."

"No," Tatum, after a brief introspection, soliloquized, "women, when they elope, don't take children with them." "They bring them back," he was about to add, but he judged the humor ill-timed. "Now—er—yesterday, when you saw her last, you say she was ill and in bed?"

"With a nurse on one side and a specialist on the other."

"And what was the nature of her malady?"

"Oh, nothing of moment; a slight indisposition. But, last evening Sayce said that a secondary personality developing within her may have confiscated her faculties."

Tatum bowed gravely, as though such confiscation were a thing, like death, which no one may avoid.

"Yes," he almost cooed; "but, even so, it does not explain the bishop's attitude."

"On the contrary, it aggravates it. That is why I said he ought to be hanged."

"And, as I said, that is the proper spirit. But, perhaps, when I have the pleasure of seeing you again, you may consent that his life be spared. Where are you stopping? At the Touraine? Very good. In an hour, in two at most, you shall hear from me."

"Thank you," said Uxhill, who got back to the cab and drove to the hotel.

The toys he had carried to his room, and among them he sat, confident now that shortly a line would come saying that the bishop, recognizing the error of his ways, was anxious, with eager apologies, to reunite him to his daughter.

Or, did he dream it? Anyway, a hall-boy, announcing Mr. Tatum, awoke him.

Uxhill stood up, rubbing his eyes, the fringes of the vision about him. Yet, when the lawyer entered, though he looked quite as much like a prize-fighter as before, he looked, too, like a heavy-weight after an unexpectedly ardent scrimmage.

"Mr. Uxhill," he began, in his caressing voice, "I fear that perhaps our friend Sayce is right. I am not an alienist, but I will wager a good red pippin that you are perfectly *compos mentis*."

"I certainly am," said Uxhill, a bit dashed by this prelude. "But, why? Why do you say that?"

"Because, if you are sane, your wife is not. On the other hand, if she is sane, I lose my pippin."

"But, why? Why do you say all this? Have you seen her?"

"I have seen Forster, who has seen the bishop. Mr. Uxhill, neither your wife nor your child is in Boston. Forster assured me of that, and you can believe him."

"Then where are they?"

"That I do not know. But, though you may see your child again,—for no one can prevent you if you can find her,—I doubt if you see your wife."

"What!"

"The bishop told Forster that on information and belief, derived, I must assume, from this lady,—for, though Forster did not say it was so derived, he intimated that such was the case,—on this information and belief, the bishop asserts that you are crazy."

"The devil he did! Damnation! Is there any way of getting him to put that in writing?"

"To what end?"

"To have him arrested for libel. Never in the world could my wife have suggested such a thing about me."

Tatum made a gesture. In it, in his voice, too, was infinite indulgence. "When a lady leaves her husband, she must have an excuse. It is not an excuse, or hardly a valid one, to declare that he is everything he ought to be. She must find something else. When, therefore, he is notoriously good and kind, invariably she says that he is crazy, and everybody believes and sympathizes with her. It is a great world."

Uxhill gnawed at his moustache.

"I am crazy," he announced, "or she is. I said that at the start."

"You are a bit excited, perhaps. But not crazy. If you are, it is a pity that there are not more lunatics like you. Yours, though, is an extraordinary case,

—from one aspect. From another it is quite common. In domestic life the development of secondary personalities is more frequent than you might suppose; only husbands do not, as a rule, happen on such an exhilarating term for it. The term incompatibility, if less suggestive, is more exact. Many is the man who has awaked to the discovery that he is married to a lady to whom he has never been introduced. Without presuming to intrude my domestic experiences upon you, I myself have done so. But, I have consoled myself, and very greatly, with the reflection that it is better for a man to have loved his wife than never to have loved at all. Do you not agree with me? By the way, that is a very pretty doll that you have there."

In the *débris* of the disaster in which Uxhill was sinking the remark was like a rope. He caught at it and swam up.

"Have you any children?" he asked.

"Ten," Tatum placidly replied.

"Then do me the favor to let me send the doll to you, and the other toys, that I got for my little girl. I do not want to lug them back to New York, and it would be distressing to think of them as foundlings."

"They shall be properly adopted. I thank you very much. My children will be fathers and mothers to them. But, did you intend returning to-day?"

"I do not see that I can do anything here."

"Not for the moment. But the bishop is aware of the advantage of the avoidance of publicity. Forster will, I think, furnish me shortly with your wife's address, or with that of attorneys with whom you may communicate. They know that you won't let matters rest as they are. It would be inconceivable if you did. What they are after is the time necessary in which to arrange some *modus vivendi*."

"In other words, they are sparring for wind. Now, then, is the time to hit."

"If you could get them, yes. But you can't. We might possibly badger the bishop by instituting a suit for alienation. But what good would it do? On the other hand, you can, if you like, proceed against your wife in New York, get a decree of separation and the custody of the child. But, I think that what you have chiefly to consider is, that disappearances are deceptive. Barring the fact that the bishop says that you are crazy, and Sayce says your wife is,—and you say that one or the other is right,—there is nothing to explain the present situation, and I take it there will be nothing until Forster comes to me, which he may do to-morrow."

"If he does, you will inform me?"

"You may rely on it."

Then presently Tatum withdrew, and shortly Uxhill was whirling back to New York, where a bill for services rendered whirled after him.

It was some time, though, before he could attend to it.

XI.

IN certain conditions a trip on a train is not a sedative. When to these conditions is added the conviction of defeat, a journey may become demoralizing. On the way back to New York, Uxhill was at once conscious of defeat, and conscious also that the consciousness of defeat comes, when come it does, always from within. A man who is a man should never know that he is beaten. Though he suspect it, he should never admit it, even—and particularly—to himself.

Uxhill, aware of that, fought against any idea of being downed. But, circumstances were against him. He had gone to Boston with what amounted to a certainty that, no matter what surprises awaited him, at least he would know where he was, and, so knowing, know also what to do. Instead of which, not only was the Why as intangible as ever,—its poignancy was intensified by the attitude of the bishop. The latter's age, his cloth, his eminence, the fact that he was Maud's father, not one of these things would have protected him had he been on that train.

Uxhill felt quite murderously toward him, yet far less because of what he had said than because of what he had not. He had been vastly annoyed at the charges which Tatum had brought, but the annoyance, however vast, was slight by comparison with his anger at the bishop for not disgorging the Why.

That is what he wanted, that and nothing else. It was for that he had gone to Boston, and to come away without it spelled something like defeat. Mentally he ravened, and for a while lost himself in the rememoration of strange tortures and of the pleasure that it would give him to see the bishop undergoing the strangest and most torturesome of the lot.

The evil mood passed. A gentleman, it has been said, should be too indolent to bear malice. Uxhill was a poor hater. With the landscapes through which the train shot the evil mood sank back. After all, he subsequently told himself, were a man to elope with a daughter of his, as he had eloped with the bishop's, he might not feel conversationally inclined to him, either. Then, too, from what he knew of the bishop, it was quite on the cards that he should regard Maud's flight as the just retribution of his sins. But, though the evil mood passed, this eminently benign view was not reached until many other things had supervened. It is not easy to be philosophic all at once. At the time the mood was helped away by the realization that the bishop at most, or at worst, was but an accessory before the fact,—that the real criminal was not he; it was Maud.

Yet, why was she that? Why had she done what she had? To know, to get at the truth, though truth were an acid, he would have drained it. However it corroded, the pain would be less acute than the disintegrating agony of suspense.

Truth should be charming or else withheld. But, charming or otherwise, it was not forthcoming then. Only a vulgar whiskey and soda was obtainable for the thirst of this man, outwearied by twenty-four hours of ceaseless emotion.

Truth was not apprehensible then. But, later, through processes devious and contradictory, which he could neither co-ordinate nor comprehend, into the depths of his tired being there filtered the conviction that somehow, in some way, it was all unreal.

An idea, not similar but cognate, he had found himself entertaining at the start. But that idea was due to sheer bewilderment. It was an idea like that which visits the absent-minded who have an object in their hand one minute and cannot find it there the next. They know that it cannot have dematerialized. They know that presently it will turn up under their nose. Because Maud's disappearance had been utterly inexplicable, Uxhill, for that very reason, felt that it must shortly be explained.

But that feeling had gone. In its place came an apperception, at first opaque and elusive, yet gradually tangible and more clear, that all that had occurred, all that was occurring, were but pictures floating by, pictures picturing nothing, images without significance, dreams woven together in a dream of themselves.

At this conception, Uxhill marvelled. It seemed to him chimerical. But, in certain crises, we get used to chimeras. The soul makes itself at home with what it must. When the soul of Uxhill did accustom itself to this ideal idealism, Uxhill himself was in New York.

On leaving Boston he had wired Patmore. On reaching town a groom met him, took his bag, piloted him to the brougham, scaled the box, saw him to his house.

The house was quite as he had left it, only, while his hopes had been diminishing, its desolation had increased. And why was it desolate? Ah, dear God, if he only knew!

It was not in search of an answer, it was for the mere companionship of familiar things, for the atmosphere which

Maud had breathed, that, after a futile effort at eating something, he went to her room, went from it to Mowgy's, looked at the spectral crib, at the little things infinitely precious which she allowed no one to touch, thought of the incredible tales he had improvised for her there, and wandered back to Maud's room, where other things held for him the pain which only such things in such circumstances can hold,—the pain made of memories and regrets.

The top of the dressing-table, previously covered with futilities in gold, was bare. A drawer beneath it, which sometimes he had seen Maud open, and which, on such occasions, always had been filled, was bare, too, entirely empty, save for a little book.

For the solace of handling what she had held, he took it up. It was a volume of verse. He turned the pages and read that Joy should be majestic, equable, sedate. But, to Joy he was a stranger. He was about to put the book down when lines underscored jumped at him:

"When I was young I said to Sorrow,
'Come and I will play with thee.'
He is near me now all day.
And at night returns to say,
'I will come again to-morrow,
I will come and stay with thee.'"

He read them, read them again. They had their meaning. But, what? He looked around. The walls did not answer. The bed was dumb. The table, the chairs, were silent.

Then from the room he went, closing the door closely as though to shut there something he knew not what,—something, though, that must have managed to escape, something that must have got out with him, something that crept after him down the stair, dogging him steathily to the dining-room below, where, in nameless horror, at his side it crouched, plucking at his sleeve, drawing him into labyrinthine darknesses, holding to him semblances of sudden light, torturing him with their abrupt extinction, impelling him to find the Why, demanding that he unearth the Sorrow; prodding him insistently, in the ways so lancinant, that the pain of them, prolonging, expanded into those excesses from which insensibility proceeds.

Pain has her anæsthetics. Pain can plunge the soul of the agonized into depths of torture where no further hurt can go. Into those depths the soul of Uxhill sank.

From them, reascending, he started on another journey, one from which men have returned, but none ever as they went.

XII.

IN dream everything is possible, or, rather, everything seems possible to him who dreams. On the uplands of that wonderful country to which sleep conveys us, faces that we never saw, forms we shall never behold, delights we shall never enjoy, beckon, palpitate, advance and retreat. Though they loiter, they do not linger. Sometimes in tumults of farewells they disappear. Sometimes, silently as they have come, they go. Sometimes you are unaware they have appeared until they are upon you, then as nebulously they are gone, vanishing through gaps to their eyries, from which they have emerged but for a second, though that second seem to you years.

Yet, however they appear and disappear, however inconstant their return, however they disturb or delight, however illusory they may be, perhaps they are but a prefigurement of life which itself is a dream from which at death we awake.

In the insensibility to which the soul of Uxhill had been sunk, semi-breves stirred, lightly, as leaves stir when birds pass; faintly, in the little whispers that woods have at dawn; floatingly, in murmurs and low trills. The soul of the man was seeking an issue from its tenement of flesh, seeking another whom it could not find.

The threading whispers augmented, the murmurous trills increased, mounting gradually, yet sheerly, in reverberations so sonorous that they melted into luminous circles which radiated, distended, contracted, revealing in their transformations multi-colored perspectives where a sphinx, orange-haired, vesuvian-eyed, smiled and sank away.

The sounds decreased, the colors decomposed. There was but darkness, in which the soul of Uxhill groped until, caught in a current, it was tossed into shadowy spaces where figures, very dim, serpented ceaselessly in haste toward a point far away where a flame burned spirally, and from which, like balls from a Roman candle, face after face, all of them smiling, each of them orange-haired, vesuvian-eyed, flew upward and disappeared.

The soul of Uxhill sought to follow, but forgot them in a region shuttled with wide avenues of transversal streets, at the corners of which the furtive forms of women, balancing themselves undecidedly, hesitantly appeared and, immediately, like frightened swallows, fluttered suddenly from sight.

Remotely stretched rows of houses, their sculptured doors widely hospitable, their windows opening candidly. Within were serene retreats, chambers furnished with capricious care, the flooring parquetted with pomegranates, the ceilings covered with cashmeres. As the faces had faded, as the forms had flown, the windows closed, the wide doors shut, silently, mysteriously, almost smilingly.

Beyond was a plain strewn with flowers and girls, indistinguishably fair, indistinguishably intermingled, as indistinguishable, in paradise, girls and flowers are. Yet, over the girls that were flowers, and the flowers that were girls, a blankness intervening hid them, their perfumes and smiles.

But, at once, in a garden, from behind bushes of roses, a woman emerged. As she moved the folds of her dress glistened with changing hues, increasing her height demeasurably. With her changing folds the garden mounted. Upward with her girdle the roses grew. The plain joined itself to her. From behind the blankness the flowerful girls ascended, mingling their beauty with hers. The rows of houses with their candid windows lifted themselves in her train. The wide avenues of transversal streets, the shadowy spaces, the luminous circles, the remote horizons, the decomposing perspectives, the sounds, the colors, the world itself, rose with her, and, rising, soared further, further yet into voids, into chaos, where like a bubble it burst.

At that absence of anything, in which all things were returned to the indeterminate, dissolved there into primal fluidity, divested of substance and design, at this nothingness, in which he himself disappeared, Uxhill, or the soul of him, stared.

And still he stared.

Long hours later, Patmore, entering the dining-room, as was his morning custom, found Uxhill there, a decanter before him. The hour, the decanter, the spectacle of Uxhill, an elbow on the table, a hand to his head, at once sufficed. Patmore knew that Uxhill was drunk.

Patmore did not blame him for that. Patmore was not censorious, and in omitting to be, reached, without suspecting it in the least, the heights which ages ago the founders of philosophy scaled.

Patmore, though not censorious, was observant, which is another and very excellent attribute of the sage. In the course of his observations, Patmore had never seen Uxhill drunk before. On the other hand, he was aware of what had occurred. Though not a drinking man himself, he rather felt that in similar circumstances he, too, would be drunk. In addition to indulgence and observation, Patmore had sympathy as well.

Patmore was only a butler. Yet, he possessed virtues to which a bishop might bow, and to which, if a bishop had bowed, Patmore would have felt exceedingly uncomfortable. To sympathy, indulgence, observation, Patmore added humility. Saint Francis would have called him brother.

Now, duty prompting, he inquired:

"Would you wish anything, sir?"

Patmore got no reply whatever.

"Coffee, sir? Or, perhaps, first your bath, sir?"

To these suggestions there was no reply, either, silence merely, but a silence that gave Patmore the creeps. It was the highly uncanny silence of a man staring at you with wide-open eyes that seemed in the white of them to pop from his head.

Patmore, though observant, had, on entering, not observed that. The moment he did, indistinctively, his own eyes looked down over his own person. Assured that nothing was amiss with him, he looked again at Uxhill, who still was staring, yet, less at him than through him, at something behind, which Patmore could not see, and to which, when he turned, was but the tulipwood sideboard, the mirror of which showed back his own face.

A bit confused, Patmore evolved another question.

"You may not be feeling very well, sir. Would you wish me to call the doctor?"

To this there was still but that stare. In it, however, Patmore, now thoroughly frightened, ventured to affect to discern consent, and to it, after a moment's self-communion, he added:

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. I will do so at once."

PART II

THE WOMAN WHO PERSISTED

I.

"HOW is Mr. Uxhill to-night?" Sayce was inquiring, as a footman helped him from his coat.

"Thank you, sir. Miss Sixmith has been with him since noon. Mr. Watson is going to him now."

"Yes. You might say to Miss Sixmith, please, that, before going up, I will thank her to give me a moment."

Sayce turned into the drawing-room. On getting there that morning he had found Uxhill pretty much as Patmore had discovered him; but finding, too, cutaneous insensibility, low temperature, defective respiration, complicated presently with incoherence, he had got him to bed, at the side of which shortly two nurses, one a man, the other a divinity, alternated.

"Well?" he began, when the goddess appeared. "Anything new?"

Collared and cuffed, aproned and capped, her blue dress striped with white, presenting generally a resemblance to the belle Chocolatiére,—*mais en mieux*,—demurely, in her clear contralto, the divinity replied:

"No. The hypnogogic hallucinations continue."

"Still thinks he does not exist?"

"And that nothing else does, either."

"Not even you?"

"Me, least of all."

With cheerful unconcern the physician smiled.

"To him you do not exist, to me you only do. His condition is merely unusual, mine is unique. Otherwise the cases are not dissimilar. He has lost his bearings. Without you I should lose my own. But, while his condition is temporary, mine is permanent. There is the real difference, and a big one it is."

He took her hand. With entire submission she let him hold it. Then slowly it was withdrawn.

"You are so good."

The smile fell from him. "Do you know that the day before yesterday was the birthday of my life?"

"I know that a girl needs protection."

"I know, too, that, however and how vainly I had hoped, it was not until the day before yesterday that I believed you would accept it from me. The tragedy of age is not that a man is old; it is that he is young. That tragedy you made into a festival."

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Through some miracle of love, Sayce had really succeeded in rejuvenating. His hair was white, but his skin, the color of brick, was unlined, his eyes were as luminous as her own. Yet, then, happiness is a great elixir.

To Stella no elixir was necessary. She was an elixir herself, solidified, in cold storage. But, having, perhaps, less enthusiasm for the subject in which he revelled, she changed it.

" Did I understand from you that Mr. Uxhill's condition is temporary ?"

The little douche in the question dampened Sayce, if at all, but for the instant. The girl's reserve was one of the elements of the elixir which she exhaled, and not the least heady element, either. It was one, though, Sayce felt, which marriage would sublimate. That conviction evaporating the douche, he nodded serenely.

" Oh, yes. Through some strain, it may be through some shock, he has lost his memory. A counter-emotion is indicated."

Stella patted her apron, adjusted a cuff.

"He cared a great deal for her, did he not?"

With a gesture that was familiar to him, Sayce ran a hand through his hair.

"Yes, and you see what love will do. Should anything separate us, my condition would be quite the same, unless it happened to be worse."

"Which a counter-emotion would dispel," the girl, with her rare smile, replied. Then, getting back to her muttons, she asked, "Do you know, at all, why she left him?"

"Oh, well, to him, poor devil, I suggested spontaneous somnambulism. You see, when we don't know, we have to pretend to. Tell a perplexed patient that you are as perplexed as he is, at once you are a jackass. But, tell him he has a disturbance of the vasomotor nerves of the cœliac viscera, instantly he is reassured, and you are Cagliostro. Spontaneous somnambulism comforted Uxhill. Had I not suggested something for his mind to chew on, he would have sworn at me, and if I had intimated that it was another Besalul affair, he would have knocked me down."

"And you think it was that?" the girl, from the tips of her lips, distastefully inquired.

"What else is there to think? It was evident that she had something on her mind, and in this neighborhood what do women ever have on their mind except men—and money?"

"But, before I came here, did you not say that he was very wealthy?"

"Precisely. Her going, therefore, is explicable only on the man-theory. In Boston, Uxhill probably realized that. A reflex movement in the cerebral circulation ensued, from which a form of psychic paralysis has resulted. In the abeyance of consciousness the sense of his identity is dispersed. He seems to himself as having been, yet as no longer being, and exterior objects seem as though they no longer were. Physical individuality is but the aggregate of sensations emanating from the different organs, tissues, and movements of the body, and repercuted thence to the sensorium. As these are affected so is the individual. A change in them may produce anything, from a simple indisposition to a complete displacement of the centre of gravity. In such displacement the patient may believe anything imaginable and unimaginable, but whatever he believes is perfectly true, at least to him. It cannot help being true, for his consciousness is but the expression of his condition. In the present case the indentity is dispersed. But, it can be got together again. The fragments are strewn about in the sub-cellars of the sensorium. In a shock they have sundered, in a counter-emotion they will coalesce."

"It is very curious."

"And even humorous. Uxhill thinks he does not exist. How modest that is! The world is full of people who properly have no existence whatever, whose importance is that of gnats in the sun, and yet, who, through prodigies of imagination which psychology is incompetent to explain, fancy themselves great guns and great shakes. It would take more than an emotion, it would take shrapnel, to undeceive them. By the way, how does Watson do?"

"Very well; he is with him now. As I was coming down here I heard Mr. Uxhill saying, 'Who am I?' and 'Why?' And I heard Watson telling him who he is, and that he would soon be right."

"Yes, that is indicated, but it is not enough. He has never seen Watson, while he knows you. If he could realize your presence he would begin to get his bearings. Shall we go up?"

II.

THE next morning, Stella, relieving Watson, took her place in the room in which Uxhill lay. Under the influence of an opiate all night he had slept. He was still sleeping. Stella looked at him. He was good to look at. In looking she saw that the effects of the opiate were diminishing. Uxhill's eyes were closed. But occasionally he moved.

Stella had with her a book. She began to read it. It was a treatise in French on obscure derangements of the brain. The derangements were new to her. Being new, they interested. As pages turned they confronted her with men who thought themselves women, with women who thought themselves men, with others who thought themselves both. But these were not what she wanted. It was a case similar to Uxhill's that she sought. The index aiding, she found one.

It was the account of a young girl who thought herself isolated and transported far, very far, in a sphere in which there was but the darkness of thick clouds and shapes of strange sin, shapes which she did not know could be, and concerning which she brooded interminably, until one who loved her, breathing his name into her ear, dissipated the thick clouds, revealed her to herself and to the fact that she was not so far away,—at home merely and in bed.

The descent from the infernal to the commonplace amused Stella. She smiled, not frostily as she usually did, but with the rare seduction which, when she wished, she could display. As she smiled the white of her delicate skin suffused.

It was as though there were claret in it.

She stood up, moved noiselessly to the bed, and, bending down, looked in Uxhill's face. He still was sleeping. She moved closer, bent nearer, and, pressing her lips to his ear, whispered to him.

He had been lying, his face to the wall, but now within him something stirred. He turned heavily. Without haste Stella retreated. He was muttering. Yet what, she could not tell. Presently he was silent. Stella waited. But, obviously, he had lapsed back. Then closer she moved, bent nearer, so near that his breath was in her hair, and, pressing her lips to the other ear, whispered again, but longly and so intensely that within him again something stirred, but more deeply.

He turned, this time on his back. His eyes opened. He rubbed them and looked after her, for she had retreated again, further than before, to the chair where she had sat.

Laboriously Uxhill raised himself on an elbow, passed a hand across his head, pulled at his moustache, his eyes still on Stella, not vacantly, but wonderingly, as though he could not make things out. But some of them, soon, he must have been able to. For in a moment he laughed queerly, and said, and quite confidently, too :

" You have not changed much."

" No," Stella repeated, providing him as she spoke with glimpses of her beautiful teeth. " Nor you."

" Ah !" he answered absently, and seemed to meditate. " But it has been very long."

" What has been long ?"

" Since,—since I got here."

" Not so very long, only a day and a night."

"A day and a night!" Uxhill repeated. "No. You are jesting."

"Indeed, I am not."

"It seems to me impossible. And you say a day and a night?"

"A day and a night, Mr. Uxhill. Shall I show you the calendar?"

Uxhill nodded, unconvinced. "I have been to odd places. I have seen odd things. Among them I lost something. What was it?" he interrupted himself to ask. "Something very important. Something vital. What could it have been? Ah! I remember."

"Yes?" said Stella, encouragingly.

"Yes, I remember; it was Maud."

Stella looked down at her book.

"Yes," Uxhill resumed. "I looked for her in strange places, among strange things. She disappeared in them. Miss Sixmith?"

"Yes, Mr. Uxhill."

"You and I will never see her again."

To this the girl could have found no suitable reply. Her eyes were still on the book. She said nothing.

"No," Uxhill continued. "She has gone. I wish her well. But I shall not look for her any more. Between us eternity has begun."

He paused. "Miss Sixmith!"

"Yes, Mr. Uxhill."

"Has it really been but a day and a night?"

"A day and night since you have been in this room. A day and two nights since you returned from Boston."

"It is inconceivable."

Uxhill sank back. His eyes reclosed. For a while he was motionless.

Stella stood up again, moved forward and looked. He seemed to be sleeping, but she was not sure. She waited a moment. In the corners of her perfect mouth another smile had bubbled. To her face the flush had returned. She moved closer, bent nearer. But something made her turn. Then the smile vanished, but the flush increased.

In the doorway stood Sayce.

Stella straightened like a reed. Where the smile had been two fingers went. Noiselessly, as she had gone to Uxhill, she moved toward Sayce, the fingers still on her lips, motioning him with the other hand back to the hall, where she followed, closing the door behind her.

Sayce, mystified by the graceful pantomime, stared.

"He is out of it," she announced. "I am so glad."

"H'm," mused Sayce. Then he added, "You look it. If I did not know you as I do, I could have sworn you were about to kiss him."

But, if Stella heard the comment, she did not appear to have done so. Besides, explanations were not in her line.

"Yes," she continued. "I was reading. It was only five minutes ago. He spoke to me, called me by name. He was entirely rational. Just now he went to sleep again. He would hardly believe, though, that it has been a day and a night—"

"Thought it longer, did he?" Sayce interrupted. "That is usual. But, it has all turned out very well. He has had a normal return from the abnormal. If he is rational when he awakes, he will stay so. In which event there is no necessity for you to remain. There is no necessity, either, for him to know that you are so prodigiously glad. It might excite him, don't you see? But, when he awakes, let him have anything he wants. Humor him in everything. That is to say, you know, in everything reasonable. Where is Watson? Turned in?"

"Yes. He was here until I relieved him an hour since."

Sayce nodded. "If, when he is up again, Uxhill is then right, you had best go Now I must go. Meanwhile, remember, no excitement; and, to avoid it, don't let him suspect that you are so pleased."

Sayce laughed and passed on. He was quite sure of the girl. Any excitement that Uxhill could derive from her would, he was aware, be meagre. However heady her appearance might be, her demeanor was very sobering. Entrancing as song, she was passionless as algebra, the true type of *femme forte*, the ideal companion,—when companionable she would consent to be.

That consent, long besought, only recently he had believed might be obtained.

The belief had put a bird in his heart. It was singing there. But, until latterly, it had all been very uphill. From the first he had cared as only a man can care who has never cared before, at once prodigally and concentratedly, with that concentration which reduces the census to a single being.

She was that being. His whole life he felt he had been waiting for her, and then, when, suddenly, a delight and a desire, she did appear, it was with the attitude of a Madonna, with the air of a divinity offended at being looked at.

Sayce knew that he was less than she. But he knew, too, that it is from such knowledge that failure comes. He was careful to conceal it. It was his admiration that he disclosed, and which, at first, she put from her, but which, in the daily intercourse of ward- and sick-room that ensued, she ended by accepting, yet always with reserve, with the effacement of a pupil praised by a teacher. Later, when the admiration became more personal, she listened as one does who is unwilling to be brusque and yet whom a topic wearies. When he persisted, as he did persist, she told him, as she had told Maud, that she did not intend to marry.

It was all quite hopeless, and so continued until that afternoon, a few days before, when, unstrung by Maud's unaccountable disappearance, she had gone to him for counsel. The counsel which she very naturally received was that she should take him. Then, for the first time, she consented to listen. But, then, it was the first time, too, that her pulse had not registered normal.

Not his, though. Nor had it registered normal since. That afternoon he accounted the birthday of his life. Since then in his heart a bird had been singing.

It is true, she had not wholly consented. But capitulation is only a question of time with a castle that talks. The beleaguer had stormed it, and now, as he passed on, he told himself that soon its allurements would be his.

These allurements had their effect on Uxhill. Before Maud had gone he had been so fully aware of them that, conscience-pricked, he had for a moment attributed the going to some clairvoyant intuition of the emotions which they produced. A moment only, for at once he had seen that the cause was not that. In an effort to get at that cause, to rout out the why, he, too, had departed on a journey more mysterious than hers. Yet, wherever Maud may have gone, and whatever the cause of her going, his journey had, in a measure, resembled her own. In going she had left him. In returning he had left her. On the road to nowhere and back, somewhere he had strewn her. In leaving his home she had filled his heart. On his return that, too, was empty.

Absence may make the heart grow fonder, but, to do that, then between the absentee and the heart there must be reciprocity. Eliminate reciprocity and sooner or later, and generally sooner than later, the result is reducible to an Old World axiom, "Who goes to the chase, loses his place." Or hers, as the case may be. The axiom is not merely Old World, it is archaic. It is something higher. It is a law of Nature, who has many laws, no compunctions, and a few dislikes.

Chief among the latter is a vacuum. A vacuum is the residue of what remains of those whom the chase entices. A vacuum is Nature's pet detestation. Let the hunter omit to return and refill it, Nature promptly stuffs in the first thing that she finds.

The censorious allege that this is not right and may continue to, for all that Nature cares. Nature has no heed of the censorious or of anybody, or of anything, save her will and her way. A saint may defy her. Uxhill was not that by a long shot. He was a human being who had been made to suffer poignantly, who had been deserted and insulted for no reason at all, and who, as a result, had been forced on a journey from which some men return, but none ever as they went.

Of this Uxhill had found himself at once aware. In the halts of the journey it had been manifesting within him. To those that stood about, the journey, relatively, had been brief. Though to him it had been inordinate, its actual brevity could not minimize the result. Everything human is bound to pass away.

The process of passing may be long or short. In either event the result is the same. In the case of Uxhill pathological conditions had so favored that, what ordinarily might have taken a lifetime, had been effected in one of those crises in which time is wiped out.

The only things that really are, are those which we believe to be. To Uxhill the duration of the journey had been inordinate. He accepted, though, the brevity of it. But that did not alter its effect. It was to him as though the episodes directly preceding it had occurred years since, years that in their progress had put mouldering hands on what had been and planted ivy where once grew the rose.

Maud, like a rose, had gone. Concerning the going Uxhill had now no ill feeling. He had no feeling at all. Even the wherefore of it had ceased to preoccupy him. That she had loved him he knew.

But, he knew, too, that there are women who can both love and betray. On that score, too, he had no feeling.

What he chiefly felt was this: There are those who in departing leave behind them memories so toxic that they poison the lives of those whom they desert, memories so atrocious that they survive the forgetfulness of all things else. Maud, like the rose, had left but perfume. Yet that, too, had gone. Everything had. Between what had been and what was, already, as he had said and in saying believed, eternity had begun.

III.

IN the existence of every one there are little oases in which life suffices unto itself. In one of them, Uxhill was resting. The resting consisted in looking at Stella. With her subtle ways and marmorean face, she was extremely reposeful, less so, perhaps, than the opiate he had had, but, certainly, more consoling.

Poppies and mandragora make you dull. An angel in the house will make you dream. Uxhill, latterly, had dreamed a great deal. He had dreamed of strange places in which something had disappeared; something in search of which he, too, had vanished. The memory of it was going. In its place another dream had come, one which it pleasured him infinitely to look at. The balm of it contrasted medicinally with the gaps and voids of the other.

In considering this dream, an hour passed. Poppies leave you without appetite, but beauty has many stimulants. It can excite the appetite also. Not ravenously, but appreciably, Uxhill's appetite was presently aroused.

He asked the time. It was high noon. Declaring that he would get up, he asked for Patmore.

Sayce had said nothing about that. He had, though, said that Uxhill was to be humored. Stella reflected on the possible injudiciousness of opposition. In reflecting, she withdrew. To replace her Patmore came. Then to luncheon presently Uxhill descended, perfectly clothed and otherwise in his right mind.

On descending the stair he had seen letters, piles of them, in heaps. Letters had always seemed to him very tedious.

They bored him, less because of what they contained than because of what they never did contain. But he objected to them chiefly because those who write them regard you as rude if you omit to reply. People are so sensitive. The letters he passed, passed on to the drawing-room where the dream stood, a dream that had a hat, white gloves, and a coat of black fur.

He remonstrated at once:

"But you are not going?"

"But I must."

"At least not before luncheon."

The dream hesitated. Hesitancy was rare with her. Always she knew what there was to do and did it. But, on this occasion, she let herself be persuaded. The gloves came off, the coat, too, though not until she had stipulated that, luncheon over, she should go at once.

To all of which Uxhill assented. It

had been part of his buccaneer training always to say "Yes" to women. He found that, besides pleasing, it gave them a chance to change their mind. Then, too, it is so ill-bred to insist. Partly, therefore, from habit, partly, too, because he saw no reason why the luncheon should not indefinitely prolong, he yielded with entire grace, and at table, with a view, perhaps, to showing that he was himself again, talked first about insects, then about stars, the infinitely great, the infinitely little, the only subjects worth discussing by those who have nothing else to discuss.

But, presently, talk drifted into channels more personal. As was customary at luncheon in this house, there were no servants about, and Uxhill, after having eaten quite enough to have satisfied a bird,—a bit of bread and a few berries, asked the dream where, on leaving, she proposed to go.

"To my lodgings," the dream replied.

"You would not, I suppose, consent to stay here even if I went elsewhere."

"Of course not."

"I appreciate that. You regard me as a married man."

To this the dream made no answer. It did not deserve one.

"Whereas," Uxhill continued, "I am a widower."

On the dream's fork was a bit of orange that had bathed with other fruit in Maraschino. She put the fork down and looked at him reproachfully. A subject so intimate, personal, and delicate, it was hardly fair of him to produce.

But, the look he misinterpreted. The reproach he took for surprise.

"Indeed, I am," he retorted. "It is true, I have no tombstone to show, but I propose to get one."

In the grewsomeness of the project, Stella looked away.

Uxhill, however, was not to be rebuffed.

"I propose to get a divorce."

Stella went back to her orange. But from the fork it had slipped. She tried to fish it up, and failing, looked at it as though it were some curious thing. It must have been curious, some highly charged slice, perhaps. The fork with which she was spearing at it gave little taps, not on it, but against the plate. Had you not known better, you would have said that the phenomenon was due, not to the orange, but to her; to some tremor, perhaps.

"I do not yet know," Uxhill was saying, "just how I shall proceed. But, probably, in Rhode Island, where I was born, and where, technically I may, I think, still claim residence. In that event it won't take long, and when I have it—"

Stella was rising. Uxhill, too, stood up.

"When I have it—"

But, Stella now was passing into the adjoining room.

"When I have it," he repeated, following and overtaking her there. "When I do—"

Turning suddenly, she confronted him.

"Don't say it," she cried. A hand, half raised, she held up in protection.

That hand he caught, and peering into her face, asked:

"Will you marry me when I have?"

The girl wrenched herself free. From her eyes flashed indignation, or was it disdain?

"In this very room, once and for all, did I forbid you to speak to me as you have."

"I was married then."

"You are still."

"For a brief while only."

"You have no right to even mention the subject to me."

"I have the right that love gives."

"I deny it. I will not listen."

"But you must. And you shall. The first time I saw you, the mere movement of your head went to mine. Later, I saw you raise your arms. From them I could swear fell the reason of love. Later still, at this very spot, I told you of it. That, indeed, I lacked the right to do,—or so I thought, and determined never to repeat it. But fate had me in its charge. At that very moment it was preparing to empty this house. What brought you here but fate, and what but fate has brought you here again? You may deny what you like, you cannot deny the inevitable that has destined us for each other."

The speech, if tolerably rambling as such speeches are apt to be, had, however, a moral to it, to emphasize which he caught again at her hand.

"Let me be."

Her head bent, her eyes avoiding his, she tried to free herself. But, the effort was less violent than before, and because her face was turned from him, the anger, the defiance, too, which previously she had displayed was less visible. No longer was she confronting him as she had with her air of divinity offended. Her ineffective struggle more clearly suggested girlhood, helpless and hurt.

"Look at me," he continued, his hand still fast on hers. "Tell me that when this is over I may come to you and ask you again."

"Let me go."

Struggling still, she was still trying to get her hand away.

"Yes, surely," he answered, "though if you would let me, I would leave you and go myself, until I could come and claim you. For claim you I shall. Only tell me that you will be waiting and willing. Tell me that. Tell me," he persisted. "Say it."

She had ceased to struggle. Her head now was not bent. She had raised it. She was looking at him. From her face the high disdain had gone. There was something else there. Something which must have eliminated the necessity for further speech,—something that did away with the need of questions, with the need, too, of other reply. At sight of it his arms went about her, and in them, her eyes in his, his lips on hers, unresistingly she lay.

A moment only. Undulently she freed herself, crossed the room, stopped at a mirror, adjusted her hat, got her coat, drew on her gloves.

"I shall see you?" Uxhill asked.

Stella, occupied with a button, shook her head. Her face was hotly flushed, her fingers were unassured. To a girl who has not been kissed before, the process is emotional, though her mouth does not lose its freshness for that.

"You will write to me?"

Occupied still with a button, again she shook her head.

"But when it is over?"

She had finished now with her gloves. Silently but suddenly, with an abandonment for which even the kiss had not prepared him, her face still hotly flushed, the edges of her teeth just visible on her under lip, her eyelids quivering, emotionalized still, the hands that were in those gloves frankly she put in his.

It was her answer.

Over her hands he bent. She took them from him, moved to the hall beyond, and silently still, through doors that footmen held open, like a divinity disappearing in incense and prayers, out and away she passed.

IV.

THE poets are right. Life is packed with delights,—which the majority of us never enjoy. The world is filled with delightful people,—whom few of us ever meet. There is food for every hunger, drink for every thirst. There are amusements for the simple, austerities for the sage. But, of all things that the gods can bring,—and take,—love is best. In its ambrosia is a sense of Olympus.

Uxhill, the savor of it on his moustache, stalked up and down. He had not, in earlier days, written a sequence of sonnets for nothing, and now, in further sequences, he saw himself strolling with the lovely girl through lovely lands, beneath a sky of cinnabar, beside a sea of blue. And there, in gardens glowing in perpetual summer, in fevers of perpetual caresses, he could see her, her arms outstretched, fairer than dream could be.

The vision was so vivid that, naturally, it evoked others,—the perspectives he had intercepted with the ambrosia that had come to him from Maud. But, the parallel was disagreeable. In stalking up and down, he tried to leave it behind. But, it refused to be left. It ran after him. He could not get away from it. Then presently the Why, which he had thought safely ablated, eruptively returned.

Why had she gone? The reason might be a matter of indifference; nonetheless, it would be satisfactory to know. In the proceedings which he proposed to institute the rhyme of it would aid him in determining his terms. If, like Mrs. Besalul, she had gone with some man, then he would exact the custody of his child. He did not see with what man she could have gone, but episodes of his buccaneer days had taught him that when a woman's heart is interested, that heart may become a treasure-house of mystery and ruse.

At the same time he found himself forced to admit that in all the years of his life with Maud, not once, not for a second, had he known her other than straight as a string. No one becomes suddenly bad, he decided, precisely as he had already decided that no one becomes suddenly insane. Like madness, badness, too, has its degrees, the preliminary steps before the jumping-off place is reached. You must be mad in thought and bad in thought before you can be either in action.

Then, also, in conceit—very pardonable because perfectly human—he was quite unable to regard her as an unfaithful wife. Not merely did it clash with his idea of her, but it diminished him in his own esteem. Poets, buccaneers, mere men, object very much to that.

No; any such explanation of her departure was, on the face of it, absurd. Yet, if it were not some other, it must be that. And what other could it be? Why should a woman who had a home that was at least to her liking, and a husband who was manifestly the same, spring abruptly from a sick-bed and abandon both, unless enthralled by some man?

Why, indeed? And there he was back again in the infernal circle of the query, with no other escape from it than the conviction that she was not of that kind. No; she was not,—a fact, however, which had not prevented her from leaving him precisely as though she were. In the circumstances it seemed to him unendurable that he was not better informed. Thereupon, prompted by that stupid theory of what's what, which most men of his class have, he seriously assured himself that if, by any inconceivable chance, he had been tempted to act toward her as she had acted to him, he would have told her all about it in advance. For that, he reflected, would be only the gentlemanly thing to do, forgetting entirely, in so reflecting, that when a man does depart from a lady, he is either too exasperated, or, what is worse, too weary for further speech.

Yet, even had he recalled that platitudinous point, it would have brought him no nearer the mark. But, thus far, nothing had. From whatever angle he tried to approach it, he tumbled straight into the circle again, like a fly that crawls up a window-pane and then buzzes back.

Then, as such things occur, he thought

of the letters in the hall. He had them brought to him, spread them out on the piano, and selecting one, bothered no further with what the others contained.

The letter which he selected was from Tatum. It held two enclosures, of which one was a memorandum of services rendered, the other a copy of a communication from Forster, the bishop's representative, stating that Messrs. Crumings & Kim, attorneys, 10 Wall Street, New York, had been authorized to accept service in any action instituted against Mrs. Gerald Uxhill by Gerald Uxhill, esquire.

That was all. But, was it not ample? Was it not insolent, also? Nothing more, and nothing less, than that he could go ahead if he liked, and, failing that, to the devil.

"Yes," Uxhill remarked to himself,

"it is the height of *sans–gêne*, the *comble* of indifferent defiance."

Yet, somehow, behind it, Maud herself, the Maud whom he had known, was absent. Then at once there returned the theory with which Sayce had comforted him,—the idea that she had become another being, an idea, however, which, on examination, divested itself of any comfort, for the reason that, admitting its validity, the confiscation of her to the profit of a secondary personality would be as obvious to those who were acting for her as his own trip to nowhere had been apparent to those that had tended him.

And there he was. But, the position, unendurable from the start, had now become absolutely untenable. He must, he saw, fight free from it, and fight at once.

Thereupon he wrote a note to Jones,

asking him, if possible, to dine with him at eight that night.

The note dispatched, he discovered again how appallingly desolate was the house.

V.

IN Vanity Square everybody is late for everything. At dinner only is some sort of decency observed, and then not always. Uxhill had known himself to be behindhand a whole hour, and, on one occasion—through an unholy mix and confusion of dates—a whole week, a degree of lateness so superlative that his hostess, instead of being put out, had regarded it as highly original.

Jones, though affiliated with the precinct and its pecularities, was never late. He turned up with the punctuality of a comet. An eclipse was not more reliable. When expected at eight, at eight to the minute he appeared.

But there must always be exceptions. This evening was one of them. Eight came, but not Jones. Five minutes passed. Ten. The quarter after. Still no Jones. To Uxhill this was odd. In the note he had told him that if he could come, not to bother to reply. But, if he could not, to telephone. There had been no reply, no message whatever. There was but one conclusion. The note, sent to his residence, had not reached him, either because he was detained at his office or else—

Here, mentally, Uxhill stumbled over an alternative that suddenly loomed,—the possibility that Jones was the man!

For years he had seen him spreading before the feet of Maud the mantle of his admiration, inoffensively indeed, but quite as a courtier may to his queen. For years, too, he had seen Maud tread on that mantle as a queen should, with royal unconcern.

At the possibility that it could have

enthralled her, Uxhill pulled at his moustache, gnawed at it. Here was a sequence of things which he had omitted to consider, and which now, in considering, produced for him the immediate resolution to kill the damned scoundrel if—

"Mr. Jones," a voice announced.

Then at once before Uxhill the scoundrel appeared, his bandbox air rather absent. He had an overcoat on, the collar turned up, the coat itself very dirty. In his hand was his hat, singularly bedrabbled. He nodded at Uxhill and looked cautiously about.

"Where the devil have you been?" Uxhill, perplexed at the mummery, inquired.

"In a fight. Where is your wife?"

"H'm. She—er—she is not at home this evening. What the deuce do you mean by a fight?"

He touched a bell. A footman appeared.

"Take Mr. Jones' hat and coat."

Then the reason of that coat became apparent. The shirt beneath was rumpled, the collar torn, the white tie hanging disreputably.

Nervously, at the spectacle, Uxhill laughed.

"I should say you had been in a fight."

Jones laughed, too. "I have not had such fun in a week. On the corner below a hold-up man pointed a gun at me, and though I knocked it out of his hand, I had to knock him down several times before I could convince him that he had mistaken his party. I was glad of the exercise, but sorry to have mussed my shirt. Have some of your people take me where I can get a bit ship-shape."

Uxhill, mollified now, had Jones, scoundrel no longer, taken to his dressing-room, from which presently, in a fresh shirt and a reputable tie, he reappeared almost as bandboxy as ever.

"I say, Patmore," said Uxhill, when, shortly, the two men sat down to dinner, "Mr. Jones has been held up at the corner. Get me a pistol to-morrow and keep it in my overcoat pocket."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. New York is getting very bad, sir."

"Weren't there any police about?" Uxhill continued, turning to Jones.

During dinner the episode defrayed the conversation. But when the servants had gone, Jones, fingering a filbert, asked pointedly:

"What's wrong with you?"

"I had not meant to disturb your digestion and, possibly my own. by offering you horrors for dessert," Uxhill replied, "but—"

Thereat, Uxhill produced them; Maud's

tortuous flight, the Boston trip, the further journey, the communication from Crumings, with, for climax, the comfortless theory of Sayce.

"Gammon!" said Jones. It was his sole comment.

Uxhill nodded. "I never took much stock in that myself."

Jones lighted a cigar, slowly, carefully, meditatively. Then he, too, nodded. "There is something back of this—"

"Of course there is," Uxhill interrupted.

"Which you have not told me," Jones resumed. "Now, what is it?"

Uxhill flared. "I have told you everything,—everything, that is, which I consider relevant."

But Jones, who had come from one fight, was not to be denied in another. "Let's hear, then, what you don't consider relevant."

"Well, for one thing, she says I am crazy, when it is perfectly patent that she is crazy herself."

Jones nodded again. He was not yet where he wanted to be, but he was getting there.

"Better that than to say that you are stupid. Besides, a woman never says a man is crazy until he is one too many for her. But, don't flatter yourself. That is not your case. Your wife has outwitted you,—which is precisely the reason why you call her crazy yourself. You are jealous of the way in which she has got ahead of you, and jealous people invariably call names. I don't believe that she ever called you any."

Still weak from the fatigues of the journey to nowhere and back, the snub bowled Uxhill over. But he was game and up at once.

"If she is not crazy, she is worse, and there is the mystery for—"

"There is no such thing as mystery," Jones, dodging and landing another, broke in. "There is only ignorance, and with that you are abundantly supplied."

"It is not my fault, then," Uxhill, rather staggered, replied.

"No; it's your wife's misfortune. She is not playing hide-and-go-seek for the fun of it, but in self-defence, at something you have done. Now, what is it?"

Then Uxhill got back at him. "I have done nothing. I have not had time. But, now I am going to do something. I am going to get a divorce. What is more, you are going to get it for me."

Jones put his hands down. "Ah!" he said, invitingly, "who is the lady? One of her intimate friends, I'll wager. And you pretend not to know why she has gone?"

"Lady!" Uxhill fiercely exclaimed. "What are you talking about? I have said nothing about any lady."

"Then what the devil do you want a divorce for? To be revenged? That is not very gentlemanly. To see your name in the papers? Without enjoying it very much, you have seen it there before. To recover Mowgy? But you would spoil her with concessions, and ruin her with chocolates. Unless you propose to marry somebody else, what good, then, will a divorce do you? But that's it. Nobody ever wanted a divorce for any other purpose. It was devised for that. Marriage is the earliest of institutions. Divorce was invented three weeks later. It is perfectly clear to me, and, if to me, how much more so must it have been to your wife?"

"But," Uxhill expostulated, "you—"

With a gesture Jones hushed him. "And you have called her crazy! Good God! It is considerate that she is, and, what is more, high-bred. On discovering your intentions, without a word, without a reproach, she leaves you, and leaves you to your conscience. That I call very fine. Always I have admired her, but never as now; and as for getting a divorce for you, frankly, Uxhill, I will see you damned first."

"But, confound it!" the routed wretch, in utter exasperation, cried, "you have the cart before the horse. You jump at the conclusion I am to remarry. Supposing I am. I had no idea of it before she left, and, consequently, she could not have, either."

"Oho! It is only since, then, that you have met Number Two? It seems to me that you have been devilish expeditious."

"Well,—er, no. I had met her before."

"Where?"

"Here."

"In this house?"

Uxhill nodded.

Jones nodded back. "That is just what I said. If Number Two is not an intimate friend of your wife, she at least has been her guest. What your wife saw I don't know. No one ever does know what women see. They have eyes in the back of their head. But, without giving you the chance to suspect that she saw anything, she washes her hands of you both. I call that very fine. Now, whoever Number Two may be is immaterial. But, I submit that your wife is worth a hundred of her. The one decent course for you to pursue is to find her, go on your knees to her, and promise to mend your ways."

Jones' cigar had gone out. He put it down and got up.

"Apropos. How is Miss Sixmith? I suppose I may take it for granted that she is contemplating matrimony also?"

To the question, as well as to the remark, Uxhill, instead of replying, got behind them into what had gone before.

"I have nothing to go on my knees for," he said, and, as though to emphasize the statement, he also stood up. "Nothing. Maud had no more cause for leaving me than I had for leaving her. In spite of which, and rather precisely on that account, I did try to find her. I tried so hard that I lost myself. I shall not try again."

"But you will try for a divorce?"

"I certainly shall."

"Well, you took the wrong bull by the horns when you said you expected me to get it for you. By the way, what is your opinion of horsehair?"

"Horsehair!" Uxhill echoed blankly.

"Yes; not long ago I saw Nora in the street. I stopped and asked her about Mowgy. She told me she was all right again, adding that she herself had been attending to some horsehair. I could not quite congratulate her. My grandmother, who lived in Washington Square, made her house hideous to me with furniture covered with it."

From the dining-room, the two men had passed to the other. Jones gazed about at the harmony of its fittings.

"In addition to matrimony, you are not," he continued, "contemplating any such further atrocity, are you?"

"No," said Uxhill absently. He had hardly heard.

But Jones had had enough; he got into his coat and got away.

VI.

ABOVE, on the ceiling, the cupids lounged and laughed. To them nothing whatever was of any importance. In their attitude was supreme philosophy. When Jones had gone, Uxhill stared at them, but unseeingly. The beauty of their significance was undiscerned. He was angry at the world, at himself, but, most, at Jones. A remark of the lawyer's, suggesting that he find Maud and go on his knees to her, rankled.

You don't rob a man and beat him, and then expect him to apologize, he told himself. Though, perhaps, lawyers do. Of course, though, he understood, Jones' admiration for Maud was so exalted that it put her on a pedestal which an earthquake could not shake. At the same time it was very tedious, for now he would have to get some else. But, whom? It was not that attorneys were lacking. The woods were full of them. Some had the theory of law, but not the practice; some knew the practice, but not the law; while the majority were profoundly ignorant of either. It was certainly very tedious.

In considering it, anger receded, as anger always does. In its place weariness came. From the debilitating effects of the journey to nowhere and back he had not yet fully recovered. Recognizing the fact, he ambled off to bed, which is always a very safe thing to do.

On the morrow he lunched at the Athenæum, afterward played bridge, and without bothering to return and dress, dined there, trying to feel that he was enjoying himself.

The effort was not successful. The

solitude of his house accompanied him. The gloom of it mantled him like a disease. In the cards which he held he saw other faces than those which they portrayed. Sometimes Maud's, sometimes Stella's, sometimes both, sometimes so confusingly that he was in doubt who was Queen of Hearts.

In this confusion and the doubt of it, he succeeded very perfectly in making himself very agreeable. His money ran like a fox before the hounds. The men with whom he played had never suspected before what a thoroughly good chap he was. Incidentally, when over the true identity of the Queen of Hearts, the doubt came; always after it there trailed the memory of Maud's ruthless desertion; while, before him, surged a vision of Stella's starlike eyes. Then, although the doubt retreated, the money did not return.

Those eyes were a godsend to the men that sat about. Stocks were abyssmally low that winter, with every menace of going lower yet. No one knew where the subsidence would cease. The men who were not hurt felt that they were,—asking themselves were they going to the poor-house, and telling each other that they were already there,—questions and answers which Uxhill's cheques momentarily relieved, and which, gladly enough, he would have enlarged if only their multiplication could have relieved him.

Time, in which all things unfold, disunite, and reassemble, alone could do that. Meanwhile the sense of desolation in which he groped, and which, when noticed at all by those who sat about, was attributed to the preoccupations of play, instead of diminishing, so heightened that he felt he could stand it no longer, that he must see Stella, that the touch of her hand in his could alone dispel the gloom of the solitude which the presence of others only increased.

Uxhill had not an idea where the girl's lodgings were. But, Patmore must know, he reflected. Patmore had had charge of her things. He got the man on the telephone, and got, too, the address,—a street in the West Hundreds, to which at once, in a club motor, he went as fast as the motor could go, determining, in transit, that so would he prevail with her that thereafter, until the divorce was secured, she would consent to see him each day. It was damned nonsense, he told himself, that she should hold herself so aloof. Yet, in his heart, it was nonsense for which he admired her the more. Everything she had done or said, even to that, particularly to that, had made him see that she was one whom always he could wholly trust,—one whose mind was clean as wholesome fruit, one who, in respecting herself, compelled others to respect her, one who could never derogate from her own ideals,—a girl who could make a boor chivalrous, and the chivalrous bend the knee.

Nonetheless, he determined to prevail with her. Ordinarily, of course, he would not have attempted to. But he had the blues, and those blues she alone could cure. To others than lawyers, practice and theory are not the same.

In the present instance, however, it so fell about that they were forced to fuse. At the address in the West Hundreds, an address, Uxhill discovered, which resumed itself into a private hotel,—for young women only, and superselect young women at that,—there could be no prevailing, no resistance, either.

That morning Miss Sixmith had gone to Canada, though whether to Montreal, Ottawa, or Quebec, she had temporarily omitted to state.

In circumstances such as these, to natures such as Uxhill's, a physician of the soul once offered the following very excellent prescription: *Lascia la donna e studia la matematica.*

Unconsciously, Uxhill rememorated it. Only for mathematics he substituted cards. The motor scurried him back to the green baize of the tables, where the money he got rid of was so profusely distributed that, when at last he left for his empty house, he was the most popular man in the club.

"What was it?" he asked himself in the cab that took him away; "what was the name that Sayce gave to the malady which he said psychology recognized, and which consists in the fear of going home? Anyway," he decided, "I have it. Moreover, as Stella has so arranged things as to prevent me from seeing her until I have the divorce, I will start for Rhode Island to-morrow."

There are morrows that never dawn.

VII.

THE next morning, Uxhill found himself inundated with the usual letters, which, as usual, he did not read. But, on one of them was an imprint that tempted. It was that of Crumings & Kim, the attorneys who had so civilly acquainted Tatum of their authority to accept service in any action against Mrs. Gerald Uxhill which Gerald Uxhill, esquire, might bring.

The present communication was equally civil. It set forth the perfectly legitimate wish of their client to recover her wardrobe, and suggested that, with Mr. Uxhill's permission and at Mr. Uxhill's convenience, packers would be sent.

In pauses of his perplexities, Uxhill had thought of this before. In ordinary circumstances, long since the things would have been shipped. If he had been unable to detain the lady, certainly he had no wish whatever to detain her clothes, or any of the thousand accessories that go to the making of a woman's atmosphere in her home. But, how may things be shipped to one who has no known address? The fact had affected him. It had seemed to him that Maud, in her flight, had taken only necessities, abandoning everything else; unwilling to be cumbered with objects associated with him. Whatever the cause of her going, he felt that he had not deserved that.

Then, too, there were Mowgy's toys, the little precious things which were hers, which she liked no one but herself to touch, but which occasionally, as a great treat, she displayed, one after another, admiringly to her papa. These things Uxhill knew that the child would miss, knew that their absence would hurt her with one of those hurts of childhood that are the more tragic in that they are inexplicable, and, as such, never forgot. What hurt her at all, hurt him far more.

Now, on receipt of the letter, he gnawed at his moustache. In view of the fact that, already, he had been officially acquainted with the existence and attributes of Crumings & Kim, it was for him to have offered to dispatch the things, instead of growling around like a dog in the manger, until prompted regarding a matter, of which, unprompted, he should have written himself. After all, it was but a detail. Yet, to the fastidious, details count.

There and then, Uxhill gave orders to have the things packed, and to Crumings & Kim he wrote a line setting forth that at any time the next day the effects would be delivered to anybody they might send. "Or," he was about to add, "to any address with which I am furnished."

But, that he judged superfluous. Crumings & Kim would furnish nothing. Yet, that which they would not furnish, he might obtain. There was nothing whatever to prevent him from having the things followed. Where they went, Maud would be, and Mowgy as well. No ; there was nothing to prevent him except his conceptions of what's what. An enterprise of that nature would, he reflected, be distinctly underhand. At the same time there was nothing particularly open and above board in the manner in which Maud had taken herself and his child away. Even so, the methods of other people cannot legitimatize any lack of square-dealing in your own. Then, too, in love and war, women have not always the same high regard for what's what which they might. They are the weaker vessel, and must be treated as such. Moreover, and here was the main point, to which Uxhill in his cogitations reached at last: A gentleman never sees anything that was not intended for him.

As a result, he left the matter to take care of itself. But, for that day at least, he thought the journey to Rhode Island might as well be postponed. Then, the orders given, the letter dispatched, he got away into club-land, where he remained until night.

The morrow was more episodical. By the afternoon train he proposed to go to Newport. Long before that train had any intention of starting, the morning post brought him a note of legal thanks, saying that shortly an expressman would stop by for the effects.

With that the episodical day began.

A trifle before noon, Uxhill was in the hall. He had been helped into his coat.

His hat had been handed him. A man held his stick, which, his gloves buttoned, he was about to take, when the bell rang and there was the expressman, a blond giant, producing an order for trunks.

Uxhill looked at it. "Where are you to take them?" he asked.

"To the Buckingham, sir."

"What! To the Buckingham, on Fifth Avenue?"

"Yes, sir."

The Buckingham was less than a mile away, practically around the corner, five minutes in a cab, ten on foot. Uxhill passed on and out. Beyond was Central Park, swooning in excesses of snow, striated with trees, from the branches of which icicles hung and glittered. Though the cold was polar, the sky was equatorially blue. The eager air, that slapped you with a smart that made your cheeks feel like porcelain, had in it little motes that dazzled. But, the exhilaration which the sheen of them induced, Uxhill at first did not notice.

He was occupied with a novelty which he had encountered in the pocket of his overcoat, the pistol which, on the spur of the moment, he had told Patmore to get for him, and then had utterly forgot. What earthly use had he for it? he asked himself. Hold-ups do not occur in the daytime, in Vanity Square at least, and, at night, not being as mad about exercise as Jones was, he was never on foot.

Then, precisely as he had forgotten that he told Patmore to put the thing in his pocket, he forgot that it was there. He had other matters on his mind. The fact that Maud was within hailing distance routed everything else. The sheer simplicity of it bewildered. There were times when he fancied her in Mexico, others when he believed she might be on the Mediterranean, but always nebulously in some spot which he never could find, and to which he never would know why she had gone.

Instead of which, she was around the corner, the toss of a stone from the Athenæum Club. But, though the simplicity of that was startling, yet, he reflected, it coincided curiously with her entire *sans-gêne*. Quite as her attorneys had made it clear that it was immaterial to her whether he brought suit, or whether he did not, so, obviously, it was one to her whether or not he chanced on her in the street.

Only, Uxhill told himself, the obvious is misleading. It was all too damned obvious to be other than phantasmagoric. For what in the world was there to prevent him from marching to her rooms, marching in, and marching Mowgy away? It was absurd on the face of it. She could not be at the Buckingham. Probably Crumings lodged there, or Kim, and one or the other of them had the trunks fetched to the hotel for subsequent transshipment.

In Uxhill's brisk descent of the Avenue, already the Park and its excesses of snow had been left behind. The Plaza, too, he had passed. Before him the Cathedral tossed, like cries, its spires in the biting air. The brick and brown of the Buckingham were just beyond. In a moment he would know.

In a moment he did. Entering the hotel, he went to the desk and asked if Mrs. Uxhill was in, producing a card on which the clerk scribbled a number, gave it to a bell-boy, and told him he would see.

Maud was there, then. In a crescendo of bewilderment he turned away, contemplating with unseeing eyes piles of papers and magazines which another desk contained,—a contemplation which the bell-boy interrupted.

The party was out.

Well, why not? Uxhill reflected. It might be so. He could, of course, sit about and wait. He could also go away and return, demand access to Mowgy, and, the demand denied, apply for a habeas corpus.

At the thought of all that he felt extraordinarily hot, and, unbuttoning his overcoat, strode out into the eager air. It nipped him. He meditated an immediate descent on some one of the many lawyers that he knew, and mapped an instant campaign. But, in the refreshment of the air, he concluded that the telephone might spare him any such bother, and, besides, in the present and surprising condition of things, it were, perhaps, better to see if he could not get Jones to learn for him the lay of the land.

Then presently he reached the club, where latterly he had become so popular. At the time it was empty. In the reading-room, before an open fire, two old men were comparing ailments. Otherwise there was no one. Uxhill got out of his coat, went to the telephone-room, told the operator to call Jones, and, at once almost, he was talking to him, telling him that Maud was at the Buckingham, asking him to go to her, and to insist that, without forcing him to uncivil proceedings, she give up the child.

"And herself, too, of course," Jones replied.

"You may say, if you like, that I have but one desire regarding her, and that is never to see her again."

"I'll be shot if I do!" Jones shouted back. "I will carry no such message.

But, your child is a different matter. I will see about that. Where are you?"

"At the Athenæum."

"Stay there, then, until you hear from me."

It was then one by the clock. It would, Uxhill knew, be at least an hour before he could possibly hear. He joined the old men. But, their complaints failed to interest him very deeply. The haunting query had returned. Yet, not as before. The enigma of the great Why was as mysterious as ever, but the solution over which he had puzzled had lost its disturbing force. It could no longer change the course of events. He had been shamelessly treated, and though an explanation of that treatment might possibly be forthcoming, yet for it there could never be the slightest excuse. While one old man was telling of his lumbago, and another of his gout, such were Uxhill's thoughts.

Pretexting a pretext, he left them and ordered lunch. In spite of the walk, the eager air and the bite of it, he was not very hungry that day. He wished to the devil it were all over. He wished that he and that lovely girl were sailing away to some lovely shore, where, in a fever of perpetual caresses, perpetual summer would be theirs. He thought of Bora Bora. But he put it from him. It was too much of a job to get there.

Zante occurred to him, the *isola d'oro*, the hyacinthine isle, where the slopes and intervales are rose when they are not purple, where the sky is a stretch of silk wadded with films of pink cotton, where there is no violet deeper than the velvet of its nights, where the air, a bath of gold, is shuttled with the color of dreams, with dreams changing colors,—with salmon, saffron, and smalt.

In the beauty of it all, Stella would fit like a flower of flesh, and at sight of her the grave Ionians would stop, and, musing, wonder could the young Venus of their ancient faith again from the sacred sea have arisen.

It was a delightful picture. It needed only the accompaniment of a little music to be perfect. Having intercepted it, and, incidentally, having eaten a suprême of chicken with a big bit of pistache in the middle, Uxhill lit a cigar, long, thin and black, at the end of which those casements formed that open on the marvel of lands where dreams come true, and then, it may be, occasionally turn into nightmare. On the fair perspectives Uxhill gazed until a head-waiter, approaching, arranged a chair for Mr. Yoda Jones.

Uxhill started. But, then, he had been far away. He looked at Jones, then at his watch. It was just three. Such were the imaginary enchantments which the imaginary casement disclosed that time had passed unnoticed. He had fancied it much earlier and said as much,—a remark which Jones treated like a cobweb.

Seating himself and addressing Uxhill without the faintest exhibition of any one of the many bagatelles of the intercourse known as courteous, "You can," he announced, "see your child whenever you get ready. It is your right, in the first place; moreover, it is one that nobody proposes to contest. But"—, and Jones, as he threw out the monosyllable, gave Uxhill a look that was tantamount to a blow—, "take the child away and it is murder."

"What?"

"You understand English, I believe?" Jones, poking his head out like a turtle, inquired. "Yes. Well, I said murder. M-u-r-d-e-r! Did you get it? You will kill your wife,—that's what you'll do; confound you."

"But, see here!" Uxhill furiously interjected; "hold on a minute. What the devil are you driving at? What did she say?"

"I have told you," Jones curtly, with his most brutal air, replied.

"You have not told me why she left me."

"I have that. I told you before I saw her. She left because of your matrimonial intentions."

"But, confound it, at the time I had none. The idea had not entered my head. How could it have?"

"Perhaps," said Jones, "you had it subconsciously and talked of it in your sleep. How do I know what you did, or what you did not?" he angrily resumed. "I asked your wife if she cared to tell me her reason. She answered that when you were free, you would marry Miss Sixmith."

At that, Uxhill, who had been leaning on the table, staring at Jones, sank back in his chair.

"God alone knows where she got that. The only people who knew are Miss Sixmith and myself. Certainly she did not get it from me, and she could not have got it from Miss Sixmith. Miss Sixmith knew no more than I did where she was."

"On the contrary, Miss Sixmith knew very well where she was. She knew that she was in bed,—ill there."

"But, confound it, can't you or won't you understand that at that time I had not asked Miss Sixmith to marry me?"

"Oh, I hardly suppose that in so many words you made a formal proposition that she should accord you her hand in holy matrimony. But, that she was aware of your intentions is clear from the fact that your wife was also."

Uxhill pulled at his moustache. The obstinate stupidity of Jones irritated him so that he could have struck him. But, in the clubdom of Vanity Square, a relapse into such primal primitiveness does not do.

"I tell you," he angrily repeated, "that I had no such intentions. Miss Sixmith could not have been aware of them, or Maud, either. But, let it go. Was that her reason for leaving?"

"I hardly see what better reason she or any other woman could have. When I asked her she said at once that you proposed to marry again, and, as you had admitted it, I could not deny it. It was then that she said she would not contest any action; on the contrary, that she would facilitate you; but, she told me to beg you to leave her the child. I felt it my duty to say that if, instead of facilitating you, she resisted any action you brought, and showed how you had been carrying on under her nose, it was she who would get the decree and the child as well."

"I was not carrying on under her nose," Uxhill ragingly retorted; "it is an outrage for you to suggest it."

"When I told her that," Jones imperturbably pursued, "she replied that she would not contend with you, but that if you took the child, you would take her life with it. Now, Uxhill—"

"Yes, I know, you want me to be lenient with a woman who drove me nearly if not quite insane, who for no reason whatever, for none, I tell you, for there was none, left me, abducted my child and went to her father."

"From whom, by the way, you abducted her, and who, when she sought refuge with him, told her that she had made her bed, and that she could lie on it. After taking her from her home, you have forced her from yours. She has nowhere to go. Only her child has she left to her, and you want to take that. You have ruined her life. But ruin is not enough for you. You want to kill her as well. Were it not for the child she would be glad to have you, glad to go, glad to be dead. And it is you who have brought her to that. But, you have been able to only because she loved you. It is a fine reward. I told her so. Yes, and she would not listen to me. She would listen to nothing against you. Uxhill, do you hear what I am saying? She stopped me when I started to tell her what I thought of you. Well, at any rate, I have told you. I should have suffocated if I had not."

Jones turned, and, with an uplift of the chin, summoned a waiter. "Fetch me a whiskey and soda."

Uxhill turned also. He felt profoundly misused. Prior to Maud's exit, save for one brief mood that had departed as abruptly as it had come, save that and an equally brief passage-at-arms, there had been nothing in his conduct to which a saint could object, there had been nothing on his conscience which a seraph would reprove. He felt that. He felt it so strongly that he felt that everybody concerned ought to feel it, too. Instead of which, through some unaccountable shuffle of the cards, one that he could no more explain to himself than he could explain Maud's exit, he who had done nothing, and to whom everything had been done, suddenly, through this prodigious shuffle, was turned into a villain in a melodrama, feeding on women's tears. He was guiltless, yet held guilty, while the real criminal was converted into a suffering angel before his eyes.

Strangling an oath, he stared at Jones, who, having had his say, was refreshing himself with a great glass of bubbling stuff that had effected its entrance with a pop!

At other tables other men were lunching belatedly. Without, in the hall, others were entering a room where Uxhill's money had run like a fox. From without came the jingle of sleigh-bells, the cries of brutes swearing at their horses, the sound of hammering and of engines working at the ceaseless skyscrapers ceaselessly going up, the metallic roar of the city.

Of it all, Uxhill was unconscious. One fact alone stood out. He was inexplicably misused. Jones, through some impediment of thought, was not only incompetent to see things as they were, but now, after having damned him up hill and down, was affecting, if you please, a remoteness that seemed to say, you are not fit to be spoken to.

Thereat, as though to put an accent on this impression, Jones, the bubbling stuff absorbed, stood up, and, without as much as a nod, marched off.

But, that was the extra drop. Uxhill felt not merely misused, but robbed. Jones was taking away with him the opportunity of being told what a confounded ass he was; what a confounded ass he had always thought him,—a confounded ass, indeed, with whose asininity he wished nothing further to do.

That robbery was more than Uxhill could bear. He started from his seat. But, in the hall, in which Jones' retreating back was still discernible, were men with whom Uxhill was very popular; a group of them detained him, asking were he not to join them, urging him to come and play. When he was free of them, Jones, like a fiend on the stage disappearing in a trap, had entered a lift and vanished.

When, ultimately, Uxhill reached the hall below, the doorman told him that Mr. Jones had just gone.

Maltreated, misused, robbed-to-boot, Uxhill became immediately conscious of a sense of being absolutely alone. The colossal city had been converted suddenly into a desert, in which, Stella gone, there was not a soul with whom he cared to exchange a word.

No; not one. Only a little girl, too young to understand.

VIII.

CHILDREN do not consider the future, they do not bother over the past; to them the present is alone important. We have much to learn of children. Apart from the charm of their charming philosophy, they are anarchists every one. They all wish to do what pleases them,—and what wish is more natural? Sometimes their wish is realized; then, instead of being anarchists, they are autocrats; for, when you come to look at it, an anarchist merely wants to do that which an autocrat can.

To Uxhill, Mowgy was an autocrat. He never thought of thwarting her. Now, the memory of her recurring, he got from the club, and made for the hotel.

At the desk orders evidently had been received. There was no sending of cards or waiting about; a bell-boy, directed at once what to do, led him to a dim hall and to a door, where he knocked.

But, Uxhill, unaccustomed to such formalities, opened it and beheld a room, at one end of which Nora stood, looking extremely uncomfortable, while, on the floor, was Mowgy.

The child turned, distended her mouth demeasurably, got precipitately to her little feet, with a bleat of joy hurled herself in his arms, and then, after the fashion of children who invariably persecute those that love them, she proceeded to tyrannize.

"Take me home," she ordered.

At the side of the room a lateral door, behind which he divined the presence of Maud, silently was closing.

Uxhill kissed the little girl. "Yes, dear, presently."

"No; now," the child insisted.

But at the door through which he had come there was fresh knocking. A waiter appeared with bread and butter and strawberry jam, which Nora took from him.

"You must eat your supper first," said Uxhill, striving not to thwart but to temporize. "We will talk about it afterward." He turned to the nurse. "Nora," he added, "you need not wait."

Nora, who, at the moment, was arranging the child's supper, looked if possible still more uncomfortable. She glanced at Uxhill, but gingerly, out of the corner of an eye, instantly averted. But, presently, through the lateral door, with another furtive look, she departed.

Uxhill, occupied with Mowgy, did not

notice. He got a chair and seated himself beside her.

"Now, tell me all about where you have been."

Mowgy was a small person much given to routine. Heretofore, at supper, there had been stories. What heretofore had been must therefore be now. Besides, what were papas for except to entertain little girls? After a long, leisurely bite at her bread, she made that point very clear. Uxhill knew that it was idle to argue. Like water from a faucet, he poured a story forth. When it was done she exacted another. Then, the jam finished, her hunger for food and fiction appeased, she got back to her original demand.

Again Uxhill had to temporize. He told her that it was getting late, that presently all good little girls would be in bed, that only papas who were very big and very strong ever thought of being out at such an hour, but that, perhaps, the next day, he would come for her and Nora.

"And mamma, too, of course," said Mowgy, to whom the oversight was an accident, and to whom also the objections appealed.

"Now, you run to her," Uxhill replied; "but say good-night to me first."

The child did as she was bid. Patting him on the cheek, she said good-night, and going to the door that led to the adjoining room, kissed her hand to him as she opened it.

Uxhill went out into the hall. Beyond, a woman was loitering, a maid, he thought, but who, as he approached, he saw was Nora. She was holding her hands, in an attitude respectful and shrinking.

"Mr. Uxhill, sir," she began, "you won't take Mowgy, will you?"

"Not to-night; certainly not."

"Not to Miss Sixmith, sir?"

Uxhill had spoken, as he went on, without stopping, over his shoulder. At this he stopped short.

"But what," he curtly inquired, "has Miss Sixmith got to do with it?"

"Oh, sir, excuse me, sir; but I have been with Miss Maud, with Mrs. Uxhill, I mean, sir, since she was a little baby, and I am afraid, sir—"

Surprisedly Uxhill stared at the woman. She seemed afflicted with ague. She was trembling, and a handkerchief, which nervously she had been tormenting in her hands, she put to her eyes.

"Afraid!" he exclaimed, "afraid of what?"

But now Nora, covering her face with her handkerchief, sobbed merely.

"Afraid of what?" he repeated. What the dickens ailed the woman, he wondered.

"You—you know, sir," she whimpered.

"But, hang it, I don't know; what in the world are you crying about?"

"It's the—it's the—it's the horsehair. Oh!"

"Horsehair!"

But, Nora, the handkerchief still at her face, was slinking away. She reached the door from which he had come. It engulfed her.

"Horsehair!" Uxhill, following her with his eyes, reiterated. "She's cracked."

"Horsehair," he resumed to himself, as without bothering to wait for the lift, he went down the stairs; "who was it spoke to me about horsehair?"

He had forgotten. It was, perhaps, some club stupidity garnered at cards. But, horsehair is a thing too unsuggestive to be discussed even by people who talk about nothing. The fact perplexed him. But what perplexed him most was Nora.

For years he had seen her tending Maud and Mowgy with a sort of slavish devotion, yet otherwise prim, angular, rigid, respectability personified, trustworthiness made nurse, the ideal servant, and now suddenly afraid of her shadow.

"Certainly she is cracked," he decided. "They are all cracked. Nora, Maud, Jones, the whole lot of them ought to be in Bloomingdale!"

At the thought of Jones, the recollection of the manner in which he had carried on that afternoon, ousted Nora and her craziness. Except on the theory that Jones was so dead in love with Maud that nothing she could possibly do would seem to him other than celestial, and anything, no matter how justified, done her, would seem to him distinctly infernal, except on that theory, Uxhill could conjecture nothing that would serve at all to explain the rhyme and reason of his attitude that day.

But, he suddenly queried, did it not explain more? Did it not explain the whole situation? Did it not explain Maud's exit, which, in forcing him to get a divorce, left her free to marry this imbecile? In explaining that, it explained, too, Jones' obstinacy in maintaining that Maud had left him because of what he was pleased to term his matrimonial intentions. That, of course, was all damned nonsense; Maud never could have left him for any such reason. At the time she went he had no intentions at all. The intentions had come later. He had admitted that to Jones. Jones had repeated the admission to Maud, and between them, as an excuse for her desertion, they had concocted this cock-and-bull story. It was all clear as day, and showed, too, why Jones had refused to act for him. Of course, the scoundrel would not act for him,—he proposed to act for her! It was a conspiracy, that's what it was,—a dirty, diabolic plot.

Long since, Uxhill had reached the street. Cold as it was, the aspects of the tortuous situation made him far hotter than he had been when he had stalked from the hotel earlier in the day. In his excitement he had passed the Athenæum. He turned back and entered the club on the heels of a man muffled to the ears, who greeted him warmly, with affectionate solicitude. It was Sayce.

The club now was crowded. In a great room that looked on Fifth Avenue were thick groups. In the main hall there were more. Through coils of men, servants in livery passed with diminutive decanters, with mineral waters, cocktails, cigars.

Sayce unmuffling himself had the mufflings taken away.

Uxhill, too, got out of his coat. "Are you to dine here?" he asked. Without waiting to learn, he added, "Let's go upstairs. I must speak to you."

Already men were approaching. Among others the old man who had told Uxhill about his gout that noon. But, Sayce, knowing from experience what to expect, eluded him, and, followed by Uxhill, fled to a lift that shot them out of reach, landing them on a floor on which was the library, a room to which nobody ever went unless, the diminutive decanters urging, occasionally a member dropped in on the slumberous armchairs that were there.

Now it was peopled only with the caryatides of the bookshelves, the demigods that never die, but who, in a club like this, get dusty. Barring the bedrabbled immortals, the room was empty.

Sayce, letting himself on a sofa, looked at Uxhill.

"Any news?"

"What do you think?" Uxhill replied, squatting in a neighborly three-cornered chair as he spoke. "My wife and child are at the Buckingham. I have just come from there. I saw the kid, and see now the whole thing. The other night I spoke to Jones about getting a divorce. He came here to-day and abused me like a pickpocket. Why? Why, indeed! Because, after the divorce, he proposes to marry the lady."

Sayce ran a hand through his hair and stared surprisedly. He was not surprised in the least. From the start he had suspected something of the sort, only he had been far too civil to intimate it.

"But, dear boy, did Jones say so?"

"No, ruffian that he is, he lacked the pluck, but—"

Sayce nodded. "He has certainly always admired her very much. But so have I. So has everybody. Mrs. Uxhill is one in a million. It hardly follows, though, that—"

Uxhill interrupted him. "I, too, thought her one in a million, one in a billion, for that matter. That, though, is neither here nor there. The point is that Nora is stark, staring mad, and I want you, if you will, please, to look her over and pack her off. Mowgy is not safe with her; she can't be—"

"Nora!" Sayce exclaimed. "I won't say it is not possible, for everything is, but—"

"Yes, I know. But, wait a second. Not ten minutes ago, with tears in her eyes, shaking from head to foot, she told me that she was afraid of—what do you suppose? Horsehair! Not a horsewhip, but horsehair. Why should anyone be afraid of that? And crying and sobbing over it, too. Isn't that enough? Isn't it clear that she is cracked? By George, I believe they all are."

"Hold up a bit," Sayce threw in. "How did it come about? What was it in connection with?"

"In connection with Mowgy. She said she was afraid of horsehair for her. Horsehair, now! There is nothing evil about horsehair, is there?"

Sayce tormented an eyebrow. "Horsehair *per se*, no. On the contrary, it is the outside of a horse, and that, Palmerston said, is the best thing for the inside of a man. But, he did not mean when taken internally. Then it might be unpleasant."

"But, whoever would think of taking it internally?"

"Nobody with any sense, of course. But in medico-legal lore there is a mythical case in which a person, without sense and without scruples either, administered it feloniously. The effort was unsuccessful. But, the story got about, got twisted, as all stories do, and, in the legend, which still survives, the victim died."

"I never heard of such rubbish."

"There is nothing curious in that. What is curious is the fact that Nora should have. I don't understand it, and what I don't understand, I don't like."

"Nor I," said Uxhill. "Who does?" Suddenly he started. "There," he exclaimed, "I have it! Somebody else has talked horsehair to me. I had forgotten whom. Like that, it just came to me! It was Jones. He asked me what I thought about it?"

"About horsehair?" Sayce repeated

gravely. Then he, too, abruptly started. Something forgotten must as suddenly have occurred to him. For a moment, his face, not grave merely but perplexed, he sat in silence.

"What do you make of it?" Uxhill asked.

"Do you know," Sayce answered, rising as he spoke, "I believe I will go and see Nora. I believe I will go now. Will you wait here?"

"I will order dinner. What would you like?"

"A bit of beef and a baked apple."

"Not together!" Uxhill called after him.

But Sayce had gone.

Uxhill rang, got the dinner-bill for the day, wrote a list of dishes, among which beef and apple were presumably included, and, going to the shelves, took down a dusty immortal, one at whose shrine often, in younger days, he had paused, and read again the verse of Leconte de Lisle, the royal "Midi," the prodigious "Vision de Brahma," the enchanting "Sommeil de Leïlah."

Twice a servant came, telling him that dinner was announced, but he did not heed. In the opiates of the evocations he forgot Sayce, forgot himself, and so forgetting, forgot, too, his little human soap-bubble loves and hates.

But a third summons awoke him.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"After nine, sir."

"After nine?" It seemed incredible. Sayce had been gone since seven. Usually he looked a patient over and in five minutes, Good-day. Uxhill wondered what possibly could be detaining him.

"I wish, please," he ordered, "that you get the doorman to send into the Buckingham and inquire of Dr. Sayce when he will be back. Dr. Sayce is with Mrs. Uxhill."

He turned again to the drugs in the book, to the "Dies iræ,"—the sorcery of a somnambulist of song. It lulled him.

In the process the servant returned.

"Dr. Sayce, sir, left the Buckingham some time ago. Yes, sir."

"But, didn't he come back here? He must be in the club."

"No, sir; the doorman says not, sir."

Perplexed, Uxhill got up. He did not at all understand. But then latterly a number of things had managed to elude his comprehension. This was but another.

With the idea that he might get the physician's secretary on the wire, he went down to the telephone-room and told the operator to call Dr. Sayce. When presently, in a little booth which the man indicated, he took up the receiver, he found that at the other end of it was Sayce himself.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens is the matter? I thought you were coming back."

Then through the instrument came the physician's answering voice:

"Uxhill, it is not for me to condemn anyone; but to you I intend never to speak again."

"Sayce!" Uxhill protested.

The cry lost itself. At the other end connection had been cut.

In the booth was but a stool, on which Uxhill sat, a ledge on which the telephone stood with a blank wall behind it, into the blankness of which he stared.

Was the whole world mad? he wondered, or was he?

With such queries for companions, dazed and a bit dizzy, he sat. The desertion of Maud had been to him unfathomable. The ruffianism of Jones had been relatively just as strange. But, more inexplicable than either was this slap in the face. An hour or two before, in the hall without, a man who had greeted him with solicitude and affection now refused, indeed, to condemn him, and refused to speak to him as well. No; that man would not condemn him. Yet, condemn him for what? For what? Nor would he speak to him either. And why?

"Why?" he repeated to the wall. But the wall was not responsive.

Could it be that he was really mad, and that these things were hallucinations? But to this, also, the wall, like the telephone, was dumb.

That evening he had hit, or, what amounted to the same thing, thought he had hit, on a theory that explained, more or less well, everything that had occurred.

But, in this new affront, any validity the theory may have had took itself off with a run. For admitting a conspiracy, certainly Sayce was not in it, yet his attitude was quite, if not more, unaccountable than the attitude of those that were. Evidently, if he himself was not mad, and evidently he was not, then there was something else. But what? Though he tormented himself into madness in an effort to learn, he knew that he would never succeed. Had Patmore refused to serve him or the chef torn his apron off, he would have thought merely that the air of free America had gone to their heads and let it go at that. But that Sayce should turn on him,—no, that, he decided, was something which he had awaited as little as that Mowgy should do so herself.

And who knows, the poor devil reflected, but that to-morrow she may?

Who knows, he added in the miserable undertone of miserable thought, but that Stella will catch the infection and turn from me, too?

For it was an infection. What else could it be? First, Maud, then Jones, now Sayce. It was but a question of time when his sister would catch it, and everybody would go, everybody down to and including Patmore and the chef. Yet, if it were not an infection, then, in some strange and subtle way, he had become as one accursed, one who, for some sin unknown to him, those for whom he cared shrank from and shunned.

"Are you using the 'phone, sir?"

At the door of the booth the operator stood, eyeing him curiously. In that booth he had seen many men talking to the instrument, but none ever to themselves. He did not regard it as legitimate.

"Oh!" said Uxhill. Then, rallying, he added, "They appear to have cut me off."

With his usual indifferent air, he got out, got his coat, got a cab and drove to that house of his that was haunted now, and perhaps forever, with the ghosts of the living,—with the memories of those who had known him and would know him no more.

IX.

SNOW was falling steadily in small, slow flakes. Uxhill did not notice. When a man speaks to another as Sayce had to him, the first aid for the injured Dante supplies: "*Non ragionam di lor' ma guarda e passa.*"

To Uxhill, mere human, natural pride counselled the adoption of that very excellent advice. But, pride is a screen behind which we rage at our ease. There are occasions when it is much braver to dare to be simple. The reason of the affront was wholly unimaginable. Behind it, too, were possible vastnesses in which imagination might readily weary itself uselessly away, the great blank voids of the inscrutable, where thought either falters or else, returning, saddens us with its hopeless mien.

Pride, natural and human, counselled Uxhill to have no further heed of Sayce, to proceed without argument on his way. But, the equally human and natural desire to know, which, unappeased, may gnaw more sharply than hunger, fastened on him so irresistibly that, lowering the window of the cab, he threw at the driver Sayce's address.

The cab veered, turned into a side street, where presently it stopped.

Uxhill got out. Before him was a brown door, through which again and again he had passed, and at which, shortly now, a maid appeared, who, before he could question, told him that Dr. Sayce was not in. She might as well have held her tongue.

Uxhill, with that peremptoriness which was usual to him, strode by her, strode down the hall to another door, which, without the formality of a knock, he threw open and saw, before an open fire, beneath a big chandelier and behind a small table at which were two chairs, Sayce, standing bolt upright, looking remarkably red.

At the sight of Uxhill he stamped a foot. If a face can flame his did. If eyes could kill his would have.

"I am not at home!" he bawled.

"Not to me, I am aware. Your servant has so informed me. But why?"

"Because I am out. Is not that enough? What more do you want?"

Uxhill nodded. "Yes. But you owe it, not necessarily to me, but certainly to yourself, to say why. I have done nothing to deserve it."

Furiously through his hair, Sayce ran a hand.

"Nothing! Nothing! Then tell me what something is? Or, rather, don't tell me. I don't want to hear. I refuse to listen. Leave my house. You tarnish it."

Uxhill, closing the door behind him, toweringly advanced on the fiery little man.

"For that, were you a bit younger and a bit bigger, I would knock you down. You know it. It is your advantage. It is one, though, that a gentleman would not take. Don't do so again. I am here for an explanation. I propose to have it. But, meanwhile, in spite of your years, I will thrash you if you presume again on my forbearance."

"Thrash me!" Sayce shouted, his face livid, one arm half raised, the other shaking at his side. "If I had a pistol here I would give you the bullet you deserve."

"Ah, indeed!" Uxhill answered, negligently producing the novelty which that morning he had found in his pocket. "Well, now, here is one. It will enable us to talk on equal terms. I thank you for reminding me of it."

Sayce glared and dropped into one of the chairs by the table at which he stood.

On that table Uxhill put the pistol, shoving it over to where Sayce was, and, removing his hat, took the other chair and sat down.

But, at this, Sayce got up, turned his back on Uxhill, took a poker and lunged viciously at the fire. It was not redder than he.

The bent back before him Uxhill addressed.

"Will you tell me now in what way I have been so unfortunate as to offend you?"

Sayce, the poker still in his hand, wheeled like a rat.

"Offend me! Your language is singularly colorless. Offend me! The one thing in life I cared for you have taken.

No wonder your wife had to go,—while she still had the strength. Such things are not done, not by Apaches even. Never for an instant would I have let that girl within a mile of you could I have conceived what you would do."

Sayce paused, yet only for lack of breath. But, Uxhill, who, in mounting amazement, had disentangled from the unrolled skein of words an inkling of what he meant, sprang to his feet.

"But, Sayce, I never knew that you cared for her. You did not say, nor did she. Not for a moment did it occur to me—"

"Why should I have said anything? Besides, it is your wife that should have occurred to you. Your wife who—"

Hotly Uxhill interrupted him. "I assure you that not until my wife had gone did I say a word to Miss Sixmith."

"Oh, you don't have to assure me of

that. If you had, she is not the girl to have listened. The marvel of it is that even afterward, when your wife had gone, she consented. But she little knew that your wife had to go,—while she could."

"While she could!" Uxhill repeated.

"Yes, while she had the strength. It was infernal, the whole of it, even to your acting, even to your surprise when she had gone, even to your idea that you did not exist. Where did that come from except from the fact that were this thing known you would cease to?"

"Thing! What thing? What on earth—"

"Yes, infernal!" Sayce, brandishing the poker, shouted. "And in spite of it, you have the assurance to force your way here and to tell me not to presume on your forbearance. Yours, indeed! Don't presume on mine. There is your pistol. Take it. Go home and shoot yourself."

The chiding of a torrent is futile. There are torrents of passion which words are as useless to stem. They must exhaust themselves before speech may prevail. The rabid denunciation of himself at which Uxhill was forced to assist was wholly incomprehensible. One dim point alone was dimly clear, the man's undivined infatuation for the girl who was dear, too, to him. The rest was thick darkness.

"Yes, go," Sayce cried, his great eyebrows raised and contracted, the poker hanging in his hand. "You came for an explanation. You have had it. You have had more than you asked. You have had two. Take them and be off, take the pistol also, or, if that is too much for you, take your infernal drug."

Uxhill, the thick darkness grown thicker about him, managed here with contrasting composure to interrupt again.

"But, Sayce, what are you talking about? To what drug do you refer? To the opiate you gave me? Why should I take that? Might it not be better if you took some yourself?"

Sullenly, Sayce looked at him, and, bending, hissed, "You know the drug I mean, one of which the final effect may be delayed at will for weeks, for months, during which it simulates an ordinary disease, and, the more infernally, in that its absorption removes it beyond the chance of detection. That is the drug I mean, and which in your hands failed only because Nora was one too many for you; because she secreted enough for analysis and learned that it was orsere, horsehair as she got it, the most subtle poison known, and with which you were dosing your wife,—and why? Because a girl existed who would not listen to a married man. Because that man's wife eliminated and perhaps the girl might! That was your infernal plot!"

At this fresh freshet of words, Uxhill again assisted, but now as one does at the sight of monsters emerging in nightmare, monsters that come, grimace, evaporate, instantly replaced by others more monstrous still. Uxhill could not stay them, he could not hide from them, he could not even cry out. He was dumb, only, unfortunately not deaf. But the darkness was less thick.

"Yes, that was your plot. Jones, whom I saw, told me about the girl; Nora about the drug."

"Told you?" said Uxhill mechanically. The monsters were still about him. But dawn was breaking. Dream may be numbing in horror, but sometimes the actual is worse. Before Uxhill a dream was receding. In its place was the real.

"She told you?" he repeated in the

same absent, mechanical way, occupied not with Nora, but the real. Yet, in his eyes and face so expressive must the real have been, that at some apperception of it suddenly taking shape, Sayce coerced, stepped back.

The doctors disagree. Some deny telepathy. Others declare that thoughts may be transmitted without signs, apparatus, or words, through the sheer impact of their force.

Perhaps they may. But this, at least, is certain. Something in Uxhill's eyes and face passed from him to Sayce. From his hand the poker fell, noisily, with a thud. Affrightedly he started.

"No, no; not that!"

His hands had gone to his head. He seemed to be pressing at what had got there.

"No, no; she never did. Oh, Uxhill," he called. "A girl like that! You don't know her. She could not. Don't you see that she could not? Why should she? Don't you see that she had no reason at all?"

But, here a very curious thing happened. Sayce seemed to lose control of his legs. He had been standing, monologuing abjectly at Uxhill. Now, however, without falling or any effort to save himself, but precisely as though his legs had melted under him, he sank to the floor.

If Uxhill saw, he did not heed. Something else that had fallen was occupying him, the weight of ignorance that had been so heavy, in place of which now was something heavier still. He could not quite shoulder it. Sayce, who was weaker, it had felled.

"But, she did!" on the floor, groveling there, the old man cried.

Truth is an objective phenomenon. It

acts in us and on us like a chemical precipitate. Sayce had given it no thought, and before him it stood revealed. The revelation, which ordinarily would have got at him hours before, but which his great love interfering had delayed, was crushing him now with its blinding force. The attitude of Uxhill, his strange quiescence at the infamous charge, some gleam of the real which he, in seeing, made Sayce intercept, these things encountering in memory incidents, some overlooked, others dismissed; words uttered by Nora accusing not Uxhill but the girl, words that he had indignantly hushed, — these things combining and from the chemistry of the mind there emerged the truth.

"She did," he repeated, crouching in the sudden light. "Only one conversant with the minute phenomena of disease could have done it. Only one conversant with medicine could have so graduated the doses that only the symptoms of anæmia appeared. She knew. You didn't."

From the floor he crawled to a chair, raised himself on it and sat nodding at the illusion that had unmasked. The illusion had been to him dearer than life. He had lost it.

"Yes, she knew. She forgot that I loved her, remembering that you are rich."

Then, at the truth, he shuddered.

Before Uxhill, too, an illusion had unmasked, dropped its domino, stepped from its disguise, stripped itself bare. In one of the fancy balls which the imagination provides for days he had been roaming. But, the high walls of the revel had crumbled. From the ruins a leprous horror oozed. In the fetid air swung the Why, vomiting its rhymes and reasons, suffocating him with hideous retrospects, through which zigzagged the heightening horror that that sweet life of Maud's had seemed to her menaced,—and by him!

From that he shrank, and, shrinking, turned, picked up his hat, hurried to the hall, to the snow, to the waiting cab.

In the hall the servant who had told him Sayce was not in stood, her back to the wall. Opening the brown door, he swung it after him, but, through it, just as it was closing, a sound flew, repercuted.

Irresolutely, his hand on the knob, he listened.

Before him on the box, in a coat of snow, the cabman sat.

"Did you hear that?" Uxhill asked.

"It was a gun, I guess."

Uxhill threw back the door, passed in again to the room beyond, where, at the threshold, the servant, white as the snow in the street, hovered, without courage to enter.

Within, beneath the big chandelier, Sayce lay, huddled in a heap, his face covered with blood, the pistol beside him.

Uxhill hurried forward, knelt to his old friend, spoke to him, touched him. Rising and uncovering his head, he turned to the scared white maid.

"Ring for the police. I wish I could wait. But I cannot."

Again through the hall he went, got to the street, told the cabman to drive to the Buckingham, telling him to drive quickly.

X.

DEATH may be the last to occur, but it may also be the least. Many are the things that are worse. The abrupt exit of Sayce, vacating existence in the crash of faith demolished, had stirred Uxhill, though less than the emotions preceding. He was too violently affected already to regard it other than as an inferior horror, attributable, as was all else that had occurred, to one who, an illusion unmasking, from a saint had changed into a saurian.

In every affection there is the germ of hate. Hatred is but love reversed. In Uxhill's heart a hole had been dug and, the contents displaced, such was the revulsion that, about the neck of the girl where he had thought to put his arms, could he have got his fingers and pressed them there till her reptile ghost emerged, he would have died of delight.

Where she was, no one, perhaps, but Sayce could have told. But, wherever she was, the noise of the suicide would follow and alone to her tell the reason. No doubt it was by way of precaution against a possible charge, which the divorce proceedings might provoke, that already she had taken herself to some spot, from which, once the proceedings effectual and the divorce decreed, she could descend in vampirish beauty, capture him with her Madonna air that was lethal as the Borgias, coerce him with her small, thin hand that was steady as the Brinvilliers, and yield to him her cool, chaste lips that were malignant as virus.

At the memory of the spell, impermanent yet real, which those lips had exerted, the surer knowledge of their nameless shames recurred, and it was with a horror of them, horror of her, horror of himself, superposing on the still deeper horror which another had undergone, that Uxhill got from the cab and entered the hotel.

At the office he did not stop; he knew the way, he needed no herald, and up in the lift that had taken him that afternoon he soared, alighting in the hall where Nora had cowered, and down it he went to the room where Mowgy was sleeping. Adjoining it was another where he knew that Maud must be.

A moment he waited. Like Mowgy, perhaps, she, too, was sleeping, and if aroused, might come to the door, see him, think he had returned to finish his work, and, shudderingly, slam and bar it.

Even so he must bear it. At last he had got at the Why, and to that, surely, if through the door itself, she would listen.

A moment he waited. Then, tentatively, he knocked. The door opened. Before him was Maud, her head lifted suddenly in that attitude a deer has when surprised, yet without alarm, with none of the dread he had feared, with wonder merely. Then at once she seemed to understand. One hand of hers was concealed by the door. The other that hung at her side moved up a little and back, the contraction of it reiterating the surprise which her face expressed.

"Maud!"

It was all he found, but in it he put his heart, his soul, the agony of his great despair. Again he uttered it, but this time he was in the room, the door closing behind him.

"Maud! Only for the old days' sake, only for them, give me a moment now."

He was eating her with his eyes, and into the famine of them she peered. But there was no fear in her own, a query merely, a perplexity and a doubt.

"All the afternoon I had expected you, and when you came to Mowgy, but not to me—"

"Don't speak to me, don't answer me, only look at me while I tell you that if I had a thousand lives I would give each one for you."

But, she was looking at him, her lips half parted, the glories of her eyes aglow. He had no need to ask her that.

"Each one," he repeated. "Was there nothing to say it to you? Nothing to say I could not harm you?"

The doubt now must have been going, the perplexity and query, too, for to those half-parted lips a sad little smile had come. She looked away and then at him, and then away, far away, once more.

"Harm that comes to a woman from the man she loves, if she love him enough, she can endure. But had you wished to harm, would you have gone to find me? Would you have been ill because you could not? I have been very wrong. I believed that you and that woman were trying to, and without reproach I would have let you, but I could not leave Mowgy to be killed by her, too. Not that you would have permitted that, but she would have died, as I might have."

"I know it," he answered. "But, if I had known it too late, if you had died, died thinking me in league with that reptile, the torments of the lowest depths of Dante's seventh hell would have been myrrh and cassia by comparison to what I should have suffered. Yet, how you could have thought me capable of conceiving such a thing—"

"You conceived no such thing," she interrupted. "Yet, why I thought you had you can explain to yourself better than I."

"Yes. I will tell you. It is my confession—"

Again she interrupted him. "One that I will not hear. That you had an interest in that woman I knew. I know, too, it has gone. You would not be here had it not. But what it was I forbid you to tell. It has gone; let it go. Don't speak of it. Let it be a thing forgot. I won't have it between us."

The room was comfortless and chill. Unconsciously it oppressed. Uxhill moved nearer to his wife. He was so close to her now that he caught the odor of her hair. It had in it the scent of flowers that are far away.

"Nor I. I will have nothing between

us. Nothing. But that reptile must be fanged."

"Gerald! Who is there to do it but you and I? It would be public, and what a legacy for that child!"

"If you had only told Sayce."

With the same sad smile she answered, "I could tell no one anything that reflected on you."

His hat he still held; he put it down, and took her hand in his.

"Meanwhile I have waded from horror to horror, but horror's crown of horror is that you could have thought me capable of this thing."

"Gerald, forgive me."

"No, Maud, forgive me."

"Then let us both forgive." For a moment she hesitated. Slowly with that motion the swan has she turned her head aside. "Are you still planning to go to Rhode Island?"

"I promised Mowgy to take her home to-morrow."

Quickly she looked up. "And you propose to?"

"I promised. But, she stipulated that you should go, too. Will you? Tell me."

Her eyes were in his. From his hand her own went up about him. The other joined the first. They made a necklace there.

"I will tell you that the very weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea."

XI.

A GERMAN, whom only Frenchmen read, said that happiness is illusory. But, is not horror more so? Pain, it may be, is necessary for the equilibrium of things. It may be, also, that evil is good which we do not understand. Both, perhaps, are needful. But, not horror. Otherwise it could not be so evanescent. The horror that had fastened on the Uxhills dissipated itself as horror always does, for even when it lingers you get accustomed to it and it ceases to be that.

Since the crowning horror at which Uxhill had protested, a year and a day had gone. It was the pre-Lenten season, which in Vanity Square is the most turbulent of all, a succession of regal dinners and royal balls, for which, from overseas, occasionally, come people of mark.

Among others were the Gemine, Uxhill's sister and brother-in-law, who, obligingly, stopped at his house.

Mme. Gemine, Sally as she was generally known, had not been in the States since her marriage, and latterly she had been urgent to display their exuberance to her prince, who, however, cared very little for exuberant things. He was good-looking, as many Romans are; he spoke English without accent as many Romans do, and he approached everything with a polite remoteness of demeanor which was due, not to hauteur, but timidity, to the fear of the fright of being bored.

A beautiful day, a beautiful book, the rustle of leaves, the ripple of waters, and no pauper could have been more content than this prince, descended from a Neronian consul. For his sins, the sins of some anterior life, perhaps, Sally was essentially worldly. She counted that day lost on which she had not spent a great deal of money, seen a great many people, and done a great many things, with perspectives of more extravagance and activity on the morrow. It was her cross that Gemine had no small talk, as it was his that she had no manners,—common crosses that made them an admirably assorted couple.

In Vanity Square they had now been a full fortnight, during which, had such gargantuanism been possible, each night they could have eaten a dozen dinners, each night they could have sat in as many boxes, attended as many affairs. But the end of the season was approaching. On the morrow they were off again, this time to the Riviera.

Now, as the curtain rises on the

epilogue of the drama, they were shortly going on to the opera, pending which, at dinner, they were seated between Uxhill and Maud.

The room was unchanged, the table was the same, even the servants had not altered. Only, as is usual with people who have been in hell, Uxhill and Maud were a bit sobered.

"You two stick-in-the-muds," Sally was disdainfully remarking. "You do not know how bourgeoise you are. Is it not so, Mario?"

Mario, Prince Gemine, duke of Valtravaglia, marquis of Correse, lord of San Soria, patrician of Sienna and of Rome, was eating a white strawberry. He nodded absently. He agreed with whatever Sally said, with what anybody said. It saved time, labor, and breath. A tempestuous wife is very chastening.

"You will forget how to talk soon," Sally continued.

She was in white velvet. On her head was a tiara. About her jewels gleamed. She dazzled.

"You see," said Maud, in her low, sweet voice, "Gerald does not care to travel."

The statement was exact. Uxhill had journeyed enough,—to lands he did not wish to revisit.

Maud was in silk the color of pumpkin. So far from being bourgeoise, as always, she was charming.

"Fiddlesticks! he does not know what he wants; you either. It is positively indecent."

But at that Uxhill protested.

"Here, Sally, stop calling names."

"Shut up!" was the lady's prompt reply. She was smoking.

"Shut up!" she repeated. "Maud,

you are boss in these diggings. Tell your people to pack and come with us to-morrow. In Monte Carlo you and Gerald will have something for your money. In April we can go up to the Rue de la Paix, from there over the Channel, and in June I will ship you back."

"Why in June?" Uxhill asked. "If we are there then, you might let us stay."

"Oh! as for that, stay as long as you like. But, in June, Mario and I go to the Finsburys."

"Are they nice?" Maud, who had never heard of the Finsburys before, inquired.

"She is a dear. You would love her. Gerald would, too. But not in the same way. I know him. I know him of old. Besides, I have observed her effect on Mario. Haven't I, Mario?"

"Lady Finsbury," said the last of the

Gemine, "is the most beautiful woman I ever saw. But, her conversation,—" the prince made an almost imperceptible gesture,—"no, her conversation is less exalting."

"Englishwomen generally are rather heavy on hand," Uxhill, with an air of providing information, remarked.

"But she is not English," Sally resumed. "Finsbury's first wife was a colonial dwarf or a giant, I forget which, but something impossible. Finsbury, I know, had one child by her and a great deal to put up with. He told me all about it, and made me promise not to tell. He behaved, too, like such a gentleman. He wore crêpe on his hat for her for three whole months."

"That was very gentlemanly," said Uxhill. "But who consoled him?"

"The most beautiful woman that Mario ever saw. I don't think her as extraordinary as all that. But, she certainly is a dear. Finsbury's wife adored her. She was a friend of hers, and when she fell ill she nursed her devotedly. They were compatriots. The dwarf or giant Marchioness of Finsbury was a Canadian. So is this one. This one is the daughter of a brewer."

Sally looked at her prince. "Her father was a brewer, was he not, Mario?"

"A bacteriologist."

"Well, something of the kind. They made him a peer I know. Baron Sixmith, that was it. Gerald! Do be careful! A little more and that glass would have gone all over my dress, and I have no time to change it. By the way, what time is it?"

Sally, as she spoke, turned to Patmore. "Is the carriage here?"

"Yes, your highness," replied the butler to whom "excellency" was, perhaps, un-English, and, therefore, incorrect.

"Now, Patmore, don't be highnessing me. In this free-and-easy place Madam is enough. Maud," she continued, "Mario and I must run. You won't mind, will you?" she added, getting from her chair as she spoke. "Why, what on earth is the matter with you? You are as pale as a ghost."

"Damnation, Patmore!" exclaimed Uxhill, rising nervously, upsetting a chair as he did so. "You keep this room hotter than Tophet. Open a window."

Maud looked up at Sally and attempted to smile. She did not succeed very well, however. Her under lip was trembling. But, she managed to speak.

"For a moment I was a bit dizzy. I am quite right now."

With manifest concern, Sally contemplated her. "I thought you were going to faint. If you like, I won't go."

With the same little, tremulous look, Maud shook her head.

In the protest of it, Uxhill joined.

"No, Sally, it is only the heat; it affected me. Come, little girl," he added to Maud, "let's see them off."

As Sally and her prince passed into the drawing-room, he whispered, "Bear up."

But, presently, when on to the opera the others had gone, putting an arm about her, he led her to that sofa from which, long before, she had kissed her hand at him, and then, sauntering down the room, had played the slow, sweet air that told of lovers who are ceasing to love.

"Try and forget it."

"But, Gerald, how can I? Besides, you were right. We should have done something. Now she has killed that man's wife, and it is our fault."

"No, dear, it is you who were right. Our first concern was Mowgy. By comparison with her, what is the loss of a woman of whose existence we have learned only through hearing that she is dead? Even otherwise justice is not ours. True justice is pity. It was in that spirit we let her go."

"And Sayce, too, Gerald. Poor Sayce!"

"There, again, you see. We could not have prevented that either. That reptile was his ideal. He shot himself not because he had lost her, but because she happened to be different from what he thought. The ideal is a picture which we paint with our heart's blood, and we are not apt to feel pleasantly toward anyone who destroys it. Another man might have shot her,—he shot himself. Suicide is merely assassination driven in."

"It does all seem too terrible, though."

"The more reason why you should forget it. Sensible people think only of agreeable things, and disagreeable things they never mention."

"I fear I am not sensible, then."

"I know I did not use to be. Do you remember the night I told you to add up zeros?"

"I remember I could not."

"Nor I. I did not know their meaning. I have learned since. They mean eternity,—the eternity which I once thought had begun between us, and which I know now can never commence. Yes, zeros represent eternity, but they represent chaos as well. I have learned that, too. But, Maud, I have learned something further."

He paused and looked at her. In the pause she looked at him.

"Yes?" she murmured.

"I have learned that out of chaos issue stars, and, out of anguish, men."

Hours later, when Sally and her prince returned, they were still seated on that sofa.

"I have no idea, you know," Mme. Gemine, entering and perceiving them there, exclaimed, "how you two tiresome people can be so tiresome as to do nothing but—"

"But," the prince approaching with his polite remoteness of demeanor, continued for her, "to do nothing is less fatiguing than doing something, at least," he added with an almost imperceptible gesture, "in society as conducted here."

Uxhill, rising, helped his sister with a wonderful cloak of purple and gold which she wore, nodding, as he did so, very appreciatively at Gemine.

"Because people are not up to some

devilishness, it does not follow at all that they need be alarmingly dull. Only, in this part of the planet, it will be a few hundred years before that fact is generally diffused. I know it took a miracle to get it through my head."

Sally, who had seated herself, was lighting a cigarette.

"Now, Gerald, that does sound interesting. Tell us all about it, and how it occurred."

But, to this day, neither Sally nor anybody else, for that matter, save Uxhill and Maud, have ever known the true story of the miracle in Vanity Square.

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THE MONSTER

THE MONSTER

by EDGAR SALTUS

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1912

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The Monster

I

WHEN the clergyman had gone, the bride turned.

Before her was an open window before which was the open sea. In the air was a tropical languor, a savour of brine, the scent of lilies, the sound of mandolins that are far away. Below, in the garden, were masses of scarlet, high heaps of geranium blooms. A bit beyond was the Caprian blue of the San Diego Bay. There, a yacht rode, white and spacious. The yacht belonged to her husband who was beside her. She turned again and as passionately he embraced her; she coloured.

For the moment, as they stood there, they seemed so sheerly dissimilar that they might have come of alien races, from different zones. He, with his fair hair, his fair skin, his resolute and aggressive face, was typically Anglo-Saxon. She, with her delicate features, her dense black hair, and disquieting eyes, looked like a Madrilene Madonna—one of those fascinating and slightly shocking creations of seventeenth-century art that more nearly resemble infantas serenaded by caballeros than queens of the sky. There was a deeper contrast. He appeared frankly material; she, all soul.

Leisurely she freed herself.

"One might know," she began, then paused. A smile completed the sentence.

He smiled too.

"Yes, Leilah, one might know that however I hold you to me, I never can hold you enough."

"And I! I could be held by you forever."

On the door came a tap, rapid and assured. A page entered, the preoccupation of the tip in his face, in his hand a platter of letters.

The man, taking the letters, dismissed him.

"Miss Ogston," he continued. "From your father, confound him. It is the last time he will address you in that fashion. Miss Ogston," he repeated. "From the Silverstairs, I fancy. Gulian Verplank. There is but one for me."

He looked at his watch. "The launch from the yacht will be here shortly."

"When do we start?"

"Whenever you like. The Marquesas will

keep. Bora-Bora will be the same whenever we get there. Only——"

"Only what?"

"I am in love with you, not with hotels."

"Let us go then. There will be a moon tonight?"

"A new one, a honeymoon, a honeymoon begun."

"Gulian! As if it could end!"

In pronouncing the "u" in his name her mouth made the sketch of a kiss.

"You would not wish it to?" he asked.

"When I die, perhaps, and even then only to be continued hereafter. Heaven would not be heaven without you."

She spoke slowly, with little pauses, in a manner that differed from his own mode of speech, which was quick and forceful.

Verplank turned to the letter that had been addressed to him, and which he still held. Without opening it, he tore it into long, thin strips. It was, he knew from the imprint, a communication of no importance; but, at the moment, the action seemed a reply to her remark. It served to indicate his complete indifference to everything and everyone save her only. Afterward, with a regret that was to be eternal, she wished he had done the same with hers.

Yet, pleased at the time, she smiled.

"Gulian, you do love me, but I wonder do you love me as absolutely as I love you?"

Verplank, with a gesture that was familiar to him, closed and opened a hand.

"I do not know. But while I think you cannot love me more wholly than I love you, I do know that to me you are the unique."

Leilah moved to where he stood.

"Gulian, and you to me. You are the only one." She moved closer. Raising her hands, she put them on his shoulders. "Tell me, shall you be long away?"

"An hour or two. Apropos, would you care to leave before dinner?"

"Yes."

"We will dine on board, then. Is there anything in particular you would like?"

"Yes, lilies, plenty of lilies; and pineapples; and the sound of your voice."

Lifting her hands from his shoulders to his face, she drew it to her own. Their lips met longly. With the savour of her about him, Verplank passed out.

Idly Leilah turned. Before her the sea lay, a desert of blue. Below, on the beach, it broke with a boom in high white waves which, in retreating, became faintly mauve. The spectacle charmed her. But other scenes effaced it;

sudden pictures of the Marquesas; the long flight southward; the brief, bright days; the nights that would be briefer still. Pleasurably for a while these things detained her. Idly again she turned.

On the table were the letters. One was from an intimate friend, Violet Silverstairs, a New York girl who had married an Englishman, and who since then had resided abroad. The other was—or appeared to be—from Matlack Ogston.

Matlack Ogston was Leilah's father. That a father should write to a daughter is only natural. But that this father should write surprised her, as already it had surprised Verplank. When he mentioned whom the letter was from she had thought he must be in error. Now, as she opened it, she found that he had been. Her father had not written. The envelope contained a second envelope addressed to another person. This envelope had formerly been sealed and since been opened. It held three letters in an unknown hand.

She began at one of them. More exactly, she began, as some women do begin, at the end. The signature startled. At once, as she turned to the initial sentences, she experienced the curious and unenviable sensation of falling from an inordinate height, and it was not with any idea that the sensation would cease, but rather with the craving to know, which in certain crises of the emotions becomes more unendurable than any uncertainty can be, that she read the rest of the first letter; after it, the second letter, and the third.

Then, as truth stared at her and she at truth, so monstrous was its aspect that, with one shuddering intake of the breath, life withered within her, light vanished without.

When ultimately, without knowing who she was; when, conscious only of an objective self struggling in darkness with the intangible and the void, when then life and light returned, she was on the floor, the monster peering at her.

She disowned it, disavowed it. But beside her on the floor the letters lay. There was its lair. It had sprung from them, and always from them it would be peering at her, driving her mad with its blighting eyes, unless——

She got on her hands and knees, and from them to her feet. Her body ached from the fall, and her head was throbbing. With the idea that smelling salts, or some cologne water which she had, might help her, she went and fetched them from an adjoining room. They were not of much use, she found, though presently she could think more clearly, and in a little while she was considering the possibility that had loomed.

In certain conditions the soul gets used to monsters. It makes itself at home with what it must. Her soul, she thought, might also. But even as she thought it, she knew she never could. She knew that even were she able to succeed in blinding herself to this thing by day, at night it would crawl to her, sit at her side, pluck at her sleeve, wake her, and cry: "Behold me!"

It would cry it at her until she cried it at him. Then inevitably it would kill her.

She had been seated, bathing her head with cologne. Now fear, helplessness, the consciousness of both possessed her. They impelled her to act. She stood up. She looked about the room. Filled with flowers and sunshine, it said nothing. Beyond was the sea. It called to her. It told her that in a rowboat she could drift and be lost. It told her that that night she could throw herself from the yacht. The blue expanse, the high white waves, the little mauve ripples invited.

The room, though, with its flowers and sunshine, deterred. To throw herself from the yacht meant that she would have to wait. It meant more. It meant that she would have to see him. It meant that she would have to feign and pretend. These things she could not do.

There remained the rowboat. Yet, in some way, now, the sea seemed less inviting. At the thought of its embrace and of its depths she shrank. To die, to cease any more to be, to succumb like the heroines of the old tragedies to fate, at the idea of that, her young soul revolted. There must be some other course.

She looked from the window. Beneath, before the ocean, a motor was passing. The whirr of it prompting, flight occurred to her, an escape to some spot that would engulf her as surely as the waves. Hesitatingly she considered it. But there was nothing else. Moreover, if she were to go, she must go at once.

She turned, crossed the room, stooped, gathered the letters, and seated herself at the table. There she put the letters in another envelope which she addressed to Verplank. While writing his name, her hand trembled, it shook on the paper drops of ink. These she tried to blot, and made a smear.

Trembling still, she got up, went to the telephone, and attempted to speak. At first, too overcome to do so, she leaned against the wall. It did not seem possible that she could do this thing. But she must, she knew. At last, with an effort, she spoke.

"When does the next train leave San Diego? One moment. Have my servants sent to me; my servants, yes, and—and order a motor."

Again she leaned against the wall. The room had become intolerable. Into the languors of the air a suffocation had entered, and it was unconsciously, in a condition semi-somnambulistic that she found herself considering the pink of the ceiling, then the rose-leaves woven in the green of the carpet, the dull red of the table-cover, the darker red of a tassel, the tall vase that stood on the table and in which were taller lilies.

There, beneath them was the monster. Its vibrations, disseminating through the room, were silhouetted on the walls. She could not see them, but she could feel them. They choked her.

But now her servants appeared. Nervously, with an irritability so foreign to her, that they eyed each other uncertainly, she gave them hurried commands. These obeyed and the porters summoned, she passed, choking still, from this room, the secrets of which the walls detained.

It was perhaps preordered that they should do so. Long later, in looking back, she realised that destiny then was having its say with her, and realised also why. At the time, however, she was ignorant of two incidents, which, after the fashion of the apparently insignificant, subsequently became the reverse.

One incident had the porters for agent; the other was effected by a maid who supervened. The porters, in removing the luggage, collided with the table. The inkstand, the tall vase with the taller lilies, were upset; the vase, spilling water and flowers, fell broken on the floor; from the stand, ink rippled on the red of the cloth, on the darker red of the tassels, on the envelope which Leilah had directed to Verplank. These things, a maid, summoned by the crash, removed.

When Verplank returned, the table was bare.

He did not notice. What he alone noticed was Leilah's absence. She is below, he told himself. Then precisely as she had summoned her servants, he summoned his.

"Roberts," he said presently to a man. "Find Mrs. Verplank. Then get my things together. We start at once."

For a moment the man considered the master. At once civilly but stolidly he spoke:

"Mrs. Verplank has gone, sir."

Verplank, who had turned on his heel, turned back.

"What?"

"The hotel is full of it, sir. When I found that Mrs. Verplank was leaving, I——"

"What!" Verplank, in angry amazement, repeated.

"Mrs. Verplank is taking the limited, sir. It was the clerk who told me."

Then, for a moment, the master considered the man. At the simple statement his mind had become like a sea in a storm. A whirlwind tossed his thoughts.

But Leilah was still too near, her caresses were too recent for him to be able to realise that she had actually gone, and the fact that he could not realise it disclosed itself in those words which all have uttered, all at least before whom the inexplicable has sprung:

"It is impossible!"

"Yes, sir, it does seem most unusual."

Verplank had spoken less to the man than to himself, and for a moment stood engrossed in that futilest of human endeavours, the effort to read a riddle of which the only Œdipus is time.

At once all the imaginable causes that could have contributed to it danced before him and vanished. He told himself that Leilah's disappearance might be an attempt at some hide-and-go-seek which shortly would end.

But he knew her to be incapable of such nonsense. Immediately he decided that his servant was in error, and that she was then on the yacht. If not, then, clearly she had gone mad, or else——

But there are certain hypotheses which certain intellects decline to stomach. Yet the letter from her father recurring to him, he did consider the possibility that she might have gone because of some secret of his bachelor life. Anything may be distorted. Unfolded by her father, these secrets, which in themselves were not very dark, might be made to look infernal, and could readily be so made by this man who was not only just the one to do it, but who would have an object in so doing. Always he had been inimical to Verplank, and this, the abandoned bridegroom then felt, not on his account, but because of his father.

The latter, Effingham Verplank, had been a great catch, and a great beau. His charm had been myrrh and cassia—and nightshade, as well—to many women, among others to an aunt of Leilah, Hilda Hemingway, whose husband had called him out, called him abroad, rather, where the too charming Verplank waited until Hemingway fired, and then shot in the air. He considered that the gentlemanly thing to do. He was, perhaps, correct. But perhaps, too, it was hardly worth while to go abroad to do it. Yet, however that may be, the attitude of the injured husband, while no doubt equally correct, was less debonair. He obtained a divorce.

The matter created an enormous scandal, in the sedater days when New York society was a small and early family party and scandals were passing rare. But, like everything else, it was forgotten, even, and perhaps particularly by the parties directly concerned. Hemingway married again; the precarious Hilda married also; the too charming Verplank vacated the planet, and his widow went a great deal into the world.

This lady had accepted the scandal, as she had accepted many another, with a serenity that was really beautiful. But, then, her seductive husband had always seemed to her so perfectly irresistible, so created to conquer, that—as their son afterward found it necessary to explain—it no more occurred to her to sit in judgment on his victims, than it occurred to her to sit on him. With not only philosophic wisdom, but in the true spirit of Christian charity, she overlooked it all.

The culminant episode in the matter—the death of the volatile Verplank—took place at an hour when his son was too young to be more than aware that his father had been taken away in a box. Leilah was even less advanced. It was years before she learned of her aunt's delinquencies. When she did, that lady had also passed away, as had previously passed a child of hers, one that, perhaps, did not belong to her first husband, and, certainly not to her second, the result being that, in default of other heirs, she left a fortune to Leilah, whose mother had left her another.

When her mother died, Leilah was in the nursery. Her father, who thereafter abandoned her to servants and governesses, she seldom saw. When she did see him, he ignored her completely. It was a way he had. He ignored also and quite as completely the son of the deadly Verplank.

To make up for it, or it may be to make trouble, the boy's mother never regarded Leilah otherwise than with that smile of sweet approbation with which she gratified all the world—all the world, that is, save those only who were not in hers. Among the gratified were the Arlington girls, two beauties, of whom the elder, Violet, was Leilah's closest friend.

It was at Newport, at Violet's wedding to Silverstairs, a young Englishman who had followed her from Europe, and who at once took her back there; it was at this ceremony, in which Leilah participated as bridesmaid, and Verplank as best man, it was then that both became aware of a joint desire. It seemed to them that they were born to love each other, to love always, forever. Forever!—in a world where all things must end, and do. But the eagerness of it was upon them. Leilah wrote to her father. Verplank wrote to him also.

Matlack Ogston ignored Verplank's letter as invariably he had ignored Verplank. His daughter's he promptly returned. Across it was scrawled one word. That word was No.

Interests more commonplace had meanwhile transported Verplank from Newport to San Francisco. Informed of the veto, which to Leilah was an incentive and to him an affront, he had wired her to meet him at Coronado, this resort in Southern California which together they had been preparing to leave.

The night previous, on a yacht chartered at the Golden Gate, Verplank had arrived. It was by train, the next morning, that Leilah had come. The wedding followed. Before them lay a world of delight.

This was hardly an hour since. Now, like a bubble, abruptly that world had burst.

Yet why?

In that query was the riddle which impotently Verplank was trying to solve. With a clutch at a possible solution, he turned to his servant:

"Roberts, get a motor. If Mrs. Verplank is not on the yacht, I will take a special, and follow her."

"Yes, sir. Shall you wish me to go with you?"

"No, stay here until you hear from me. At any moment Mrs. Verplank may return."

But Leilah did not return. Nor did the special, in which Verplank followed, overtake her. The first intelligence of her that reached him was the announcement of her engagement to another man.

II

IN Paris, many moons later, an Englishman, Howard Tempest, looked in, at the Opéra, on his cousin, Camille de Joyeuse. This lady, connected by birth with Britannia's best, and, through her husband, with the Bourbons, delighted the eye, the ear, and the palate. In appearance, she suggested certain designs of Boucher; in colouring and in manner, the Pompadour. Admirable in these respects, she was admired also, for her gayety, her tireless smile, and her chef. She had one of the best cooks in Paris—that is to say, in the world. Her husband, the Duc de Joyeuse, harmonised very perfectly with her. He had a head, empty, but noble, an air vaguely Régence. A year younger than herself, Time had had the impertinence to whiten his hair. The duchess was forty-two. Those unaware of the fact fancied her twenty-eight. The error greatly gratified this lady, who, familiarly, was known as Muffins.

One evening in May, Tempest entered her box, saluted her, examined the house, and, as, in a crash of the orchestra, the curtain fell, seated himself, in response to a gesture, beside her.

Camille de Joyeuse turned to him, and with that smile of hers, said: "Do not fail to come on Sunday, Howard. There is to be a Madame Barouffska, whom I want you to meet. She was formerly a Mrs. Verplank. Barouffski is Number Two."

"Verplank! Barouffski! What barbarous names!" Tempest exclaimed. He had vivid red hair, violent blue eyes, and a great scarlet cicatrix that tore one side of his face. In spite of the severity of his evening clothes, he looked rather barbarous himself. "What was she, a widow?"

"Yes, but with no tombstone to show. It appears that she was in love with Verplank for years, married him one minute and left him the next."

Tempest stifled a yawn. "How extremely fastidious!"

"She ran away, got a divorce, met Barouffski and married him."

"Very honourable of her, certainly. From what pond did you fish her?"

"The Silverstairs'. Violet Silverstairs is an American you know——"

"Know! I should say I did know. Though, if I did not, I would take my oath to it. It's got so a fellow can't stir without running into one of them. How does Louis like her?"

Louis was the duke.

The duchess displayed her beautiful false teeth. "Oddly enough, when he was in the States, he went hunting with her Number One."

"In the Rockies?" Tempest, with sudden interest, inquired. "In the Dakotas?"

"I fancy so. It was a place called, let me see; yes, Long Island, I think. I remember, he said it was very jolly."

Tempest tossed his red head. "Her Number Two, I suppose, is that chap I have seen at the Little Club. The Lord knows how he got there. He looks like a thimblerigger."

The duchess raised her opera-glass. "Possibly. Nowadays, so many men do, don't you think? There is Marie de Fresnoy with the Helley-Quetgens! You will have her next to you on Sunday, Howard. Do not lacerate her tender heart."

At the suggestion, Tempest made a face. His expression amused Camille de Joyeuse. Indulgently she added: "To make up for it you shall take Madame Barouffska out."

But now the curtain was rising. The clear brilliance of the house faded into a golden gloom.

On the Sunday following, when Tempest reached the Cours la Reine, in which his cousin resided, there was a motor before the perron, and from it a woman was alighting. As rhythmically, with a grace that is rare in women who are not ballerines, she mounted the stair, Tempest had a vision of a figure, tall and slight, of a mass of black hair, and of a neck emerging from ermine. In the anteroom above, while a servant took from her her cloak and another received Tempest's hat and coat, he saw that she was extremely beautiful.

Immediately a footman, throwing open a door, announced: "Madame la comtesse Barouffska!" He added at once: "Lord Howard Tempest!"

In this marriage of their names they entered a drawing room in which were the Joyeuses, the Fresnoys, the Silverstairs; others, also, who momentarily were indistinguishable. The room—large, wide, high-ceiled—was decorated gravely, with infinite taste. Beyond it, a suite of salons extended.

Camille de Joyeuse, advancing to meet her guests, presented Tempest to Mme. Barouffska.

In a voice which, if a trifle high, was fluted, the duchess added:

"My dear, this cousin of mine has a terrible reputation, and that, I am sure, will commend him to you."

With the semblance of a smile, Mme. Barouffska replied:

"You know I am never quite able to decide just what construction to put on your remarks."

"Put the worst, put the worst!" answered the duchess, whose costume left her splendidly nude. From a billowy corsage her shoulders and bust emerged as though rising through foam, while the light gold tissue of her gown accentuated the royal outlines of her figure.

Leilah Barouffska, slenderer, taller, wholly in white, contrasted etherially with her. Turning to Tempest she said:

"Lord Howard, I have heard so much that is interesting about you."

"Not from Muffins, then."

"Yes, but also from Silverstairs. He told me that you are the best gentleman jockey in England and a Sanskrit scholar besides."

"Oh, I can straddle a horse, if it comes to that, but otherwise he exaggerates. He has caught that from his wife—unless it happens to be from her sister."

At mention of the girl, Leilah, who had been looking across the room, turned to Tempest again. In looking she saw this young woman whose allurements—and possibilities—were generally regarded as excessive. Recently she had become engaged—perhaps for the tenth time. Coincidentally was the announcement that she was going in for light opera. Now, in reference to her, Leilah said:

"You have met Aurelia, then?"

"I found it very difficult not to."

"And this young Lord Buttercups to whom she is engaged, is he nice?"

Tempest adjusted his monocle. "Very. A trifle wrong in the upper story. So was his father. So was his grandfather. A fine old English family."

Faintly, as before, Leilah smiled. "I understand that Aurelia is studying for the stage. Such a queer idea, don't you think—for an American heiress, I mean."

Tempest, extracting his eyeglass, nodded. "Nowadays, unless an idea is queer, it can hardly be called an idea at all. But I am glad this young person is studying something. When she went to school she must have been taught everything which it is easiest to forget."

A servant announced:

"His Excellency, Mustim Pasha!"

The man who entered was short and stout. He had a full black beard, and the appearance, slightly Hebraic, which Turks possess.

After M. de Joyeuse had greeted him, he saluted the duchess.

Beyond, on a sofa, Violet Silverstairs sat talking to the Baronne de Fresnoy, a young woman who looked very much as might a statuette of Tanagra, to which Grévin had given two big blue circles for eyes, and a small pink one for mouth, but a statuette articulated, perhaps, by Eros, and costumed, certainly, by the Rue de la Paix—though a shade less artistically than Lady Silverstairs, who always seemed to have just issued from some paradise inhabited solely by poet-modistes, and who, in addition, possessed what Mme. de Fresnoy lacked, a face delicately and rarely patrician.

Adjacently was her sister, Aurelia, a girl with a face like an opening rose, and a frock of such astonishing simplicity that it looked both virginal and ruinous. This young person had the loveliest eyes imaginable. In them and about an uncommonly bewitching mouth was an expression quite ideally ingénue which, when least expected, it amused her to transform into one of extreme effrontery.

On one side of her was Lord Buttercups, an English youth, small, snubnosed, stupid. On the other lounged a Roman, Prince Farnese, a remarkably fine-looking pauper.

Turning from the girl's sister to the Turk, the young baroness called:

"Here, Musty, come and make love to us."

The Asiatic was about to abandon Mme. de Joyeuse, when doors at the farther end of the room were thrown open, and the duchess put a hand on his arm.

At table, Tempest, who had taken Leilah Barouffska out, found his seat indicated beside her. At his left was Mme. de Fresnoy, whom he detested. He turned to the American. At the moment some preoccupation, a nostalgia or a regret, contracted the angle of her mouth. The contraction gave her the expression which those display who have deeply suffered either from some long malady or from some perilous constraint.

Mechanically, Tempest considered a dish which a footman, his hands gloved in silk, was presenting. When he again turned to the American, it was as though a curtain had fallen or risen. Her face had lighted, and it was with an entirely worldly air that she put before him this unworldly question:

"Do you believe in fate?"

Tempest laughed. "Not on an empty stomach. I believe then in nothing but virtue."

Leilah put down her spoon. "It seems to

me that our lives are sketched in advance. It may be that we have the power to amplify incidents or to curtail them, but the events themselves remain unchanged. They are there in our paths awaiting us. Though why they are there——"

As was usual with her, she spoke with little pauses, in a voice that caressed the ear. Now she stopped and raised the spoon, in which was almond soup.

Tempest took a sip of Madeira. "A pal of mine, a chap I never met for a number of reasons, though particularly, I suppose, because he died two thousand years ago, well, he told me that we should wish things to be as they are. I have no quarrel with fate. But if you have, or do have——"

A maître d'hôtel, after presenting a carp that had been arranged as though swimming in saffron, was supervising its service.

"Padapoulos," exclaimed the young Baronne de Fresnoy, whom the sight of the fish had, perhaps, excited, "Padapoulos told me that he dined best on an orchid soup, a mousse of aubergine, and the maxims of Confucius."

"Padapoulos," the legate of the Sublime Porte gravely commented, "is a poet, and a Greek. Add those two things together, and you get—you get——"

"Nothing to eat!" the young baroness, with an explosion of little laughs, threw at him. "Musty!" she cried. "Whom were you with at the Variétés last night? I saw you. Yes, I did. Oh, Musty, who would have thought that you would be unfaithful to me!"

"These Roumis!" the Turk mentally exclaimed. "If a wife of mine talked in that way I would have her impaled."

Beyond, across an opulent bosom, de Joyeuse and Silverstairs were talking sport. They delighted in things that men have always loved, the pursuit of prey, the joy of killing, the murderous serenity of the woods.

Farther up was Aurelia. As before, she had Buttercups on one side, Farnese on the other. She poked at the former.

"That horrid de Fresnoy woman is trying to flirt with you, Parsnips. Now, don't deny it. I don't blame her. You are too good-looking. When we are married—if we ever are—I'll make you wear a veil. You sha'n't go out except in a closed carriage. Yes, and with some big, fat, strapping woman to look after you.

Beatifically the youth considered her. "Couldn't you do that?"

Delicately Aurelia raised a fork. "I shall have my own affairs to attend to." For a second she nibbled. "I have a few on my hands as it is."

Buttercups stabbed at his plate. "I, too, may have business of my own."

"Business! Business!" The girl repeated. "You are so commercial—just like all the nobility. If you were not a peer you would be mistaken for one. It's quite painful."

"That may b-be," Buttercups spluttered. "But this idea of yours of going on the stage is quite as p-painful to me."

He hesitated, then, as though uttering a great moral truth, threw out:

"It's so dreadful to have your name in the papers!"

"And still more dreadful not to!" the girl threw back. She turned to Farnese. "You do nothing but eat!"

With large, melancholy, inconstant eyes the Italian looked at her. "It is my one consolation since you became engaged to that imbecile."

Aurelia pecked at her food. "One always feels quite safe with an imbecile, and that is so restful. Try it and see."

"I'd like to try it with you."

Aurelia put down her fork. "Am I your idea of an imbecile? You are flattering, if insincere."

Again the Roman covered her with his eyes. "It is rather difficult to be the one and not the other. But I am perfectly sincere in saying that you are my idea of perfection."

"Thanks, but, then, you are not mine."

"And might one ask what yours is?"

Dreamily, with an air of innocence that was infinite, Aurelia looked at him. "You will think it childish of me, perhaps, but, like all young girls—like all young and inexperienced girls—I have an ideal. A mere maiden's fancy, no doubt, and yet one which I cherish so. It is a vision which at times I have of a blind man, a deaf mute, a divine creature, invalid and octogenarian, who would not know what I did and would not care."

Pausing, she dropped her eyes and sadly shook her head. "You will tell me that he don't exist."

"He might be manufactured," Farnese cheerfully replied.

Then he, too, paused, drank of the wine before him, and, perhaps stimulated by it, whispered:

"Believe me, I feel as though I could cut my throat for you."

Maliciously Aurelia looked up. "When a man does not feel that way he has no feeling at all. One might even say that he is quite heartless."

Across the table, Tempest, turning again to Leilah, said: "Monsieur Barouffski is not here to-night."

At the remark, instantly in her face its former expression of constraint appeared.

"No, he is to join us later."

At the other end, where the duchess sat, everybody was laughing. The lady had been giving an account of a recent bankruptcy, that of Lord Auld Reekie.

"Heavens!" Violet Silverstairs exclaimed. "What will become of Bobbles!"

Bobbles was Lady Auld Reekie, a fair young craft of light timber and many sails.

Camille de Joyeuse, summoning her diligent smile, replied: "She will go into the hands of a receiver."

Another jest followed, and presently, in the contagion of it almost the entire table joined.

The delicately toxic fare, the slightly emotionalising wines, loosened tongues, robbing them of discretion, and, before the servants, as though the latter were deaf and dumb, hosts and guests revealed their naked minds.

"It is rotten to talk in that way before these men," Tempest exclaimed. "They get their wages with lessons in anarchy thrown in. It's too much."

"I had not heard," Leilah replied. "I was thinking of that friend of yours whom you never met."

Tempest laughed. "The one who said we should wish things to be as they are? Ah, well! I am afraid I am not up to that yet."

"Nor I. But who was he, if one may ask? Not Aristotle?"

"No, but, by the way, do you know whom Aristotle is supposed to be, or rather to have become? Herbert Spencer! An occultist told me. He told me also such a curious story. You have heard, have you not, of Apollonius of Tyana? Then you may remember it is said of him that he healed the sick, raised the dead, knew all things save the caresses of women, and spoke every language including that of colours. Well, the occultist told me that Jesus was a rabbi who surrendered his entity to the Christ, and afterward reappeared here as Apollonius. He said, too, that he was not crucified. Crucifixion, you know, is merely the symbol of initiation."

"And whom did he say was the Christ?"

"An envoy from a higher sphere."

Leilah inclined her head. "Yes, and there have, I believe, been others. From zeniths or from nadirs unknown to us, from planes, let us say, where all beatitudes are as usual as all shames are common here, spirits commissioned to regenerate the hearts of man pass into the slums of space. Confident, with a crown of light they come, only to return with one of thorns."

Tempest turned squarely in his chair. "That is a singularly beautiful idea!"

Again Leilah inclined her head. "It is beautiful. It is beautiful to think that earthward from some chromatic star the soul of Krishna may have sunk. But the idea is not mine. I found it in the *Vidyâ.*"

This last statement was lost. Mme. de Fresnoy was insisting on Tempest's attention. Meanwhile a cygnet, its plumage replaced, a pond lily in its ochre beak, had been presented, carved and served. A salad, known as Half-Mourning, a composition of artichoke hearts and Piedmontese truffles, had departed with it. Now sweets had come, pastry light as a caress, volatile as an essence, that pastry of which the art is known only to the Oriental and the occasional cordon bleu.

Devoutly, with an air of invoking the Prophet, the Turk was absorbing it.

The young Baronne de Fresnoy, abandoning Tempest, looked at him. With a wicked glitter in her big blue eyes she called:

"Musty! Are you thinking of me?"

The pasha was framing a reply, a reply perhaps rather bald, when Camille de Joyeuse also addressed him. Presently she stood up. The others imitated her. The gayeties of the table were abandoned for the brilliance of the salons beyond.

Tempest, who had accompanied Leilah Barouffska said, as she seated herself:

"Are you to remain in Paris?"

Before answering, she looked up at him, for he was standing. "Who can tell what one will do? But I fancy so. We have taken a house in the rue de la Pompe."

"In the rue de la Pompe!" Tempest exclaimed. "That is where I live." He smiled. The fact that they were neighbours seemed to constitute a bond. "Whereabouts in the rue de la Pompe?"

"Next to the church."

"Do you find it convenient?"

A servant announced:

"Monsieur and madame Spencer-Poole!"

"You mean," Leilah replied, "am I a Catholic? No, I am an Episcopalian. But my views, I fear, are not orthodox. I have got so far that I believe fully in the *Vidyâ.*"

She had cited the book at the dinner table but, at the time, distracted by Marie de Fresnoy, Tempest had not heard; now he exclaimed at it.

"The *Vidyâ!* Of all things! Why not the Upanishads?"

A servant announced:

"Madame la marquise de Charleroi!"

Leilah made a little gesture. "The Upanishads, too. I have great faith in them also. Their conceptions seem to me the most perfect that the human mind has evolved, that is, if it were a human mind that evolved them."

A servant announced:

"Madame la princesse Orlonna!"

"What particularly impressed you in them?" Tempest asked.

"The demonstration that life is a laboratory in which the strength of the soul is tried."

"And in the *Vidyâ?*"

"The fact that selfishness is the root of evil. That impressed me very much, primarily I suppose because it is true, but chiefly I think because I had not realized it before."

Tempest nodded. Never had he heard a mondaine cite the Upanishads. In no drawing room had he ever heard the *Vidyâ* mentioned. In his life he had not dreamed of having a digest of each produced in an atmosphere dripping with frivolities. As he nodded he reconsidered this woman. From the first he had realized that she differed from the ordinary society type. Now he saw that she belonged to a superior world.

"Do you not admire them, too?" Leilah, who had also been considering him, inquired.

Tempest adjusted his monocle. "You see, you know, the Self, the All-Self, the One, the oneness of self with everything, the oneness of all things with One, these minor motifs of theirs I may admire but I do not grasp. On the contrary, there is a certain voluminous complexity about them that makes me gasp. None the less they advance certain ideas which, while curious to the few and to the many absurd, are yet so mathematically evident; the fact for instance——"

A servant announced:

"His Highness monseigneur le prince Paul de Montebianco!"

"Monsieur Harris!"

The salons were becoming filled. The floor was swept by trains brief but brilliant. There was a multiplication of black coats, a renewed animation, a mounting murmur in which occasionally the name of a new arrival was lost.

The servant announced:

"Monsieur le vicomte and madame la vicomtesse de Helley-Quetgen!"

"Madame la princesse Zubaroff!

"Monsieur d'Arcy!"

"Monsieur le comte Barouffski!"

The last of these, a large man, very fair, with grey-green eyes, had a studied manner which, however, his voice relieved. As he advanced and addressed Mme. de Joyeuse, it sounded supple and silken, as indeed most Slav voices do.

Already groups had formed. The corner in which Tempest stood before Leilah developed another. The Spencer-Pooles approached. With them was d'Arcy, a young man abominably good looking, famous for the prodigious variety of his affairs.

Tempest who had continued talking, who had even been expounding and who now felt that he had been holding forth, moved on. He wanted to smoke and being an habitué of the household, he knew where the smoking room was.

There, before an open fire, his hands behind his back, in that after-dinner attitude which some men assume, M. de Joyeuse stood. He was telling of a stag hunt that had been held at Monplaisir, his estate.

The duke was not an impressionist, his description lacked colour. But de Fresnoy, who had been present, resaw it all; the sheen of the horses, the green of the whippers-in, the pink coats of the sportsmen, the blue dolmans of the officers that had ridden over from a garrison near by, the verdure of the forest's edge, the view, the scramble, the run, the quarry, the hallali of the huntsman, the leaping hounds, the fastidious ceremonial of the death and the sky of pale silk which draped with faint gold the magnificent brutality of the scene.

"It was just my luck to have missed it," Silverstairs threw in.

De Joyeuse turned to him. "We count on you next autumn. And on you also, mon vieux," he added to Tempest who had approached.

Tempest nodded. He was lighting a cigar. The operation concluded, he drew a chair beside Silverstairs. "Now tell me all about Madame B."

Silverstairs eyed him quizzingly. "She interests you?"

"Enormously."

"Then look out for Barouffski whom she interests still more."

Tempest shrugged his shoulders. "Was it her interest in Number One or Number One's interest in her that declined?"

"You mean Verplank?"

"I suppose I do. Anyway I mean her first husband. Why were they divorced?"

"Why? But my dear Tempest, divorce in the States is what racing is with us, a national amusement. Everybody takes a hand in it."

"The right or the left?"

"Both I fancy. Though in the case of Madame B. I have an idea that the right turned out to be wrong."

Tempest flicked the ashes from his cigar. "I may compliment you, Silverstairs. You have a manner of expressing yourself which is highly cryptic. But now, to an every day sort of chap like myself, would you mind being less abstruse?"

"I should feel sordid if I refused. Verplank is a very good sort, whereas this Barouffski is a rotter."

Tempest bowed. "Thank you for descending to my level. The long and short of it is that she has made a mess of it. Well, most people do. I don't wonder now that over the soup she talked about fate."

"Oh, as for that, after certain experiences of my own, with which, pray do not be alarmed, I have no intention of boring you, I have stopped wondering at anything at all."

"Silverstairs, in ceasing to be cryptic, do not become Spartan. My cousin told me that Joyeuse hunted with this, with What's-his-name, with—er——"

"With Verplank?"

"Yes, that he had hunted with him in the States. And that reminds me. What have you decided about that horse?"

Silverstairs pulled at his straw-coloured moustache. "I'll let you know to-morrow. When are you to be at home?"

"Any time after two."

Silverstairs nodded. "Very good, I will drop in on you."

From beyond, blue and vibrant, came the upper notes of a violin. In the now crowded salons a Roumanian, the rage of the season, a youth, very pale, with melancholy eyes, flowing hair and the waist of a girl, was executing a fantasy of his own.

De Joyeuse flicked a speck from his sleeve, threw back his noble and empty head, gave a circular look of inquiry, a little gesture of invitation, and accompanied by his friends, sauntered to the rooms without.

There, Barouffski after saluting Mme. de Joyeuse had engaged her briefly in talk. But her attention had been attracted rather than claimed by the Montebiancan prince, a young man extremely gentlemanly and equally modest who, with that diffidence which royals and poets share, stood bashfully at her side.

Barouffski, bowing again, passed on. During his short and entirely fragmentary conversation with Mme. de Joyeuse, his eyes had rummaged the room.

Leilah, meanwhile, rising from the sofa where she had been seated, moved with the inflammatory d'Arcy into the salon beyond.

Barouffski would have followed. But the young Baronne de Fresnoy addressed him. Perversely, with sudden glimpses of little teeth and an expression of glee in her piquant face, she asked:

"Was it you who performed that high act of gallantry at Longchamps to-day?"

"Was it I who did what?" Barouffski surprisedly exclaimed.

"What was it?" asked Aurelia, who with Buttercups in tow, had approached.

But Mme. de Fresnoy waved at her. "Go away my dear, it is not for an ingénue."

"Ah then, but you see," Aurelia indolently interjected, "I am tired of being an ingénue. An ingénue is supposed to be in a state of constant surprise and that is so exhausting."

None the less, with Buttercups still in tow she betook herself to a corner where she was promptly joined by Farnese.

Then at once to Barouffski, to Mustim Pasha, to the Helley-Quetgens, to others that stood about, the young baroness related a morsel of gossip, the report of which had been brought her but a moment before, a story that had one of the reigning demireps for heroine and for hero a man unidentified by the baronne's informant, the tale of an assault committed before all Paris, before all Paris that is, that happened to be at the races that day; an extravaganza in which the heroine, erupting suddenly on the pelouse before the Grand Stand, had, with her parasol, struck the hero over the head and had been about to strike him again, when he, pinioning her arms with his own, had to the applause of everybody, prevented the second assault by kissing her through her veil; after which releasing the lady, he had raised his hat and strolled away.

"Was it you, Barouffski?" Mme. de Fresnoy, the narrative at an end, inquired. "Was it?"

"I? Nonsense! Why should you ask?"

"It would be just like you, you know. Besides, I hear that the man was tall and good-looking."

"You are exceedingly complimentary. But the world is peopled with tall, good-looking men."

"Pas tant que ça," laughed the baroness. "Well, if it was not you, perhaps it was that man who is just coming in."

Involuntarily Barouffski turned, while a footman bawled:

"Monsieur Verplank!"

III

It was in circumstances which, if not dramatic, were, at least, uncommon, that Leilah Verplank met Barouffski.

At Los Angeles, after her flight from Coronado, she caught an express that would have taken her East. Even so, it could not take her from herself, it could not distance memory, it could not annihilate the past. The consciousness of that obsessed her. Each of her thoughts became a separate throb. About her head formed an iron band. Her body ached. She felt hot and ill. She had a sense of thirst, a sense, too, of fear.

In the compartment where she sat, a stranger came. She hid her face, covering it with her hands. The stranger sidled in between them, looked her in the eyes, penetrated them, permeated her, shook long shudders through her, shrieked at her: "I am Fright!"

She cried aloud. No one heard. She got to the door.

In the section immediately adjoining were her women. Perplexed at the start by her unaccountable flight and, since then, alarmed by the abnormal excitability which she had displayed, both, at the sight of her then, rushed to her.

Salt Lake was the first possible asylum. There, weeks later, Leilah arose from one of those attacks, which, for lack of a better term, has been called brain fever.

Like fire, fever may consume, it does not necessarily obliterate. The past remained. But in that lassitude which fever leaves, Leilah was able to consider it with a wearied certainty that no immediate effort could be required of her then.

"Forget," some considerate and subliminal self admonished. "Forget."

Even in sleep she could not always do that. But though she could not forget the past, she could, she believed, barricade herself against it. The idea was suggested by the local sheet in which she found an item about neighbourly Nevada. The item hung a hammock for her thoughts, rested her mentally, unrolled a carpet for the returning steps of health.

Verplank, meanwhile, misdirected at Los Angeles, reached San Francisco. Learning there that a party of three women had, that morning, at the last moment, embarked on the Samoa packet; learning also that of these women the central figure projected, or seemed to project, Leilah's silhouette, he wired for his yacht and sailed away in pursuit. But an accident supervening, the packet reached Samoa before him. When Verplank got there the boat was gone. Still in pursuit he started for the austral seas. There, the mistake discovered, hope for the time abandoned him and he landed in Melbourne, ignorant that the supremely surgical court of Nevada was amputating him from his wife.

In matters of this solemnity, the Nevada statutes require that one of the parties to the operation shall have resided for six months within the state. But at Carson, the capital, a town that has contrived to superpose the Puritan aspect of a New England village on the vices of a Malay port, in this city Leilah learned that statutes so severe were not enacted for such as she.

The information, tolerably consoling, was placed before her by a young Jew who, as she alighted from the train, divined her errand, addressed her with easy Western informality, put a card in her hand, offered his services, telling her as he did so that if she retained him he would have her free in no time, in three months, in less. It was a mere matter of money, he explained, and, what he did not explain, a mere matter of perjury as well, the perjury of local oafs ready to swear to whatever they were paid for, ready to testify for instance that they had known anybody for any required length of time. But the Jew in divining Leilah's errand divined too her loyalty. In speaking of fees, he kept manœuvres and methods to himself.

Leilah, repelled yet beguiled, succumbed. The Jew was retained and in a wretched inn her things were unpacked. At once a rain of days began, long, loveless days in which she tried to starve her thoughts into submission and bear the cross that had been brought.

The effort was not very satisfactory. The reason why she should have a cross and why it should be borne had never even to her devout mind been adequately explained. Hitherto she had not required any explanation and not unnaturally perhaps since she had had no cross to bear. The dogma that she in common with the rest of humanity must suffer because of the natural propensities of beings that never were, she had accepted as only such dogmas can be accepted, on faith. But in the dismal solitudes of Carson, faith faded, the dogma seemed absurd.

Then suddenly that which in her ignorance she took to be chance, supplied a superior view. While waiting in a shop for a slovenly clerk to do up a package, she looked at a shelf on which were some books—frayed, bedrabbled, second hand. Among them was a treatise on metallurgy, another on horse-breeding, a string of paper covered novels and the *Vidyâ.*

The title, which conveyed nothing, for that reason attracted. At random she opened the book. A paragraph sprang at her:

> "From debility to strength, from strength to power, from power to glory, from glory to perfection, from plane to plane, in an evolution proceeding from the outward to the inward, from the material to the spiritual, from the spiritual to the divine, such is the destiny of the soul."

Leilah turned a page. Another paragraph leaped out.

> "There is not an accident in our lives, not a sorrow, a misfortune, a catastrophe, a happiness that is not due to our own conduct in this existence or in a previous one. In accordance with the nature of our deeds there are thrown about us the tentacles of pain or the arms of joy."

But the slovenly clerk was approaching. Leilah closed the book, asked the price, paid for it, paid for the other purchase and went back to the inn where during the rest of the day she read the drama of the soul, the story of its emanation from the ineffable, of its surrender to desire, of its fall into matter, of its birth and rebirth in the mansions of life which are death, of the persistence there of its illusory joys, of the recurrences of its unenlightening trials, until, at last, some memory returning of what it had been when it was other than what it had become, it learns at last to conquer desire and accomplish its own release.

The drama, however old, was new to Leilah, and at first not very clear. But beneath it was a chain of causality, the demonstration that this life is the sum of many others, the harvest after the sowing, and, joined to the demonstration were corollaries and deductions which showed that sorrow, when rightly viewed, is not a cross but a gift, a boon granted to the privileged.

It was a little before she mastered the idea. When she had, the novelty of it impressed. At the back of the *Vidyâ* was a list of cognate works. She wired to San Francisco for them. Shortly they came, and in their companionship the rain of long, loveless days fell by.

Ultimately she sat on a high chair. An oaf asked her questions. Others testified. On the morrow a paper was brought her. It had on it a large seal, the picture of a big building, words that were engrossed, others in script.

She was free.

The knowledge brought no exultation. It was a hostage to joy, one of the many that she was to give.

Meanwhile she had written to Violet Silverstairs telling her that she had separated from Verplank, and asking might she join her. The answer, which was cabled, told her to come. That day she started.

The town house of the Earls of Silverstairs is in Belgrave Square. There are worse places. But to the American countess the discomforts of the residence were not to be endured. After one season she declined to put up with them. Pending an entire modernisation of the house, she and Silverstairs migrated to Paris, where they took an apartment, and a very charming one, in the rue François Premier.

In this apartment Leilah was made to feel that she was with friends, one of whom, however, could not get over the fact that she could not get at the facts in the matter.

"See here, Leilah," Violet Silverstairs said aggrievedly, not once, but fifty times, "it is downright mean of you to keep me in the dark. What was it that he did? Tell me."

The lady had known Verplank, as she had known Leilah, ever since she had known anybody. They had grown up together. Though not related by blood, they were by choice, which is sometimes thicker. In the circumstances it was perhaps but natural that she should call it mean, perhaps but human that she should be aggrieved.

The puzzle of the situation she put before her husband.

"What do you suppose it can be?" she asked.

But Silverstairs had no surmises to hazard.

"It must be something quite too dreadful," Violet continued. "One of those things, don't you know, that are said to change your whole life. She just sits about and reads queer books."

"Queer books!" Silverstairs surprisedly repeated.

"Yes, books that tell of planes and rounds and cycles and chains of lives and rebirths and redeaths. She believes in them, too. She told me so."

Silverstairs tugged at his moustache. "She might as well believe in the music of the spheres."

Violet looked at her lord. She loved him as certain delicately organized women do love men who are merely robust. But her affection did not warp her judgment. She know that within his splendid physique was a spirit, valiant perhaps, but obtuse.

"Well, why not?" she retorted. "Let a microphone receive from a steel plate the reflection of a star, and sounds are emitted, tones peculiar to the star itself. Those of the sun are blatant. Those of Arcturus are like little bells. Those of Sirius are as sobs from a zither. Everybody knows that. Why shouldn't she believe in the music of the spheres?"

"Gammon!" cried this man who at Eton and Christ Church had abundantly acquired everything which is most useless. "I never heard such rot."

"I dare say, but that is not the point. The point is that it is no joke to her."

Nor was it. Leilah at first refused to go anywhere, to see any one, to be present when there were guests. But Violet, declaring that she would have no moping in her diggings, forced her. It was very reluctantly that Leilah acceded. After a while she did so as a matter of course. Finally, as was inevitable, she accepted invitations elsewhere.

It was what Violet had aimed at, though not at all at the result. Yet that, Leilah, who had come to believe in karma, afterward regarded as fate.

Presently, it so fell about that at one dinner she had at her left a man whom she did not know, whose name she had not caught and with whom, during the preliminary courses, she had not exchanged a word. As the dinner progressed, cigarettes were served. Twice she refused them. The second time, as she turned again to the man at her right, she heard a cry, across the table she saw a face, the eyes staring, the features elongated. At once there was an uproar, behind her there was a crash, she was torn bodily from her chair, a piece of tapestry had been thrown about her and in it she was rolled on the floor by the man whom she did not know.

Probably, at no dinner, anywhere, had a woman suffered such indignities. She was so telling herself when she realised, as she immediately did realise, that the man and others who had joined him, were but occupied in saving her life. Her dress had caught fire and it was in this flaming fashion, hurled on the floor by a stranger and there brutalised by him, that she made the acquaintance of Count Kasimiérz Barouffski.

The sack of her costume forced her to return to the rue François Premier, where at five o'clock the next day, Barouffski appeared. He appeared the day following, the day after, the day after that.

These attentions Violet Silverstairs viewed with suspicion.

"I verily believe," she said to Leilah, "that it was that polecat who set you on fire, and if he did no one can convince me that he did not do it on purpose."

"Violet!"

"That's right, fly at me. I thought you would. Are you going to take him?"

In an elaborate drawing room in the rue François Premier the two women were having tea. Leilah, without replying, raised her cup.

Violet cocked an eye at her. "One would have thought that you had had enough of matrimony. But perhaps your intentions are not honourable."

Leilah reddened. "Violet!" she again exclaimed.

"My dear," Lady Silverstairs resumed, "remember that you are no longer in the States. England is the most hypocritical country in Europe. America is the most hypocritical country in the world. That is what we call progress. But France being old-fashioned and behind the times is not censorious. I admit, I used to be. But I am not censorious any longer. I am not because any such *état d'âme* while advanced is not becoming.

"I am an old married woman," added the lady who was not twenty-two. "But if I were not, if for instance I were like you, free, independent and not a fright, and I had to choose between love and matrimony, it would not take me a moment to decide. Not one."

Leilah put down her cup. "Of course it would not. If you had it to do again you would marry Silverstairs and you would marry for love. That is over for me, over forever."

Narrowly, out of a corner of an eye, Violet considered her. "He was such a brute, was he?"

"Who? Gulian, do you mean?"

"I suppose so. There has been no other, has there?"

"Violet!"

It was at this juncture, for the fiftieth time, that Lady Silverstairs exclaimed:

"It is downright mean of you to keep me in the dark. What was it that happened? Make a soiled breast of it. Do!"

For the fiftieth time Leilah protested:

"Don't ask me. Don't. He knows and that is enough. As for me I am trying to forget."

"And you think Barouffski will help you. But has it ever occurred to you that if you were not very rich he might lack the incentive?"

To this Leilah assented. "He said he is poor."

"At least he does not exaggerate. I told Silverstairs that he was after you for your money and he said that was what he married me for. So he did and I married him for his title. It was a fair bargain. Now if we had it to do over I would say—I would say—well, I would say that it is better to have loved your husband than never to have loved at all. But six months hence, if you had it to do over, do you think you could say as much—or as little?"

"At least I could say that I did not marry for a title."

"Well, hardly, particularly a Polish one, though I daresay even that might be useful in the servants' hall. But what could you say you married for? It isn't love?"

"No."

"Nor position?"

"No."

"Then what on earth——"

"Violet, how hard you make it for me. Can't you see that if I do, it will be for protection?"

"For protection! Merciful fathers! You talk like a chorus girl! Protection against what? Against whom? Verplank?"

"No." Leilah choking down something in her throat, replied: "Against myself."

"I don't understand you," said Violet

slowly. But she did or thought she did, and that night told Silverstairs that Leilah was still in love with her ex.

It was in these circumstances that Leilah listened to the Count Kasimiérz Barouffski, who, in telling her that he was poor, omitted to add that he had resources. These were women and cards. It is a business like another. But even to his nearest friends, to Tyszkiewicz, a compatriot, and Palencia, a Corsican, he did not boast of it. He had therefore some sense of shame, but not of honour, though with humour he was supplied. A man with some sense of humour and no sense of honour may go far. Barouffski intended to. After his volcanic introduction to Leilah, he beheld in her not the woman but the opportunity which chance had sent his way. To grasp that he displayed every art of which the Slav is capable. He did more. He impressed her not with the nobility of his name but of his nature. He was a good actor and though at first unsuccessful he was not discouraged. It was an axiom of his that among the dice of destiny there is always a golden six. It was axiomatic with him also that it is not tossed at once. To deserve it, one must wait. Barouffski waited. Presently fate shook the box before him. The golden six was his.

But not the box.

To Leilah the mere idea of matrimony was abhorrent. Yet she could not stop indefinitely with the Silverstairs. She had no relatives with whom she could reside. She felt that it would be awkward and perhaps equivocal for her to have an establishment of her own. But these considerations were minor beside another—a sense, haunting and constant, that the excursion to Nevada had been inadequate, that the past needed a surer barricade.

It was not a husband that she wanted. Peace and security were the flesh-pots that she craved. These Barouffski offered or seemed to—and it was these finally and these only that she agreed to accept.

To the implied stipulation Barouffski consented with an air of high chivalry but also with an ambiguous smile. Given the golden six of her income, the box was a detail to him, and it was in these circumstances that over the perhaps insecurely locked door of her past, this mask mounted guard.

The news of the engagement, filtering through the press, was cabled to the States, together with the fact that Leilah was then stopping in the rue François Premier with Lady Silverstairs, whose portrait, in addition to bogus presentments of the engaged couple, were printed in the minor sheets that circulate from New York to San Francisco.

On arriving from Australia at the latter city, Verplank happened on a belated copy. Since he had gone from Coronado, this, the first news of his wife, was her engagement to another man.

In his amazement his thoughts stuttered. Into his mind entered stretches of night. He looked at the sheet without seeing it. But the paragraph and the purport of it, already photographed on the films of the brain, were prompting him unconsciously, and it was without really knowing what he was saying that he exclaimed:

"Leilah! My wife! In Paris! Engaged to another man!"

The names, the words, the meaning of them all, beat on his brain like blows of a hammer.

"Leilah! My wife! In Paris! Engaged!"

Again he looked at the sheet. "What a damned lie!" he ragingly cried, and, rumpling the paper, threw it from him.

But now, the names, the words, the meaning of them all, well beaten into him, readjusted themselves, presenting a picture perfectly defined and possibly real.

He stooped, gathered the paper, smoothed it, read the account again.

After all, he reflected, it might be that she was in Paris and, if there, it was natural that she would be with Violet Silverstairs. These two items were, therefore, not improbably correct. That view reached, the deduction followed: If they are correct, the other may be. Yet, in that case, he argued, obviously she must think me dead. On the heels of this second deduction an impression trod—the ease and dispatch with which she had become consoled.

Enraged at once, angered already by what he had taken for a lie and then infuriated by what he took for truth, the anterior incidents that had this supreme outrage for climax, leaped at him. At the onslaught the primitive passions flared, and it was with the impulse of the homicide that he determined to seek and overwhelm this woman who accepted men and matters with such entire sans-gêne.

On the morrow he left for New York. Before going he sent a cablegram to the address which the paper had supplied:

Am just apprised of the studied insult of your engagement to some foreign cad. Leaving for Paris at once.

As he signed it, deeply, beneath the breath, he swore. "That will show her," he added.

It so happened that it showed her nothing. Leilah was not then in the rue François Premier, but in the rue de la Pompe, where the message followed, but only to be received by Barouffski, who read it with a curious smile.

Already he hated Verplank, who had not yet acquired a hatred for him. But though that hatred had not been acquired, it developed tumultuously when, on arriving in New York, he learned that not merely the report of the engagement was true, but that the engagement had since resulted in a marriage, which itself had been preceded by a Nevada divorce.

In comparison to all that had occurred, the divorce seemed at the time almost negligible. It was the crowning infamy of this marriage which, in renewing the primitive passions, aroused in Verplank a determination not merely to seek and overwhelm the woman, but to seek and destroy the man. The marriage, he decided could be but the result of an anterior affair, there was no other explanation of it. The idea that had come to him at Coronado, the possibility that she might have left him because informed of some affair of his own and which since then he had examined again and again, fell utterly away. It was not because of errors of his that she had gone, but for turpitudes of her own. Then to his anger at her was added a hatred of Barouffski, whom he had never seen, and who, without having seen Verplank, hated him also, hated him retrospectively and prospectively, hated him because clearly Leilah had been his and—where women are concerned, all things being possible —might be again.

But though Barouffski hated Verplank actively, he hated him vaguely, as one must when one hates the unknown. It was the cablegram which, in supplying the personal element, made the hate concrete.

"Foreign cad, eh?" he repeated, with a curious smile. "Eh bien, nous verrons, we shall see."

Presently the opportunity occurred. For it was in these circumstances, a fortnight after the receipt of the cablegram, that, directed by the young Baronne de Fresnoy, he turned and saw Verplank entering the room where he stood.

IV

With the unerring instinct of the man of the world, Verplank, on entering the crowded salon, divined immediately, among all the women present, the hostess whom he had never seen.

As he bent over her hand, the duchess, who had not an idea how he came there, said in her fluted voice:

"This is really so nice of you. I did not know you were in Paris."

"Nor did I—until this moment," answered Verplank, looking as he spoke into the eyes of his hostess who, after the one imperceptible glance with which the mondaine judges and classifies, was wondering in what manner, this man, with his virile face and impeccable presence, had forced Leilah Barouffska to leave him.

"But," he added, "Monsieur de Joyeuse whom I saw this afternoon told me that you would be at home, and assured me that I might venture to present my homages."

The duchess displayed her tireless smile. "I am only sorry not to have had them sooner."

She paused. Between her smile, the edges of her teeth showed, false but beautiful. "There is Lady Silverstairs trying to get you to look at her, and very well worth looking at she is."

Camille de Joyeuse turned for a moment to the reticent young prince who in his diffident way still lingered at her side.

Beyond, at the farther end of the room, notes rippled. Standing near a grand piano, the Roumanian with the flowing hair was preluding a fantasy of his own.

In the hush that succeeded, Verplank moved to where Violet sat.

Smilingly, without speaking, she gave him her hand and indicated a seat beside her. Then, raising a fan, she whispered:

"Demon! What have you done? Where do you spring from? How long have you been in Paris?"

Verplank, seating himself, answered:

"I got here this morning. Why am I a demon?"

From behind the fan, Violet asked:

"What did you do to Leilah? Why did she leave you?"

Verplank folded his gloved hands. "That is what I am here to find out."

"Do you mean to tell me that you don't know!"

"I have not an idea—unless it was because of this Count Thingumagig."

Violet Silverstairs furled her fan, looked at him, looked away, looked about the room. At one end her husband, accompanied by de Joyeuse, Tempest, de Fresnoy, and the others, had entered. At the further end the Roumanian dominated. Supported en sourdine by an accompanist, he massed sounds and dispersed them, concentrating fulgurations of notes from which echoing showers fell. Presently, resuming an abandoned measure, he caressed a largo, infinitely sweet, that swooned in the languors of the finale. At once to a murmur of bravos, the applause of gloved hands and a cry of "Bis!" raising violin and bow above his head, he bent double to the duchess, his flowing hair falling like a veil before him.

"He may play again," said Violet. "I want to talk to you. Let us go into the next room."

As Verplank rose at her bidding, others who had been seated, rose also. Interrupted conversations were more animatedly resumed. A servant announced additional names. The first salon now was thronged. The second was filled. Verplank and Violet passed on.

Beyond was a gallery. At the entrance

stood a woman, her face averted, talking to a man. As the others approached, she turned.

At sight of her and of the man, Violet would have turned also. It was too late.

"Leilah!" Verplank exclaimed.

For a second, in tragic silence, two beings whom love had joined and fate had separated, stood, staring into each other's eyes.

For a second only. At once the man interposed himself between them.

"Monsieur!" he insolently threw out. "My name is Barouffski."

With superior tact Lady Silverstairs intervened. "Good evening, Count. It never occurred to us that we were interrupting a tête-à-tête."

She paused. Hostilely the two men were measuring each other. In Verplank's face there was a threat, in Barouffski's there was a jeer, in Leilah's there was an expression of absolute terror. Of the little group Violet alone appeared at ease.

"Leilah," she added, "don't forget that you are to have luncheon with me tomorrow. Good night, my dear. Silverstairs and I will be going soon. Good night, Barouffski."

She smiled, nodded, took Verplank's arm, took him away. But the arm beneath her hand was shaking and she realised that it shook with rage.

Sympathetically she looked up at him. "I thought they were in the other room and it was just to avoid a thing of this sort that I got you out of it. You won't do anything, will you?"

Verplank now had got control of himself, his arm no longer shook, and it was the smile of a man of the world, the smile of one to whom nothing is important and much absurd, that he answered:

"Why, yes; it was very civil of this chap to introduce himself. I shall leave a card on him. Hello! Here's Silverstairs! I wonder if he will introduce himself, too."

The young earl was advancing, his hand outstretched. "I say! I saw a man marching off with the missis, but I had no idea it was you. Where are you stopping? Will you dine with us Tuesday?"

"Yes, do." Violet threw in. "Rue François Premier at eight."

"I shall be very glad to," Verplank answered. He turned to Silverstairs. "I am at the Ritz. Stop by there to-morrow noon, won't you, and let me take you somewhere for luncheon?"

Lady Silverstairs laughed and employing a darkyism, said: "You don't say turkey to me. There!" she exclaimed as Verplank was about to protest. "I could not anyway."

From the salon beyond came a woman's voice, clear and rich, rendering, in a lascive contralto, a song of love and passion.

The Silverstairs and Verplank approached. Meanwhile, from the diva's mouth, notes darted like serpents on fire. In mounting fervour the aria developed, trailing, as it climbed, words such as *amore, speranza, morir.* A breath of brutality passed. The atmosphere became charged with emanations in which the perfume of women mingled with the desires of men. Still the aria mounted, it coloured the air, projecting, like a magic lantern, visions of delight, imperial and archaic, that ascended in glittering scales.

Verplank, detaching himself from the Silverstairs, felt his dumb rage renewed. At the moment he conceived an insane idea of going below, waiting without until Barouffski and Leilah appeared and he saw himself, confronting the man, tearing the woman from him, carrying her off and making her his own.

The impulse fell from him. The rage that he felt at the man deflected into rage at this woman who had made his life a vacant house and for what, good God! And why?

In a cascade of flowers and flames the song was ending. There was new applause, the discreet approbation of worldly people, easily pleased, as easily bored and with but one sure creed: Not too much of anything.

Verplank must also have had enough. When presently the Silverstairs looked about for him he had gone.

Already Violet had summarised the situation to her lord. Now, perplexed at Verplank's abrupt disappearance, she said:

"You don't suppose that anything will happen, do you?"

Silverstairs, bored by the entertainment, anxious only to get away where he could have a quiet drink, tugged at his moustache and with unconscious reminiscence answered:

"I don't know and I don't care. I don't care what happens as long as it doesn't happen to me."

V

"There are too many of us," Verplank, the day following, found himself saying to Silverstairs.

The two men were lunching at Voisin's.

The charming resort which, since the passing of Véry, of Véfour and the Maison Dorée, has become the ultimate refuge of the high gastronomic muse of Savarin and of Brisse was, on this forenoon, filled with its usual clientèle:—old men with pink cheeks, young women with ravishing hats, cosmopolitan sportsmen, ladies of both worlds, assortments of what Paris calls High Life and pronounces Hig Leaf.

Without, a fog draped the windows, blurred the movement of the street, transforming it into a cinematograph of misty silhouettes. But within, the brilliant damask, the glittering service, the studied excellence of everything, produced an atmosphere of wealth and ease.

Silverstairs, after swallowing a glass of Chablis, meditatively lit a cigar. But meditation was not his forte. The twentieth of his name, he was tall and robust. He had straw-coloured hair, blue eyes, a skin of brick, and an appearance of simple placidity. At the moment he was mentally fondling certain reminiscences of the Isis and certain bouts with bargees there.

"You know," he said at last, "if I were you I would just march up to him and knock him down."

Verplank nodded. "I dare say. But not if he had taken your wife."

The suggestion, penetrating the earl's placidity, punctured it. He threw back his head. "By George! If he had, I'd kill him."

"There, you see!"

Silverstairs puffed at his cigar. His placidity now was reforming itself.

"Yes," he answered. "But then in taking yours, he did it after she was divorced. You can't have him out for that."

"All the same there are one too many of us."

Silverstairs filled his mouth with smoke. Longly, with an air of considering the situation he expelled it. Then he said:

"It is what I call damned awkward. But what the deuce can you do?"

"What can I do?" Verplank with an uplift of the chin repeated. "Why, if only for the manner in which he acted last night—"

"I know," Silverstairs interrupted. "The missis told me. He behaved like a fidgety Frenchman. I grant you that. But there were no words, nothing that you could put a finger on."

Through an adjacent door a man strolled in. He had his hat on and in one gloved hand he held a thin umbrella of which the handle was studded with gold nails. With the other hand he smoothed a black moustache. Through a monocle he was surveying the room. He looked careless and cynical.

Deferentially a maître d'hôtel addressed him. Ignoring the man he waved his umbrella at Silverstairs.

Silverstairs waved his hand. He turned to Verplank. "Here's de Fresnoy. He can put us straight. Let's ask him to join us."

Rising, he greeted the Parisian, invited him to the table, introduced Verplank, speaking as he did so in French, with an accent frankly barbarous which de Fresnoy seemed to enjoy.

The latter raised his hat to Verplank, confided it to the maître d'hôtel, gave him the umbrella also, while another waiter drew up for him a chair.

"Thanks," he said in an interval of these operations. "I see you have breakfasted. If you don't mind my eating while you smoke—"

Seating himself he turned to the waiter, a man short and stout, completely bald, with large dyed whiskers and an air of repressed satisfaction.

"Listen, Léopold, and note well what I say. To begin with do not attempt to tell me what you wish me to eat. You have heard? Good! Listen again. A dozen Ostendes, an omelette, a pear. Nothing else. Not a crumb. Yes, some Eau de Vals. Allez!"

Léopold bowed. "Perfectly, monsieur le baron. I shall have the honour of serving monsieur le baron with what he has been good enough to be willing to desire."

Again the waiter bowed. But behind the oleaginousness of his speech a severity had entered, one which intimated that in this preserve of gastronomics such an order was unworthy.

"These gentlemen?" he added, his eyes moving from Verplank to Silverstairs. "Some coffee? A liqueur?"

But now, in fluent French, Verplank was addressing de Fresnoy. "Silverstairs and I have been having an argument. In your quality of Parisian, will you tell us whether a man can have another out for looking impertinently at him?"

De Fresnoy adjusted his collar, patted his neck-cloth. "But certainly, most assuredly. To look impertinently at a man constitutes an attack on his self esteem, which in itself is an integral part of his moral wealth. To omit to return a man's bow, to neglect to take his proffered hand, to regard him in an offensive manner, are one and all so many assaults on his dignity."

Verplank, pleased with this view of things, smiled. "Thanks. Mine has been assailed and I was in doubt how to rebuke the aggressor."

"It is simple as Good day. You have only to select two representatives and get them to put themselves in communication with him. If then he refuses to have friends of his meet yours, or if, afterward, he will neither apologise or fight, he is outlawed."

De Fresnoy, as he spoke, made a gesture, a wide movement of the arm which indicated, or was intended to indicate, the uttermost limits of the world.

"It is Barouffski," Silverstairs, with some idea that de Fresnoy might be aware of the anterior complication, threw out.

"Barouffski!" de Fresnoy repeated, his head held appreciatively a little to one side. "In a bout he is very clever. Barring d'Arcy, Helley-Quetgen"—and myself he was about to add, but throwing the veil he desisted—"I don't know his equal. How he is on the field, personally I cannot say. But there, the absence of buttons, the absence of masks, the inevitable emotion, the sight of the other man, the consciousness of an injury to be maintained or avenged, the consciousness too of the definite character of any thrust you may give and particularly of any thrust you may receive, these things have such an effect that often the cleverest acts like a fool. On the boards, fencing is an exercise, it is an amusement. On the field, it is another man's blood—or yours. Though, after all, one is rarely killed except by one's seconds."

He turned to Verplank. "You fence? Or is it that you shoot?"

Verplank leaned back in his chair. "Oh, I suppose I can fire a gun."

Silverstairs laughed. "I say now! You are too modest by half." He looked at de Fresnoy. "Verplank is one of the crack shots of America."

De Fresnoy turned again to Verplank. "You should demand pistols then. Barouffski draws well, but at twenty paces he is less sure of himself. Have you selected your seconds?"

"I suppose I may count on Silverstairs for one——"

The young earl nodded. "That's of course, and perhaps you, de Fresnoy, will act with me."

The Parisian smoothed his moustache. "I shall be much honoured. In that case, however, as necessary preliminary, I shall have to ask to be made acquainted with all the circumstances."

But now Léopold, bearing a dish on which were oysters green as stagnant scum, approached and with an air of infinite tenderness, much as though it were a baby, placed it before de Fresnoy.

Leisurely he began to eat.

Verplank, who had been looking out of the window, leaned forward. "The circumstances are evangelical in their simplicity. Last evening I was about to speak to Madame Barouffska when he put himself between us and eyed me in the manner which I have described."

De Fresnoy, considering him over an oyster, said:

"You were at the Joyeuses then?"

Verplank nodded.

"And there Barouffski objected to your speaking to his wife?"

"Yes."

De Fresnoy swallowed the oyster. "In that case he was guilty not only of a grave offense to you, but to Madame de Joyeuse as well. The duke would be the first to resent it."

With an idea of making it all very clear, Silverstairs put an oar in: "Madame Barouffska, you know, was formerly Madame Verplank."

De Fresnoy bent a little. It may be that because of Silverstairs' ultra English accent he had not understood. "Pardon?"

But here Verplank intervened. "This lady had been divorced from me before she married Barouffski."

De Fresnoy, over another oyster, turned to him again. Yet any surprise he may have experienced he was too civil to display.

"Ah, indeed!" he replied. He looked as though he were about to add something, but refraining, he paused.

Verplank helped him out. "You are thinking perhaps that there may have been circumstances that rendered further acquaintance between us inadmissible. I may assure you that there are none and, without wishing to intrude my private affairs, I may assure you also that to this hour I am unaware why the divorce was obtained. This lady had no grievance of any kind against me and I had none whatever against her."

Pontifically, in his deepest note, Silverstairs threw out: "In the States they give you a divorce for a Yes or a No."

"For married people," de Fresnoy remarked, yet so pleasantly that the sarcasm was lost, "America is the coming country."

As he spoke, the fat waiter, after supervising the removal of the first dish, produced, with the air of a conjurer, another. It was an omelette, golden without, frothy within.

De Fresnoy glanced up. "Countermand the pear. Instead, bring me paper and ink."

"Perfectly, monsieur le baron."

Slowly de Fresnoy attacked the food. After a mouthful he said to Silverstairs:

"When the writing materials come we can get off a note to Barouffski. If he has any explanation he can advance it. Otherwise—on guard!"

After another mouthful he said to Verplank:

"You have fought before?"

"I have not had the occasion."

"Nor I," interjected Silverstairs. "It is against the law in England."

Gravely, as though he were receiving valuable information de Fresnoy bowed. "So it is here. But with us it is custom that rules, not law. No jury would convict an honourable man for fighting a fair fight. Besides, dueling is in our blood. It will not disappear as chivalry has. It will last as long as there are French men—and French women. And yet, in saying that chivalry has disappeared, I am in error. Not later than the week before last a cousin of mine, a young man truly charming, married a monster."

He pushed aside his plate. "Well, then, Léopold, am I to sit here the entire day?"

Serviceably, a buvard in his hand, the waiter approached. "I have subventioned a new pen for the use of monsieur le baron."

"There, Léopold, your sins are remitted. See at once if the chasseur is free."

De Fresnoy looked at Silverstairs. "With your permission, in our joint names, I write."

He looked at Verplank. "Will you pardon me if I ask how your name is spelled?"

Verplank, getting at his case, extracted a card.

De Fresnoy glanced at it. Then, taking that new pen, he read, as he wrote, aloud.

M. le Comte Barouffski.

Monsieur: M. Verplank has requested the Earl of Silverstairs and myself to arrive at an understanding with two of your friends concerning an incident which occurred last evening in the Avenue Cours la Reine.

Lord Silverstairs and I will be obliged if, as soon as *possible, you will ask one of your friends to appoint a meeting at which we may deliberate.*

Receive, Monsieur, the expression of my distinguished sentiments.

Baron de Fresnoy

He looked over at Silverstairs. "Is that to your liking? Good! We will send it to the Little Club where the answer is to be left and we will have a reply today. En attendant, there are matters that claim me."

With a movement of the chin he summoned the waiter.

A little byplay followed; the presentation of the bill, the click of gold on porcelain, the carelessly gathered change, the meagre tip, the reappearance of the hat, the bowing waiters, the craning necks, and the departure of de Fresnoy, an umbrella under his arm, a cigar between his teeth.

Verplank, emptying a glass of Chablis, looked out of the window. A panorama was forming. He saw the room at Coronado, Leilah as she told him of her love, his brief absence, his harrowing return, the hunt for her that had extended over half the globe, a hunt that divorce had not terminated, which her re-marriage had not stopped and which, had he not at last discovered her, nothing could have stayed save his death or hers or the reason of the implacable Why. An obstacle to the Why or, it might be, the incarnation of it, was Barouffski, and Verplank saw himself standing somewhere with Barouffski before him. There was a command, the call of numbers, a detonation and the sight of Barouffski turning, swaying, falling down.

The panorama faded. A picture had appeared. Before the window, arrested by a congestion of traffic, a motor was stopping. In it and the mist was Leilah.

Verplank sprang to his feet. With the idea of going out to her there and forcing an explanation, he looked about for his hat.

Silverstairs also got up. He had not seen. He too was looking for his hat. Placidly he remarked:

"I have an appointment with a chap named Tempest. Will you come with me?"

But now, the congestion relieved, the motor shot on. Verplank had the spectacle of a face fading instantly in the fog and the future.

"Will you?" Silverstairs repeated.

"Will I what?"

"I have to see a man about a horse. He lives just off the Bois de Boulogne, in the rue de la Pompe. Will you come up there with me?"

"Yes, if you will go on foot. In that case

I'll leave you there and walk back. I need the exercise. I feel like what you described as a fidgety Frenchman."

Silverstairs pulled at his moustache. "It's no end of a walk. But no matter, I'll go you."

VI

That morning Leilah had two appointments, one with a modiste, the other with Violet Silverstairs. She did not feel equal to either. The episode of the previous evening had been to her like the supreme torture which medieval legislation devised. It was all she could bear —and more!

When, abruptly, she found herself face to face with Verplank, it was as though she were confronted by the dead. The sense of it numbed her, and the numbness was heightened by a horror that has no name. Into the seats of thought there entered the realisation that, in spite of all, she still loved him, that in spite of all he still loved her. In the core of these convictions fear entered, fear of him, fear of herself, a sensation of common peril and mutual perdition so blinding that Barouffski's rudeness she barely noticed, and it was with a look the damned may have that she saw Verplank turn with Violet Silverstairs, and go.

As they passed, Barouffski, with the air of one commenting on a triviality, remarked:

"How odd it is that the Joyeuses should care to hobnob with demi-castors. Shall we go?"

That demi-castors meant bounders generally, and, in this instance, specifically, she would, ordinarily, have been insufficiently familiar with the slang of the boulevards to know. But she did not hear. Moreover, the remark required no reply. Even otherwise she was unable to speak, and it was not until Barouffski reiterated his suggestion that mechanically she acceded to it with a movement of the head.

Her demeanor then in traversing the salons, her leave-taking of the duchess, her bearing in descending the stairs, were as mechanical as her reply to Barouffski, and it was not until after the motor had dropped him, as he had asked that it should, at the door of the Little Club, that, at last alone, the mental anchylosis fell by.

At once in a sort of retrograde vision, she relived the past. There had been the flight from Coronado, the halt at Salt Lake, the descent into Nevada, the divorce, the journey abroad, the platonic marriage to Barouffski. These—the succeeding episodes in the drama of her life—were so many hostages to joy, barricades thrown one after another between Verplank and herself, and unavailingly thrown, since, with but a look, they were almost destroyed.

They had seemed wholly impregnable, but she knew then that unless reinforced by surer bars, they would one and all collapse. At the foreknowledge of that she appreciated what the heroines in the old tragedies endured, when circled by the seven-times-twisted coil of fate. Yet, though they had yielded, she would not yield, and it was with this determination that she alighted in the rue de la Pompe.

The house there had a church for neighbour, and stood between a court and a garden. Before the court was a high, white wall. The garden extended back to the parallel street, where, also, was a wall. The entrance to the court was a double doorway, the entrance to the garden was an iron gate. Between the gate and the house were large urns, a marble bench, a marble chair, most noticeably the kennels of two mastiffs, pets of Barouffski who, at whatever hour he returned at night, had them loosed. They were, he declared, a great protection, as indeed they were—for him. Apart from the occasional barking of these dogs, barring also occasional music from the church, usually the garden was quiet. But that was in the order of things. It lacked both stable and garage. These had been secured elsewhere.

Except for that detail, the arrangements generally were satisfactory. The house was commodious, agreeably furnished. On the ground floor were the usual offices, beneath which the servants slept. On the floor above were the salons and dining hall. Above these were the bedrooms. On this upper floor the apartment which Barouffski occupied gave on the street, while Leilah's overlooked the garden.

Adjacent to her suite was a stairway designed for servants, but which, because of its convenience, she occasionally used. It led directly to the dining hall, and from there she could descend into the garden.

It had a superior advantage. It enabled her to avoid the hazards of the main stairway, which was used by Barouffski, whom nearer acquaintance had discovered to her without the mask—without one mask, that is—for histrion that he was, he had many, but the best, the feigned nobility of noble pride, the assumed parage, had gone.

In its place was a smile, constant, equivocal, ambiguous, a smile such as the consciously damned may display. It gave Leilah little creeps. She dreaded it, dreaded him, dreaded both, what is worse she dreaded instinctively, without knowing why. The man was amiable, serviceable, gallant. He wore his domino not faultlessly perhaps but with the fine air of a bravo who, when the time comes, will knife you, yes, but who in so doing will rather require that you admire the chasing on the handle of the blade. As yet the knife was concealed. But Leilah felt that it was there. He knew it was. Occasionally he fingered the point.

Hitherto he had lived by expedients. A golden six had been tossed him. He had pocketed it. For him the economic problem of life was solved. He asked little else, merely that the solution should endure and that his dignity, of which he had a humorous conception, be outwardly preserved. In addition to his dignity, or to his idea of it, he had another attribute. He was not exacting. It is a great charm in any one. But with him it did not extend to money. Freely he demanded it, freely she gave and it was precisely when he demanded it that she felt, and he felt, too, the point of the knife.

On this evening when, after the usual din at the doors, the motor entered the court and she alighted at the perron, two footmen busied themselves in aiding her.

Leilah passed through the dining room to the garden where for a while she walked along the path that led from the house to the gate.

The garden was cloistered, the night serene. The influences of both affected her. The darkness put her thoughts into relief, the solitude relaxed the tension of her nerves.

Another thing was helpful, the determination which she had reached, though for that determination to be maintained there must, she saw, be further hostages, new barricades. But what further hostages could she give she wondered, what firmer barricades was it possible to erect? Barring flight or an appeal to Verplank, some message begging him to leave Paris, she could not imagine any. Flight she had already tried, but not flight to some one of the world's far away places where any one may be lost forever. It was a miserably dismal thing to do, she reflected, a thing so dismal and so miserable that she doubted her ability to do it.

As she thought it over she wondered if in some former existence she could have injured Verplank and whether it were by way of retribution that he had the power to tempt and torture her now. Tenets of this character the *Vidyâ* advanced and as she had told Tempest, she had come to believe in that Scripture as many do in the Bible, though as many also do without being able to accept it entirely, without being able to accept for instance stories such as that of Jonah and the whale which none the less all would accept were it known how profound is the symbolism behind them. With like reservations, Leilah accepted the *Vidyâ.* She was very ignorant as women in her station generally are and the reservations were due to that ignorance and also to the demand which the doctrine made on her imagination. But though she was ignorant she was conscious of it and consciousness of ignorance is usually the condition precedent to enlightenment.

Now, in considering the episode of the evening, she asked herself whether she was warranted in accepting this creed of past lives. At the Joyeuses, during the announcements of resonant names, Tempest had said that unless we swallow the ridiculous dogma of a soul specially created at every birth and unless too we are indecent enough to fancy the Deity waiting for that purpose on the passions and caprices of man, we have to accept it, have to accept with it the corollary of past actions and their consequences, have to accept, too, the deduction that, in accordance with our past actions, it is we who reward or punish ourselves, we who become avenging furies or angels of light.

Leilah wished that she could have discussed the matter more fully with Tempest yet she felt that what he had said was logical, but if it were true, then the parallel doctrine that all misdeeds and with them all misfortunes spring from desire must be true also, in which case, before their consequences can be effaced, all misdeeds must be atoned. But how can they be atoned? she asked herself. Presently she remembered. According to the *Vidyâ,* any desire no matter what, desire for pleasure, for gain, for attainments, for honours, even the desire for spiritual perfection, even the desire for the lack of desire, must be extinguished before old scores are paid. That was the way she saw, the only way. The debtor must sacrifice himself to himself.

But, uncertain still, she went over the matter again, putting to it little tests, passably naïf yet serviceable to her. She had ardently desired to marry Verplank, then, desiring as ardently a barricade against him, she had married Barouffski. In the one case the result had been catastrophic; in the other, calamitous. Doubtless she had sinned in the past and these disasters, brought about by her own desires, were her punishment. There were other things that she had desired. She had wanted to be loved, she had wanted to be thought a beauty, and not only her love had shamed her but soon she might be ashamed to show her face. At the thought of these things she realised anew and more profoundly than ever that selfish desire is the root of evil and that only in its extirpation may peace be had. But coincidently she realised also that any such extirpation was beyond her. Heredity, environment, the circumstances of her life, had given an impetus to desire which she could not arrest. She liked wealth, ease, pretty clothes, becoming hats, the society of agreeable people. She liked the world and in liking it she feared that she liked also the flesh, it might be even that she liked, too, the devil. Yet, she must not, she knew.

In telling herself that, she thought of the Church. The Church was so much more comfortable. There you were not asked impossibilities, the one requirement was to throw yourself in her arms and repent. As the facile process occurred to her she recalled George Moore's story of *Evelyn Innes*. That masterwork seemed to tell her to do as the heroine had done and go in a convent.

Perhaps she might, she thought. Perhaps she must.

Several times already she had crossed and recrossed the garden. Now she found herself at the farther end facing the iron gate.

Leilah opened it, walked to the corner and returned.

The little tentative evasion had been successful. At any time, unseen even by a servant, she could leave the house, disappear utterly, be forever ingulfed. But the knowledge that she could escape into darkness and be lost there, offered little more than a choice between tears. It presented a form of suicide which was superior only to actual death. She hoped she might be spared it. She hoped an appeal to Verplank would suffice, though in what manner it could best reach him, or, for that matter, reach him at all, she found it difficult to decide. To make it personally was impossible. To attempt it through Violet Silverstairs would involve an explanation and that was impossible also. The idea of employing one of her women occurred to her. There were manifest objections to such a course, though the particular woman whom she had in view she trusted entirely.

Slowly she returned to the house and went to her room. There, when at last the servants had gone and she was alone, she knelt on a prie-dieu and, to the Watchers of the Seven Spheres, prayed for the earthly peace of her soul and of his. She knew that no prayer could affect them, she knew that they are not to be propitiated or coerced, but it soothed her as prayer, in raising the vibrations, does soothe the distressed. The prayer concluded she began another. She prayed that sometime she might be somewhere, on some plane, where all things broken are made complete and found again things vanished.

Then, the solace of it still upon her, suddenly she saw by what the prayer had been induced. The consciousness confused and presently, in the melancholy sotto-voce of thought, she told herself that to extinguish that desire, she would have to be in Dharmakaya—the mystic state where there is oblivion of all things here.

"Here!" she caught herself repeating. For, at once, a passage from the *Upanishads* prompting, she remembered that here means Myalba, which is hell, the greatest of all hells and, for those of this evolution, the only hell there is.

VII

It was on the morning succeeding these incidents that Leilah felt unequal for the appointments she had made. But however she felt, she always did what she had planned. In this instance nature punished her. On the way to the first appointment, a malaise overtook her, enveloped her, beat at her and although, gradually, it fell by, she was still conscious of it when, in the rue Cambon, the motor stopped at the modiste's door.

"The fitting of madame la comtesse Barouffska!" a fair young girl in black immediately and authoritatively announced.

Before landscapes of silk, in the delight of new modes, customers were sunning themselves At the announcement they turned, while Leilah, conducted by another girl who had advanced to meet her, crossed the laboratory of enchantments and entered an adjoining room.

But, for the moment, the fitting was delayed. The première was elsewhere occupied. When presently she appeared she excitedly exclaimed:

"I hope I have not detained madame. I am desolated if I have. But! But! If madame knew! One is literally torn to pieces! All day long it is nothing but Ernestine that dress! Ernestine, that robe! Ernestine, that costume! Ernestine this! Ernestine that! Truly madame, there are moments when I say I die! I go crazy!"

Abruptly dropping her voice, she added: "But pardon, I monologue."

At once, indicating a gown which an assistant had brought, she exclaimed again:

"It will ravishingly become madame."

The gown, a work of the best Parisian art, suggested something of the immateriality of a moonbeam, and as the assistant, a girl with a tired face and circled eyes, held it for inspection, it gleamed.

Leilah looked at it, wondering the while where she would wear it, whether indeed she would wear it at all. Then, before a sheet that had been placed on the floor and on which the assistant arranged the gown in a circle she proceeded to undress.

To the amateur in feminine beauty, there are few spectacles more attractive than that of an attractive woman clothed in lingerie and a hat. This spectacle Leilah presented.

The première exclaimed at it. "Madame la comtesse has a figure truly divine. But! But! Who could have laced her?"

"I was not very well this morning," Leilah replied. "I told my women not to make me too tight. But you can take me in I think about an inch."

"Marguerite," said the première, "draw the stays a little closer."

The girl with the tired face undid the corset and pulled at the strings. But she pulled awkwardly, perhaps too suddenly.

Leilah gasped, turned, sat down and fell forward. The première hurried to her. She had fainted.

"The smelling salts!" the première cried. "The smelling salts! Cognac! Get some cognac!"

With one hand she was supporting Leilah, with the other she gesticulated at Marguerite who, hurriedly from the mantel, fetched a vinaigrette which Ernestine then took and sniffed at.

"She's coming to," said the assistant.

Ernestine waved the vinaigrette. "The gods be praised!"

For Leilah now had opened her eyes. Wearily she looked about, straightened herself and sighed.

"I must have fainted."

"It is nothing madame," Ernestine anxiously protested. "Truly nothing and yet so modish. Yesterday the Princesse de Solférino fainted. The day before it was the turn of the young Duchesse de Malakoff. Such a good augury for these ladies! Like them madame is perhaps——"

But Leilah now was making an effort to rise.

Abandoning the vinaigrette Ernestine aided her.

"Madame will perhaps wish the fitting postponed. Yes, is it not? It might further fatigue madame. To-morrow—no, to-morrow I regret but in the afternoon I have three appointments and in the morning there is the trousseau of Miss Smith of New York who is to marry an English lord. Marguerite!" she interrupted herself to exclaim. "The costume of madame!"

Then, as the assistant also assisted Leilah, reflectively the première resumed:

"I hear that every New York young lady loves a lord. But——"

She hesitated. Visibly the vision evoked, confused. Yet, after a second's pause, rallying, she continued.

"Perhaps it is not every New York young lady who has a lord to love. Perhaps many of them love the same lord."

Discreetly she smiled. "And that must be so nice for him!"

Considering Leilah, she concluded:

"But another day——"

Of it all, Leilah heard but that. "Yes," she answered, "another day."

Then, presently, after more attentions, the première accompanied her to the door.

"Rue François Premier," Leilah told the groom.

The machine shot ahead. Arrested shortly by a congestion of traffic, it halted before a window behind which Verplank and Silverstairs sat.

Leilah, unconscious of their presence, gazed at the murky cinematograph of the street, filled at this hour with faces sordid, petulant, indifferent, or frankly gay; with the passing forms of workmen, idlers, shopgirls, vagabonds; the swarming Parisian crowd which did not, she believed, contain one soul as miserable as her own.

The congestion relieved, the motor shot on. Leilah leaned back. It was not so long ago that she was on her way from New York to Coronado. She was happy then, happy with a happiness so perfect that it lifted her into the ultimate ecstasies which love and life comport. It was not so long ago, only six short months, only that brief eternity of sorrow which, unended yet, had been the damning penalty of that joy.

"In this life ye shall have tribulation," the Christ had said, and truly said, and as she rememorated the significant menace, she wondered whether for such as she, tribulation ended here. But her creed assured her. From the *Vidyâ* she had acquired faith in fate, the belief rather that we make our own destiny, that it is by our own hands that our lives are cast in places pleasant or the reverse, that our conduct in one life creates the conditions of our existence in another, that anything experienced now is the effect of a cause set going in the past, that happiness is the recompense of beneficence, deformity the result of cruelty, melancholy the penalty of evil thoughts. But whether retribution pursued its victim into future planes or abandoned them when they died, depended, she also believed, on how they faced it here, and it was in this idea that, during the unended sorrow, she had found the strength to bear its coils.

The motor stopped. She told the groom to wait. Presently she was among the subdued tints and harmonised furnishings of the drawing room of her friend.

At once, clearly in her limpid voice, considering her with brilliant eyes, Violet Silverstairs aimed and fired.

"You're a liar!"

At the shot Leilah attempted to smile, and though she failed, it was not because she fancied there could be any reproach in the term, but because latterly she had been unable to smile at all.

"You're a liar," Violet repeated. "Also, you are late."

"I know I am late and I am sorry," Leilah withdrawing her gloves, replied. "But how am I a liar?"

"Come to luncheon and you will precious soon find out. I had some eggs for you, eggs à l'Aurore Boréale. I had a sweetbread. I had—I have forgotten what else. Now I have nothing. Everything is spoiled."

Violet Silverstairs was perhaps imaginative. There were eggs, very good eggs too, though whether prepared in the Aurora Borealis fashion is perhaps beside the issue. Moreover there was a sweetbread, one that had been germinated on salt meadows and which was not spoiled in the least. In addition there were the other things which she had forgotten and all of them appetising in the extreme. It was an excellent luncheon, perfectly served in a beautiful room. But it was a luncheon for

Sybarites, not for the suffering. After the first morsel Leilah was unable to eat.

"Where is Silverstairs?" she asked when that morsel had been consumed.

"With your ex."

Leilah put down her fork. "With Gulian?"

Violet laughed. "Have you more than one? But it was just through him that your lie cropped out. Last night he swore by bell, book and candle that you had never told him why you cut and ran."

It was at this juncture that Leilah found herself unable to eat. Instantly her mind shot back. She was at Coronado again, in the sunshine and frippery of her sitting room. She could see Verplank as he left it, see the letters that had been brought, see herself as she opened one of them, that one which with its enclosures she had redirected and left for him. The possibility never before conjectured, that he had not received it girdled her with a zone of ice. For a moment she looked fixedly at one of the windows through which the pale daylight fell. In the beautiful room, companioned by her nearest friend, she felt that sense of utter loneliness which in the great crises of life is experienced by all. Yet was it true?

"Violet!" she cried. "You are jesting."

But the lady, determined then or never to learn the truth, cocked an eye at her. "I am not, nor was he."

At that, Leilah felt the girdle of ice sending its shivers through her. The plan she had made must, she saw, be foregone. If Verplank did not know why she had separated from him, never would he leave Paris until he did. But what must he have thought, she agonisedly reflected, and what must he think!

Violet, who had been watching her, said: "Why don't you tell me?"

Leilah taking up her fork again, tried for countenance sake, to affect to eat. The effort was beyond her. She put it down.

"I can't," she at last replied.

Violet, her brilliant eye still cocked, almost winked.

"Yes, you said that before. But you see, don't you know, that whether you can or cannot tell me, you will have to tell him and, in the circumstances, would it not be best to have me do it for you? To be sure, if you had taken my advice and omitted to marry Barouffski, I would say, have it out with him yourself. But your marriage does not seem to have simplified matters, which, so far as I can make out, are now pretty thoroughly mixed."

The lady spoke better than she knew. Matters were complicated though how profoundly she had no idea, nor was Leilah aware that the situation, already tortuous, was to become even more intricately labyrinthine.

"Of course," Violet, in her bell-like voice, threw out, "after running away, getting a divorce and marrying another man, I can fancy that you don't much want to see him. But, really, you owe it to yourself to give the reason, particularly as it is he who is to blame."

At this, Leilah, who had been looking down into her prison, looked up. "I never said so."

"No, but was it necessary? Even nowadays, even in the States, a woman does not cut and run because butter won't melt in her husband's mouth. She does so because she has, or thinks she has, a grievance and the man, if he is a man, ought to be given an opportunity to apologise, however imaginary the grievance may be."

Leilah shook her head. "There can be no apology here."

Violet laughed. "That is just what I would say if I had gone and done it. Then it would be for Silverstairs to try on his knees to get me to listen to one—provided, of course, that in the interim I had not taken over another man, for in that case I verily believe he would wring my neck. But you need fear nothing of the sort from Verplank. He seemed anxious only to wring Barouffski's."

Leilah made another futile effort with her fork. Absently she answered:

"I don't believe he knew who he was."

"You don't! After his telling him! But, apropos, what became of d'Arçy? I thought you and he were safely tucked away in a corner, otherwise never in the world would I have marched your Number One up to your Number Two."

"D'Arcy!" Leilah repeated. She had barely heard. She scarcely knew what she was saying, still less what was being said.

"Yes, le beau d'Arcy. Marie de Fresnoy told me that the other day at the races he was about to pay a ragamuffin of a girl for a flower, when she said: "I'd rather you kissed me." Fancy that! She told me too that a man who had a husband's reasons for wanting to kill him, was afraid to say a word. It appears he is a dead shot. But it appears also that your lovely Barouffski is one of the best swordsmen here. Verplank had better look out. To return though to our Chablis Moutonne. What will you do?"

Leilah, her thoughts afar, made no reply.

"What will you do?" Violet repeated.

From afar the question floated, descended, trod among the tender places of Leilah's soul. At the pain of it she winced. "God help me, I do not know."

Violet, cocking an eye again, insinuated: "Let me take a hand." She paused, then, for clincher, threw out: "He dines here to-morrow."

"Here!" Leilah exclaimed, half rising, fearful now that at any moment he might appear. "Here! With you?"

Violet nodded. "Why yes. Why not? If I can't confess you, perhaps I can him. At any rate I can try. You can't blame me for wanting to, either. You abandoned him on your honeymoon. You won't tell me why and he says he don't know. But he must suspect. He must have concluded that you left him for this, that or the other. I want to find out what his this, that and the other are and then make my own selection. It is true he did say that it was because of Barouffski. But that's all gammon. You never saw Barouffski until you got here. There is something else and what that is I want to find out. No, you can't blame me. It is the instinct of self-preservation. If I don't get at the bottom of it soon, I shall simply go mad."

A laugh, clear and musical, wound up the lady's chatter. She had no more idea of going mad than she had of jumping out of the window. But she wanted to know and that was only human.

But now, Leilah, who a moment before had half risen, stood up. "Violet, I am not well, you must let me go. Yes," she added as the lady remarked that on the morrow she might appear in the rue de la Pompe. "Yes, yes."

She would have said yes to anything. Hurriedly she got away.

Without the motor waited.

"Home," she told the groom.

A little before she had thought herself the most miserable of beings. But however deep the hell, there is always a deeper one. Add uncertainty to distress and the sum of it is sorrow multiplied by the infinite. That hell, that sorrow was or seemed to be, hers. She did not know where to go, what to do, to whom to turn.

The pitiable plan of flight returned to her. Again she put it aside. She could not adopt it now. Besides, though she owed a duty to herself, she owed another to Verplank. In what manner he had failed to receive the letter, it was impossible for her to imagine, but the fact that he had not received it, hurt her doubly, hurt her for herself, hurt her for him. Had it reached him, both would have been spared this pass. But it had not reached him and since then what must he have thought of her? What!

The query, which kept repeating itself, tortured her and on that torture was superposed the precarious problem of his enlightenment. See him she could not. To write was beyond her ability. For there are things no pen should write as there are others no tongue should tell. None the less the truth she knew must reach him and would do so best, she thought, through some channel similar to that from which the letter had proceeded, from a source either indifferent or inimical to them both.

At the auto-suggestion, her thoughts fluttered, scattered, grouped, then suddenly regrouping, produced a name. Beneath her breath she uttered it.

"Barouffski!"

It was not in provision of this that she had married him. At the time no such possibility had even impossibly loomed. But she had married him precisely as she had obtained a divorce, in order to barricade the future from the past; in order also for the fleshpots which she craved—peace and security. She had not had much of either. None the less, the primary object which she had sought had, in its accomplishment, persisted. He was a barricade. He was her official and paid protector.

For the task therefore which she could not perform, he seemed naturally indicated. What alone gave her pause was the certainty that he would enjoy it. She could see him, see his ambiguous smile, see his green eyes aglow, his cruel and sensual mouth distended.

From the picture she turned. Beyond was a church, the frontal draped with black. The motor had stopped. It had reached the house in the rue de la Pompe and pending the opening of the doors, whirred as it blocked the sidewalk.

It was then that she turned. Beside her, arrested by the car, stood Verplank.

After walking up from Voisin's with Silverstairs he had left him a moment earlier at Tempest's.

But the great doors had opened. Before Verplank could speak, the machine slid in. As it entered the court, the doors closed noisily.

VIII

On alighting at the perron, Leilah had as always to endure the ceremonial of two footmen assiduously assisting her.

"Emmanuel," she said to one of them. "Is Monsieur Barouffski at home?"

"No, madame la comtesse."

Leilah passed on and up. For a moment, in the hall above, she hesitated. Then, pushing a portière aside, she entered a salon, went to the window, and looked out. Crossing the court was Verplank.

Fear and the fear of it, the throttling sensation which children know when pursued, enveloped her. With an idea of telling the servants that she was out, that she was ill, that she could see no one, she turned. On a table near the entrance was a service of Sevrès. Its tender hues were repeated on the ceiling. Beneath was the mirror of a waxed and polished floor. On the glistening wood work her foot slipped. She staggered, recovered herself, got to the door.

Already Verplank had entered. She could

hear him. He was not asking, he was demanding to see her. The form of the order mounted violently.

"Tell your mistress that I am here."

Even then, with the idea that she might still deny herself, Leilah drew back into the room. Mentally she was framing a phrase when Emmanuel entered.

With that air domestics have when tidying something objectionable, the footman reconstructed Verplank's command:

"There is a monsieur who inquires whether madame la comtesse receives?"

"Tell him——"

But the injunction, as yet not wholly formed, was never completed. Verplank, brushing the man aside, strode in.

Leilah, retreating before him, motioned at Emmanuel, and the servant, with an affronted air of personal grievance, vacated this room that was charged now with the vibrations of hostilities begun.

Retreating yet farther, her eyes on the foe, Leilah stared at him, and, as she retreated, Verplank, staring, too, advanced. In his stare were threats so voluble that she thought: "He will kill me." At the thought, there appeared before her Death's liberating face, the mysteriously consoling visage which it reveals to those alone who have reached the depth of human woe.

Beyond, from the church, came the music of an organ. A requiem was being held. Leilah felt as though it were her own.

Verplank, his hands clenched, the look of an executioner about him, threw at her:

"For six months I have been looking for you. I am come to have you tell me why I have had to look at all."

"*Dies irae, dies illa,*" admirably, in a clear contralto, a woman's voice rang out.

Neither heard it. At the menace of the man, Leilah shrank, and in an effort at defense cried pitiably:

"Gulian! I left a letter for you."

Angrily he tossed his head.

"I received none, nor did I need any to tell me that there are women on the street, others in jail, that are less vile than you."

"*Teste David cum Sibylla,*" clearly and beautifully the voice resumed.

"Gulian!" Leilah cried again.

With whips in his words, he added:

"No harlot could have acted more infamously than you."

At the lash of the outrage, Leilah, joining her hands, held them to him. "Gulian! You are killing me!"

"It is what you deserve. There are no penalties now for such turpitudes as yours. But, when there were, women like you were beaten with rods, they were lapidated, stoned to death, and death was too good for them; they should have been made to go about, as they afterward were, as you should be, in a yellow wig, in a yellow gown, that even children might point and cry: 'Shame!' "

The words, which he tore from his mouth, he hurled at her. She cowered before them. On a chair near by she had put her bag. Her wrap had fallen from her. In the church now the hymn had ceased. The ringing of the Elevation was beginning.

"Gulian! As if shame had not cried at me! Gulian, I have been scourged, I have been stoned. If I live, it is to implore of you mercy."

Her hands, still joined, were still extended, and in her face was an expression of absolute despair. But this martyr attitude seemed to him the most abominable of hypocrisies, and it was with anger refreshed that he lashed her again.

"Mercy? Yes, you want mercy, you, who were merciless in your treachery to me. A sweep would have had more decency, a scullion more heart. I put in your hands my trust, my love, my honour, and you who want mercy dragged them in dirt."

"Gulian!" Within her now was that invincible need of justice which impels the weakest to protest against the savagery of wrong. "Gulian! When you know!"

"I do know. I know you and your lies, and the infamy of them too well. At Coronado——"

"Gulian! You are not killing me merely, you torture my very soul."

He sneered.

"Do I? Do I, indeed! No, you compliment yourself. It is what I want to do, but you cheat me even there. No woman with a soul could have done this soulless thing."

The brutality of the arraignment shook her. She leaned against the chair for support. She felt hopeless, helpless, defenseless, and it was because the need for justice still impelled her, that she protested anew.

"Gulian, if only you knew! If only you had had that letter! Had it reached you, you would know that there was no deceit, that I left you for your sake as well as my own. Gulian, if I had not gone you would have seen and made me tell you, and then it may be you would have taken me and thrown me with you from the yacht."

There were tears in her words. With one hand she held to the chair, the other she raised to her head. It pained her. She felt bruised and looked it.

"Ecce panis Angelorum
Factus cibus viatorum——"

Beyond, sustained by the arpeggios of the organ, the voice of a singer mounted sheerly like a thread of gold. It lowered and heightened. Presently, on a note, as if abruptly snapped, it ceased. The organ continued. It renewed the canticle. It projected a scale that ascended slowly, as though upward and onward, over the limitless steps of eternity, it were lifting the soul of the dead.

Leilah wished it were her own. Sadly she added:

"God knows it would have been better. Anything would be better than that you should speak to me as you do."

There is an innocence that appeals, a sincerity that disarms, a candour that outfaces every proof, and Verplank, who had been bent on overwhelming this woman with a contempt which he felt wholly deserved, was impressed, in spite of himself, by the evident ingenuousness, by the evident wretchedness, too, of her words.

He moved back.

"You say I would have made you tell me?"

"Yes. Yes. You would have."

"But made you tell me what?"

Leilah, still holding one hand to her head, raised the other from the chair, and with it made a gesture slight, yet desolate.

"What was it?" he asked.

Before replying, she looked away.

"What I hid from you rather than repeat."

"But repeat what?"

Her face still turned from him, she answered:

"Something, my—something Mr. Ogston sent me."

"Mr. Ogston!" Verplank exclaimed. The formality of the statement astounded him. "Do you mean your father? What did he send you?"

But Leilah would not or could not speak. Her mouth contracted as though she were choking, and she put a hand to her throat.

"Tell me," he insisted.

She turned, and beseechingly she looked at him.

"Gulian, I cannot."

At that Verplank moved nearer, and so dominatingly that again she extended her hands.

"Gulian, I will get some one else to tell you. I had intended to. Believe me, it is better so."

"It concerns me?"

"Yes, you."

"And you?"

"Yes, both of us."

"Then you shall tell me, and tell me now. Do you hear?"

"Gulian!" she cried. She raised her clasped hands to him. "Gulian!"

But Verplank, his jaw ominously square, confronted her.

"I say you shall."

"Don't look at me then," she pleaded. "Bend your head, bend it lower. One second, then I will. One second—one. Ah, God! I cannot."

Verplank, who at her bidding had stooped, straightened himself, and caught at her.

"I say you shall."

"Gulian, a moment. Give me a moment. Now bend your head again. One moment, Gulian; your father, your father—— My mother loved him."

"Your mother loved my father!"

"Gulian, I am his daughter."

"You are what?"

"I am your sister."

As she whispered it, she covered her face. Verplank started, straightened again, raised his arm, and, with a gesture wide, elemental, absurd, and human, struck at the empty air.

Savagely he turned to her.

"And you believe this?"

Leilah, her head bowed, her face covered, shook with sobs.

"You believe it?" he repeated.

"There were letters," she stammered. "Three letters. No one could read them and not—and not——"

"And it was for this you left me?"

A fresh access seized her. He could not see her tears, he heard them.

"And it was for this you got a divorce?"

On the chair beside her was her bag. She felt in it, and got out a handkerchief.

"And it was for this you took that cad?"

Slowly, with infinite hesitations, the bit of cambric held to a face that was wet and white, she turned to him.

"I thought you would forget. I thought you would marry. I though you would be happy. I hoped so that you would. But my leaving you, the divorce, the marriage, these things were done with no idea of happiness. They were to serve as barriers between us."

Impotently he stamped a foot. He was furious still. But his anger had deflected. He was enraged less at her than at circumstances.

"Rubbish! That's what your barriers are."

Leilah, wiping her eyes, turned from him. The barriers, however fragile, were not rubbish to her.

Violently he continued:

"As for Barouffski——"

But Leilah, turning to him again, interrupted:

"Gulian, let me tell you. Last night I planned to have some one ask you, for my sake, to go away. Gulian, I thought you would, but I determined if you would not that I would go."

Verplank moved back.

"Go! Go where?"

"Ah! God knows! Anywhere. Wherever I could hide myself. Wherever I could hide my love for you."

Her eyes had been raised to his. At the confession they lowered of themselves. Then again she looked him in the face.

"Gulian, it is that which cried shame at me. It is that which scourged me with rods bitterer than those of which you spoke. You say the barriers are nothing. Gulian, you are wrong. To me they are eternal."

"Yes," he angrily retorted. "Yes, if your story were true. But it isn't. It's arrant nonsense."

In miserable protest, she half raised a hand.

"Gulian, when I read those letters my youth died in me. Never since they reached me have I had the heart to smile. If you had seen them you would have felt the truth in every line."

"I would have felt nothing of the kind; the fact that you still care for me ought to show you that they are false."

"Gulian, I tried to think that, too; but even in trying I felt that I was pleading for myself."

"Then, for the love of God, stop pleading and act! Look at yourself, look at me! We could not be more unlike if we came from different planets."

She was making an effort to answer. He stopped her.

"Listen to this. If you can't act, I shall. My mother is in London. To-morrow she is to be here. Probably she can tell me the truth. If not, I will go to the States. There I will see your father. When I return it will be with proofs. I will bring them if I have to drag that old scoundrel with me."

He paused. Though angry still, her story had pacified him. He felt it to be false, nonetheless she had believed it and the fact that she had, absolved her of much that she had done. However she had erred, she had at least tried to do right. He closed and opened a hand, looked at it and from it looked at her.

"But first I will see my mother. In any case I will be here to-morrow. Yes, that's what I'll do. Why shouldn't I come. Why not?"

Leilah did not answer. She did not believe he would come, except to cause fresh agony to them both there was no reason why he should do so. The horror which she had told him and to which incredulously he had listened was gospel to her, an evil gospel, yes, but nonetheless a true one. Besides if he did come as, in any case, he said he would, he might meet Barouffski, and affrightedly she foresaw blows, afterwards a duel—one which she was unaware was then impending.

"Why not?" Verplank repeated, fumbling her as he spoke with suspicious eyes and appearing to divine and to resent her forecast.

She caught at a straw. Usually, between four and seven, Barouffski was tabled at baccarat, gambling with her money. That straw she produced.

"Come at five."

Verplank, appeased, nodded. "Very good, at five then."

But at once she realised that other safeguards were needful. She hesitated, looked about her, looked at Verplank, gave him his hat, motioned to him. Then, preceding him, she passed into an adjoining salon, entered the dining room and moved from it to the garden below.

Passably mystified, he followed.

The air, freighted with fragrance, stirred by music from the church, the dogs, at sight of him, charged suddenly with menaces. Straining at their chains, viciously they clamoured.

Indifferently Verplank glanced from them to the gate beyond, to which Leilah was leading him.

When both reached it, she opened it and said: "Come this way to-morrow, will you?"

For a second he considered her. Her face was as a book in which he could read the reason. In view of many things, particularly of the duel, it seemed to him all very puerile.

But, replacing his hat, grimly he nodded. "Before then I have rather an idea that there may be a deficit among us."

This expression, in itself perhaps over precise, was too much for her and the fact that it was showed itself in her eyes.

Without heeding their inquiry he nodded again. "I will come this way but only that together we may leave by the other."

Again he nodded. In a moment he had gone.

Leilah, closing the gate behind him watched him go. It was, she felt, her last earthly sight of him. There would be no going away together. He would never come back. Never. His mother, if she knew the truth, could only substantiate it. If she did not, another would. Helplessly she held at the gate. A vagrant passed, she did not see. A hawker called, she did not hear. She was not only helpless, she was hopeless. She wished that death really were, that it could beneficently come, take her, shroud her in blankness, in endless oblivion of what was and of what might have been. Long since the dogs, mollified by Verplank's exit, had ceased to bark. Shrilly now from the church came boys' fresh voices. The music of them stirred her a little and she turned.

Before her, framed in a window of the dining room, Barouffski stood. At sight of him she started. Amiably he smiled. When she looked again he had vanished.

But, in a moment, in the doorway beneath, smiling still, he reappeared.

"What a beautiful day, is it not?" Oilily he rubbed his hands. "You have been having visitors, cara mia?"

As he spoke he moved toward her. Urbanely he continued! "And what did they have to say?"

He was quite near her now and, with his head held a trifle to one side he was regarding her with affectionate indulgence, much as one would regard a child.

"They told you nothing new, cara mia?"

Without looking at him, Leilah shook her head. "Nothing. Nothing at least that I did not know."

Smiling still, indulgent as before, Barouffski plucked at his pointed beard. "And what is that, cara mia?"

Remotely, in a voice without colour, as though speaking not to him at all but only to herself, she answered:

"That I am the most miserable woman in the world."

Barouffski's smile broadened. "Bah! They exaggerated, cara mia. It is the way of the world. Mon Dieu, à qui se fier? You are not at all what they said. You are—how shall I put it—perhaps a bit indiscreet. That is it, a bit indiscreet." He pointed to the bench. "Will you not seat yourself?"

He was still smiling, but the smile wholly muscular, was one in which the eyes have no part. The "visitors" whom he affected to ridicule, alarmed him. They were, he knew, quite capable of taking Leilah away. Her presence or absence was quite one to him. Only if she departed, so would her purse.

"Will you not?" he repeated.

"I am going in."

"Certainly, cara mia. It is as it pleases you. But——"

At this Leilah, who had passed him, turned.

"Well, what?"

"You see, cara mia, supposing I had visitors. Supposing rather I had a visitor. We are only supposing, are we not? Bon! Supposing this visitor happened to be what we call an ancienne, an old flame, an inamorata of mine. Supposing that were so. Do you know what you could do?"

"No," Leilah from over her shoulder answered. "Nor do I care."

"Forgive me, cara mia. You mean that you do not care to be informed. Yet you should know, for you could if you wished have me fined. Yes, that is what you could do. You could have me fined.

"But I," he resumed. "Do you know in similar circumstances what I could do? Do you know rather what the law says I may do?

Do you, cara mia? Do you? For really you ought to."

But Leilah now was approaching the entrance.

"What!" Barouffski exclaimed. "You are not interested? You are really going?"

As he spoke, he bowed. "Bon, à ce soir, cara mia. And a last word. If I may advise, do not be led into indiscretions."

"Do not," he repeated, while shrilly from the adjacent church came the voices of boys chanting the final phrase of the Pater Noster:

"Sed libera nos a malo."

"That is it," he called at Leilah's retreating back. "Pray rather to be delivered of them. Otherwise——"

But Leilah now had entered the house.

"Otherwise," he continued to himself and moving to the kennels, patted the dogs, "otherwise a sojourn in Poland may improve you."

IX

"The strawberries were delicious," Violet, the following day, remarked to Leilah.

The two women were seated in the garden of the house in the rue de la Pompe. It was just after luncheon and between them was a table on which coffee had been served. From without came the whirr of passing motors, the cries of those hawkers who are never still. But the garden itself was quiet, scented too and the day superb.

Violet, patting a yawn, resumed: "One never really gets strawberries except in Paris. They are so big! And so expensive, aren't they? I know that in a restaurant a man gave one to the waiter for a tip."

She looked about her. "But, mercy! What can have become of Aurelia? She was to have stopped for me."

"Don't you think it unwise to let her go on the stage?" Leilah, with an air of talking for talk's sake, inquired.

"Let her! But she's got her head. I can't prevent her. She'll never come to any harm though. She isn't the kind to want to do anything she thought was wrong. No indeed. She would never think anything wrong that she wanted to do. But tell me. I could not very well ask before the servants. What are you going to do?"

For a moment Leilah did not answer. Then, a bit resignedly, she folded her hands.

"I do not see that I have the ability to do anything."

The pause, the gesture, the reply, angered Violet. She bristled.

"Don't be so modest, you make me nervous!"

For a moment she also paused. Then, ruminantly, as though in self communion, the lady uttered these cryptic words:

"But perhaps——"

Leilah, who had turned away, turned to her. "Perhaps what?"

But Violet, compressing her lips, assumed the appearance which a very worldly, exquisitely gowned and beautiful Sphinx might present.

"Perhaps what?" Leilah, puzzled by the attitude, repeated.

"Oh, nothing. That is, nothing in particular. I was merely thinking from battle, murder and sudden death, Good Lord deliver us! And yet——"

"Well?"

Violet looked her over. "I know I ought not to tell and for that very reason I will. Your two husbands are to fight to-day. They may be at it now——"

Abruptly she made a face, dropped her voice and threw out:

"No such luck."

In the doorway Barouffski stood.

Leilah had not seen. Inwardly she had shrivelled. To the sudden knowledge that the two men were to fight, fear, as suddenly, superposed the conviction that Verplank would be killed. It stirred in her a wholly animal longing to get away from herself; to be rid, however transiently, of that sense of horror and helplessness which only the tortured know. In an effort to shut out the pain of it, she closed her eyes.

When she opened them, Barouffski was before her. Affably he was addressing her friend.

"Beautiful day, Lady Silverstairs. In London you do not often have such weather. I hope Lord Silverstairs is planning to keep you here a very long time."

"What? What?" Violet in a crescendo of surprise, exclaimed.

Affably, smilingly, unperturbably, Barouffski reiterated the expression of his hope.

Icily Violet cut him short. "With us it is the woman who makes and unmakes plans."

Barouffski, unabashed and smiling, plucked at his beard. "A most excellent custom. Yes. For when has reason governed the world? It is only by the heartstrings that men can be led and women alone can lead them."

But now Violet with the air of an empress had risen. "Leilah, my motor is at the door. Let me take you for a turn in the Bois."

"Do," Barouffski exclaimed, looking as he spoke at Leilah. "You are a trifle pale, cara mia. A turn or two now in the Bois——"

With a gesture he signified, that is what you need.

Turning to Violet he added: "So thoughtful of you, Lady Silverstairs."

In speaking he bowed for Violet now was vacating the garden and Leilah who had risen was following her.

Barouffski bowed again. "Cara mia, a pleasant drive to you."

But, when both women had entered the house, he sighed, sighed with relief, looked about him, consulted his watch, looked again about him, moved to the entrance, touched a bell which presently a footman answered.

Barouffski indicated the table and chairs. "Get all that out of here."

"Perfectly, monsieur le comte," the man, with marked deference, answered and started to do as bidden.

Barouffski checked him. "In five or ten minutes some gentlemen will come by the main entrance. Show them in the reception room. About the same time others will come by the gate. When they do, see that I am notified at once."

"Perfectly, monsieur le comte."

"Afterward, when they are gone, come back here and tidy up."

"Perfectly, monsieur le comte."

But now Barouffski had turned, he was entering the house. The man stuck his tongue out at him. "Canaille, va!" he muttered. Raising his arms, he added: "Tidy up, eh? Tidy up what? The remains of your conversation, no doubt. Bah! That won't be much." He laughed, took first the table, then the chairs, vanished with them and reappeared.

A bell at the gate had sounded, he hurried there and bowing, admitted Aurelia and that young person's young man.

The girl made straight for the kennels. "Parsnips!" she delightedly exclaimed. "Aren't those two big brutes simply dear?"

Swiftly Emmanuel intervened. "Pardon,

they are very savage." Then, as the girl hesitated he added: "Will mademoiselle give herself the trouble to pass into the salon?"

Aurelia tossed her pretty head. "No, I like it here. Besides I hate suggestions. Tell Madame Barouffska that I have come on a most unimportant matter which will probably detain me a very long time."

"Yes," her companion rejoined as the footman retreated. "Yes, I often think that it is only unimportant matters that are really momentous." In his hand was a stick which negligently he twirled. "What is this one, if I may ask?"

"I have forgotten."

"Perhaps then it was really important."

Aurelia, who, with her delicious face and delicate garments, looked like a wayward angel, lifted a finger.

"So it was! So it was! I remember now I wanted to ask her how she likes matrimony."

"Cæsar!" the youth exclaimed. "You are not collecting data on the subject, are you?"

Meekly, with a treacherously innocent air, the girl surveyed him. "You wouldn't wish me to take leaps in the dark, would you?"

"Certainly I would. Certainly I do—since you are to take them with me."

With the same wicked look, Aurelia moistened her lips. "What a beautiful nature you have!"

Pleased at this, the little lord nodded.

"I'll tell you what matrimony is, two souls with but a single thought——"

"Yes," Aurelia interrupted. "Two souls with half a thought apiece." Rapturously she sighed. "There is real bliss!"

Buttercups snarled. "Oh come, now! If you turn everything into ridicule——"

Dreamily Aurelia continued. "I asked the duchess, and she said——"

"The old harridan!"

"You know her manner"—a manner which Aurelia instantly made her own. "My dear, matrimony is three months of adoration, three months of introspection, thirty years of toleration—with the children to begin it all over."

Buttercups frowned. "A rather voluminous definition."

"Rather luminous, I should call it."

Frowning still, Buttercups threw out.

"While you were at it, it's a pity you did not ask her what love is."

But the sarcasm, if sarcasm it were, convulsed Aurelia. "Parsnips!" she delightedly exclaimed. "You'll never believe it! She asked me!"

"Mistook you for an expert," Buttercups, glowering at the beautiful, laughing girl snapped back. "What did you say?"

Aurelia, her eyes sparkling, her little white teeth visible, her little pink tongue also, looked about her, turned, went to the bench, got up on it and there, solemnly now as though on a platform, coughed.

"I said, that while from studies and statistics I was inclined to believe that, theoretically, love is a fermentation of the molecules of the imagination, actually it is the affection of somebody else."

Blankly Buttercups stared. "I don't understand that."

Aurelia coughed again. "I added that from the same studies and statistics I was also inclined to believe that love is the tragedy of those who lack it, the boredom of those who don't."

"Eh?" Buttercups whined. "I don't understand that either."

"I further stated that love is a specific emotion, more or less exclusive in selection, more —or less—permanent in duration and due to a mental disturbance, in itself caused by a law of attraction which somebody or other said was the myth of happiness, invented by the devil for man's despair."

Helplessly Buttercups groaned. "I don't understand that at all."

With birdlike ease Aurelia hopped from the bench and with consoling delicacy nodded:

"Violet said she didn't either."

Buttercups brightened. "Now there's a woman of sense."

Very sweetly Aurelia nodded again. "Leilah Barouffska said she did understand, so I may suppose that she is stupid."

At the shot—which missed him—Buttercups tormented the tip of his nose.

"No doubt, she does seem to have made a mess of things. Why now did she leave her first husband?"

Aurelia looked down and away.

"It is not a thing I could mention."

Buttercups gave a little jump. "What?"

Perversely, her lovely eyes still lowered, Aurelia added:

"She caught him in the act."

Buttercups jumped again.

Aurelia blushed or rather appeared to do so. "With her own eyes she saw him eating fish with his knife."

But Buttercups had rallied. "Now, Aurelia," he protested, "I have heard too many lies about myself, too many confounded lies, to believe any such story."

Superciliously, her delicate nose in the air, Aurelia looked him over. "Ah, indeed! But then you see sensible people never object to the lies that are told about them. What we do object to is the truth. Now when we are married—if we ever are——"

"Aurelia," the poor devil pathetically interrupted, "you never say when we are married without adding if we ever are!"

"That's to teach you not to take things for granted. I have been engaged before—and may be again."

"B-before!" the flustered Buttercups stuttered. "A-again!"

Frostily this ingénue considered the youth. "Parsnips, don't look at me in that fashion, you inflame me."

She cocked an ear. "What's that?"

At the gate the bell was ringing and unperceived by either Emmanuel had reappeared. The footman was descending the garden. Midway he stopped.

"I have the honour to inform mademoiselle that madame la comtesse is momentarily awaited."

He bowed, moved on, opened the gate through which then a brief procession passed: —Silverstairs, a green bag under his arm; de

Fresnoy, a stick under his; an old man with a small valise; finally Verplank.

Verplank, raising his hat, approach Aurelia. De Fresnoy, after saluting the young woman, addressed the old man.

But Silverstairs, sidling up to Buttercups and indicating Aurelia, whispered:

"Get her away, there's to be a fight."

"The deuce there is!" Buttercups exclaimed.

For a moment he looked helplessly about and made a little futile gesture. "If I ask her to go she'll stay."

Silverstairs pulled at his moustache. "Then tell her to stay and she'll go."

But such strategy was needless. Aurelia had no intention of loitering among these men, not one of whom interested her remotely. With a glimpse of her pretty teeth to Verplank and a nod at the others, she passed, followed by Buttercups, through the gate which the footman held open.

Meanwhile the dogs were barking and, from the house beyond, Barouffski appeared. With him were friends of his, Palencia, Tyszkiewicz; also a young man with a serious face who, like the old man, had with him a case which gingerly he put on the ground.

Verplank glanced at them, went to the bench and began removing his coat.

The night before he had dreamed pleasurably, as the great beasts of the jungles dream, of blood and the joy of killing. He had dreamed also and less agreeably that Leilah's story was true. However he had denied it, he did not know but that it might be. Nonetheless he doubted. He doubted it for the most human of reasons, because he wanted to. He doubted it for another and a better reason, because his intuitions so prompted. He had yet another reason, one less valid perhaps but cogent, the dissimilarity between Leilah and himself. The contrast was so marked that they might have come of alien races, from different zones.

On leaving her house other differences had occurred to him, differences not physical but moral. It is ridiculous, he had told himself. Nonetheless he dreamed that the story was true.

Meanwhile the parliamentaries had not been entirely successful. The note dispatched from Voisins had resulted that evening in a conference between Verplank's seconds and Barouffski's. These latter, Tyszkiewicz and Palencia, had begun by insisting that it was their principal who was aggrieved, that Verplank, in attempting to address a lady whom he knew did not wish to speak to him, had been wholly at fault and was deprived in consequence of the choice of weapons.

To this de Fresnoy had objected that Verplank knew nothing of the kind, that in addressing or in attempting to address the lady, he had acted in accordance with the usages of the world: moreover assuming him to have been in error in thinking that the lady did not object to being addressed, her slightest indication to the contrary would have been supersufficient to make him desist, the result being that Barouffski's intervention reflected on his good-breeding and was therefore an insult.

This view of the matter Barouffski's seconds refused to accept. They represented that it were difficult for the lady to have more punctiliously informed Verplank of her disinclination to be addressed by him than she had already done in obtaining a divorce.

At the easy logic de Fresnoy laughed. According to him, all that was beside the issue. He declared that many divorced couples were better friends afterward than they had found it possible to be before. In support of the statement he cited history: he cited the case of Henri IV and the Reine Margot. He did more than cite, he quoted the chronicles of Pierre l'Estoile, and he insisted that if his view were not accepted the conference must dissolve and an arbiter be convened.

In face of these arguments advanced to provincials by a Parisian, advanced too with that tone of authority which only a man sure of his ground or of his assurance may maintain and advanced, moreover, to men not over sure of their own, the latter hesitated.

Then, as though to demonstrate the truth of the parodox of which de Fresnoy had delivered himself at Voisins, the quip that a man is rarely killed except by his seconds, Silverstairs who, thus far throughout the conference, had smoked in placid silence, suddenly stuck his oar in.

"Why not toss for it?"

Tyszkiewicz and Palencia, hesitating still, agreed. A coin was flipped, heads for Verplank, tails for Barouffski. Tails it was. Barouffski was accorded the choice of arms, foils were designated by his seconds and the meeting was arranged to be held in his garden, at two the next day.

Verplank would have preferred pistols. But, informed of the result, he dreamed pleasurably. The encounter was the main thing. Presently sleep sank him deeper. Life and death ceased to be. He became part of the inchoate and primordial. Then, from the voids in which he lay, lightly, delicately, imperceptibly, an artery reached and drew him. But his scattered selves, the objective, subjective, superjective, satisfied with their temporary decentralisation, resisted. In the subtle struggle a memory, catalogued Leilah, was aroused. The syllables of the name resounded remotely, like a damp drum beaten obscurely behind the shelves of thought. They conveyed no meaning and, before they could suggest any, they passed, drifted by the currents of unconsciousness. But at once, those currents, barred by assembling ideas broke to the murmur of the vocables—Leilah! Leilah! Other memories, incidents, possibilities eddied among them and the sleeper, awakening, found himself confronted by the tragic mystery which the name revived.

Immediately the picture that had formed itself before him at Voisins returned. From it the Why had gone but the obstacle remained, and, as he got from the bed, he promised himself to demolish it.

Now, in the hostile enclosure, as the dogs barked and Barouffski appeared, Verplank removed his coat, undid his collar, rolled up his sleeves.

Beside him, bending over a case, the old man mumbled. He was a surgeon. The hour was not to his liking. He believed in duels, they were a source of revenue to him, but he believed in fighting on an empty stomach and, in the afternoon, who had that?

He looked up at Verplank. "Monsieur, you are young, you are brave, I doubt not you are also adroit. But had I been you, when your seconds asked, as I may suppose they asked: 'Which shall it be, the pistol at twenty paces or the sword?' I would have said to them: 'Give me the sword at twenty paces.' Yes; that is what I would have said."

Verplank ignored him utterly. In the center of the garden the seconds grouped together, were concluding details. Beyond, near the house, Barouffski stood. He also was now bare-armed. Near him, emptying a case, was the young man with the serious face. Beside him, placed upright against a wall, were two long green bags. From the street came the usual rumble, the noise of motors, the cries of hawkers, the snorting of stallions, the clatter of hoofs.

Silverstairs, abandoning the others went over to Verplank.

"De Fresnoy has been chosen director."

Verplank, from his trowsers pocket, had taken a pair of gloves. The palm of one of them, previously moistened, had been dusted with rosin. Now, as he put it on, he looked across at Barouffski who was looking at him. The man's bare arms were hairy and the sight of them was repugnant to Verplank. At once all the jealousy, all the hate of the male, mounted like wine to his head. He coloured, his hand shook. Then, resolutely, he reacted. In a moment he had again control of himself and it was idly, with an air of indifference, as he finished with his glove, that, in reference to the dinner that evening, he said:

"Are you to have many people to-night?"

Silverstairs, delighted that Verplank, showing up in such form, should be so sure of the result, laughed. "No, it is to be small and early. Afterward we go on to a play. The missis has a box for something, the Gymnase I think."

Verplank bent over and turned up the ends of his trowsers. A moment before he had been considering methods of attack, in particular a direct riposte after a certain parade and it was springingly, as though delivering it, that he straightened.

But now de Fresnoy approached. Silverstairs moved to one side where he was joined by Tyszkiewicz, a thin, tall man with a prominent nose and an air vaguely pedagogic, and by Palencia who, with great black eyebrows that met and a full black beard, looked like Fra Diavolo disguised as a clubman.

From one of the long green bags de Fresnoy had taken a pair of foils. These he offered, hilt foremost, to Verplank who grasped one and then to gauge its temper, or his own, lashed the air with it. The movement revealed a suppleness of arm, a muscular ease, the swelling biceps which training alone provides.

Save Barouffski, no one noticed. For a moment his eyes shifted absently. It was as though he too had meditated a coup and now was meditating another. Meanwhile he also had received a foil.

"Messieurs!" de Fresnoy called. He spoke in a loud, clear voice. He had moved back and stood at an angle to Barouffski and Verplank. Opposite, at an equal angle were the seconds and surgeons. All now were so stationed that they formed a sort of cross.

"Messieurs, I do not need to remind you of the common loyalty to be observed. What I have to say is that the encounter will proceed in engagements of three minutes, followed each by three minutes of repose, until one of you is incapacitated."

De Fresnoy looked from Barouffski to Verplank. At once in his loud, clear voice he called:

"On guard!"

The two men fell into position. De Fresnoy moved forward, took in either hand the foils at the points, drew them together until they met, left them so and moved back.

"Allez, messieurs!"

At the word Allez, or, in English, go, and without waiting for the term Messieurs that followed, instantly Barouffski lunged. His foil pierced Verplank in the cheek and touched the upper jaw.

Verplank had a vision of a footman peering from a window, a taste of something hot and acrid in his mouth, a sense of pain, the sensation of vulperine fury.

De Fresnoy's face had grown red as his neckcloth. He branished his stick.

"Monsieur!" he cried at Barouffski. "Your conduct is odious. You shall answer to me for it."

Barouffski bowed. "For the expression which it has pleased you to employ, you shall answer to me."

"Permit me! Permit me!" Tyszkiewicz interjected. "To what do you object?"

Angrily de Fresnoy turned at him. "Your principal drew before the order. He——"

"Permit me! Permit me!" Tyszkiewicz interrupted. "The word Allez is an order. The moment it is uttered hostilities begin. The term Messieurs is but a polite accessory, a term which may or may not be employed."

Insolently de Fresnoy considered him. "I have no lessons to receive from you."

"Permit me! Permit me——"

But de Fresnoy had turned on his heel. Before him Verplank stood, Silverstairs on one side, the old surgeon on the other. The young surgeon had joined them. Beyond, Barouffski was examining the point of his foil.

From Verplank's mouth and face blood was running. The wound had not improved his appearance. The old surgeon, on tiptoes, was staunching it.

"What I like," he confided, speaking the while very unctuously as though what he was saying would be a comfort to Verplank; "what I like is to attend to gentlemen whose wives have deceived them. Outraged husbands, monsieur, that is my specialty!"

Verplank brushed him aside, shook his foil, and called at de Fresnoy.

"Are the three minutes up?"

"Monsieur!" the old surgeon protested.

The young surgeon intervened.

"But, monsieur——"

De Fresnoy motioned at them.

"Is he in a condition to continue?"

"Why not?" Verplank scornfully replied.

He raised his left hand, and, with a gesture of excuse, turned and spat. He looked up. His mouth was on fire, his jaw burned, the wound in his cheek was a flame. Yet these things but added to the intensity of his eyes. They blazed. There was blood on his face, on his chin, on his shirt, on his feet. He was hideous. But he was a man, and a mad one.

"He ought to be horsewhipped," muttered Silverstairs, glaring as he spoke at Barouffski, who was talking to his seconds.

"On guard, then!" called de Fresnoy.

"Permit me, permit me," cried Tyszkiewicz. "The point of my principal's sword is broken."

"Give him another then," de Fresnoy roughly threw out. Insolently he added: "And teach him how to use it." In a moment, when from the other bag, a foil had been got and measured, "On guard," he repeated.

Again he united the foils. Again he gave the command.

For a moment the weapons clashed.

Suddenly and excitedly Palencia cried: "My principal is touched."

"Halt," de Fresnoy, intervening with raised stick, commanded.

Verplank moved back. “Damn him,” he muttered, “I haven’t done with him yet.”

About Barouffski now, Palencia and the young man with the serious face had come. The latter was examining Barouffski’s right arm. On it a thin red line was visible. Very gravely the young man looked up.

“My client is disabled. Profound incision in the region of the flexor digitorum sublimis accompanied by a notable effusion of blood.”

The old surgeon chuckled. Confidentially as before he addressed Verplank. “I know that term. It means a scratch. Those ladies there, it must amuse even them.”

As he spoke he indicated a window at which Violet and Leilah had appeared, but from which now Leilah was retreating.

Verplank did not hear, did not see. The young surgeon, resuming, had announced himself as opposed to a continuation of the encounter. It was this that preoccupied Verplank.

Loudly and angrily he cried: “Let’s have pistols then. That man can use his left hand and I’ll do the same.

“Cristi! La jolie dame!” the old surgeon muttered to himself.

In the doorway Leilah had come. Hurriedly she moved to Verplank. As she did so Barouffski tried to prevent her.

"Cara mia, I must beg of you——"

He had got in her way but she eluded him, while the other men looked curiously at this woman who now agitatedly was addressing Verplank.

"Don't fight any more, don't!"

Roughly Verplank answered: "I haven't begun."

"Sir," cried Barouffski. "I can permit no conversation with this lady."

Verplank ignoring Barouffski as utterly as he had ignored the surgeon, looked at Leilah.

"That story of yours is——"

But whatever he may have intended to say, Barouffski interrupted. He was shouting at Verplank, calling, too, at Leilah whom he had got by the arm and whom he would have drawn away, but this Verplank prevented. Shifting his foil to his left hand, with his right he seized Barouffski and with a twist which separated him from Leilah, shoved him aside.

"To your shambles!" he called at him.

But already the others were intervening. Tyszkiewicz with his eternal "Permit me," got between the two men. Palencia held Barouffski by the shoulder. Silverstairs drew Verplank away, while de Fresnoy, viewing the situation as hopeless, declared the duel at an end.

The actions of all were practically so simultaneous that they were as one to Leilah who, bewildered by the confusion which she herself had caused, horrified by Verplank's appearance and tortured by the riddle of his interrupted words, now, over the heads of the others, again called to him:

"You say that the story is——"

"At five!" Verplank threw back.

Barouffski, bursting with rage and impotence, shouted:

"I say this conversation must cease."

The old surgeon, nudging his colleague, laughed:

"There is my specialty!"

Both surgeons then were occupied with their bags. De Fresnoy, overhearing the remark, could not but smile. To conceal it he turned to the gate where he was joined by Silverstairs and where at once, Palencia and Tyszkiewicz followed, leaving in the center of the garden Leilah and her two husbands, one of whom with a shrug which for an American was perhaps rather French, went to the bench where his coat lay.

In this instance again the actions of all so closely coincided that barely an instant intervened before Leilah was throwing after Verplank the two syllables he had thrown at her.

"At five!"

Later she was unconscious of having done so. But Barouffski heard and presently, when the others had gone and in this garden those two were alone, with angry suspicion he confronted her.

"Five! What is that? What does it mean?"

Leilah had turned to go. A bit unsteadily she moved on, reached the entrance, leaned there for support.

But Barouffski was at her heels.

"Five," he repeated. "He said it, you said it, what does it mean?"

"It means that God willing some day I may have peace."

She had half-turned. She turned again. In a moment she had gone.

Menacingly Barouffski's eyes followed her. "That's what five means, does it?"

Then he too turned. Nearby, on the marble chair, were his coat and waistcoat. Slowly, thoughtfully, he put them on. As he did so he noticed the dogs. It may have seemed to him then that they were his only friends. Longly he looked their way.

Suddenly, as though illumination had come, he touched a bell and looked up at Leilah's window.

After a brief delay, Emmanuel appeared.

"Shut the gate," Barouffski ordered.

"Perfectly, monsieur le comte," the footman very deferentially replied and started to do as bidden.

Barouffski checked him. Indicating the lower window, he added:

"At five or thereabouts be in there. I will tell you then what to do. You hear me?"

"Perfectly, monsieur le comte."

Again Barouffski glanced at the upper window. As he glanced he smiled.

"Cara mia, five may mean more things than you say, more even than you think."

He was still smiling but it was not a pleasant smile to see.

Beneath his breath, Emmanuel, who was looking at him, muttered:

"Quelle gueule de maquereau!"

X

"Gracious!" Violet exclaimed. She had been smoking and now in putting a cigarette in a cendrier she had succeeded in overturning it. Undismayed she looked at a clock. "Gracious!" she repeated. "Since that stupid duel, I have sat here an hour."

Leisurely the lady arose. She was a glowing object in this room which, filled with costly futilities and furnished in canary and black, otherwise was Empire and brilliant. The main entrance, hung with heavy portières of yellow damask had, opposite it, across the room, a tapestry panel which masked a spiral stairway that led below. To one side, at an elaborate table, which now the overturned cendrier had strewn with ashes, Leilah was seated. Behind her, through an open window, shone the eager sun. Before her, rising from a sofa was her friend.

Leilah wished that she would go, wished too that she would stay, wished rather—as at times we all wish of those who are near us—that she were different, less mondaine perhaps, more simple. To Violet, the spectacle in the garden had been tedious. To Leilah it was horrible. Moreover the atmosphere of blood and hate, the enigma of Verplank's words, the menaces of Barouffski's eyes, these things frightened her, inducing a dread which seemed to brood not in the mind but in the body. She could have put a hand to her girdle and have said: "It is here." In addition she felt—as in every spiritual crisis we all do—alone. Of this she could not tell Violet. She felt that she lacked the power to express it and that Violet lacked the ability to understand. Pain has accents which only its graduates know. Violet, in all her brilliant life, had never shed a poignant tear.

"What do you propose to do now?" the lady was asking.

Cheerlessly Leilah replied: "My duty."

Here was something which Violet did understand. Brightly she nodded.

"Yes, and I may tell you that it is your duty to preserve your looks and avoid a scandal. I did not at all like your fantasia in the garden. A gentlewoman never does anything important and that was an important thing. In no time it will be all over the place. You can believe that, can't you?"

"I don't know what to believe."

Violet laughed. "I always believe what I like. That I find so satisfactory. Apropos. What was that story about which Verplank was shouting? Mercy! I could have heard him a mile away."

In weary protest Leilah shook her head. "You know I can't tell you."

"The same old thing, was it? But how antiquated you are! Really it is piteous. There are no secrets any more. All that sort of thing went out with hoopskirts. Private life which used to be a sealed book has become an open newspaper. It is plain for instance, plain to everybody, plain as a pikestaff that you are still in love with Verplank. What you left him for the Lord in his infinite wisdom and mercy only knows. That is a secret certainly but only because you choose to make it one. It is no secret to me though that you are dying to go back to him. But don't you know you can't? Don't you know it? Don't you know that you can't budge an inch until you have shipped Barouffski? Now how are you going to do that? Tell me."

Leilah made a pass with a hand. It was as though, in some rite known but to her, she were consulting the lap of the invisible gods and, in it, the equally invisible future.

"Then I will tell you. You have got to buy him off. Listen to this. I will pack Silverstairs straight to the Embassy. There he will get all the law and most of the prophets. Meanwhile promise that you'll keep your head."

"I will try," Leilah, mechanically, her thoughts afar, replied.

"There!" Violet exclaimed. "That's right. When there is a divorce in the air it's so much better to try than to be tried."

At the inane jest she laughed, embraced her friend. In a moment she had gone, distributing as she went a faint, sweet smell of orris.

Leilah who had risen moved to the window and looked out at the gate through which Verplank would come. It was as she had said: She did not know what to believe and mutely for a moment she prayed for guidance.

"O, Lords of Karma, Watchers of the Seven Spheres, grant me so to live that, hereafter, I may say, I have harmed no heart, I have made no one weep. Out of your infinite bounty grant that somewhere, sometime, there may be peace to Gulian's soul and mine."

The prayer concluded she felt securer. Momentarily the cancer of anxiety had ceased to gnaw, the fascination of fear had departed. In the respite she turned to the clock. It was nearly five and she rang for one of her women.

"Parker," she began, when the servant appeared.

"Yes, my lady."

"Presently, in a few minutes, a gentleman will come by the gate. Be there and bring him here. Bring him through the dining room and up the back way. If possible, I prefer that no one should see him."

"Yes, my lady. Thank your ladyship."

At once, with that air which those acquire who attended to delicate matters, the woman drew aside the tapestry that masked the stair, which then discreetly, almost atiptoe, she descended.

As the tapestry fell again, instantly there returned to Leilah the sense of evil and impending ill. The brilliant room seemed full of terrors. In each bright corner a danger lurked. So strong was the impression that she felt it must be she was being warned, that she was being visited by those obscure phenomena which occultists call impacts from the astral, and that these were urging her to go, to meet Verplank without, in the garden, in the street, anywhere except in this fastidiousness.

Coerced by the impression, she entered an adjoining room, got there a fichu which she put on her head, a light wrap which she drew about her. Excited as she was, unaided as well, it took several minutes before she could find these accouterments. When, at last equipped, she re-entered the sitting room, she started.

Before her, his hat on, one side of his face medallioned with courtplaster, stood Verplank.

At sight of Leilah, he removed his hat which he tossed on the sofa and said at once and simply enough:

"That story of yours is false as Judas."

"Gulian!" At the moment it was all she found, but then fancy a blind man dazzled.

Verplank nodded. "Yes. The letters you received at Coronado—there were three of them, were there not? three written on gray paper each signed Effingham Verplank?—well, my father wrote them, that's true enough, but he wrote them to your aunt, your mother's sister, Hilda Hemingway. Did you never hear that the governor had an affair with her? Did you?"

Leilah's face spoke for her. From the bewilderment there, it was obvious that of it all she was ignorant.

With an uplift of the chin Verplank considered her.

"That's odd, girls generally only hear what they ought not to. However, Hemingway became suspicious—for very good reasons, no doubt, or, if you prefer, for very bad ones—the result being that his wife turned the letters over for safe keeping to your mother. When she died your father found them. He did not stop there, he showed them to my mother. My mother knew the facts, but she said your father was so convinced of your mother's infidelity that it seemed a pity to disabuse him. Those were her very words to me to-day."

"Gulian!" Still Leilah found but that. Visibly the light was there. As yet she could not credit it.

Again, but now appreciatively, Verplank nodded. "Yes. I know. It does seem queer. But then my mother is not the ordinary woman. She thought the governor so created to conquer that it no more occurred to her to sit in judgment on his victims than it occurred to her to sit on him. In the true spirit of Christian charity she overlooked it all."

Verplank paused, opened and closed a hand. "It was not matrimony perhaps, but it was magnificent," he obliging resumed, forgetting wholly that it was not in him to do likewise.

"Come," he added. From the start, Leilah's apparel, the fichu and wrap, had made him fancy that she was as ready to go as he was to take her and it all seemed very simple. "Come. Let's be off. I have a cab for you."

But at the suggestion which was a command she undid the lace, loosened the cloak.

"Gulian, I cannot."

"Cannot!" he angrily repeated. "Why can't you? Have you not heard what I said. You are not my sister, you are my wife. Come."

"Gulian! You do not know what you ask!"

"I know perfectly well. If you hesitate it is because you do not believe me. But would I urge you if that malignity were true? Would I?"

"Gulian, no, you would not."

"There! You see! You have to believe me."

"It is not that."

"It is the divorce then! But you are no more married to that dismal cad than I am to one of your maids. Except in Nevada the decree has no effect whatever. But without bothering to have it set aside, come with me and let this saurian get another."

"Gulian, yes, but for the moment surely you can see that this is impossible."

"Impossible! There is nothing impossible. Why do you say so? Why do you make so many objections? You should not make any.

You hear a cock-and-bull story, take it for gospel, run away, get a divorce, marry a damned scoundrel and, when you find the story is a brutal lie, stick like a leech to him."

"Gulian, if you but knew. My position is horrible——"

She wanted to tell him that she was in a prison replete with tortures, one from which she was as eager to go as he was to take her, yet one from which she could not escape through the open door of sinning.

He gave her no time. Instantly he interrupted her.

"I know your position, it is all of your own making, too. By God, you can make up your mind to one thing. You'll come, if I have to take you."

As he spoke he looked so brutal that she shrank.

"Gulian, you will kill me. I thought so before. I know it now."

"It is only what you deserve."

"Gulian! And you said you loved me!"

"Yes, but you make me doubt it."

The wrap which previously she had loosened she let fall on a chair beside her and put the fichu on the table.

"Gulian, you must give me time."

The words were simple, plaintively uttered, but her action with the cloak and lace, gave them an emphasis which added to his irritation.

"Nonsense," he retorted. "You have had time enough. Now you must act." Roughly he considered her. "Anyone else might think you cared for that——"

"Gulian, in all the world you know I love but you."

Verplank raised the cloak, reached for the fichu.

"Put these on, then, and come."

But Leilah, with a gesture that was less of resistance than of appeal, motioned them from her. The gesture infuriated him. He threw the cloak about her.

"By God! You shall put them on. What's more, you will come whether or not you want to."

As he spoke he seized her, lifted her.

To Leilah it seemed as though she were about to be carried off violently, like a prey. Unresistingly she raised her face to his.

"Gulian, kill me. It will be better; it will end it all."

Something, the words, the tone in which they were uttered, the helplessness of them and of her; but, more than anything else perhaps, the fact that as he held her he felt her tremble, stayed him. He put her down. His arms fell from her.

Catching again at the chair she steadied herself, and added:

"But if I am to live and love you, be patient. Gulian, if you would stop to think, to realise, you would be patient, you——"

He started from her. "You don't mean——"

At the question and its insinuation, hotly she flushed. Verplank saw but the flush. The day previous she had told him that she had taken Barouffski to serve as a barricade between them. Since then he had cajoled his imagination with the idea that the creature stood to her as husbands do on the stage, show entities who, the rôle performed, cease otherwise to be husbands. Now the idea seemed to him hideously naïf. The flush refuted it. It did more. It revealed not only other relations but the result of them. Instantly he divined that it was for this that she refused to go. At once within him waked the primitive, the aboriginal self that lurks always and, save in the high crises of the emotions, sleeps always within us all. He was in that condition in which men slay with bare hands and afterward consider them marvelingly, wondering at whose command they could have worked. Perspiration came to his forehead, started about his nose and mouth. With the fichu which he held he wiped them, but on the table from which he had taken it was a layer of dust and ashes, the refuse of the cendrier which Violet had overturned. It streaked his face, griming him with a mask comic and sinister.

With that mask, he called at her,

"Then may you be forever damned."

The malediction passed from him, reached her, shook her. She held to the chair for support. Then indignantly she protested.

"Gulian!"

He did not hear. An idea had come to him, one that had visited him in Melbourne, again in New York, to desist from further effort, to leave her where she was, behind the barriers she had raised. At the moment he believed he desired her no longer, loved her no more, had never loved her at all. Occupied with the idea he looked at this woman who had ruined her life, ruined his own.

She had been saying something, what he did not know nor, self-centered in his anger, did he care.

In his pocket was a revolver. He felt of it and infuriatedly cried:

"You ought to be shot."

"Gulian!"

"You are on a par with the beast you took up with."

"I took his name, Gulian, his name alone."

It was her turn to be angry. The flush had gone, she was pale again and she had abandoned the chair's support. She stood upright, confronting him with that purity which was hers.

"I have no more been his wife than I was yours."

"What!"

This time he heard. But her words, conflicting with his thoughts, rolled over together. In this mental confusion he stared.

"What!"

"It is as I tell you."

"You swear it?"

"Do I need to?"

Still he stared. Truth which acts on us and in us like a chemical precipitate was disclosing to him her whiteness and its own.

"Do I?" she repeated.

"No, by God, you don't. I believe you. I can't help myself. It is in your eyes."

He paused and awkwardly added:

"Forgive me."

Faintly and sadly she smiled.

"Will you?" he asked.

"Kiss me."

In the unique syllables of the words, which in a woman's mouth are so fluid, there was a forgiveness so entire and a love so great that in passionate contrition he drew her to him. Longly their lips met. She closed her eyes, opened them, disengaged herself, moved back a step and looked at him. For the first time she noticed the grime on his face. It did not astonish. It seemed natural after what they had both been through and it occurred to her that her own appearance might be equally bizarre.

Briefly then, in this lull in the storm, she told him what Violet had suggested—the buying and divorce of Barouffski.

"That will take time," he objected. "The shortest way 'round is the quickest way out. If you had not interfered in the garden——"

A gesture completed the sentence.

"No matter," he grimly added. "I haven't done with him yet."

In speaking he had crossed the room, now he recrossed it.

Imploringly Leilah approached him.

"Gulian, not that, not that! Don't fight with him again. Don't, I beseech you. It is not alone that anything of the kind is so horrible but he is one of the trickiest swordsmen here.

Think what that means! Think what would become of me if—if——"

From the pocket of his coat Verplank had taken the revolver. He looked at it, looked at her, replaced it.

"I am a trifle interested in the matter myself. Besides, there are other weapons than the foil. If I can shoot pigeons—and I believe I can—I ought to be able to land a buzzard."

At sight of the revolver Leilah had winced. Now she cried:

"Give it to me!"

Verplank, amused at her simplicity, smiled.

"That isn't a dueling pistol."

"But you never carried one before."

"In the States I did not need to. Here, in Paris, particularly at night, the streets are seldom sure. I have this thing for protection."

"Promise me then——"

Verplank looked her over.

"Don't be a fool."

But as he looked, suddenly she started and he saw that she was trembling.

"What the deuce is the matter?"

Trembling still, peeringly now she had turned to the portières.

"What is it?" he repeated.

"I am so frightened."

"Frightened? What at?"

Uncertainly, her head drawn back as a deer's is when surprised, she glanced about her. Slowly then her eyes returned to his.

"I am so frightened!"

"Yes, but at what?"

She motioned at the room. "Before you came there seemed to be something here, something around me and just now——"

"Well?"

"I heard something."

"Your maid probably."

With an intake of the breath she raised a finger and for a moment both were silent.

"There is no one," he presently told her. "And what if there were!"

At the idea, he laughed.

The laugh, succeeding the silence, while intended to reassure her, did not wholly succeed. She turned to him anew and in a low voice, said:

"You must go. To-morrow come to Violet's."

"I dine there to-night."

"Yes, I know. Tell her that to-morrow, say at three, we will both be with her. Then she can tell us——"

But Verplank had drawn her to him. Again her eyes closed.

"Go," she said at last.

On the sofa was his hat. He reached for it. While he did so, she moved to the tapestry, raised it, disclosing the stair up which he had come.

"To-morrow, then," he said, as he entered there.

She nodded at him. "At three!"

Dropping the tapestry she turned, but very quickly, for again she heard or thought she heard a noise.

Across the room the portières were parting. Through them Barouffski appeared.

"I might have known it," she told herself, and realising that he had been listening, she realised also that the opportunity was as good as another for making an offer which she had in mind.

These ideas, instantaneous at sight of him, were for the moment stayed. On turning she had seen but the man. Now hastening toward her was a creature with an expression so venomous that instinctively, in search of help, with the idea of calling to Verplank, she turned to the tapestry again.

Quicker than she, he caught and tossed her spinning on the sofa. Then, running to the open window, he shouted from it:

"Emmanuel! The dogs!"

Leilah, falling backward on the lounge, was too stunned to hear. But she steadied herself, recovered, got to her feet and making again for the stair, called at Barouffski:

"Free me from you and you shall have half of what I have."

"Half!" he repeated. At once he was upon her. "All," he cried. "I want it all, all of yours and all of his."

As he spoke he struck her, shoved her aside, raised the tapestry and vanished. For a second she heard him hastening down, while at once from without came the barking of dogs, the jar of oaths, the sound of cries.

What it meant she did not know. Her head was whirling. The fall, the blow, the indignity of both clouded and confused her. From without the uproar mounted and suddenly, the uproar prompting, into the turmoil that was her mind, a gleam of understanding shot. At the apperception of it she shrieked, ran to the window where she shrieked again. The loosened dogs had sprung at Verplank, who, overwhelmed' had fallen.

Again she shrieked. Answering the shriek, mingling with it, were snarls, the gnashing of fangs, the din of great hounds ferociously struggling for blood, tearing vehemently at flesh, at a flesh, though, that rebelled.

Verplank rose up between them. With a

kick he sent one of them sprawling. But, in the recoil, torn at by the other hound, he stumbled. The dog was at his throat. In protection he held his left arm against it. With his right hand he got at the revolver in his pocket, and, through the pocket, fired twice into the brute. Gnashing still, it rolled away.

But now, from the other side, the second hound was on him. He saw its eyes, felt its breath, felt its fangs. Again he fired. As he did so, his hand relaxed. He heard a woman shrieking, the sound of hurrying feet. The wall before him mounted. His senses scattered into night.

Suddenly the garden was filled with people. Through the gate, two sergents de ville had come. These, forms furtive and uncertain followed. From the house, led by Barouffski, the footmen ran. Above, from the window, still there issued a woman's shrieks.

Barouffski stopped, and turned. He looked up at the window. He smiled. With one hand he tapped his breast, with the other he pointed at Verplank. Then, in French, reassuringly, he called:

"My dear! See! You may be tranquil. I, I am unharmed. It is the robber."

At the ignominy of that flouting jeer, Leilah, impelled by the impulse to do something, though it were but to beat her head against a wall, rushed from the window, and, strangling with spasms, fled out of the room and down the stair, where horror so suffocatingly enveloped her that in it her brain tipped, and she fell.

XI

In the golden half light of the Opéra, a chorus, soprano voices on one side of the stage alternating with contralto on the other, vaporised the subtle sensuality of the scene.

Violet Silverstairs, turning to her husband, who was seated behind her, remarked:

"How much better the Italian school is than the French."

Silverstairs, ignorant of either, and indifferent to both, promenaded his glass about the house.

"I wonder why Tempest doesn't show up? There is Marie de Fresnoy! I saw de Fresnoy to-day for the first time since his duel with Barouffski. What a ridiculous affair that was! I suppose one of these days he will have another with d'Arcy."

Violet turned to him again.

"Because of Marie? How absurd you are! D'Arcy doesn't interest her. No man could unless he drove at her with a four-in-hand, and d'Arcy has nothing."

Silverstairs, still promenading his glass, exclaimed:

"There he is now!"

"Who? D'Arcy?"

"Yes, with the Helley-Quetgens, in that box between the columns. Isn't that your friend Leilah whom he is talking to? By Jove, it is, and Barouffski is there, also."

Violet, who had also been promenading her glass, put it down.

"Well, he ought to be. I do think she has acted scandalously. What is said at the club?"

"About Verplank? It is forgotten already. Barouffski, you know, claimed that it was a mistake, and as it appears that Verplank agreed with him, as from neither the one nor the other any charge was forthcoming, the police could do nothing but get Verplank back to the Ritz."

Impatiently Violet unfurled her fan.

"Yes, where she has been every day; every day, that is, when she has not been with d'Arcy."

The statement was inexact. Leilah had indeed been at the Ritz but d'Arcy she had seen but once, momentarily, by accident—if there be such a thing, in any event through one of those seeming hazards which, however fortuitous at first, afterward appear to have been designed. It was a little, though, before Leilah took that view of things. Meanwhile, when, on recovering from her swoon, she learned that Verplank had also recovered she realised with thanksgiving that Destiny which has its tyrannies has its mercies as well. So soon then as she could get from the bed into which the horrors of the midspring nightmare had thrown her, she went to the Ritz where she found Verplank amply attended, abundantly bandaged, severely but not dangerously hurt.

"One of the brutes nearly chewed my arm off," he told her. "If the other omitted to eat me entirely, it was not because he did not try. I did for them, though," he added, and smiled as he said it. After the manner of man, he took comfort in the feat.

"But not for the worst brute," Leilah answered wishing in spite of herself, wishing instinctively and even ungrammatically that some good fate might.

From beneath a bandage, Verplank laughed:

"Bah! I'll do for him, too."

But Leilah did not hear. She was speaking to the surgeon, whom—with a bravery which in itself was a little defiant, and which in any event might have been more discreet—thereafter, daily and openly, she supplied with that which every surgeon wants, a nurse obedient, attentive, skilful, alert, and who, in addition ministers for love.

Presently, Verplank was able to be up. The surgeon said that in a day he would be able to be out. Verplank, who knew as much without being told, asked Leilah to go with him on the morrow.

Leilah refused. Verplank, for an invalid, became then surprisingly demoniac. The demonism of him affected her less than a conception, feminine perhaps but erroneous, of her own selfishness. If she went, she knew beforehand that irremissibly she would be dishonoured. But she knew also that any sense of dishonour must, if it is to ashame, come not from without but from within. If she went, her conscience, she thought, would acquit her. She thought that she would not feel dishonoured, though she knew that she would be disgraced. To refuse on that account seemed to her selfish. As a result finally she consented. Yet in consenting she made one stipulation. Characteristic in itself, it was that there must be nothing clandestine, that he must come for her in the rue de la Pompe, and that from there, her boxes put on whatever vehicle he brought, they would leave for darkness by daylight.

The plan pleased Verplank. He agreed at

once. He told her that he would come the next day.

When he had, she added: "To-night I go to the Opéra; the Helley-Quetgens have asked me. It is my last look at this world."

Then, shortly, the arrangements for the evasion completed, she left the hotel.

Without, her motor waited. She told the groom to have it follow her. The air tempted, though the sky was dirty. She thought of the California glare, the eager glitter of New York. She wondered would they go back there. Perhaps, she told herself, we shall at last see Bora-Bora.

Her walk took her through the arcades of the rue de Rivoli to the fountains of the Place de la Concorde. From there she was about to enter the Champs Elysées when she became conscious of being accosted.

"Chère madame," some one was saying, "I precipitate myself to renew the expression of my homage."

D'Arcy, hat in hand, was before her. At once, with a view to what the French agreeably describe as the placing of landmarks—*pour poser des jalons*—he asked to be permitted to accompany her.

Leilah smiled.

"Not for the world!"

She motioned at the motor. Then, with that graciousness which is natural to the mondaine, with perhaps the desire also to attenuate whatever there were of brusqueness in her reply, she added, as she got in the car:

"I shall be at the Opéra with the Helley-Quetgens to-night. Could you not look in?"

D'Arcy, habituated to the abruptest victories, accustomed to inflame, with but a glance, by the mere exhibition of his Olympian good looks, and, therefore, indifferent when not bored by the celerity of his successes, but piqued by the tranquil air with which this woman had always regarded him, thanked her, assured her that he would not fail to be there, and replaced his hat.

Immediately he raised it again, straight from the head, high in the air. Looking with brilliant eyes from a brilliant brougham, Violet Silverstairs was dashing by.

Coincidentally, unobserved but observant, Barouffski was also passing that way.

Leilah's motor flew off and she sank back, wondering at herself, wondering rather what influence, malign and unhallowed, could possibly have prompted her to ask this man, whom she disliked as—in spite of a theory to the contrary—honest women do dislike a man of his type. But though, at the time, she could not understand what impelled her, later it seemed to her that it must have been fate.

Barouffski had a different interpretation. At the Joyeuses he had seen Leilah and d'Arcy together. Now, here they were again. The circumstance, of which the fortuitousness was unknown to him, irritated him for that very cause. But he could imagine and did. At once it was clear to him that the brute was after the blue eyes of her bankbook. The deduction, however erroneous, was easy. He was viewing the matter, not, as he fancied, from d'Arcy's standpoint, but from his own. In spite of which, or rather precisely on that account, he told himself that d'Arcy was a damned scoundrel. The humour of this quite escaped him. But that perhaps was in the order of things.

Since the night at the Joyeuses, he had been measuring himself solely against Verplank. Twice he had failed with him, but he knew that soon they would be at each other again and for the next bout he had in view a coup which, he felt, would do for him definitely. Meanwhile, if in regard to Leilah he had been led into certain vivacities, he felt that with time, which is the great emollient, her memory of these vivacities would pass. Even otherwise, the law was with him. He proposed to see to it that she was also—she and with her her purse. The one menace to both had been Verplank. Here, now, apparently, was another. Here was d'Arcy with his pseudo-Pheidian air, that famous yet false appearance of a young and dissolute Olympian which made imbeciles turn and stare. Ragingly Barouffski reflected that canaille though d'Arcy were, he carried a great many guns, almost as many as Verplank, who, worse luck, had, in addition, the signal advantage of being Leilah's first love—that love to which it is said one always returns.

But even as he sounded the stupidity of that aphorism, vaguely, for a dim second, he intercepted a gleam refracted from truth. The danger with which he had to contend, Verplank did not personify or d'Arcy either, it was himself. When the golden six was tossed him, had he but then known how to secure the box, there would now be no danger at all. But truth, when it does not console, confounds. Barouffski put it from him. It was too exasperating. "Bah!" he told himself, "if her attitude does not change, a sojourn in the solitudes of Lithuania may alter it." Angrily he nodded. Things more surprising have occurred there.

On this day it was Leilah who surprised him.

Since he had called to her from the garden, she had encountered him only in the hazards of entrances and halls. On such occasions she had passed with an air of being unaware that there were anything save chairs and tables about.

In part, it was this attitude which he thought certain solitudes might change. Oddly enough, Leilah herself wished it altered. But to want to do one thing and to do something else, happens to all of us, even to the best. She despised Barouffski and yet in despising him knew that the one contemptible thing is contempt. For what he had done, she felt that no punishment could be too severe, yet in so feeling she knew that he was only the embodiment of past misdeeds of her own. Physically he had struck her. Spiritually, it was her own hand that had dealt the blow. He had loosed the dogs on Verplank and she had judged and condemned him for it, though she knew that not only she should not judge at all, but that never perhaps do useless events occur. Clearly these events were evil, but were not those which she planned evil too?

In this dilemma there was some slight consolation for her in the knowledge that it was not her fault, at least not her present fault, that she had been born with a nature so problematic. But the *Vidyâ,* in teaching her that whatever we suffer is derived from our past; that the people who wrong us—or seem to—are mere puppets come to claim karmic debts which we owe; the *Vidyâ,* in teaching her that taught her also that every life we lead here is but a day in school. Her schooling, she felt, had as yet been insufficient. No doubt she would know better when she came here again.

The thin gilt hope of that fortified her a little on this day when, to Barouffski's surprise, she sent for him and then, her head raised, said distantly:

"The Helley-Quetgens have asked us to the Opéra. I am going. You are free to do as you like."

Here, obviously, was something new. At it and at her Barouffski looked with shifting eyes. Uncertainly he rubbed his hands.

"But how then! I am at your orders It is a festival to be where you are."

But as he did nothing without an object, he wondered what hers was. Obviously, there was a reason. Yet, what? Could it be an olive branch? He was too adroit to ask. Even otherwise, he lacked the opportunity. Leilah had gone from the room.

It was in these circumstances that, on this night, she appeared at the Opéra where Violet was complaining at having seen her with d'Arcy.

At the complaint, Silverstairs pulled at his moustache.

"I did not know that she had taken up with him."

"I don't know that she has either. But she was with him to-day in the Champs Elysées."

"Oh, come now! Things haven't got to such a pass that a woman can't be seen with a man——"

"No, but no honest woman can be seen alone with d'Arcy. Leilah ought to know better. She ought to know better too than to go to the Ritz. As she does not appear to, I propose to tell her."

"Do as you like," replied Silverstairs who would have said the same thing no matter what his wife had suggested. The lady had not entirely Americanised this Englishman but she had at least made him realise the futility of argument.

"Do as you like," he repeated. "There are the Orlonnas. There are the Zubaroffs."

At once to the quick click of an ouvreuse's key, the door opened and Tempest appeared, a foulard showing above his coat.

While he removed these things Violet called at him:

"You're late."

Silverstairs laughed. "He always is. At Christ Church he was known as the late Lord Howard."

Tempest moved forward and sat down between them.

But now, to the volatile sweetmeats of the score, the curtain was falling. In the stalls there was a movement. Men stood up, put their hats on, turned their back to the stage or set forth for a chat with the vestals in the green room.

Silverstairs also stood up.

Violet turned to him:

"I do wish you would look in on the Helley-Quetgens, and ask Leilah to come to luncheon to-morrow. Say I have a bone to pick with her. That may fetch her, if nothing else will."

Tempest ran a hand through his vivid hair.

"A bone over what, if I may ask? You may not know it, but I greatly admire Madame Barouffska."

Violet smiled.

"She's a dear. But I saw her to-day with d'Arcy, and I propose to scold her for it."

Tempest showed his teeth.

"D'Arcy is not a man's man, though he certainly is a woman's. Yet, when you come to that, not such a woman as Madame Barouffska. What an odd thing that was about her first husband!"

"You mean about the dogs?"

"Yes. I never got the rights of it. What was he doing there? Is she living in the past?"

Violet raised her opera-glass.

"She would be very lucky if she could be; living in the present is so expensive, don't you think?"

Again there was a quick click. The door opened. Silverstairs, filling the entrance with his tall stature, reappeared.

"Violet," he began, "the Helley-Quetgens are going on to some dance in the Faubourg, and Leilah wants the three of us to sup with her at Paillard's. What do you say?"

Violet laughed. "I say it will be just my chance." She turned to Tempest. "You will come?"

"Thanks, yes. Isn't that de Fresnoy with the Zubaroffs?"

Silverstairs, without sitting down, raised his glass.

"Yes, and I was just saying, this is the first time since his duel that I have seen him. But what an asinine affair that was! He lunged at Barouffski's neck, Barouffski knocked the foil up and pricked himself on the chin with it. Then Barouffski's surgeon stopped the fight on the ground that it might interfere with his breathing. Fancy that! Afterward, in the account given to the press, the surgeon described the prick as an incisive wound in the hyoïdian region, accompanied by a notable flow of blood. Anyone who did not know would have thought that Barouffski had been nearly done for. But that's a French duel for you—a funeral at which everybody giggles."

Tempest looked gravely up at his friend. "What did you have for dinner?"

Suspiciously, Silverstairs considered him.

"Why do you ask?"

"You are so expansive and brilliant."

On the stage, the drama continued, poignantly, beatifically, in a unison of violins and voices that was interrupted at last by the usual stir in the stalls and boxes, by the haste to be going, to be elsewhere, and a defile began; a procession of silken robes, gorgeous cloaks, jeweled headgear, black coats, white ties; a procession that presently filled the subscribers' rotunda, from which, at sight of it, grooms fled, then hurried back, touching their hats, eager and zealous.

Between the columns groups loitered, regarding each other with indulgence, with indifference, at times with a loftiness that put isolating zones about them; and women assumed that attitude which women alone can assume, that attitude of being not only apart from the crowd, but of being unaware of the crowd's existence.

In the centre, Mme. Orlonna, an Italian princess, with a slight moustache and an ancestry that extended to the super-Neronian days of Heliogabalus, stood, laughing and talking, lisping *Bonthoirs* to everybody.

Another princess, a Russian, Mme. Zubaroff, with a young girl at her side, and an escort of blond giants, passed, inclining her head to the left, to the right, bowing with a grace mechanical, but sovereign.

Beyond, Leilah appeared, d'Arcy on one side, Barouffski on the other. Her face, ordinarily pale, was flushed, and her manner, usually subdued, was animated. She was laughing, not loudly, but noticeably.

Violet, accompanied by Tempest and Silverstairs, approached. As the men, after saluting the women, greeted each other, Violet tapped Leilah with her fan.

"My dear, I have a bone to pick with you."

Leilah, with a levity that was rare with her, interrupted:

"It is just for that we are going to supper. How will you have it, grilled or deviled?"

"Her ladyship's carriage is at the door," a groom announced, in English.

Another added, in French: "The motor of madame la comtesse is advanced."

"Yes," Violet retorted. "But my bone belongs to a different kettle of fish. Now, you come with me." With a smile, she turned to the others. "We will go in the brougham, and you take the motor."

Stooping, she lifted her train, and the two women, accompanied by the men, followed the groom to the carriage.

There, after seeing them in, Barouffski called:

"To Paillard's, Chaussée d'Antin."

XII

At the glass door, which a chausseur opened, Barouffski stopped, spoke to the man, gave him an order. As the others, conducted by a maître d'hôtel, approached a table, a fat woman in a pulpit charged them, before they were seated, with the use of the silver and the cloth.

Beyond, a band of Bohemians, costumed in crimson, were loosing, with nervous and dirty fingers, whirlwinds of notes. The atmosphere, filled with vibrations, fevered by the fury of the violins, dripped with the scent of flowers, with the bouquet of burgundies, the smell of champagne, the odour of tobacco and food.

At adjacent tables were demi-reps and foreigners, mondaines and clubmen, a sprinkle of the cream of the venal, the exotic and the ultra-chic, whom omnibuses and waiters, marshaled by maîtres d'hôtel, served with the same deference and zeal.

For the Barouffski party, these latter had turned two tables into one, at which Violet Silverstairs occupied one end, Leilah the other. Violet had Barouffski at her right, Tempest at her left, while Leilah had Silverstairs at her left and d'Arcy at her right, a disposition natural enough and otherwise fortuitous which placed Tempest next to d'Arcy, with Barouffski and Silverstairs opposite.

In the rising storm of the music, Leilah turned to d'Arcy. What she was saying the others could not hear and all, save Silverstairs, who was munching a hors d'œuvre, addressed themselves to Violet.

Presently, in a lull of the gale, Tempest would have tried to talk to this woman who, in abandoning her Madonna air had now the merit of suggesting both the Chimera and the Sphinx, but something in her attitude to d'Arcy prevented. It was not, to employ a vulgarism, that she was making eyes at the man, but she was obviously permitting him to make eyes at her.

D'Arcy was seated, his arms on the table, talking in her face. His plate was empty. A chaudfroid had been served. He had refused it. A mousse had followed. He had refused that also. Over the glasses at his side he had put a hand, It seemed a pose of his not to eat or to drink that he might do nothing but talk.

Leilah herself had not eaten. But as soon as champagne was served she had drunk of it, she had drunk since and in her manner, in the way she held herself, in the inflection of her voice, there had entered a trace of the excessive which the mondaine avoids. It was this that had deterred Tempest. Moreover she had been laughing and that surprised Violet who, except a little earlier in the rotunda, never, since Leilah reached Paris, had seen her laugh before.

Now, her head drawn back, her eyes half closed, she was gratifying d'Arcy with that look with which a woman can appear not to listen merely but to drink the words, the appearance even, of the man by whom she is addressed. While perhaps flattering to him, it was too marked for good taste. The others noticed it, but, as is usual in such circumstances, they acted as though they had not.

Barouffski conscious of the impression produced, conscious also of the impressions of the afternoon, leaned forward and said in French:

"But, my dear! You eat nothing!"

Silverstairs, tugging at his moustache, laughed inanely and addressing himself to both Leilah and d'Arcy, threw in:

"If this is a private conversation——"

"What nonsense!" Leilah threw back.

"I was about to say," Silverstairs resumed, "that if it is a private conversation, I'd like to hear it. If it is not, never mind."

Barouffski, still leaning forward, continued:

"I pray you take a bit of the chaudfroid."

With a movement of impatience, yet otherwise ignoring him completely, Leilah turned again to d'Arcy.

Barouffski was not in a mood to be ignored. The sight of d'Arcy in the afternoon, the man's unawaited advent at the Opéra, his demeanour to Leilah, her attitude to him, the hazards which both seemed to suggest; yet chiefly the precariousness of his own position, the constant effort to appear other than what he was, the consciousness of danger ever present, the obligation to cover irritation with calm, anxiety with banter, these things and the tension of them, fevered and enraged. At the moment he felt like a fiend and looked it. A moment only. Reacting at once, he compressed his lips, parted them and summoning his ambiguous smile, called out:

"If the chaudfroid says nothing to you, will you not try the mousse?"

Leilah was raising a glass to her lips. She looked over it at him and, much as though he were a servant, said:

"Do me the favour to attend to your own affairs."

Barouffski's smile evaporated. A man with no sense of honour and some sense of humour may go far, provided that he keep his temper. Barouffski knew it but forgot it. With a tone of authority which in the rue de la Pompe he would have ordinarily avoided, angrily he replied:

"Then do me the favour not to drink any more."

Leilah, the glass at her lips, paused, looked over it again, and very gently, almost sweetly, with the pretty air of a spoiled child, nodded at him.

"Only one sip."

She touched the glass with her lips, for a moment held it there, then, offering it to d'Arcy, rather languorously she said:

"Beau sire, will you drink the rest?"

Instantly Violet intervened. "Leilah! Behave yourself!"

"But with delight," d'Arcy was saying.

From Leilah's extended hand he took the glass, raised it, drained it, put it down, looked at her.

Barouffski was looking at him. Quietly, without emphasis, he asked:

"Will you drink mine, too?"

Half rising as he spoke, he had taken his own glass in his hand and with a gesture which, even as he made it, he regretted, a gesture incited by vibrations which he was unable to resist, he flung the contents at him.

"Barouffski!" Violet indignantly exclaimed.

She glanced about her. At her elbow an omnibus, a lad undersized but stout, stood gaping. Beyond, the Bohemians were storming. At the adjacent table were demi-reps and South Americans. They had not noticed. At this table, Tempest, his teeth visible, was contemplating his host. Silverstairs, tugging at his moustache, was considering Leilah. The latter was looking—and with what a look!—at Barouffski. But no one spoke. A spell seemed to have settled on all. With the idea of doing or of saying something that would break it, Violet turned to d'Arcy.

Delicately, with a coroneted handkerchief, he had wiped his face and was then mopping at his shirt.

Interrupting the operation, he looked up and laughed. "Oh, la, la! The dangers that may be avoided in remaining at home! These are the accidents of restaurant life!"

He laughed again. The laugh humanised and deformed the Pheidian beauty of his face. He bowed to Leilah, bowed to Violet and collectively added:

"Mesdames, I have ceased to be presentable. A thousand pardons. You will permit me?"

In a moment, after another bow, circular this time, a bow which while managing to omit Barouffski, included the rest of the table, he had gone.

"He looks like Keats," said Silverstairs animated by an unconscious desire to second his wife and break the spell which still persisted. Ordinarily he would have taken her and gone. The assault had been as much of an affront to her as it had been to d'Arcy. But to have left the table would have been a reproof to Leilah, whom, in the ridiculous way in which society is organized, he was unable to disassociate from Barouffski.

"Keats!" Tempest, coming to his aid, exclaimed. "I'll lay a guinea you would not know his picture if you saw it."

Amiably Silverstairs tugged at his moustache. "Well, perhaps not. What I meant was that he looks like a poet."

"I don't agree with you," Tempest retorted. "To begin with, there are not any. Besides, latterly there have been but two—Hugo, who looked like a green-grocer, and Swinburne who looked like a bookseller's assistant. Moreover I hate poets, though, as someone said somewhere, an inability to write in verse can hardly be regarded as constituting a special talent. No, d'Arcy does not look like a poet, he looks like a poet's creation."

"Excuse me," Silverstairs with affected meekness threw out. "And thanks for the lecture."

Tempest nodded. "You're entirely welcome."

He turned to Violet. She was looking at Leilah who was looking at Barouffski. The latter was looking at the fingers of his right hand against which his thumb passed and repassed mechanically. But now, aroused from his reflections by the entire cessation of talk, he glanced about him, summoned a waiter, settled the score. The Bohemians who momentarily had been silent, abruptly striped the air with spangles from their bows.

Violet and Leilah stood up, resumed their wraps, passed on. The men, buttoning their coats, putting their gloves on, followed.

At the door were the eager grooms. As one of them touched his hat to Leilah, Violet turned to her.

"My dear, I cannot thank you for a very pleasant evening. But I will look in on you to-morrow. That bone isn't picked and what's more, now I've got sauce for it."

With Silverstairs and Tempest at her heels, she went to her brougham. Leilah entered the motor.

At the door of the latter Barouffski stood. He raised his hat. Leilah looked at him. She had had, she thought, her last glimpse of the world and this was her last glimpse of him. The sight was so repugnant that she almost sickened and the nausea which she felt, her face expressed.

Barouffski tried to smile but the unconcealed candour of her abhorrence made his lips twitch. Now, though, the motor was starting. As it whirred away, he drew his coat closely about him, turned up the collar and stuck his hands deep in the pockets. There had come to him that odd sensation which homely fancy attributes to someone walking on your grave.

XIII

The next day, Violet, entering the brilliant room, gazed first about it and then at Leilah.

"Aurelia is not here? That's odd. She is simply horrid but so reliable. You don't mind my having told her to meet me?"

Leilah sighed. "I am getting so that soon I shan't mind anything."

Violet, seating herself, nodded vivaciously.

"I call that very fine. But there is something finer. Never mind anybody. Silverstairs now——" and as the lady spoke she summoned a smile feline and Cheshire—"he fancied I would be a good, obedient little wife. Instead of which he is a good, obedient big husband." In entire self-appreciation she exhibited the tip of her tongue and moistened her lips with it. "It takes us, doesn't it? But forgive me, dear, us is perhaps an exaggeration. I am afraid you have made rather a mess of things. Now what are you going to do?"

Without replying, Leilah looked away. During the night she had barely slept. The incident in the restaurant, events that had preceded it, anterior complications, subsequent developments, these things, like the Bohemians at Paillard's, had stormed at her, attacked her fibres, wrenched her nerves, striating the darkness of her room with variations on the tragedy of her life.

In what manner the affair in the restaurant had terminated, she had no one to inform her but she could readily fancy that shortly d'Arcy and Barouffski would go somewhere and fight, or pretend to, and then return, none the worse and none the better, but with honour satisfied and their names in print.

The entire episode was shameful. But though provoked by her she had not premeditated it. In offering d'Arcy her glass, she had wished solely to display her independence. Subsequently, in going over the matter, she had realised that the wish, while human, had not been nice. Then, a bit conscience-stricken, she had wondered how she could have behaved as she had.

"I did it without thinking," was her immediate excuse. But that, she told herself was untrue. Ever since the duel and the blow and the nightmare that followed, some such wish had been fermenting in her. The wish, reasonable in itself, though in her case unreasoned, persisted, as in certain natures a wish will persist, until, after the fashion of a constantly recurring idea, the individual becomes so saturated with it that, given the impulse, given less than that, given a vibration, some effect, perhaps wholly atmospheric, and suddenly the idea has solidified into an act, an act noble, degrading or merely banal, according to the influence that produced it, but an act which, whatever its character, has then become inevitable, even involuntary, its constant mental recurrence having exhausted the ability to choose between it and another.

Leilah had thought of this and, in search of comfort, had groped for another excuse. As an Oriental will say: "My body is tired." "My body is hungry," so Leilah decided: "It was my nerves that did it."

But the sophistry displeased her. She knew that she had judged and condemned Barouffski and she knew also that she had no right to do either. The man was clearly a cad, a scoundrel and a brute, yet even though he were these things and worse and more besides, he so became in her eyes merely because her consciousness had evolved to a point higher than his own. Seen from a different angle, she might appear only a shade less reprehensible, and it might be, even equally vile. Moreover, according to the *Upanishads,* this consciousness of hers and that consciousness of his were fundamentally one. Both had come from the same source. To that source both would ultimately return. They would be fused there, as originally there they had been merged.

At the apperception of that, the curious lines which occur in the *Book of Dzyan* suggested themselves:

"Said the Flame to the Spark: 'I have clothed myself in thee, thou art my image, my body, until that day when thou shalt rebecome myself and others, thyself and me.'"

In the penetrating beauty of the allegory Leilah told herself that she, Barouffski, Verplank, the Silverstairs, the Helley-Quetgens, everybody whom she knew, everyone whom she did not know, all the fillers of space, were sparks of one Flame, the Flame from which they had been formerly emitted and into which they would finally return. That, she felt she must believe, if she were to believe anything. But she felt too that though she did believe it, she believed also that for the present there were sparks better parted than united, as there were also others better united than apart.

On the table before her was a treatise on the Paramitas—which are The Blessed Things.

She looked at it, knowing that what she had done was wrong and what she was about to do was evil. But she felt also that she could not help herself. Whatever the penalty, it was impossible for her to live with Barouffski. Whatever the punishment, it was impossible for her not to live with Verplank. At the moment it seemed to her as though the high fates had set her in a circle from which she could not escape except by the door of death or that of further sinning. At this idea she wondered about Barouffski as, after Verplank's eruption at the Joyeuses, she had wondered about him. She wondered whether in some former existence she had injured Barouffski and whether it were for that reason that she had been led into giving him the power to injure her now. It might be so, she told herself, in which case she ought to bear it. But how could she know that it was so? Yet even though it were and the fact were made clear to her, even then, even too if the certainty of a punishment more poignant than any were shaken in her eyes, still she could not bear it.

"But I ought to," she found herself saying.

These reflections Violet's advent had interrupted.

"What are you going to do?" the lady was asking.

Leilah, unfit at the moment for battle, felt unable to tell. She looked away.

"Nothing, I suppose."

Violet, cocking a belligerent eye, threw out:

"You carry moderation to excess."

Leilah looked up. "What would you have me do?"

"Divorce Barouffski."

"Because he threw champagne about? I hardly fancy I could get a divorce for that."

Militantly Violet whipped off a glove. "Frankly that creature is a criminal. Never, in all my life, have I seen such an exhibition of bad taste. But then, as they say here, bad taste leads to crime—to such vulgar forms of it at that."

"Even so, I don't see how it helps me."

"But he struck you," Violet, more bellicose than ever, exclaimed. "You told me so. What more would you have. But aren't you difficile to-day!" Suspiciously she considered her friend. "You've got something up your sleeve."

"If I have," Leilah, in an effort to parry the thrust, replied, "at least it is not witnesses."

Cogently Violet nodded. "Come to me then. Divorce is the mother-in-law of invention. If you haven't any witnesses, I'll find something else. I make a specialty of finding things before they are lost."

This programme hardly suited Leilah's book. Again she parried. "Last night—and what a night!—I dreamed I was feasting with the dead. It was so peaceful. It is that that I want. It is peace the very fibres of my being crave."

Here were heights—or depths—where Violet could not follow. With a smile she tacked.

"Before you dreamed your dream I noticed that you wore a very ducky frock."

"It is stained. So am I. The champagne Barouffski threw stained me within and without."

Here were other heights. Readily Violet skirted them.

"I believe I got a drop or two myself. But then I don't mind. It is true I am not a theosophist."

At this, in indignation at herself, Leilah protested.

"Theosophy is primarily a school of good manners. In giving d'Arcy my glass, mine were detestable."

Now they were on surer ground. Wickedly Violet winked.

"Nobody has any manners any more or,

when they do, they have them in plenty and all of them bad."

"If I have an excuse," Leilah continued, "it is that Gulian drove me nearly demented."

Now, Violet felt, they were getting at it. Mentally she girded herself and with an engaging appearance of sympathy, exclaimed:

"A man never does that unless he loves a woman to distraction."

The sympathy, however feigned, did its work. After all, Leilah reflected, why should she not tell what she was about to do? On the impulse she turned.

"Violet, I offered Barouffski half my fortune to free me. His reply was a blow. Apart from that I have no grounds for a divorce, none at least which I can show. Previously there was something between Gulian and me. It has gone. He cares for me still and I care for him. Shortly he is to be here. For a long time I hesitated. But after last night—after the nights and days that preceded it!—it does not seem to me that I need hesitate any more."

Pausing, she drew breath. "Violet, when he comes I am to go with him. Is there a reason why I should not?"

Violet, who had long suspected as much, now at last had nailed it. Cautiously she buckled to.

"No. Not one. On the contrary. There is every reason why you should. Every reason. Particularly as to greet you there will be the disdainful eyes, the lifted skirts, the averted heads, every one of the very slight and very fiendish tortures that are visited on the woman who has gone and done it."

For a second she too paused, then with a war whoop added:

"But you can't do anything of the kind. I won't let you."

"Would you turn from me also?"

"I! Merciful fathers! But I am not the world. No matter what is done in private, the world does not care. The world is very well bred. It never sees anything that was not intended for it. But on the open scandal of scandalous conduct instantly it turns its well bred back. It will turn it on you."

Indifferently Leilah assented. She had examined this phase of the matter. It had not seemed very important.

"No doubt," she replied. "Yet then destiny seldom closes a door without opening another. I told you of my dream. It was a dream of peace. Here there can be none. It may be my karma perhaps. But this," she continued, motioning at the brilliant room, "this is my prison."

She hesitated and a bit lamely concluded:

"It is horrible to be in such a place."

"And worse to be nowhere at all," Violet shot at her. In firing she had sat up. Now, lolling back on the cushions, she enigmatically resumed: "You may be right though. I daresay it is dreadful to be in prison. I daresay it is even worse than you think."

Enigmatic still, she smiled. With another shot, with two at most, Leilah, she told herself, would be routed.

"It is as though I were in a vortex," the latter was saying. "It is as though I were being torn from places where I do not wish to be to others I may not like. But can one argue with a vortex? It is idle even to struggle. Whether you will or you won't, you have to let yourself go."

Lightly, in her most worldly manner, Violet laughed.

"Never in the world! A woman should never let herself go—except in an aeroplane. At a pinch a four-in-hand might do, but——"

At the moment the lady was thoroughly *en veine* and, sure of victory, might have bantered on, but this, Aurelia, ushered by Parker, prevented.

Sharply Violet threw at her: "Where have you been?"

Ignoring Violet, Aurelia nodded at Leilah. "I was here the other day, did they tell you?"

She turned and with blithe impertinence looked her sister up and down.

"Don't be so ordinary as to ask a girl where she has been. If you are inquisitive, ask where she is going, and, if you ask me, I'll tell you. I am going to become——"

"Yes, yes." Violet impatiently interrupted. "We've heard all that. You're going to become a star. I know what kind too—a fallen star."

A fresher smile bubbled about Aurelia's delicious mouth.

"It pleases your ladyship to jest. I am to become the Princess Farnese!"

"Merciful heavens!" Violet exclaimed, turning as she spoke to Leilah. "She'll go in to dinner before me!"

But Leilah who, after a word of greeting to Aurelia, had, from the table before her, taken and reopened the Paramitas, perhaps did not hear.

Violet turned again to her sister. "When did he propose?"

With an air of amused contempt, again Aurelia looked her up and down.

"How antiquated you are! Don't you know that all that sort of thing has gone out?"

"Do you mean that he didn't propose?"

"Of course not. I proposed to him."

"What?"

"He was so coy about it, too," Aurelia, quite as though she were eating sweetmeats, resumed. "He asked me all about my finances, what settlements I would make and whether I would object if he kept a separate establishment. You can't really fancy how coy he was. He quite blushed and stammered, the poor thing."

"I should think he might."

"Yes, indeed. He asked me if I had spoken to his mamma, and I told him that while it was perhaps incorrect of me to speak to him in the first instance, yet that there could be no real love without a mutual misunderstanding, and now that we had one I would make a formal demand of the old lady to-day."

Aurelia, executing a little *pas,* added: "I have just seen her."

"Well?"

"She said: 'And so you want my little boy for your husband.' Partly that I told her, but partly also I want you for mother-in-law. You should have seen her lick her chops over that. Then she asked me about my affections.

I told her they were just like the fashions. They came and went."

"She must have been delighted."

"She hugged me. Then, of course, I asked about him. She told me that he has just been named as co-respondent in the Kincardine divorce suit, and I said that that was perfectly satisfactory."

"What!"

"Perfectly satisfactory. It appears that the poor boy can't remember whether the charge is true or false and that I think is so dear of him."

Violet, rising, extended her arms. "Aurelia, I have been wrong, I have misjudged you. Come to me."

But Aurelia, moving back, waved her away. "You'll only muss me. Now I must run. I must break the news to Parsnips. Will you come, Vi?"

"In a moment." Violet answered. "Wait for me in the brougham. There is something I want to say to Leilah."

Endearingly the ingénue smiled. "Something I ought not to hear, I suppose." In speaking she made for the door. "The amount of things I ought not to hear and do hear is simply amazing."

As the portières fell on her gracile back, Violet, with a gesture which, for so warlike a lady, resembled defeat, reseating herself, exclaimed:

"Frankly, she is impossible."

At once though, buckling anew for the fray, she aimed at Leilah and fired.

"So are you."

Leilah, who had been considering the Paramitas, started at the attack which instantly was followed up by another.

"Do you know anything about the code here, the law code, I mean. Do you?"

Leilah, a bit bewildered, shook her head. "No, that is, very little."

Violet's eyes fairly snapped. "I congratulate you. A little is sometimes a great deal. I also know a little and that little is, well, immense, so enormous even that because of it I am in a position to tell you that if you go with Verplank, Barouffski can, if he catches you, have you jailed."

Gravely, with curious calm, Leilah looked at her.

Annoyed that the shot had fallen short, Violet aimed again.

"Didn't you hear me? I said jailed. J-a-i-l-e-d! Now I may add for two years. That is what I meant when you spoke of your prison. I agreed with you that it must be dreadful to be in one. I said I daresay it is even worse than you think."

Leilah half raised a hand. "But——"

Unheedingly Violet continued. "Now, as for Verplank, if Barouffski were to surprise him here with you he could kill you both, yes, and be acquitted. But you—I have told you what he can do. Moreover, if he so much as suspects you, he can call the police. But excuse me. You were saying?"

"Nothing of any moment."

But Violet persisted. "What was it?"

"Merely that during the Terror a woman went to the guillotine smelling a rose."

At this flank movement Violet winced, but she rallied.

"Yes and rehearsed the act beforehand. They all did. The great ladies of the period rehearsed for the guillotine that they might die, as they had lived, with grace. Those were the good old days. These are the bad new ones. Anything of the kind would be ridiculous now."

To this, gravely as before, Leilah assented. "No doubt. But aren't you rather rambling about the grounds? It seems to me that you also have something up your sleeve."

Violet rose to the challenge. "Something! I have the entire pharmacopœia. In it is a remedy heroic but sovereign. If you'll take it, it may maim but it will cure."

Leilah, well entrenched, braved her. "I may not need it."

With a rush, then, the attack began.

"That's because you don't know. You think you are sane and sound. Don't you now? Yes, and you are neither. You have a high temperature complicated with nausea. The temperature is due to exposure, the nausea to indigestion. You have been exposed to Verplank and you have supped on Barouffski. You fancy you can't be rid of the incubus. That is an hallucination which the fever has caused. You can be rid of it. You can throw it up. I have an emetic that will do the trick. It may not be tasty but I'll warrant it will make him gag far more than you."

At the ferocity of the assault, Leilah quailed. "Really, Violet, your language——"

But the lady was not be denied. "Aha! You want me to be butter-fingered, don't you? Not a bit of it. You shall have the dose whether you like it or not and here it is for you. You called this place a prison. Now who runs it? You do. And on what? Your money. Supposing you hadn't any? Would Barouffski supply it? He would pack in a jiffy. Couldn't you then sue for divorce? Of course you could. Then there is the emetic. Verplank has enough for you both, enough for an army. All you have to do is to hold your nose, open your mouth, give your money away and vomit Barouffski. Will you?"

It was Violet's last shot. With it she had expected to bowl Leilah completely over. Anxiously she looked to see the result.

"Will you?" she repeated.

With manifest exaltation Leilah answered: "I had thought of it."

Surprisedly Violet stared, wondering could all her ammunition have gone for nothing, wondering too at the almost rapt expression that had come into Leilah's face.

"What?"

"Yes, Violet, I had thought of it—and of other things also. While Aurelia was here, I was reading a little book. It told me what I once knew and had since forgotten. It told me that if we have ideals we should live for them, that it is only by living for them and suffering for them that we can lift ourselves above the brutes. Violet, it was sinful of me to think of going with Gulian."

Dispassionately the now mollified lady toned that phrase.

"It was not perhaps quite nice."

"But I had not seen," Leilah continued. "No, not that," she interrupted herself to explain, "I had forgotten that this prison, all I have endured, all I shall endure, these are my debts to the Lords of Karma."

But that was a bit too strong. Violet laughed.

"You mean the Lords of Gammon."

"I mean," Leilah, with heightening fervour, replied, "that I have looked upon my prison as a cross. It is not a cross, it is a boon—one of which I have not been worthy. For I forgot that any sorrow should be welcomed. I forgot that it has been sent to make us nobler than we are. But my sorrows I have not welcomed. I have rebelled against them. I shall rebel no more. They were my masters. They shall be my servants now."

At these fine sentiments Violet sniffed.

"If that is theosophy I will believe in it when I am old, fat and a German. But I am glad it enabled you to reach a decision. Otherwise——"

But what the lady may have intended to say was never expressed or at least not then. Through the yellow portières, the delicate oval of Aurelia's face appeared.

"Aren't you ever coming?" she called. "What have you two been talking about?"

As the ingénue spoke, she entered, strolled to the mirror, considered herself.

"We have been discussing your engagement," Violet, in a very matter of fact way, replied.

Aurelia adjusted her hat, patted her hair, and addressed the mirror.

"I fancied it must be something important. Did I tell you what happened before I took Farnese?"

Violet yawned. "I have forgotten."

Aurelia, still pluming herself, smiled.

"Then I didn't. Besides, it is so shocking."

Violet motioned at her. "Don't be tiresome! I may have lost the ability to be shocked but not the ability to be bored."

With an air of great satisfaction Aurelia turned.

"Well, this morning, d'Arcy called. He told me about the gayeties last evening and it seemed to me that he must have looked so sweet with the champagne all over him that I could hardly resist accepting him, too."

"Accepting him, three!" Violet exclaimed. She raised her eyes as though calling heaven to witness. "There's constancy for you!"

Aurelia gave another glance at her enticing self.

"Do you know, I have always thought that constancy must be due either to a lack of imagination or else of opportunity. That is what you would call a moral standpoint, isn't it? Though what morality itself is you never deigned to explain. Personally I am inclined to think that it must be a preference in a choice of experiences."

Violet stood up. "One might suppose you thought it consisted in being engaged to half a dozen men at the same time."

Enthusiastically the girl regarded her. "There! That's it! You've struck it! There is safety in numbers and what a moral young person I am!"

Violet nodded. "I never suspected it before."

"Nor I," Aurelia contentedly replied. She looked at Leilah. "By-by."

"Good-by," Violet added.

In a moment both had gone and Leilah, again alone, reopened the little treatise on the Paramitas.

The way was now clear and to that way the pamphlet had pointed. It had done more. It had brought the exaltation which such beatitudes do bring to those in great distress. But though it had exalted, suddenly the fervour fell from her, for at once she foresaw the scene which she would have with Verplank, when now, at the last moment, she had to tell him that she could not go. The terror of it daunted her. She could see him, demanding that she tell him why—that faltering why of hers which would be gibberish to him and yet which summarised her ideals.

For the moment she felt that she lacked the strength for this, that it would be better to write him and she was thinking what she would say and how she would say it, when something external, a noise from without, distracted her.

She stood up and went to the window, from which, since the day of the ambuscade, she had had no heart to look.

Below, a footman in a canary coat and black knee-breeches was walking, bareheaded, straight on. At the gate he stopped, fumbled with the latch, drew back the door, held it open.

A man entered. Tall and broad-shouldered, he had a rigid face, calm eyes, the air of a judge. His beard, intensely black, the beard of a Saracen, was close cut and pointed. He was dressed in black.

Another man followed. Shorter, fairer, distinctly fat, he had a box under his arm. About the box were broad bands, sealed with red wax.

A third man appeared. Older than the

others, he had gray hair, glasses rimmed with tortoise-shell, and a bag.

All three were in black, all were grave, all were silent, and as they stood before the gate they partially concealed a fourth man, who, in black also, wore white gloves.

What they had come for Leilah could not imagine. Then, at once, she recalled what Violet had said: the rigors of French justice, a husband's ability to cage an erring wife, to put her away, indefinitely, among the demented and the depraved, and at the sight of these men, at the thought of the Byzantine abysses of Barouffski's nature, abysses perhaps unsounded yet, dread shook her. She shuddered.

But now another procession appeared, one that issued not from the gate, but from the house, a procession also composed of four men, also grave, also silent. One of them she vaguely recalled, and her stumbling memory tried to put a name on him, Dal, Mal, Pal-Palencia! Another, too, she remembered, Tyszkiewicz. A third also, and, to her cost, she knew. It was Barouffski.

In the first procession there was now a fourth acquaintance. The man with white gloves was raising his hat. As he did so she recognised d'Arcy. Then at last she understood, and, lest they should see her, drew back.

Meanwhile the footman had disappeared. From the first procession the man with the umbrella and the man with the box detached themselves. From the second, Palencia and Tyszkiewicz advanced.

For a little, grouped together, they conversed inaudibly, but amply with gestures and movements that included the tossing of a coin.

A pantomime followed. Tyszkiewicz, Palencia and the fat man moved to one side. The man with the umbrella drew with the ferule of it a line on the ground. Then, his head bent, one foot put directly in front of the other, he walked slowly until he had covered a space equal apparently to about fifteen yards. There he drew a second line, straightened himself, turned to Barouffski, who went to that line, while d'Arcy stationed himself at the other.

Immediately the fat man handed his box to Palencia. Palencia looked at the seals, broke them, opened the box, and, going to where d'Arcy stood, presented it. D'Arcy removed a glove, removed his hat, which he put brim upward beside him, and taking a pistol from the box, pointed it at the ground.

Palencia went back, restored the box to the fat man, who presented it to Barouffski. Another pistol was extracted. The fat man moved to one side. The man with the umbrella placed himself at an angle to d'Arcy and Barouffski. In front of him, at an equal angle, Palencia, Tyszkiewicz and the fat man stood. These the old man with the bag and the fourth member of the Barouffski party joined. The man with the umbrella took out a watch, and held it open in his hand.

"Attention!"

The pantomime had ended. Leilah leaned forward. Of Barouffski she could see now but the back of his head, the back of his tight-fitting coat. But d'Arcy, who stood sideways, his heels drawn together, might have been posing for a photograph.

The sky was leaden. The shrubbery resembled it. From behind an urn a cat appeared. It meowed and vanished. For a moment more there was silence.

The man with the umbrella looked from d'Arcy to Barouffski.

"Messieurs, after I give the command Fire, I will count from one to ten, leaving between each number an interval of ten seconds. It is unnecessary, but it is my duty to add, that to fire before I have given the word, or after I have counted ten, constitutes attempted assassination and, should death ensue, murder."

He paused, looked at his watch, looked at d'Arcy, again at Barouffski.

"Fire!"

Simultaneously the two men raised and extended their right arms, d'Arcy in such a manner that the forearm and butt of the pistol masked the abnormal beauty of his face. The hand was bare, but the left, which hung at his side, was gloved.

"One! Two! Three!"

With the ridiculous noise of a firecracker a pistol went off. D'Arcy, lowering his right hand, raised and shook the left. The delicate material of the glove had reddened, and on the ground specks of crimson dropped.

"Four! Five!"

D'Arcy's left hand fell back. He raised the right.

"Six! Seven! Eight!"

Measuredly, monotonously, but more loudly than before, the final numbers were being called. Infinitesimally the point of d'Arcy's pistol moved. His heels were no longer drawn together. His right hand was held less high. His left hand burned. Otherwise he was entirely at his ease.

He had withstood Barouffski's fire. It was Barouffski's turn to withstand his. He had time and to spare. Slowly, coolly, deliberately, he was taking aim.

It was very agreeable. He was smiling. He was enjoying himself. He was enjoying Barouffski's presumable suspense. He was savouring his equally presumable agitations. The man's face had turned ashen. The fact that it had, that he could see it had, delighted him. He felt sure of himself, and his thoughts were pleasant.

He was thinking: "That glass of wine of yours was the last you will ever ask me or any one else to drink."

He had become aware of Leilah's presence. That, too, delighted him. If he had a regret, it was that Tempest, the Silverstairs, all the demi-mondaines and exotics of the night before, the Bohemians to boot, the waiters as well, were not present also. Though in appearance divine, at heart he was human.

Again, imperceptibly, the point of his pistol moved.

"Nine!"

The trigger had been pulled. There was a fresh detonation. D'Arcy handed his pistol to the fat man, bent over, took up his hat, put it on, took it off, raised it straight upward, and for a moment, before replacing it, held it high in the air.

Leilah, without noticing the salute which was intended for her, saw Barouffski turn completely around, sink on his knees, press his hands to his side, and pitch forward.

It was a feint, she thought, histrionics for the gallery, perhaps for her. But now the old man and his colleague were bending over him. Behind them, Palencia, Tyszkiewicz and the man with the umbrella leaned. Barouffski's coat and waistcoat were opened, his shirt was torn apart.

Leilah heard what to her was the meaninglessness of technical terms. She saw the men who had been bending arise. She saw the others remove their hats. At the significant action she saw that the garden had been again invaded, this time by Death.

She turned, clutching for support at the velvet of a curtain, overwhelmed at the knowledge that her prison had crumbled, that the jailer was gone.

It had been her destiny to have sorrow spring into her life, fell her, make her its own, and to what end? Tearfully she had put that query to walls as callous as fate. Tearfully she had come to believe that she was damned in this existence for sins committed in another. It is this life that is hell she had told herself. But now, abruptly, the malediction was lifted. Still in hell, she was at the portals, the gates were open, she was free!

Yet was she? At the moment it seemed to her that it was all a hallucination; that, if she looked again into the accursed garden, she would see Barouffski tapping his breast with one hand, pointing to some prostrate form with the other, and, with his ambiguous smile, calling to her:

"See, my dear, I, I am unharmed."

So poignant was the impression that she did look. A litter had been improvised, and on it Barouffski, an arm pendent, his head fallen back, his face a gray green, was being put.

On the door behind her sounded the muffled tap of fingers furtive and discreet. She turned. At the threshold was Parker.

"If you please, my lady. Will your ladyship receive——"

"No," Leilah answered. She was about to add that she was at home to no one. But she caught herself. "Who is it?"

With that air which those acquire who attend to delicate matters, the woman answered: "Mr. Verplank."

Leilah drew a long breath. She went to the mirror. The curtain had disarranged her hair. She readjusted it, and passed out and down into the slippery salon.

Verplank was leaning against the piano. His left arm was in a sling, and the left side of his face from the nose to the ear was bandaged.

Before either could speak there came from the hall a murmur of voices, the sound of lumbering feet, the noise of people labouring upward.

Verplank looked at Leilah, and from her to the door.

"What is that?"

On and upward moved the steps, the noise decreasing as they passed, the sound subsiding with them.

"What is it?" Verplank asked again.

Leilah's under lip trembled. The deliverance from the vortex, the after-shudder that comes when some great peril has been barely escaped, the sensation of strength overtaxed, these things fusing with the consciousness that the last barricade had been taken, that there were now no more hostages to joy, induced in her one of the most curious of physical phenomena.

With tears running down her cheeks, she smiled. Then, sobbing and smiling still, she answered him:

"The key of the prison."

Verplank nodded. He did not in the least understand. But the singularity of her appearance, joined to the singularity of her reply, aroused in him a great pity for this woman who had ruined her life, ruined his own, and who then seemed to him demented.

"Pardon, madame la comtesse. Monsieur Palencia and Monsieur Tyszkiewicz ask if madame la comtesse will receive them?"

At the door, behind her, was Emmanuel.

At once another phenomenon occurred. Galvanised by that instinct of form which, when requisite, enables women of the world to banish instantly any trace of emotion, Leilah turned to the footman a face in which the tears had been reabsorbed, and from which the smile had gone.

"Say to these gentlemen that I appreciate and thank them, but that I can see no one."

Emmanuel compressed his lips. He wondered how she knew. There was a great deal occurring in this house that perplexed him. Moreover, Verplank's bandage and sling interested him very much. But, trained to his calling, he bowed and withdrew.

"What do they want?" Verplank asked, memories of his own duel surging at mention of their names before him.

In Leilah's face the tears and smiles reappearing, mingled.

"Barouffski is dead," she answered.

Verplank closed and opened a hand. His mouth opened also. He was sure now that she was crazy.

"Dead! How? What do you mean?"

Leilah made a gesture.

"There, a moment ago, in the garden. D'Arcy shot him."

Verplank started. The definiteness of her reply divested him of his idea concerning her, but it produced another which was also, though differently, disturbing. His eyes blazed. The old scar, the scar on the right side of his face, reddened.

"Who the devil is d'Arcy?"

For a moment he stared. Then, angrily snapping two fingers, he cried:

"In taking you from this damned house today, I had intended to leave a card for him, not a p. p. c. either, one with our address on it and the hours when I would be at home. If there was any shooting going on, I intended to be in it. Now some duffer must interfere."

With a rapid intake of the breath, he considered her. At the moment, he doubted it could be true. Yet her face, with its hysterical blending of joy and sorrow, seemed to certify that it was so. After all, he reflected, however the odour may occur, always the smell of an enemy's corpse is sweet. But, uncertain still, he threw out for clincher:

"Is that what you meant by the key of the prison?"

She moved to him.

"Gulian, yes, and never can I be thankful enough that it was not your hand that turned it."

Verplank tossed his bandaged head.

"So this is the end!"

Leilah looked up at him.

"Gulian, no, not that. The end of the beginning, if you like. Hereafter we will be beginning anew. Hereafter——"

She paused. The word had been evocative. Its repetition showed her that which she had not yet had time to consider; the decencies of life, the decencies, too, of death, the funeral, the widow's weeds, the delay which the world exacts; new hostages to joy, real though impermanent.

She told him of them.

From the church next door the organ pealed, and as they then remade their plans—those plans which mortals think they make, and which always are unmade unless intended for them—a ray of sunshine entered; the organ pealed louder, the beauty of the melody hushed their voices, and for a moment, to the appoggiatura of Stradella, on that shaft of light, Leilah's thoughts, ascending, mounted into realms where all things broken are made complete, and where are found again things vanished.

EDGAR SALTUS

MADAM SAPPHIRA

A FIFTH AVENUE STORY.

F. TENNYSON NEELY
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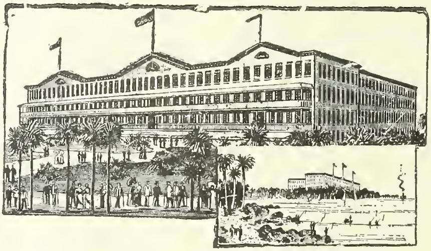

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Madam Sapphira

A Fifth Avenue Story

BY

EDGAR SALTUS

F. TENNYSON NEELY,
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Madam Sapphira

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MADAM SAPPHIRA.

I.

"I told my father that you expected to make a hundred thousand this year. He said he didn't believe in miracles."

It was Mrs. Carol Nevius who, from the head of the dinner-table, addressed her husband.

"Did he though! That's odd, seeing that it has taken a succession of them to keep him out of Sing-Sing."

Mrs. Nevius laughed. She was a pretty little woman, very well dressed, with a noticeably good manner. And as she laughed it was evident that her father was not one who inspired respect.

"But if you do," she insisted, "if you

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make a lot, you will let me entertain, won't you?"

Nevius shook his head. No, not though it were millions. In the now remote bachelor days he had his fill of society, and while it is colloquial to maintain that those who do not care for society are those for whom society does not care, in his case the argument was invalid. He was too busy to fatigue himself further with futilities and late hours.

His wife was not. She was essentially social, schemingly so, with a dream unfulfilled, yet, perhaps still fulfillable of leadership in the upper four, and so exasperating did her husband's disinclination for any form of entertainment seem to her, that had you confessed her privately and apart she would have declared illicit commerce as nothing in comparison.

But this was natural. Not until her engagement was announced did society become aware of her existence. Born a Snaith, her people were believed to be rich and known to be common. Her father was an old person of both sexes—possessed of all the vices of woman and none of the virtues of man—a Wall street rat who told untellable stories and insisted on morning prayers. His wife, it was rumored, was of better stock, and in reviewing the documents, it seems difficult for her not to have been. But she had little to boast of. She was a bloodless creature, with a deprecatory manner and a total inability to look you in the face.

To these people two children had been born, both girls. The elder, Frances, became in time the wife of young Montrion who promptly landed her in a set which, while not censorious, has a curious habit of closing its doors on women who leave their own wide open. In what manner and through what circumstances

Mrs. Montrion became negligent in regard to her vestibule is not a matter with which the telling of the accompanying episode need be delayed. Suffice it to say that after being urged from one end of the avenue to the other the sufficiency of that urging ceased.

This occurred at the hour when her sister, Hilda, was about to make some form of début. That the latter was thereby materially handicapped goes without phrases. Apart from a handful of school friends, their brothers and lovers, the girl knew no one. It was Mrs. Montrion on whose offices she relied to join the since defunct F. C. D. C., and to tread Assembly floors. It was through her she was to be smiled upon by the Bleeckers, Rewicks and Wainwarings. It was through her she was to grasp those two potential fingers with which Mrs. Amsterdam sealed the advent of the debutante, and just when the frocks were ordered, presto! up and down Fifth avenue one door after another was closing on Mrs. Montrion's back.

It was hard on the girl, very. But she held her tongue, and the frocks which were to have been worn at routs she wore quite graciously at home. Now and again when her father could be induced to secrete himself, the handful of friends, their brothers and lovers, were asked to break bread at the house; and in return now and again her friends asked her to their own abodes. It was on one of these occasions that she met Carol Nevius.

Nevius was then in his twenty-fourth year. As men go his appearance was not distressing, he was neither effeminate nor beefy, his chin may not have been one which Lavater would have praised, but his features were good, he held himself well, and he dressed as those do who put themselves in West-End hands, and then dismiss the subject. A little before he had taken honors at the Law School, and had been welcomed to the bar by judges to whom his name was evocative of old New York and the early history of Manhattan. Of immediate relatives he had none. His income, derived from a small bundle of bonds and the rental of the Nevius house in Tenth street, was sufficient to enable him to live without toil though not without debts. An existence of that kind not being to his liking he had fought for spurs and won them, so notably even that the cigars he smoked while digesting the Code were paid for from the emoluments of his profession.

His initial encounter with Miss Snaith occurred at a dinner. As the conversation expanded he found himself taking pleasure in the sound of her voice, and presently he discovered that her eyes were so blue they dazzled; that her mouth was perfect, the poise of her head delightful; that though slight of figure, she was adorably constructed; that her wit was nimble and her manner subdued. She seemed to exhale all that is good in woman—simplicity, sympathy, sweetness and strength; manifestly she was pure of mind, of eye and tongue, and before the dinner was done he told himself that her beauty was the least of her charms.

These impressions he kept to himself, but on learning that at her house a cup of tea was to be had any afternoon for the asking, he thanked her with much gratitude and took her at her word the next day.

But was it tea she gave him? Surely there was a philter in that samovar. It was February then, but by the time Lent had come and gone and the spring's bold emissaries were in the air, such was the potency of that brew that only her people and his poverty prevented him from praying her to become his wife. Try as he might, he could not reconcile himself to her family, and try too as he was able, he could discern none of the cohorts of advancing wealth. And yet the girl was so radiantly fair, so graceful in speech, so gracious in bearing and apparently so unexpectant either of love or betrothal, that he saw no reason why he should cease to quaff that cup. Nor did he cease till spring had gone and summer jumped upon the town.

At the first monition of impending heat the Snaiths were accustomed to desert Fifth avenue for a red chalet at Bronx, a roomy structure standing on grounds that leaned to the water's edge. Sometimes a poor connection could be lured that way, and sometimes a friend of the girl's would come unwarned and then take flight, abashed by the speech of that coarse old man, unnerved by the stealthy air and cattish smile of the mother. But as a rule guests were infrequent.

By what means Mr. Snaith was induced that year to try the waters of Sharon is not a part of history, but try them he did, and during his absence Nevius was asked to Bronx. Over that invitation he hesitated, and continued to hesitate until after a minute review of recent events he was able to affirm that not once had the girl even alluded to engagement rings. Then he went, and as Mrs. Snaith kept herself aloof, very pleasant he found it.

Of a morning there would be a skurry on horseback through bye-lanes and hedges; when the sun was oppressive there were the poets—Meredith, Bailey, Rosetti, Blunt and Swinburne too; in the late afternoons there were decorous drives over dusty roads, but in the evening there was the moon, the gurgle of waters, the caresses of a midsummer night. There were strains too from that duo in which we have all taken part, and there were monologues, spaced with silence. The moon, the waters, the hush of locusts, the sorceries of the poets, these things are sworn accomplices to adventurous desires, and one morning Nevius awoke, wondering at fate, appalled by it, overcome by a remorse into which a sweetness filtered and declined to go.

When he sought the girl she was not immediately discoverable. It was not until he set out through the grounds that he discerned the white and buttercup of muslin beyond. As he approached she rose from a bed of flowers, and, as he took her hand, her lips parted and she smiled. Never had she looked more fair. Beneath the blue splendors of her eyes were the faintest of circles, but in the gay sunlight she was as fragrant as the flowers she held.

"Wish me good morning," she admonished. And that office performed she led him to another parterre, where she gathered more flowers and joined them with the first.

"They will do for the table, don't you think?"

"Hilda, will you marry me?"

She turned to him, a quick, glad look on her face.

"You know that I love you," he added. "You must know that, or—or—"

Lamely he hesitated. But the girl must have divined his meaning; she made a gesture that dispensed with needless explanations; a little color came to her cheeks, yet her eyes rested bravely in his own.

"Yes, I know, and you too must know how I love you. Carol, I have always loved you; that line in Festus was made for me: 'My love was perfect from the first, it did not grow as meaner things mature.'"

There was no riding that day. Later the girl made avowals sweeter still. To all intents and purposes her life had been but a waiting for him, the preparation and prelude of his coming. There were many things over which she had wondered, but now they were all made clear. She understood music and its meaning. She understood the witcheries of spring, the ripple of the rain, the breath of brooks. She understood at last why the stars had filled her with unrest. She understood when they first met why a bird in her heart had burst into song. It was love, always love; her love appealing to his.

This was very pretty, and of such avowals Nevius became thoroughly avaricious. He, too, was in the festival of youth, and apart from the three or four episodes which inevitably occur to one who moves in certain circles and whose appearance is not distressing, he might have repeated to her everything she said to him. His heart at least was as virginal as her own. If he had taught her the meaning of love, she had shown him the meaning of life. Heretofore he had been ambitious to make a name for himself. Now at once he was ambitious to make a name for her. And with a little perplexity, a little embarrassment, he told her of himself. There was the house, the meager income and his professional hopes.

In view of the fact that the Snaith household was kept on a footing of perhaps fifty thousand a year, and by no means lavishly at that, the girl might readily have dismissed so indigent a suitor. Then, too, in spite of the sweetness and simplicity which she exhaled, she was not one to contemplate with enjoyment such pleasures as are said to reside in surburban flats. But she had faith, less in her lover's success perhaps than in the possibilities of her father's money. At the moment, however, she seemed quite content, and a day or two later informed him that her father had arrived and had been approached.

"You are to speak to him after dinner," she said. "If you were a broker he would love you." At that period brokers made money. "But you are a lawyer, and he says lawyers are tricky. Come."

Nevius looked down and away. In regard to trickiness Mr. Snaith's reputation was indeed above reproach, but in this respect, it surpassed it. Yet, after all, it was not the father he was to marry, nor yet the mother, it was the girl he loved. The entire catalogue of distasteful things which her family represented, faded at thought of her. He looked up and followed her from the verandah to where her people were.

At the entrance of the lovers Mr. Snaith grunted and made for the dining-room beyond. His wife stroked a bloodless hand and asked did it look like rain.

"When I am with Hilda," Nevius answered, "the sky is always fair."

"Ah!" exclaimed the lady, by whom that phenomenon had evidently passed unobserved. "Ah! indeed!"

Nevius turned to the girl, she was smiling, the red tip of her tongue just visible, and so adorable was her expression that it was only a proper appreciation of form which prevented him from catching her and smothering her with kisses in his arms.

But in the dining-room the enthusiasm of the moment was forgot. Mr. Snaith broke a raw egg into his soup and refreshed himself with whisky and lithia, a beverage that he declared was tip-top for gout, which statement passing unchallenged he entered into a long tirade against physicians in general and professional men in particular. They were either idiots or scoundrels. "Yes, sir, every damn one of them." To all of which Mrs. Snaith assented. Then he relapsed into a domineering silence, and some attempt was made at more amiable forms of talk but without sufficient success to cause any needless prolongation of the repast.

When the bowls were brought and the women had gone, Nevius turned to his host. All over him was written the fact that he had seen worse days and never intended to see them again. He was short and obese, with a face like a brandied cherry, and as terrible as vulgarity and ready-made clothes could make him. He looked exactly what he was and nothing worse could be said of him.

"I believe you are aware that I have asked your daughter to be my wife."

"She has made her bed and she can lie in it," Mr. Snaith replied.

"Am I to infer that I have your consent?"

"Infer? I don't know what you infer. She's got a good home, I don't see what she wants to leave it for."

"Doubtless," answered Nevius, "for the same reason that Mrs. Snaith left her own."

"That's nothing to do with it. She's not fit to be married, I've told her mother so. But let's cut it short. What's your income?"

"Forty-six hundred."

"I'll give her the same as long as I can afford it and not a damn cent more.'

"Perhaps in a year or two it won't be necessary for you to give anything."

"So much the better for me then."

And with that Mr. Snaith left the table and hobbled from the room.

Had Nevius been other than himself, he too would have left the room, Bronx as well. Even the law had not brought him into contact with a boor such as that. For a second it seemed to him that in spite of Hilda and the irreparable he must wash his hands of the whole affair, but in that second Hilda was at his side and led him out to where the red moon was, the gurgling waters, the locust's hush.

Before the red moon waned white he was reconciled. A girl such as she possesses enchantments which dull regret. And during the pre-nuptial honeymoon which ensued the only regret he could maintain was that which concerned his position toward her. But for what was the marriage service invented? In the autumn their loves were consecrated by a diligent bishop, and for a while they loitered among the quick of Paris and the ghosts of Rome. When they returned, the house in Tenth street was made habitable, and Nevius threw himself into work as another plunges into dissipation.

A year passed, another, a third, six in all, yet on this particular evening, as Mrs. Nevius from the head of the table questioned him in regard to the possibilities of future income, she was, if not a bounder, as the word is used, still as far from the inner sanctuaries of upper fourdom as when the doors were closing on her sister's back.

At the time being she had no opportunity of expatiating on this wrong. A servant appeared and announced that Mr. Ablaut was in the drawing-room.

Mrs. Nevius rose from her seat, and her husband, punishing a yawn with a tap of the finger, made for the library.

"If it were Jenny now," his wife called after him, her eyes half-closed. her chin upraised, "you wouldn't be in such a hurry. would you?"

II.

"I WOULD rather have written Salammbô than have built the Brooklyn Bridge. It was more difficult, and besides it will last longer."

Mr. "Alphabet" Jones, the novelist, a thimbleful of champagne in his throat, was discoursing to the guests whom Mrs. Nevius had assembled.

"Yes, of course," interjected Mrs. Anderson, a young woman with the face and manner of a cocotte. "Ah, yes," and she smiled with an *air entendu;* " but does literature pay?"

With elaborate manifestations of bewilderment, Jones threw himself back in his chair:

"Pay, Mrs. Anderson? Pay, did I understand you to say? Why, look at Bradshaw. Year in, year out, he clears ten thousand pounds sterling."

"Bradshaw? Bradshaw?" Mrs. Anderson shook her head vaguely. "Oh, yes, the author of Ben Hur."

"*Ce qu'elle est idiote*," muttered Nevius to Miss Jenny Adulam, who sat at his side.

"*Ce qu'elle m'ennuie*," responded that young woman. But her eyes said more than the words conveyed; they complimented Mrs. Anderson with a look of absolute abhorrence.

"What is it?" Nevius asked, who had seen but not understood. "What has she done?"

"I can't tell you."

"But you must, Jenny."

"I can't; I told Hilda and that's enough."

"No, dear Mrs. Anderson," Jones was saying. "Not Ben Hur; you are thinking of Mr. Gunter. Bradshaw is the author of Rabelais, Tristram Shandy and the Bride of Lammermoor."

"Yes, yes of course, but then you see I thought he was dead."

"Not dead, dear Mrs. Anderson, and that is just the point I was seeking to convey. Dead he is not, but departed, for the artist never dies. But how well Scalchi sang last night. Don't you think her voice must have been changed in the cradle?"

From across the dinner-table Clayton Anderson, a fat man with a beard that concealed the total absence of chin, labored to the rescue of his wife.

"By the way, Jones, that was a nasty criticism the *Saturday Review* had of your book. Stupid sheet, isn't it?"

"Stupid? not a bit. Only the year before last it had a most excellent article on manure. It is admirably edited, I assure you."

"By gad," snorted Anderson, an appreciative smile on his sodden, good-natured face. "If I had the editor's address I'd drop him a line and tell him what you say."

"Drop it in the sewer, it will get to him in time," Jones answered, and began anew at Anderson's wife.

Ablaut, who sat at Mrs. Nevius' left—James Ablaut, Jr., a large red-headed man, who dripped platitude and exhaled stupidity from every pore, yet the son of a Patriarch and as such supposed to be possessed of social power—grinned contentedly at his truffles.

Mrs. Nevius turned to the novelist: "Tell me," she said, in reference to an episode which was then occupying not only society but the newspapers of two worlds as well—a husband who, surprising his wife with her lover, had killed the latter almost in the woman's arms. "Tell me, what do you think of the Ex affair. Is it not terrible?"

"Terrible in its selfishness, yes," Jones answered. "And still more terrible in its bad taste."

"We men of the world—" Ablaut, anxious to get an oar in, began, but Jones was too quick for him.

"There's a plural that is singular. Now, Mrs. Carol, since you do me the honor to ask my opinion, I think it was Ex's duty to have made himself more attractive to his wife than any one else could, but having failed, having seen that he failed, the dog-in-the-manger act which he committed was abominable. If any shooting was necessary it was himself he should have shot. But all that sort of thing is out of date and bad form too. A man of the world never sees or hears anything that was not intended for him.

"You think he ought not to have made a fuss then? Well, perhaps; but when a man surprises his wife in that way——"

"He should apologize for the intrusion."

"And do nothing?"

"Oh, if he really feels the need of satisfaction, he might express some astonishment and say to the lover, 'Is it possible, sir, that you are embracing that lady without being obliged to?' A little remark of that kind can be as effective as a bullet and has the advantage of not raising the roof."

"Stuff and nonsense," objected Anderson pompously. "This man was a snake in the grass. He was Ex's friend and under cover of that friendship he led his wife astray. In Ex's place I should have done the same thing."

From where Mrs. Anderson sat came a ripple of laughter which silenced her husband strangely. Jones turned to him with serious mien:

"No, dear boy, permit me. A woman is never led astray. She trots, or gallops or bolts astray, but never is she led. Lovelace, Faust, Don Juan, rolled into one, are helpless where virtue is. Besides, in these days a man never makes the first advances, he hasn't time. It is the woman, always the woman, who—"

"Dear me!" Mrs. Nevius was making a fine show of indignation. "Dear me, are all women as bad as those in your books? Haven't you ever met any with a conscience?"

"Plenty, Mrs. Carol. Plenty. Some even with two."

And as the novelist through his shrewd, tortoise-rimmed glasses gazed at his hostess, that lady lowered her eyes.

At the other end of the table Nevius was chatting inaudibly with Miss Adulam, a girl less pretty than fetching, small of feature, with the flush of youth still in her face and about her that intangible something discernible only in the end-of-the-century virgin of higher New York life, that air which, while indicating total incapacity for wrong-doing, indicates also a perfect comprehension that wrong-doing exists; in short, a girl to whom a man may talk without the disheartening dread of seeming to say more than he means. Nevius had known her when she was in short frocks, and a few years previous, encountering her haphazard in Paris, had made her acquainted with his wife. Since then the two had been much together, Mrs. Nevius, who understood perfectly the advantages which a married woman possesses in the companionship of a decorative young woman that can be relied upon to hold her tongue, having grappled her to her heart with hooks of steel.

"So you are not going to Tuxedo," the girl was saying, though less for information perhaps than for conversation's sake.

"No, why should I?"

"Hilda goes to-morrow with the Andersons and Ablaut."

"Ah! I knew nothing of it. I did not even know they were to be here to-night. You either, for that matter. Hilda only told me when I got up-town. But what is this about Tuxedo?"

The girl shrugged a shoulder. "Some party they have made up. You don't mind?"

"It wouldn't matter much if I did, I fancy. Though if I seem to, it is only because of Mrs. Anderson, who is common as—as, well, let us say Narragansett Pier."

"She is your guest," Miss Adulam murmured.

"Very true." And for the moment Nevius subsided.

Presently there was a general move to the adjoining room. There Nevius sat with the girl, Jones occupying himself for literary purposes in drawing Mrs. Anderson out, the other men dividing their hostess' attention. But by eleven, husband and wife were alone.

As the front door closed for the last time, Nevius went over to where his wife was seated.

"I have been having a chat with Jenny."

"So I saw."

"What is it that Mrs. Anderson has been doing to her?"

Mrs. Nevius opened her great blue eyes in wonder.

"Doing to her? I am sure I don't know. What do you mean?"

"Jenny said she had told you."

"Oh, what nonsense. Dulcibella happened to be a little friendly with her and she went to work and imagined all sorts of things."

Nevius stared at his wife very blankly.

"I don't understand. What did she imagine?"

"How do I know? She's probably got her head *farcie* with the *Deux Amies* or some similar twaddle and is capable of imagining anything. Give me a cigarette will you? It's not worth talking about."

Nevius went back to the dining-room, but when he returned his face was grave.

"Do you know, Hilda, I wish you would drop that woman. What you tell me is not reassuring, but, independent of that, she has neither manners, breeding nor brains. And how should she! Her grandfather was a Tweedringer, her father the receiver of stolen goods, and yet in the *List* she has got her maiden name down as Wainwaring; why she is no more a Wainwaring than you are."

"That is one of her middle names, I think," Mrs. Nevius answered remotely. "But even otherwise, what does it matter? How can you be so old-fashioned? Nowadays people don't expect a patent of nobility in everyone they meet; what they do expect is money. Bella has a hundred thousand a year and no one would object if she called herself a Knickerbocker. Besides, is it her fault about her grandfather? I dare say if we got down to bottom facts the original Nevius was no better."

"The original Nevius was a Latin poet, but that's neither here nor there. I won't have her at dinner. She's a woman with preferences for everybody and attractions for none."

"She is nothing of the sort, she is very pretty, and anyway there is no use in your picking up Alphabet Jones' cigarette stumps. He never means a word he says; he talks and talks just for effect. I am tired and sick of him. Did you notice the way he spoke to Ablaut to-night? He doesn't seem to be aware of the difference in their positions."

Nevius smiled helplessly and tugged at his moustache. "I think he is, but I am quite sure he would not try to wound Ablaut by referring to it. Here, Michette!"

A black monster, amber of eye, the neck

furred like a ruff, the tail fluttering like a banner, gazed through the portière. Leisurely it promenaded a haughty stare, interrogating the escritoire, the pedestalled lamps, the yellow shaded candles, the grave hangings, capacious chairs, cushioned lounges, plants, flowers and knicknacks with which the high-ceiled room was provided. Then, assured that all intruders had gone, it stepped gingerly and circuitously to where Nevius sat and with a sudden purr bounded to his side.

"There Michette, I know all about it. You don't like strangers any more than I do. Do you, you lobster?"

Michette opened and closed his eyes and purred profusely.

"And you have not the remotest desire to go to Tuxedo, have you?"

A thin smile came and vanished in the corners of Mrs. Nevius' mouth.

"Did Jenny tell you that, too?"

"That Michette—"

"Don't be absurd."

"Yes, she said you were all off to-morrow. do hope you won't be gone long."

"But, Carol, when I am here you see nothing of me. You come in just in time for dinner, and after that you are either talking business or writing letters. Oh, I know what you are going to say—that you are trying to make a fortune—but what good does that do me? I want to go out. I want to entertain and be entertained. I want to lead the life that my friends do; and, instead of that, I might just as well be at Bronx. You won't go to the opera, you won't go to the assemblies; last winter you would not even take me to Mrs. Bleecker's. If once in a century I ask people to dinner, unless you have Jenny on one side of you and Jones within call, you don't speak. And if it were my friends alone that you snubbed! But you won't even speak to my own family. There was a time when my mother used to beg me to bring you there. Now she never mentions your name. My father says you cut him in the street. But don't you know that you are making yourself very well hated? The lecture you have read me about Bella Anderson is all very well, but it would be the same thing in regard to any one else; it always has been. You objected to Viola Raritan, to the Yardes, to the Jerolomons, to this woman, that man and the other. Do you know what I think?"

And Mrs. Nevius, in spite of her manifest indignation, smiled frostily.

"Do you know what I think? You want a wife simply for domestic purposes; to pay the bills, talk to tradesmen, see that the machinery runs smooth; to be your housekeeper by day and your mistress at night."

"At least I want no other wife than you. It may be selfish of me to act as I do; no doubt it is, but since I have got into these companies I haven't a moment."

Mrs. Nevius, whose cigarette had gone out, relighted it, and for a while puffed meditatively. Presently the cigarette was put aside, her features relaxed, and she looked up at her husband with great amiability.

"There, Carol, forgive me. I am out of sorts. I know you work hard; say the word, and I wont go to Tuxedo."

"But Hilda, I am delighted to have you go if it amuses you. The only thing is—"

"Well, what?"

"Your companions."

"What a goose you are. The Andersons are received. Whatever you may say, Belle is perfectly presentable.

"Oh I don't mean to imply that she eats

sweets with a spoon; nor was it so much of her I was thinking. Ablaut is all very well in his way, but don't you think he is too much in yours? Don't you think if he is tagging after you down there that people will gossip?"

Mrs. Nevius gave a twist to her skirt and laughed for sheer joy.

"You dear thing, are you jealous? Tell me, Carol, are you?"

Nevius tormented the tip of his nose reflectively and glanced at his wife. She looked the embodiment of merriment, of coquetry too, of grace as well, and prettier even, more tantalizing and tentative than in the old prenuptial days. No, he was not jealous and said so.

"Now see," she continued, straightening herself and distributing wide breezes from an enormous fan. "See how little jealous I am. Every evening while I am away, Jenny is to dine with you."

"You don't mean that you asked her!"

"I did then, and she said she would like nothing better."

"But won't the servants think it odd?"

Mrs. Nevius gave him a curious, investigating look.

"What are the servants' thoughts to you?"

"Nothing. It was Jenny I was considering."

"She cares as little as you do. If I ask her, who is to object?"

"Not I, certainly. Jenny is very sweet, I am very fond of her, and if she comes I shall take it as very kind of her, but she is not you. It is you I want."

He leaned forward; there was a light in his eyes which she saw and recognized, but before he could reach her she was on her feet.

"There, Carol, behave. I am tired, and besides, anyone would think we were on our honeymoon still."

III.

"This is really delightful of you. I had hardly ventured to hope—"

"If you are going to be formal, Carol, I won't stay."

Miss Adulam, preceded by Michette, was entering the drawing-room. Such outer wraps as she may have worn had been laid aside, but her frock, cut sufficiently low in the neck to be suitable for evening wear, had none of the insignia of festival.

And now, as she stood holding a hand to him, there was about her a little simple air of dignity which a princess might seek and get not.

"I won't be called formal. I am not formal." And Nevius, raising the hand, touched the wrist with his lips.

From between the curtains at the end of the room a servant appeared, annunciant of dinner.

"But it is good of you," he continued. "It is worth while to be a bachelor to have such compensation as this."

Miss Adulam withdrew the hand.

"If Hilda had not insisted I should not be here," she said; "but she has been so good to me that it seemed stupid to refuse, particularly as it appeared, sir, that if I had, you would not have let her go."

"Aha! I'm a tyrant now, am I? All the same, Miss, I wish you would try to imply that you are here just a little for me."

"But I am," the girl exclaimed. "Really I am. If I were not very fond of you do you suppose I should be here at all?"

"There, that's something like, that's my dear old Jenny. Now let's go in and see what we are to have to eat. But afterward you must play. When I was younger, oh! ever so much younger, I swore a great oath that I would never marry a girl that did not. And Hilda, who did play at the time, has not touched a piano since. Her hand is no longer big enough for the octaves, if you please. That's the way we men get cheated. There!"

Nevius had seated his guest and taken the seat at her side.

"Put my things here," he called to the servant, for his place had been arranged at the other end. "And what is there to drink? Champagne and claret? No, I want moselle and seltzer. Serve the champagne to Miss Adulam. You won't have claret, will you? By George, I believe these are Mumford coves. I take that as being very thoughtful of Hilda. *Maintenant*," he added with just a glance to where the servant stood. "*Causons. Et nos amours?*"

"That's hardly the expression, is it?" The girl answered in French. "But after all he is so nice that call it what you like."

"He's a deuced lucky fellow, that's all I have got to say about him."

"Not so lucky, Carol. Not a penny, not one."

"And what of it? When I married I hadn't a penny either. But it's idiocy of him to stick in Texas. He won't make anything in cattle. That day has gone. This is the era of syndicates and New York is their home. Make him come back, Jenny. I can put him up to any number of things. Nevius and Tredegar! How does that sound?"

"Beautifully, Carol. But Jack won't do it. You know how obstinate he is; once an idea in his head and only a surgical operation could get it out."

"And his heart?"

Miss Adulam smiled demurely.

"Anyway," Nevius persisted, "you have something of your own."

"Eventually I shall have something; a hundred thousand, perhaps, but not more."

"But that's very neat. You could live comfortably on it in Paris and luxuriously in Florence. Of course it's not much here, and nothing at all in London. And you wouldn't care to live anywhere else, would you? After all, New York would be a mighty nice place, if it were not for the New Yorkers. Don't you think so?"

"Here," he called in English to the servant. "Give Miss Adulam some more champagne, and I want some more seltzer. What is there after this? Quails? I hate quails. Never have them again."

He turned to the girl.

"Does he write often?"

"Who? Jack? Every day."

"And what does he say?"

"*Mais, Monsieur, vous me demandez des choses !*"

"I didn't mean that." And Nevius shook with laughter. "Though I can fancy, of course," he added after a pause, which he purposely made significant.

'You are very impertinent, sir, and I am going home."

"Yes, of course. And that is just the odd thing; it is always an impertinence to divine a woman's thoughts. Her wishes *passe encore.*"

"Why, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" and the girl turned on him a look which was meant to be quite severe yet was not. "I am afraid Alphabet Jones is corrupting your good manners."

"Do you know, Hilda said something of the sort last night. By the way, she intimated the other evening that Ablaut was in love with you."

"Carol!"

"She said something to the effect that he came here more to see you than anyone else. I shall tell Jack, Miss Jenny, mind that."

With an inappositeness which afterward was to occur to Nevius as curious in the extreme, the girl became abruptly barometric.

"Wasn't it nice this afternoon, so cold and brisk!"

"Cold? yes, it was certainly that, but I don't know what your idea of niceness is. It rained pitchforks down town, didn't it rain here? Why, Jenny, you are crying!"

But not a bit. The phantoms of twin tears had come and gone. Miss Adulam was mistress of herself at once."

"Poor Jack," she murmured.

"Why, you foolish thing," expostulated Nevius with much noise and indignation. "Damn Jack. No, forgive me, I didn't mean that. I don't know what I meant. I was only jesting anyway.

"What's all this," he cried furiously at the servant. "Carry it all away and serve the coffee in the other room."

"Come, Jenny," he added in another tongue and milder tone. "Let's have a cigarette in English."

Michette, who lay, a ball of fur, before the fire, stared indolently at their approach, then, his back arched, his tail full as a bludgeon, made crab-like zigzags across a rug.

"I know what you want, you lobster, you want some music to dance to."

And presently, the coffee disposed of, Nevius and Miss Adulam took seats at the piano and played a succession of resounding duets.

Whether Michette accompanied them with pirouettes and entrechats is not a part of history. The duets continued until, during a wonderful series of resounding accords, there came a ring, and Miss Adulam stood up.

"Thank you, Jenny. That went off very well, didn't it? And you will come to-morrow? You are sure it doesn't bore you?"

In a brotherly fashion he drew the girl to him and kissed her pure brow.

"Miss Adulam's maid."

A portière had been drawn. The servant entered and disappeared.

"Yes, certainly, I will come."

Nevius followed her to the hall, aided her with her cloak, accompanied her to the cab, and, as he re-entered the house, told himself that it would not be a bad idea at all to see what effect a letter from him might have on the obstinacy of Miss Adulam's lover.

IV.

A WEEK passed. Once Nevius read of his wife's presence at the country club to which she had gone, and once she wrote. But the letter was brief, relating mainly to household affairs and conveying but meager details as to the writer's occupation and environments.

Meanwhile Miss Adulam had been almost as good as her word. She had dined at Tenth street twice and on the intervening Sunday had lunched there as well.

On that evening Nevius dined with Michette. The cat was loquacious, but its loquacity was not of the interruptive order, and as it monologued interminably on what seemed to be the same subject, Nevius felt bored. As a relief, the cloth removed, he wrote to his wife.

That pleasure at an end, the boredom returned, loneliness as well, and for companionship's sake he looked in at the Athenæum club where he ran into Alphabet Jones and managed to kill an hour.

"I hear you are making money," the novelist between two whiffs remarked. "I hear you have enough to burn."

"I wish I had. No, I may have to go to Chicago in a day or two, I am afraid even that I may have to go abroad."

"It wouldn't frighten me a bit if I had to. Will your princess go too?"

"Oh, of course." And Nevius nodded with an air of assured conviction. "But how is the Muse? What are you writing now?

"Cheques, dear boy," Jones answered negligently. "Cheques, that's all."

"I thought you had something on the stocks."

"Stocks is the word. The pillory comes later."

"Your books are too confounded cynical, Alphabet. The public don't like it."

"But did I invent human nature?" And the novelist looked at his friend with an air ruminant and bovine in its innocence.

"I don't believe," retorted Nevius, "I don't believe at all that it is human nature for women to act as they do in your books. Anyone might think that New York was peopled with demireps."

"Perhaps. But then you see every one isn't blessed as you are."

"No, that's a fact, I admit. But even so, what is the use in choosing such subjects?"

"I choose a subject! Why, dear boy, a writer, if he happens to be worth his syndicate, never chooses a subject. The subject chooses him. He writes what he must, not what he might. That's a thing that the public can't understand. The secret of any work of value lies in the harmony existing between the subject and the author. And even then his one chance of success consists not only in yielding to the subject but in caressing it. Every artist knows that. Flaubert has rung his changes on it a thousand times.

"Oh, well, if you bring up your heavy artillery I surrender. After all I don't mean to abuse you."

"But I love to have you. The next time you have a moment skim over a history, and then come and tell me the name of one man of ability who has not been abused. And the greater the ability, the greater the abuse. It is the tribute that failure pays to success. Mediocrity is never discussed, and, being unforgiving, resents it. As for my books, if they please no one, doubtless they are poor, but if they pleased everybody I should consider them rot. *Vox populi, vox stulti.* The majority is always wrong. What would a Scotch and soda say to you?"

"That I am vile and vicious I suppose. No thanks. I think I will be getting home."

"By the way, if you and Madame go abroad, will Ablaut and Miss Adulam join you?"

"No, why should they?"

Jones lit a match and fumbled for a cigarette. "Are you sure you won't have anything? Where is that devilish case gone now! Ah, yes, here it is."

"Why did you ask?" Nevius repeated.

Jones glanced about the room. "For no reason, dear boy," he murmured apologetically. "For no reason. I had got to look upon you all as a family party, don't you see, and it occurred to me that—that—it occurred to me—"

Irritated by this mummery and hesitation. Nevius got from his seat. "I don't know what can have occurred to you, but if you fancy for one instant that anything, even platonism, exists between Ablaut and Jenny Adulam, I may just as well tell you that you are off, 'way off.'"

"I should think so;" and Jones smiled in his beard. "No, indeed. Wait a second, dear boy. No, indeed, I never gave the matter a thought. But that subject of platonism now is really very interesting. Speaking in the abstract of course, I believe in it, but not as you do. I think that the affection a nice girl may have for a man who is neither her brother nor her lover, a man I mean with whom she is constantly thrown in contact, is often of that order. But it is different with the man. It seems to me that however pure at heart he may be, however honest in intention, nature is apt to resent that negation of sex. And it is for that reason that platonic affection, or, more exactly, reciprocal platonism, is discoverable only among married people. Nature having had her way, has no slights to resent, and occupies herself, if at all, in directing the attention of the parties to the possibility of other enterprises. In such circumstances there are women who, noting in their husbands a decreasing desire for the pleasures of the *tête-à-tête*, appeal to the courts. There are others astute enough to understand that it is not in the nature of man to subsist on a single dish, and sufficiently refined not to give that bit of information to the newspapers. But there are also women whose fastidiousness is such that they are the first to desire a change in the *menu*. When this occurs there are husbands that return to the animal state and shriek for blood; there are others of finer breed who collaborate with their wives in an effort to observe the courtesies and amenities of civilized life while agreeing that individual tastes shall suffer no interference. Now there you have true platonism, the ideal state in which the ancients instructed us, the—"

"Ideal state of pigsty," Nevius gruffly interrupted. 'What's all this rubbish you are rehearsing on me?"

Amused and vatic, Jones set about polishing an eye-glass.

"Rubbish, is it, dear boy? Well, perhaps; but then we have been merely exchanging ideas. Do have a liquor."

"No. I'm off. Good-night."

Jones watched him go and nodded confidentially to himself. "*Le menage à trois, c'est encore joli. Mais à quatre! Non, c'est d'un pur!*"

V.

Mrs. Carol's return was unheralded. One evening after a dinner at the Down-Town Club, Nevius found her entrancing as an angel, but far better garbed, outstretched in the drawing-room. From beneath the hem of the skirt the gold clock-work of a stocking glistened, the blue eyes that met his own were languid and sultry, and as he bent over to kiss her there rose to greet him the fresh odors of iris and of health.

"There, don't muss me up."

Unabashed Nevius drew a chair to where she lay, and taking her hand held it in his own.

"I can never tell you how glad I am. And I have wanted you so. You enjoyed yourself, I hope. Tell me all about it. Are you glad to be back?"

Mrs. Nevius withdrew the hand he held, and with two fingers patted a yawn.

"Of course I am glad to be back. Carol, do be careful," she admonished, for he had bent toward her again. "There's some one there. Of course I am glad to be back. I hate living in a trunk. What is it, Rebecca?"

The servant had entered; a note on a tray.

"A letter for you, mem. And there's an answer, mem."

Nevius moved his chair. His wife stood up and went forward to a lamp. There she turned.

"You are not going out, are you?"

And as Nevius shook his head, she made a motion to the servant."

"I will ring."

The woman left the room, and Mrs. Nevius, seating herself at the escritoire, busied herself with pen and paper.

"Whom is it from, Hilda?"

The question must have entangled her thoughts. She took the sheet on which she was writing, tore it up and tossed it aside.

"How can I write if you keep talking to me?" she asked almost piteously. "It's from Frances."

Frances was her sister, Mrs. Montrion, and as Nevius gathered up the *Post* and tried to lose himself in the advertisements, the name evoked a series of incidents that were not at all to his taste. There was the liaison with a dyspeptic boor, which, however, had interested him remotely, if at all, until Mrs. Montrion took it into her head to have herself and the *cavaliere servente* chaperoned by Hilda during a trip abroad. At that he had rebelled, and his rebellion had not been lessened on learning the object, which was to enable the Snaiths, during Mrs. Montrion's absence, to secure evidence against that lady's husband, whereby she might obtain a divorce and marry her lover. But the plot had fallen through. Montrion was not a man to be trifled with, and his wife grew timorous of results. Then, too, the *cavaliere servente*, after the fashion of his kind, had bestowed his services elsewhere. The subject was not agreeable, and to dismiss it Nevius tried to lose himself in the columns of the *Post.* Before he succeeded, the answer was written, dispatched as well, and Hilda returned to the sofa.

Nevius threw the paper aside. "If you are glad to be back," he began with a bad attempt at banter, "at least you are not enthusiastic."

"But what do you expect? Here I am tired out, and besides after what you wrote I thought you would be on your way to Chicago."

"Yes, I remember. But I found it was not necessary and I am glad now it was not. I only wish you had wired. If I dined down town it was only because it is less appalling than the house when you are gone."

Mrs. Nevius smiled with bright frostiness.

"But you have had Jenny all the time. Dear me, Carol, what do you want? A seraglio?"

And as though in challenge, she raised a fan and unfurled it with a sudden click.

Nevius shook his head.

"It is not nice of you to speak that way. It's not like you either. You know that I want no one but yourself." As he spoke he bent toward her, but before he could touch her, Mrs. Nevius moved, and shoving him gently enough aside, sat upright, smiling still.

"Listen to me, Carol, how long have we been married? Nearly seven years. Now, tell me, don't you think that in seven years a woman may get just a little tired of that sort of thing." In her great blue eyes interrogations floated, and in the corners of her mouth was a candor which would have delighted Greuze. "For I am. And if you are not," she added with a gesture so wide that it took in all New York, "there are so many other women who would like nothing better."

Nevius was on his feet. Into his face had come a look which his wife had seen before, and at which, mentally, she retreated. But before he could speak, she was at his side, her arms about his neck, her lips on his.

"Dear," she murmured. "Couldn't you see that I was jesting. Don't you know it, Carol? Don't you know that if I thought you could look at another woman it would break my heart?"

With both hands on his shoulders she held him a little from her, and with a pathos that seemed charged with love and grief eternal, gazed into his face.

"Tell me?"

"I suppose so," he answered, though with a thoroughly masculine sigh. "But then, whatever I may do or leave undone, you come always first."

Mrs. Nevius' eyes lighted visibly. She led him back to where they had sat and for a while very sweetly discussed with him matters of common interest. At last she stood up again, declaring that it was late.

"I am going," she announced. "Are you coming presently?"

Nevius led her to the door and drew the portière that she might pass.

"And Carol, when you come don't forget the gas."

The portière fell again. Nevius returned to the *Post*. There was an editorial which he read unheedingly. From a cablegram he learned of an epidemic in the Orient. From another that an English duke had died without an heir. A paragraph in the financial column interested him. There was a statement which concerned his own interests. He got out a note book and studied some figures; an idea in connection with them occurred to him, and at the desk he jotted down some memoranda which he re-copied and tearing up the draft put the copy in his pocket. He looked at the clock, the half hour which he had given himself had gone and he went upstairs, the gas forgot.

The following afternoon, on returning to the house, he went directly to his own room. At the office he had found that the memoranda were not in his pocket. In ordinary circumstances he would have recalled the substance of any such paper unaided, but in this instance subsequent episodes had driven the purport from his mind. Not in his bed-room, however, nor in his dressing-room, was the paper to be found. He questioned the housemaid; she had no information to impart. Where is the housemaid that ever had? After all, he reflected, it was not a matter of life or death, and if it were lost, was it not as Hilda had often said, because he was fiendish in his carelessness? And he was about to give the matter up when he remembered that he had first made a draft which he had torn and thrown aside. There was a chance that the housemaid had left the scrap-basket undisturbed and, presently, after getting into evening dress, he went to the drawing-room below.

The lights were lit, on the table was the *Post;* there, against the wall, was the escritoire of lacquer work and brass on which he had written, and beside it a basket of beribboned velvet.

One glance was sufficient, the contents had not been touched, and, emptying them, he began to arrange them on the desk. Yes, they were all there. In a moment he had them not only in proper position, but with three pieces of paper to spare. These he would have brushed away, but something on one of them caught his eye —*Dearest J*—, written in his wife's hand. But what preceded the adjective, or what had followed the *J*, there was nothing to tell. The second scrap was larger, and on it was written *he has not go—;* on the third were two words and a fraction that must have come from the middle of a sentence—*can't see y—*.

Nevius stared at these little papers and, as he stared, all interest in his own memoranda evaporated.

He looked again in the basket. It was quite empty. Whether the other bits of that letter had fallen, not in the basket, but on the floor, and had then been swept away, he did not try to determine. Enough remained. The J, of course, was Ablaut—Jimmy, as he was familiarly called. As for the rest, a child could have supplied the missing words—*He has not gone to Chicago; I can't see you to-night.*

And this was Hilda! For a while he sat, staring at the scraps, conscious only that he was suffering, endeavoring even to delude himself into a belief that some explanation might set this horrible thing aright. But little by little, as the impossible merged into the actual, the understanding came to him that the worst that could be done had been done, and he ceased to suffer. It was time to act.

From the stair came a rustle of silk, the sound of a footfall that he knew. As yet he had no plan. But as he became aware that Mrs. Montrion's sister was entering the room he stood up. His lips may have been a trifle compressed, but otherwise he had his everyday air; he looked well groomed, sedate, anxious, if at all, merely that dinner should not be too long delayed.

Mrs. Nevius passed through the curtains, the light shuttling her hair, illuminating the rose of her mouth. In her blue eyes were evocations of summer, and beneath them, on her cheeks, on the lobes of her ears, health had placed its token in pink. She was adorably dressed, adorably constructed, and dressed and constructed to be adored. In one hand was a fan, in the other a fold of her gown. At sight of her husband she smiled.

Nevius stayed her with a question.

"What was it that Frances had to say that was so important last night?"

With that motion which a swan has, Mrs. Nevius turned her head and for a moment seemed lost in the query. But at once she must have recollected.

"Nothing. The address of a milliner. How are things in the Street?"

"And you gave her the address, did you?"

"Of course, I did. Why? But what do you mean by asking all these questions?"

"And you found it necessary to add that I had not gone to Chicago, and that you couldn't see her, didn't you?"

Mrs. Nevius' big blue eyes seemed to grow bigger and bluer, but to her face came a flush with which health had nothing to do.

"You found it necessary to add that, didn't you?"

The fan she held, she opened and closed.

"I am sure," she said at last, "I don't understand—"

"Look."

At the invitation, at the gesture which accompanied it, she crossed the room, peered down at the scraps, at the basket from which they had come, at the rug and floor. When she raised her head she turned on her husband a look of absolute scorn and, straightening herself, confronted him.

"You, *you*, Carol Nevius, condescend to fumble through waste papers! A scullery-maid might do such a thing, a gentleman—never."

"Ah? Perhaps. But it was not for sociological information that I asked you to look at these things. It is because they are addressed to Ablaut, who, I see, is your lover."

Mrs. Nevius stepped back. In her face had come an expression which a princess might assume to a lackey who had dared to question her. Then at once, as in a storm, a sky of buttercups and forget-me-nots will suddenly appear, the indignation vanished and she laughed outright.

"Why, you great goose, that was written to your Jenny."

And as Nevius contented himself with staring at her. "But how," she cried, "how is it possible for any one to be such an idiot as you are!"

"I don't see—"

"Then you shall. On our way to town Mrs. Manhattan offered me a box for next Friday. I thought I could get you to take both Jenny and myself. Last night before you came in I sat down to write to her. I told her of the offer, and referring to you I said, "If he *has not got* anything on hand *I can't see yet* but that we may persuade him." Then I heard you at the door, and determined I would ask you first. But did you give me time? Did you? Was ever a woman mauled as I was? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? No, but aren't you?"

"Will you forgive me?"

He was very penitent, very meek, very happy, and as his wife pretended to look as though she were not quite sure whether forgiveness could be granted to such a sinner, he caught her in his arms.

"Oh Carol!" muttered that aggrieved little woman, freeing herself as best she might. "How can you be so dreadful! Some one's there."

Between the curtains Rebecca stood in silent announcement of dinner.

VI.

For several days Nevius saw little of his wife. At no time had she been visible when he left the house, and now when he returned there seemed to be always some one at dinner. The cloth removed, he sought the library, a room on the second floor which separated his apartment from hers. By day it was gloomy, for light reached it from above but at night it was pleasant and very still. Lined on three sides with books, it was furnished with a wide table, easy chairs, a hanging lamp, and a sofa large as a bed. Here Nevius passed his evenings. Time was valuable to him just then; he had more documents to examine than he could handle at his office, and many a letter to read and write. Later, the work at an end, he would go in search of his wife, but in those days she must have been over-fatigued; her door was locked.

This regimen made him morose. That the effect was noticed is presumable. One evening he was gratified with the intelligence that he was to dine alone with Hilda, and incidentally that there was a surprise in store. What was it? *Ah, voila!* If she told, where would the surprise be?

In his delight at recovered companionship Nevius promptly forgot all about that surprise; during the service of the courses he talked of his plans and projects as he had not had the chance to talk for ages before, and when the meal was done and they had gone to the other room there was a caress in his manner which Mrs. Nevius understood.

"Now, Carol," she admonished, as he took a seat at her side. "Do behave, it's immoral, there's no other word for it."

"Immoral!"

"If it is not immoral then, it's worse. It is bourgeois."

From the past there floated to him memories of the old pre-nuptial days, when there had been no question of ethics, no question of customs, nothing in fact save a frank abandonment to love and life. But to those days he was incapable even of an allusion.

"It is not nice of you to talk like that," he answered. "You accused me some time ago of picking up Jones' cigarette stumps; a speech such as yours smacks of Mrs. Anderson a mile away. I have begged you so to drop her.

"Oho! I'm not nice, eh?" And Mrs. Carol nodded and smiled seductively. "Wait till you see. Now tell me, how have you been passing your evenings?"

"Very badly."

"But how, I mean. What have you been doing?"

"Writing letters."

"And how long has it taken you?"

"Two or three hours."

"Precisely. Now if by any combination of circumstances I were able to shorten those two or three hours into one, and mind I only say If, but if I were, would I be nice or would I not?"

To these propositions Nevius assented.

"Very good, will you come with me for a moment."

Mrs. Nevius led him to the floor above and threw open the library door. Seated at the table was a young woman of that type of blonde beauty which only a sight of creates in the average man a desire to jump straight down the possessor's throat. As the door opened she rose from her seat, and with a gesture, perhaps of embarrassment, her hand went to the side of her head and busied itself with a curl.

Mrs. Nevius looked at the girl, and in a little voice, which was used only on particular occasions, affably, from the tips of the lips, she murmured:

"This is Mr. Nevius, Miss Vührer." Then with a glance that stripped Miss Vührer from neck to heel, she turned to her husband.

"Miss Vührer is a stenographer. Oh, quite an expert, I believe. Miss Vührer thinks she can be of great assistance to you. If you have any letters to-night, why not let Miss Vührer show you her abilities?"

Whether or not this projection of peaches and cream into the privacy of the library caused Nevius pleasure or displeasure, not even a lady who was eying him could decide.

"Certainly," he answered, but he spoke in the matter-of-fact way which he brought into all business transactions. "Certainly, I make no doubt that Miss Vührer is competent, and

I shall be glad of her assistance. Let me see. Yes, I have several letters. Perhaps—"

"I will leave you then."

With a sweet little bow to the young woman, Mrs. Nevius backed from the room and closed the door.

"Perhaps you will sit down, Miss Vührer. Yes, you might sit there, please. You have everything you require?"

Miss Vührer, a pad in her hand, a row of sharpened pencils before her, resumed her seat. Nevius dropped on the sofa, and after a glance at some papers, which he had taken from his pocket, began:

"Waters and Rivers, Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, Dear Sirs:—In reply to yours of the 18th I have to inform you that—"

And so on and so forth. For an hour the dictation continued uninterrupted, save by pauses of thought, and the tick of the clock on the mantel. Once Nevius heard the door bell ring, and once he found himself scrutinizing this blonde young creature, who rarely turned her eyes to him. The letters done, he stood up.

"Thank you, Miss Vührer, that will do. If you will copy out what you have, I can sign later on."

He left the room and went down the stairs. On the way he caught the sound of a voice, which, musical as the squawk of a bicycle he recognized at once, and on reaching the hall, picked up his hat and coat. But his step had been heard, his movements perhaps divined, there was a jostle of portière rings, and before he had got his arms well into the coat, Mrs. Carol was at his side.

"You are not going out, are you? Do come in. It's only Ablaut, you don't mind him."

"Not in the least, but I do mind his carrying off my best umbrella every time it rains, and I wish you would tell him so too."

"Oh, pooh! Who's afraid of you? Tell me," and Mrs. Carol came closer to her husband. "What do you think of her?"

"Miss Vühren? She is very pretty."

"Is she really!"

The air of surprise which Mrs. Nevius assumed could not have been dissimilar to that which the Duchess of Burgundy exhibited, when she learned that other women had five fingers like herself.

"Is she really! I didn't notice. How queer men are! But do come in."

"No, not just now. I have an odd feeling in my head, a walk will do me good."

And bending toward his wife he received from that lady a rapid and noiseless peck.

When Nevius returned Miss Vühren was about to leave. The drawing-room was dark and untenanted. He opened the door for the girl, wished her good night, and went in search of his wife. But Mrs. Nevius must have already retired. There was no answer to his knock.

VII.

Meanwhile nothing further had been said about Mrs. Manhattan's box. Mrs. Carol may have abandoned the project, and as for Nevius, the matter had passed from his mind. He had other things to think of. One evening he returned to the house later than usual; he was tired and looked cross. On entering the drawing room he found his wife already there. At the moment he said nothing, contenting himself with staring at her. Her gown was an artful combination of silk and tulle, colorless yet silvery, and in it, with a large fan and a low bodice, very delightful she was to behold. About her were the incendiary and not altogether definable emanations which the well sent-out of her sex not infrequently exhale, but of which she had made a study. There are women, few indeed, but there are women who merely in raising their arms define the reason of love, and Mrs. Nevius was one of them. The costume, however, and its attendant charms were not, Nevius understood, intended solely for his own delectation. A festival of some kind was imminent.

"Aren't you going to dress?"

As Mrs. Nevius spoke, the tips of her lips just moving, her chin a trifle advanced, her eyebrows arched, the blue splendors of her eyes dilating, she might have sat for Spring pouting at Winter.

With the *sans-gêne* of a married man, Nevius dropped in a chair.

"Anyone would think I had shot you," she added, after a pause which she made populous with interrogations.

Nevius straightened himself.

"How long will it take you to pack?"

"Two months."

"Hilda! do be serious."

"Two months I tell you. Not a minute less. But what has happened? I give you my word you look as though you had been studying the extradition treaty. What's gone wrong?"

"I go to Paris to-morrow and I want you to go too."

To this Mrs. Nevius made no reply unless the click of a fan may be so accounted.

"The Board of the Interocean Canal met to-day and they want me to go. In fact I have to. The stockholders, in spite of De Lesseps, are all there, and the Board needs more money. How much God only knows, and when I say God only I exaggerate—"

"Don't be coarse," Mrs. Carol interjected, but she spoke mechanically, her thoughts afar.

"I have the ticket, a *cabine de luxe;* it is big enough for three. Rebecca could get such things as you need in shape in no time. And it would be so sweet," he added.

This conclusion was allowed to pass unnoticed. With a gesture which was habitual to Mrs. Carol when called upon to think quickly, she raised a hand to her forehead. On one finger a great jewel glistened, but not more so than the finger-tip. When she lowered it her face was almost apathetic.

"It would be so sweet of you, Hilda."

Mrs. Nevius dropped her fan, patted a fold of the skirt, and, as though reflecting still, crossed to where he sat.

He was on his feet at once.

"I knew you would!" he cried, and caught her to him.

"How long are you to be gone?"

"Oh," he answered eagerly, "the time to get there and turn around."

Mrs. Carol freed herself.

"Dinner has been announced. Let us go in."

"Yes, and let's have some champagne. Do you remember the St. Marceau we used to get? Do you remember the little restaurant we went to one night on the other side of the Seine? Do you remember—"

The memories of other days returned, too abundant, too fragrant, too sacred even, for enumeration while the servant was there. But during the progress of the meal there was plenty of animation in that room, many a jest and many a laugh. The jests, however, came from him. Mrs. Carol smiled and nodded, and nodded and smiled, but otherwise her contributions to the gaiety were slight. At last they moved again to the adjoining room. There, when they had got seated, she took his hand in hers.

"Carol, I can't go."

Surprise, annoyance too, lifted him from the seat.

"Now wait." With but a gesture she had him back again. "If you insist I will obey you, but—"

"Obey me, why—"

"But it will be very selfish of you. I am not a bagman's wife, Carol. I can't leave New York at a moment's notice. In spite of your attitude I have some small position in society. I have engagements to keep, duties to which I must attend. I have my friends, my family. What would they all say? But supposing I were to go. Who would look after the house? When I got back it would be in rack and ruin. You're to be gone but a few weeks. Surely after nearly seven years you can do without me for that space of time. And I would only be in your way. But look at it from a different point. Supposing, as many a woman has, I not only refused to go, but refused to let you. Whereas I am going to do everything to get you off comfortably, and not only that, but I shall be on the dock to welcome you home. Only on one condition though—"

And as he manifested no earthly interest in the condition, as he looked sulky and very cross, she twisted about in such a manner that he was obliged to notice her, and repeated tentatively and seductively:

"Only on one condition though—"

"Well, what condition then?" he finally snarled.

But Mrs. Carol was very patient that evening; very tender. She stroked him much as she might a big baby.

"That you promise, no, but faithfully and honestly promise to be back in six weeks."

By way of answer Nevius bit his lip.

"And see," she continued, "I was going to

Mrs. Usselex' to-night. I was going to make you take me too. Yes, whether you liked it or not. But Mrs. Usselex will have to do without me. Why, Carol, I wouldn't leave you to-night, no not to sup with the queen."

She touched a bell.

"Rebecca," she ordered when the servant appeared. "There was a cab to be here at eleven. Countermand it, and tell Miss Vühres not to wait."

These commands distributed she turned again to her husband.

A glance was enough to tell her that his annoyance had gone, that presently he would accept the situation, its logic as well, and with some inward approbation of her own prowess she stood manfully to the guns.

"You can do so many little things for me, too, Carol. I want corsets of that woman in the Rue de la Paix. I want gloves from the

Louvre and lingerie from Doucet. If you tell the corset woman I want six more like the last she will understand. And you must order them as soon as you get there. Corsets take forever. And the gloves—but I had best make a list. You won't lose it, will you? Oh, if it were April now how I would jump at the chance. In the winter Paris gives me the horrors. You must be good, though; no flirtations, *rien des horizontales.* Do you hear?"

Yes, he had heard; he gave the required promise, but absently, his eyes on the rug.

"And you must take good care of yourself, too. You mustn't tire yourself out, and catch one of those horrid Paris fevers. If you did, though," she added after a moment, "how I would fly to you!"

The words were nothing. But in the intonation, in the expression of anxiety her face took on, there was a tenderness, a solicitude, an affection so sincere and abiding that Nevius felt ashamed.

It was selfishness, he reflected, to wish her to accompany him on a disagreeable trip, and it was surly of him now that he saw the selfishness of the wish to sit staring at the intricacies of the rug. But still, though he said nothing, his face spoke for him and presently when he put his arm about her Mrs. Nevius felt that the battle was won.

VIII.

Save in New York, and in the antipodes, the early winter is rarely pleasant. But when Nevius reached Paris the sky was white as tin and in the air that sparkle which Fifth avenue knows in March.

He descended, to use an idiom of the land, at a small hotel in the Rue Castiglione, where he was greeted as only those are who are magnificent with small coin.

"Seigneur! I who dreamed of Monsieur the night of the day before yesterday. No, it does good to the eyes to again see Monsieur. And Madame? She carries herself always well? Ah, how I am content! God of gods, to say that I of it have dreamed!"

It was the janitress, obese and fulsome, welcoming him in the excesses of her tongue.

"And Baptiste? It is there he is. The trunks of Monsieur to the number 12, and let it not loiter. And hey!" she cried with much haughtiness to an interloper who had opened the cab-door and was now officious in the transfer of the luggage, "And hey, species of calf's head marined in mud, go, I pray you, a little that way and see if I there am."

Number 12, in which Nevius presently found himself, was a yellow suite, where he had brought his wife on each of their visits to Paris. Though two years had passed since the last trip, apparently nothing had happened to it, it was as ornate and trivial as before. He had but to close his eyes and fancy her calling to him, as she was wont to do from the room beyond, and, for a while, in an absurd, canary-covered armchair he sat reminiscent.

The journey over had been uneventful, as such journeys ever are. There was the usual number of merry commercial gentlemen in the smoking-room, and on deck, blanketed in sedan-chairs, the usual quota of unalluring dames. Apart from a man whom he remembered but whose name he could not recall, he had barely exchanged a word with anyone. But then, he had not been well. On the second day out the curious sensation of a lancinating burn had come and gone, leaving him perplexed as to the cause, yet mindful of an anterior, though less acute attack. On the morrow there was nothing, a heavy feeling merely, which he attributed to the effects of the sea, and which remained with him until the voyage was done.

And now, as he sat in the little sitting-room, he felt he was ill, yet after the fashion of men to whom illness exists only through hearsay, he refused to admit it. He would dine, he told himself, and look in at the *Comedie.* For though he objected to theatres in New York, there was no weariness to him in that home of perfect acting and perfect French.

Contrary to precedent, the prescription did him good. On the morrow he awoke, if not alert, at least refreshed, and after a breakfast of coffee and the *Figaro*—in which he learned that Mr. Cleveland had the Constitution of the United States tatooed on his back—he went to the corset woman, across the way to Doucet, afterward in search of gloves to the Louvre, and it was only these matters attended to, that he bethought him of the duties which had brought him to France.

Business in that country is not transacted with the same dash which has made the success of our own. The agents whom Nevius visited were not to be hurried. There was a preliminary plenitude of form to be observed, punctuated, it is true, with abundant promises. But the Canal Company, albeit in its quality of corporation, without a soul, had, nevertheless, a stomach, and Nevius was fully aware that that stomach was not to be fed and be filled on the faith of to-morrow's baked meats. Yet beautifully clear was it made to him that it was precisely on food of that kind that the company would have to subsist until a general meeting could be called and terms arranged. Meanwhile, the agents would be only too glad to have him breakfast with them, dine with them and sup, as well.

Under the diligent supervision of friends encountered and recovered, a week was helped away without any abuse of these offers. The corset woman, he found, was not as dilatory as she had been represented; already a package of her wares had come, another from Doucet, too. As for the gloves, long since they had been in his keeping. The machinery in the agent's office was at last at work, and in a fortnight, so far as he was then capable of determining, there would be nothing to prevent his return.

On the morning of the ninth day after his arrival there came to him, with the coffee and the *Figaro*, a batch of letters postmarked New York. Among them was one of blue paper, stamped with the Nevius crest, directed in his wife's familiar hand. Oh, he had been awaiting it, calculating when it would arrive, devoured by impatience, hoping even that tide and weather favoring, it might reach him the day before. But now it had come, and letting the other letters lay where they were, he opened it, his eyes glad and eager.

"Dear Carol:

"I have bad news for you, or, at least what seems bad to me. Your whole affair with that woman has come out. My father has been told, and he says that if I do not come to him at once he will disinherit me. Precisely what course he will pursue I do not know; indeed since I first learned of your conduct I have been so dumb and crushed that the family have seen that I am incapable of acting for myself, and have taken the matter entirely out of my hands. But, independent of them, I know that you will agree with me, that it is best that we should part. For years we have led different lives; you never would take me anywhere; your pleasures were your own, not mine. But I will not reproach you. I know your nature, and how you resent interference. Hereafter there will be no one to bother you. A bachelor's life, without ties or duties, is what you prefer. As for myself, I may tell you that a more wretched, broken-hearted woman does not exist. In separating myself from you, I say good-bye to so much—to my wasted years, to my ruined youth, to love, to happiness and to life. But it must be said, and in such grief as you would pity could you see, I say it. So soon as I am able I leave this empty and dishonored house; there are other women that will come to you in it, be truer to them than you have been to me. I can write no more, my eyes are blinded with my tears.

"HILDA."

When Nevius finished this curious communication he neither changed color nor fainted away. But he did rumple it a little and then smoothed it out and read it again. It is a trick, he told himself, a forgery, a practical joke. But where was the trickster capable of perpetrating a jest such as that? "She must be mad," he reflected. "What affair of mine has come out? Why must she go to her father. Why is she dumb and crushed? Why—why—why—?"

But ask questions of canary-colored furniture in a Paris hotel and see how communicative it is. Yet to the soul that is sinking Hope throws a straw. With the idea that something in the other letters might convey a clue to the mystery he ran them over. One was from the Canal Company. He threw it down. Another was from his broker; he tossed it aside. A third was from Chicago; he let it lie unopened. But the fourth was more promising; in one corner it bore the neat imprint of the Athenæum Club and it was covered with the oblique scrawl with which Alphabet Jones was accustomed to distress his publishers and confuse his friends.

"Dear Reprobate:

"It is the way of this envious world to hate an adulterer. The brute has had such a confounded good time that the rest of us are jealous—an apothegm which you won't have to read twice to understand that I have been interviewed by Mrs. Carol. Yesterday I was sent for and I at once precipitated myself to renew the expression of my homage. Your princess was looking remarkably well, but of you and of one who shall be nameless she did not speak as she looked, in fact, it would be hyperbole to say that she was complimentary. Of course I reasoned with her as best I could. I told her that accidents increased the best of families; that woman proposes and a poor devil accepts; that matrimony is paved with improper attentions. But my arguments were treated like cob-webs. I was told that you had gone abroad to avoid trouble, and though I intimated that I should do the same thing, and moreover that disappearances were deceptive, I was warmly urged to advise you to remain where you are. As a consequence I advise you to do nothing of the sort, though, between ourselves, it is always stupid to come back and explain things which need no explanation, and as for exoneration only sinners feel the need of that. Perhaps then your best course is to study the maxims of that Hindu philosopher whose name is I Dhont Kare; try not to be any more particular than you have been in the observance of the XIth commandment; and, in any event, *Tace et Memento.* Divorces, as you may be aware, are quite modish this year. They are of all shades of green, cut low and behold, with or without frills as personal taste dictates, and are worn *en train, sans pudeur et avec reproche.*

"N. B.—Your wife would rather be dead than out of the fashion.

"With this for *carte du pays*, choose your own route. But which ever way you go, don't talk back, it is middle-class to begin with, and besides an insult ignored insults the insulter more than the insulted.

"Yours in the bonds of Christian fellowship,

"A. B. FENWICK CHISHOLM-JONES."

In a crescendo of bewilderment Nevius turned to the furniture again. "Am I asleep?" he asked. "Is this real, or a nightmare? Is it actual or am I insane? Who is it that shall be nameless? What is this rubbish about divorce? What is this obesity of the mind which Jones mistakes for wit? What does he mean by suggesting that I should remain where I am? Remain where I am! The steamer isn't built that can carry me fast enough. One word with Hilda, only one, and this farce will end?"

Yet would it? Presently, with a remorse that was childish in its poignancy, one by one he recalled the numberless instances in which he had refused to take her to this function and to that, the embargo he had placed on certain of her associates, the mortification which she must have felt because of his attitude to her family, his surliness to her friends, the utter perversity with which he had thwarted the one poor little wish she had ever expressed, the natural, feminine desire to entertain and be entertained in turn.

Ah, indeed, if it were because of these things she was to leave him, he had no defence, not one. He could only raise his hat and speed her on her way. No doubt she would be happier, oh, much happier without him.

But was such a thing possible? Could it be that the one being in all the world whom he loved, whom he had loved for seven years with a seven times seven increasing love, whom he loved now with a prodigality of affection of which he had been previously unaware, could it be possible that she was to leave him because of this?

The accusation in regard to the woman perplexed, he knew it to be a delusion, one which he could rout with a word. That which presently affected him was the suffering Hilda must endure because of her belief in it. In similar circumstances what would his sufferings be! Why they would drive him mad. But apart from that the thing which moved him most was the fact that she could condemn him unheard, that she could go to others for her knowledge of him. It was not a thing he could have done to her. Of that he was quite sure. But on what, after all, had the condemnation been based? He was not a saint, far from it. In spite of his present perplexity, there had been moments when his deportment to others had not been licit. But never, as the phrase is used, had there been an affair, fancies merely which at best, or at worst, had not outlasted a week. What was it then that had come out? Why was she dumb and crushed?

And then, suddenly as intuitions visit us unaided by anything more tangible than that intangible operation which has been christened unconscious cerebration, a clew appeared and vanished.

"By the living God! I believe it is some nastiness of that Mrs. Anderson. If it is—"

He had sprung to his feet; his hand clenched menaced the gilding of the cornice, the filmy yellow of the curtains, the world that lay beyond.

But the sound of his voice must have startled him; he crossed the room, ashamed of the outburst, and presently, aided by the understanding that if ever calm were required of him it was then, he sat down again and strove to think.

This was Monday. There would be no ship from Havre till the end of the week, but on Wednesday there was a choice of boats that sailed from Southampton and Liverpool. It was now high noon. At three the Club-train left for London. By midnight he could be there. On the morrow he could engage passage. The day after he could sail. A week later he would be in New York, and one hour after he put foot on shore this nightmare would be dissipated and Hilda in his arms. Was he not sure of her, and how few the words that would serve to make her sure of him?

Closing his eyes he saw her again, as he had seen her the morning of his departure, her dark hair falling about the sweetness of her face, and in a voice that seemed tremulous with emotion, imploring him to remember his promise to return to her soon.

Yes surely, that promise he would keep, and with a lunge at a tasseled cord, presently he had Baptiste attending to his traps.

"Not the trouble to come to take oneself off so swift, is it not, my sir? But my sir will re-come, very sure. The America, it is far however. Beautiful land, eno says, and rich! Ah, how I wish my sir me would lead with him!"

Baptiste pottered away, mumbling to himself. But Nevius had gone. There was a trinket at the jeweler's opposite which would look well on Hilda's throat. Then, too, there was a telegram to be sent to the Canal Company. These things accomplished, he was able to eat an omelette, and get to the remote Gare du Nord in time to catch the train.

The next morning he awoke bewildered. What had happened to the Rue Castiglione? Why was it so hushed? Where were the bird-like trills of the hawkers? What had been done to the roar and rumble of Paris? And that sky of glittering tin, a pall had been stretched across it.

The Rue Castiglione no doubt was as noisy and as bright as ever. It was in Jermyn street that he had awaked, in a room which overlooked the ghostliness of mews that lay dumb and hidden beneath a fog of leprous brown.

It was by candle that he dressed, and when at last he was able to set out for the steamship office his teeth chattered with the rawness of the air. Hell is supposed to be hot, but fancy it cold, and there can not be a pin to choose between it and London in December.

The steamship office was in Cockspur street, the throw of a stone beyond, but Nevius felt too numb and depressed to get there unfortified. He went back to the hotel, ordered some drink, and in the gloom of the coffee-room sat a while, a copy of the *Times* before him. But since when had that serious sheet appeared in pink?

Before he could account for such levity, the paper disappeared, the room as well, and when, long after, he issued from a terrible struggle with rushing waters he was lying on a bed; at his side was a little man with white whiskers.

Nevius opened his eyes wider:

"I must have fainted, didn't I?"

The little man nodded confidentially, with an air of approval.

"And a dom fine one it was altogether. Be easy a bit now, you're not to get up this day."

"But I've got to," Nevius answered. "I've got to get my ticket." Then he lost sight of the little man, and when the white whiskers again appeared it was after another combat with thunderclaps and torrential streams.

The little man was prophetic as a ballad. Nevius did not get up that day, nor on the morrow, either, though for a while he was permitted to look out at the dinginess of the empty mews. But he looked with little pleasure; he was weak and confused, and on his forehead above the left eye, a hot iron seemed to be searing the bone.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We've been kicking over the traces, haven't we?" the little man asserted with the same confidential approving air.

"Not a bit."

"And dom stupid it would be if we couldn't."

"But I haven't. I have been good as gold. I don't know what fiend of a microbe has battened on me. I don't know what can be the matter with my head."

"And we've been angry, too. Anger is a poison. We didn't know that, did we? Strychnine congests the brain, anger congests the liver."

"I don't see why you say that."

"When we go gunning for a lady in our sleep, we know what has happened when we were awake, don't we? We've got our system upset, we've got something on our mind, and as for that pain in our head, it's a taste of neuralgia that will leave us with a bit of quinine."

Nevius took the quinine, and to the burn in his forehead was added a roar in his ears. The night was white; barely did he close his eyes; to the agony of his temples was joined the agony of his thoughts. He tried to sleep, but the dual agony banished that benison, until at last he remembered the porter and through his aid succeeded in drugging himself with drink.

On the morrow, the little man changed the medicine; he ordered exalgine, and the burn in the forehead went. But not on that day was Nevius able to take ship, nor on the morrow, either. A week went by before he could go. Yet, meanwhile he had cabled to Hilda, telling her of his illness, imploring her from across the sea to remain where she was until he could reach her and show her that it was she he loved and none other.

This despatched he secured a prescription for a solution of opium, chloral and chloroform which did away with any further need of arousing the porter, and of which, when sleepless and in pain, he was to take one-half of one ounce.

It was on Thursday that he sailed. Eight days later, at six in the evening, he landed at Hoboken and drove to his house.

IX.

The house was empty as a vacant bier, barred and bolted, unlighted, and to his repeated summons dumb. None the less, through that curious optimism which will visit even the condemned, Nevius told himself that he was but the victim of some accident, presently to be explained. He was disheartened indeed during the trip across he had done little but prefigure the almost instant reunion, which must occur when he stood once again face to face with his wife, yet in spite of the agony of the disappointment, as he descended the steps he affected, through that duality common to certain natures, to make light of the whole thing, and wondered what had become of Michette.

"Drive to the Brevoort," he ordered.

But before the cab reached the avenue, the current of his thought had veered, and countermanding the first order, told the man to drive to the Snaiths. For it was there she must be. And, a cigarette between his lips, he threw himself back and resolutely dispossessed his mind of thought.

The cigarette done, he began on another. Before he had finished it, the carriage stopped at that corner of Madison avenue where, years before, he had sipped the brew whose effect was potent still. Through the glass above the door came a light from the hall beyond. The windows of the drawing-room, too, were lighted, and from the rooms on either side of the entrance there came also a filter of gas. Yes, she was there. And he rang the bell, not violently, but with a certain energy of his own.

"Where is Mrs. Nevius?"

The woman who had opened the door, started as at a malefactor, but immediately she recovered herself.

"I don't know, sir. Would you wish to see Mrs. Snaith?"

Nevius nodded. For the life of him he could not question the servant further. He entered a reception room and stalked to and fro, though whether for one minute or fifty, he afterward forgot. The intermediate was submerged and forever lost when Mrs. Snaith appeared. But the cabman remembered, and for the purpose of these pages that may suffice.

"Where is Hilda?" he asked, and, prompted by the teachings of an earlier education, he raised her hand to his lips.

Mrs. Snaith withdrew the hand and for a moment eyed him strabismally, then in the deprecatory manner which was peculiar to her, addressed the floor.

"We thought—that is, we heard—Hilda said that—you were to remain abroad."

"Where is she? I must see her."

Mrs. Snaith fluttered her pallid hands.

"She is not well. She is not well at all. In fact, she is too ill to see you."

"To ill to see *me*. What nonsense. I shall see her. Is she upstairs?"

As he spoke he turned. Mrs. Snaith made no attempt to detain him.

"Hilda is away," she remarked. "Mr. Snaith is upstairs if you care to see him, but won't the lawyers do?"

"Lawyers! What lawyers?"

Through sheer surprise Mrs. Snaith for the first time in her life looked him in the face.

"When did you get here?"

"An hour ago."

"And don't you know that the suit has been begun?"

Nevius had been standing, but at this statement he dropped into a chair and covered his eyes.

In a musing, contemplative way the lady gazed at him, and presently, with a sort of inquiring defiance, she added—

"Of course you won't contest it."

Nevius looked up. There was such bewilderment in his expression that the lady grew bolder.

"The lawyers say that it is a clear case," she announced a little loftily.

"A clear case of what? Do tell me what you mean."

"Hilda wrote to you I am sure."

"Hilda wrote nothing. She told me that an affair of mine had come out. That she was a broken-hearted woman because of it. The instant I got her letter I started to come here. If I have not got here sooner, it's through no fault of mine. But I cabled her; didn't she get it?"

Mrs. Snaith shrugged her shoulders.

"It's all very well to send cablegrams from London. What you ought to have done was to have behaved yourself in New York. And it's all very well for you to look at me that way. You know better than anyone. It took Hilda a long time before she could believe such a thing possible of either of you. But I knew what kind of a creature she was the first time I set eyes on her."

"But can't you tell me," Nevius cried, "can't you tell me whom you mean? '

Mrs. Snaith's thin lips filled with abundant scorn.

"Why, your mistress, of course, that Adulam girl—"

Nevius was on his feet by this time, the expression in his face was not pleasant to behold, he was quite white beside; and when he confronted the lady, as he instantly did, his voice was not wholly assured.

"I have never contradicted a woman in my life, never to my knowledge have I been uncivil to one, but—"

He hesitated, and with a gasp which must have been the escape of rage compressed, abruptly he mastered himself.

"Nor will I begin with you."

There was a bell on the table, he turned and touched it.

"But it is my duty to Miss Adulam to say—"

A servant appeared, and interrupting himself, he addressed her.

"Tell Mr. Snaith I wish to see him."

And as the servant disappeared he added:

"It is my duty to her to say that your accusation would be monstrous were it not absurd."

The lady smiled stealthily. Such a remark could be treated with disdain. And, smiling, left the room.

Nevius neither saw nor heeded. He stood, his head bowed, his hands behind his back, till there came a shuffle of feet in the hall, and an obese dwarf with an erysipeliptic skin halted in the doorway.

"Well? What do you want? I'll teach *you* to cut *me* in the street.

Nevius reached for his hat and put it on.

"Your wife has charged Miss Adulam—"

"My wife? My wife isn't in the habit of making charges—"

"Permit me, you are wrong, she is. It is not so long ago she hired a parcel of detectives to manufacture evidence against Montrion, and if Mrs. Montrion didn't use it, it was only because, as she told me herself, she was afraid Montrion would shoot her."

"It's a lie."

"What your wife says in regard to Miss Adulam may be so described. She knows it and so do you. What Hilda thinks I have yet to learn."

"If you don't know already, more fool you. If you have come here with any intention of contesting this suit, you might as well go back. The lawyers have daughters of their own and they say they'll make an example of you."

"Ah! you may tell them from me that I will contest it until the last armed court of appeals expires—which I suppose is just what they want."

"By God then, if you do, I'll ruin you."

"And you may say, too, that I shall be at the Brevoort until I can get into my own house, and meanwhile whenever they take a fancy to serve the summons—"

"You've been served," the dwarf shouted. "You've been served by publication. When I employ lawyers I get my money's worth. The papers are full of it."

Nevius ripped a glove in two.

"Do you mean that you have got Miss Adulam's name in connection with mine?"

In his voice were such angers, in his bearing such threats, that the dwarf wheeled like a rat surprised.

"Then you ought to be trampled under foot," Nevius gnashed, and striding after him cried, "In Hebrew there are four words for reptile, in my vocabulary there is but one—*Snaith*."

The old man squirmed to the stairs, shrieking obscenities, fearful of attack.

But the front door opened and closed. Nevius had gone.

X.

"Carol, this is the saddest thing that ever happened to me."

On reaching the hotel, Nevius, after securing rooms, had sent for the papers. On the first page of the one he first examined was his name in leaded type, and beneath it, written in that reporter spirit which stops not even at a column, was an account of the last sensation, the petition of Mrs. Carol Nevius for divorce on the ground of her husband's adultery with Janet Adulam and Gertrude Vührer. Though he had eaten nothing since noon, he sickened as he read, and was obliged to put the page down. The remainder of the article declared that after a painful scene at his house he had confessed his misconduct and fled abroad. The other papers contained articles of similar tenour, though one, more enterprising perhaps, stated that the correspondents were the housemaid and the cook.

An hour passed before Nevius could hold a pen, then he had sent a message to Jones, and now, as the novelist, cloaked in an Inverness, the white of his neckcloth just visible, entered the room, there was no cynicism in his voice, a sympathy merely, abiding and sincere.

"The saddest," he repeated with just a glance at where the papers lay. "If there are words of consolation I do not know them."

"It is hideous," Nevius muttered. "I don't wonder you advised me to remain where I was—"

"Did I suppose—could any one suppose such a thing possible? When I read that drivel I was in a rage beside which the anger of Achilles was a fleeting annoyance. Your wife ought to be tarred and feathered."

Nevius raised a hand in protest.

"It is not her fault. It's that father-in-law of mine."

"Father-*at*-law you mean. But that's neither here nor there. The thing is done, and a more abominable iniquity never was committed. That your wife should wish a divorce, *passe encore.* But that in her effort to get it she should put a young girl into leaded type, a girl who was her intimate friend; a girl whose people were governors of New York at a time when the Snaiths, if they existed, were cleaning the streets; no, in the entire history of civilized life there is no parallel for it. And who is this other correspondent? Why didn't she stick to her and let Miss Adulam out?"

"Hilda had nothing to do with it!" Nevius answered dejectedly. "Don't say anything against her. I can't and won't permit it."

"Bosh."

But the novelist spoke in an undertone. From a box on the table he took a gold-tipped cigarette, at which article of London luxury he sniffed, and for a while there was silence in that room.

But presently Nevius, who had sat, his face in his hands, looked wearily up at his friend.

"What do they say?"

"Who? People in general? Every one seems to be very well pleased. Some of the men are indignant at the publicity, knowing how, in similar circumstances, they would feel themselves. Others are indignant, too, but their indignation is partly envy, partly disgust, at having no such chances themselves. As for the women, that is a different guitar. You have got one of their sacred sex into trouble, and as a body they won't forgive. Though individually, were you not rather compromising at present, you might toss monogrammed cambrics as before. On the whole, then, I may say that people in general are rather pleased than otherwise. There is a land where there is much joy over the sinner that repents. In the world we live in the joy is at his detection."

Nevius leaned across the table.

"Do you mean to say that it is believed?"

"Well, you know —" And for a second the unembarrassable Jones actually hesitated. "You see, Carol, to be frank with you, more or less, don't you know, for some time past people have connected Miss Adulam's name with yours. And they say, you know, that there were times when she—well, when she came to see you."

Nevius sank back.

"But even so," he queried. "Even so—"

"Oh, if you put it in that light, in any light for that matter, I am with you. Of course it was sufficient for me to see it stated that you had made a confession, to know that you had done nothing of the sort. It is what we don't do that gets into the papers, never what we have done, which after all," the novelist added to himself, "is sufficient for most of us. The point is here, however, people had doubts, now they have none. Naturally you will declare Miss Adulam innocent, and the world will treat her as though you had never opened your head. But tell me, what sort of evidence have they?"

"Evidence! As God is my witness that girl is as straight as your sister."

The reply came so abruptly, in a voice so indignant, and yet so earnest, that the novelist stared. Not for a moment had he doubted but that the facts were as Mrs. Nevius stated them.

His anger, his sympathy, too, were due to the knowledge that people of ordinary refinement do not permit certain forms of publicity. That Miss Adulam had taken a step aside, that Nevius had aided and abetted in the taking of that step, were matters which concerned him not in the least. To his thinking the wantonness of the whole affair consisted in the fact that Mrs. Nevius, in her desire for a divorce, had not gone about it in such a way that no one, not even the attorneys, could suspect that there was so much as a shred of linen which needed the services of a laundress. Men and women of decent breeding sunk their private grievances and separated with mutual delight, no doubt, but also with common courtesy. The act which Mrs. Nevius had committed was the act of a scullion, at best of a young person in Harlem. No matter how outraged she had felt, refinement should have inhibited her from disgracing a girl before the eyes of the multitude. It was that which had aroused his wrath, not once had the suspicion come to him that the charge might not be true.

But now as he stared at Nevius he saw that it was false. He was far too old a bird to be caught with chaff. He was far too good a critic of private theatricals not to know the true ring when he heard it, and as he saw in Nevius' face, in his bearing and attitude, that transfiguring innocence which only the guiltless can display, he pounded the table with his fist.

"By George then, if that's the case this whole matter is more damnable than it was before. Why, Carol, Bernhardt isn't in it with your wife."

"It isn't my wife, I tell you, it's her people. You know how they acted in regard to Montrion. They have done the same thing to me, with this difference, Fanny Mortrion was behind the scenes, and Hilda knew nothing until they got their trumped charges in shape. It must have nearly killed her, though, puzzle as I may, I don't see how they ever got her to believe them, and what's more, I don't believe they have. When I see her to-morrow it will take me just one minute to disabuse her mind. Her mother says she is ill, and God knows I am too."

"You've seen the mother, have you?

"Yes, she wouldn't tell me where Hilda was, she kept repeating that she was too ill to see any one."

"She was at the opera to night"; said Jones very quietly.

"Impossible!"

"You may well say that, but I saw her. She was with the Andersons in their box. I asked Anderson how she could show herself when the papers were dripping with the scandal she had made—"

"Well?"

"He laughed. 'She has come to enjoy her revenge!' he told me."

Nevius got up, went to the sideboard and pouring out a glass of whisky drank it off.

Jones watched him. When he turned the novelist added:

"In the circumstances I wouldn't try to see her. She has left you, it should be beneath your dignity to approach her in any way."

Nevius shook his head helplessly.

"How dense you are! You don't or wont understand. She is a woman after all, and no matter how she may suffer she has too much pride to show it. I think she ought not to have gone to the opera to-night, whether she believed this thing or whether she didn't, and I think too the Andersons alone could have had the bad taste to invite her. But none the less I make every excuse for her. Supposing our position reversed, what is there that I might not do?"

"He has the faith of a little child," the novelist mused, "it's pathetic."

"But tell me, what did she say when you saw her?"

"Nothing very pleasant. To be candid, she doesn't seem to have the same good opinion of you that you have of her."

And Jones, knocking the ashes from his cigarette, added meditatively:

"But then you may be both in error."

This little conclusion may not have reached Nevius; he was pacing the floor.

"I know I have been selfish," he muttered. "Damn selfish. But I can't understand—"

"See here, dear boy. I will go to her to-morrow. If she is to be argued with, I think I can handle her. But do you get to bed; it's after two, and you look like the devil. Leave the matter in my hands."

Nevius stopped short in his walk and gazed at his friend.

"Do you know I don't realize it? I can't realize it. But if by any chance I were convinced that she was not to return to me—"

A gesture completed the sentence.

"Bah!" And the novelist smiled complacently. "Suicide is out of fashion, dear boy, and vulgar too. Now listen to me. To-morrow the Snaiths will probably let you into your house. From what you said in your note I suppose you will want servants. I will attend to that. Now get to bed. I told you you looked like the devil, I should have said—you did. The devil is a very fascinating person, Carol, and unless you take some care of yourself you will entirely cease to resemble him."

Oh, no doubt; and the novelist gone, the care which Nevius proceeded to take of himself consisted in more whisky, and on top of it a draught of the London drug.

XI.

The morrow was charming, half spring, half autumn, with just that touch of frostiness which makes the blood beat fast. Nevius shivered, his eyes were heavy, his mind dull, his face yellow and blotched, the mouth drawn. He had looked at a mirror and had not looked again. Whisky bloats and opium disfigures. The ice water of a bath had brought a glow, but that had gone; he was trembling; it was a stimulant he needed, no doubt, and he called for absinthe.

With the drink a hall-boy came. There was a gentleman below with some keys and a message. Should he come up?

Nevius, his hand uncertain and vacillant, swallowed the absinthe before he spoke.

"Yes, he may come. And—what was it I wanted?—oh, fetch the morning papers."

But the drink did him good. And presently, at a knock, he opened the door.

Before him stood a stout, young Jew, revolting as uncleanliness and vulgarity could make him. Yet, who vaguely, despite his nose and his youth resembled Mr. Snaith.

"Is your name C. Nevius? Well, here's some keys and a summons."

Nevius closed the door, the keys and summons in his hand. By whom could he be summoned now? But the mandate was perfectly legible. The complainant was Hilda Nevius, and did he not in twenty days appear or answer, judgment for relief demanded would be taken by default. Signed, Tooth and Tooth.

Tooth and Tooth? Ah, yes, the divorce sharks. Service by publication was not sufficient then. Apparently these gentlemen were in haste. And to think that Hilda could be capable—

The boy had come with the papers, but his coming and going passed unmarked. For an hour, that seemed a minute, Nevius sat wondering at his wife. A man who suffers is never bored.

But what did the hall-boy want now? Mr. Harding, of the *Chronicle*, was below, was he? And Mr. Robinson, of the *Despatch*, and Mr. McGrath, of the *Evening Star?* Well, below, deeper down even, for all of him they might remain. And yet, had he only Hilda to consider? Was there not Jenny, too?

"Show them up," he ordered, and passing into the bed-room changed his dressing suit for morning garb. When he returned, the representatives of the press were there. Mr. Harding, who was sharpening a pencil, took the matter on himself.

"Mr. Nevius, I believe? Mr. Nevius, I have come to ask what you have to say in reply to the charges in yesterday's papers? You have seen them, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have seen it stated that I made a confession, and then, to escape the consequences, fled abroad. I had no confession to make; I made none, and the fact that I am here should, I think, be evidence that consequences do not intimidate me. To this I have nothing to add, except that the charges brought against the young women named in the complaint are absolutely without foundation."

"Shall you contest the suit?" inquired Mr. Robinson.

"If it is not withdrawn, as I am convinced it must be, I certainly shall."

"What have you to say in regard to Mrs. Nevius?"

"Mrs. Nevius does not enter into the matter.

There is no need for any mention of her name."

"You think then," began the representative of the *Star*, "that the suit was instigated by third parties?"

"I think nothing about it. I know. But this gentleman—" and Nevius indicated Mr. Harding "—asked if I had any statement to make. I have made one. If you will publish that and nothing else you will oblige me."

"But—"

"At this moment, I regret, I am occupied I must ask you to excuse me."

The door behind him was open, and through it he retreated, angry with himself, angry with fate, angry with the world.

When he returned, there was the hall-boy again. This time with a note from Jones to the effect that he had secured servants and would look in later on.

"I send you the keys." Nevius scribbled

in reply. "Tell the servants to meet me at the house, and do come before midnight."

The answer despatched, he sat down and tried to think, to forget rather and not to remember.

XII.

Already the afternoon had taken itself off. A sun, red as ceiling-wax burned and subsided, leaving a sky of dead rose and water-green. Then shadows came, lapping the walls, devouring the furniture, creating abysses into which objects disappeared, mysteriously, one by one.

When night was wholly there, Nevius groped for his hat and gloves. Presently he was in the street, in a few minutes at his house. Yes. Jones had been as good as his word. There were lights in the windows and the outer door of the vestibule was open. With a latch-key he let himself in. The hall was chill, bleak too, sonorous beneath his tread. But where were the hangings and tapestries, where were the plants, the pedestalled lamps, the silken cushions, the candles with their yellow shades, all the attributes of ease that six weeks before had filled the drawing-room? Surely this was not his house, or else had the sheriffs passed that way. But it was his house, and why was it dismantelled? Where had the scent of the iris gone? Ah, yes; he remembered. These things were Hilda's, all of them, even to the scent of the iris, and in leaving him, necessarily she had taken her chattels too.

And the floor above! Truly were it not for the chill he might have thought it summer time and Hilda off to the sea-shore, so properly had little familiar things been put away. But what was that on her bureau from which everything else had gone? Nothing, a picture of himself merely, overlooked, no doubt, and forgotten. Yet was it a picture of himself? At least if he had ever had the youth and alertness with which the picture credited him, never would he have them again.

The library which so long and well had separated her room from his had, out of gratitude, perhaps, been left untouched. There were the yellow shelves of law, the darker tomes of history, and here, in smooth maroon, stamped with the Nevius crest, were the classics of Greece and Rome. Beyond were the caryatides of literary France, Corneille, Racine, Moliére, dusty and undisturbed. But this empty space beneath? Surely Hilda never could have taken away the little gifts she had made him before she bestowed that great gift which was herself. The Owen Meredith from which in the gardens of Bronx she had repeated to him:

> Since we parted yester eve,
> I do love thee, love, believe,
> Twelve times dearer, twelve times longer,
> One dream deeper, one night stronger,
> One sun surer, thus much more
> Than I loved thee, love, before.

The Aldrich from which he had read to her:

> But there will come a time, my love,
> When if I read our stars aright

I shall not linger at your side
With my adieux. Till then, good-night.
You wish that time were now? And I!
You do not blush to wish it so?
You would have blushed yourself to death
To own as much a year ago.

And the Sonnets of Proteus:

What shall it matter, when our heads are gray,
Whether we loved, or did not love to-day?

And the Swinburne:

A little while and we die: shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.

But though the rhymes returned unprompted, where were the books? Where was the Festus, the Rosetti, the Tennyson? Surely she could not have taken these gifts away. But then, what had she done with herself? And why did the gas burn so dimly? Or was it a mist that had got to his eyes?

"I beg pardon, sir—"

Nevius started. At the door a man stood, coatless, looking at him. I am Patrick, sir; my wife is in the kitchen, would you—"

"Yes, of course. I know. Let me see—suppose you go to the Brevoort and get my things. Tell them to send the bill to my office. And what time is it? No, I can't eat anything, but if there is any whisky lying about, you might bring it up."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. Mr. Jones is in the parlor. Shall I ask him here?"

But before the novelist entered the room, Nevius lit a cigarette and hid his face in smoke.

"Well?"

"Well, I have seen your princess, and so far as I am concerned I can dispense with the honor of seeing her again. Calumny is to her what venom is to the adder, a sole defence. A harder, an unjuster woman I have never met, no not even in the masquerades of my own fiction. Her entire accusation has no other foundation than the tattle of the servants' hall."

"She is annoyed, Alphabet. So would I be. Don't say anything against her. You don't know her as I do. You don't know the letter she wrote me. Her heart is breaking. But when I see her to-morrow—"

"See her! You'll never see her till you meet in court. She is furious, not at all because of this thing, but because you have returned. Her attorney told her they would get a divorce in short order and here you are declaring you will contest it. You have upset her calculations. She fancied she could be free at once."

"Yes, but then she didn't understand. I assure you she will be very sorry when she learns the truth, very sorry indeed—"

"H'm," the novelist sniffed and smiled. "When she is, I send my resignation to psychology. She knows the truth, she has always known it. Never for a second has she believed the charge she has made."

"It is not Hilda; I have told you that. She wrote me that she was so dumb and crushed that her people took the matter entirely out of her hands."

On the table at which Jones had seated himself, was a pile of bills and letters. On the topmost was the imprint of the District Messenger Service. Leisurely the novelist reached for it. In the envelope were the vouchers of the month before. Jones drew out one, then another.

"Tell me," he presently asked, "when did you sail for Europe?"

"The second of December."

"Your wife's attorneys are Tooth and Tooth, are they not? So I thought. Will you look at this? It is dated 2d of December and addressed to Tooth and Tooth, who you will see detained the messenger one hour and sent an answer which seems to have been received by somebody who signed herself H. Nevius. Is it your wife's writing?"

The ticket he tossed across the table.

"Here is another, same date, same address. Here is another dated the 4th. Here is another dated the 5th. For a lady who was dumb and crushed, whose affairs had been taken entirely out of her hands, it seems to me that not only she was very agile with the pen but—"

Nevius sprang at him fiercely.

"But what? It is on evidence of that kind she has condemned me. Poor child, she knew no better. But you, who have accused her of listening to the tattle of the servants' hall, do you expect me to descend the back stairs, too? Give me those tickets."

Seizing and mutilating them he flung them at his feet, and in the same hot wrath blurted:

"If you have anything else to say against my wife, say it, but do you say it to me."

Reflectively the novelist contemplated his finger-tips, joined them, separated them, and joined them again.

"There is a little operation I must perform on you, Carol. One which will pain, but which is necessary and charitable."

Mystified by this preamble, Nevius stared.

Jones stood up, closed the door, and whispered to his friend.

The latter shrank, his eyes dilated, his mouth agape.

"No, no, tell me; she never said that!"

"She has then, not to me alone, but to everyone. That sweet little friend of hers, Mrs. Anderson, with whom she is stopping, fairly revels in it. There isn't a man in town, nor a woman either, that won't hear it to-morrow."

When Jones got the scalpel in his hand he knew where and how to cut. But then in this instance he was a trifle annoyed at the slur on his friend.

"When I heard it," he continued, "I did not see the object. I have since. Mrs. Carol understands what a mess she has made of it all, and she is trying to exculpate herself at any cost. If there is a single thing believable or unbelievable that she and Mrs. Anderson are capable of inventing to your discredit, invent it they will, and proclaim it too."

Nevius bowed his head. The hot wrath must have gone.

"How sorry she will be," he muttered. "How sorry, how sorry, how sorry she will be."

What was there in that for Jones to laugh at? Yet laugh he did.

"My little Hilda!" Covering his face, Nevius leaned down and rested his arms on the table. When he again looked up his eyes may have been red, but they were steadfast still.

"Wait. Wait until I see her. For she must see me, or—"

"Yes, I told her your ultimatum of last night. Would you like to know what she said? It is not pleasant, but if it removes this cataract of yours I don't mind. She said, and very affably, mind you, in that little voice which I have heard her affect when she wishes to impress: 'Tell that man that nothing he might do could cause me greater pleasure, except to send him the pistol with which to do it.'"

As in pain which is acute, Nevius dug his nails into the palms of his hands, and for a while his face, tortured with the retroacting currents of conflicting thought, expressed only a suffering, sentient and visible. But gradually the hands relaxed, the expression modified, and you would have said that the cure which Jones had attempted was without effect.

"From what you say," he ventured at last, "I must believe that Hilda's condemnation of me is complete. But then I have been horribly selfish—"

"Her condemnation is so complete," the novelist interrupted "that it absolves you from condemning her. In the total lack not only of justice but of decency which she displays, comfort yourself as you seem disposed to do, by being charitable to her and unjust to yourself. It is not nineteenth century, no, but by gad, its red-heel. Carol, I want you for a book."

"—So selfish," Nevius repeated, "that some day when you see her I want you to tell her that I regret it from the bottom of my heart."

For a moment he looked down and away, but almost immediately, with a smile that was its own apology, he added:

"It's best to take people as they find us, isn't it, Alphabet? You have been very good to me, very considerate, and you have borne magnificently with my ill temper. I want to thank you, but I can't. I am a trifle tired, perhaps—"

"Yes, you had better get to bed. But I want to thank you, and I can, for teaching me that phrase. It *is* best to take people as they find us. *E vero ed é ben trovato. Trovato? E ben Trovatore!*"

"What is that saying of Ingall's?" he mused as he passed down the stair. "'It is just as well to let dynamite alone, particularly when it happens to be intelligent and has a grievance.' When Nevius understands what I do, he will kill that woman, and by George, when he does, for the first time in my life I shall want to be on the jury."

"Patrick, is that you?" he interrupted himself to ask. "Patrick, do you keep an eye on Mr. Nevius, he is not at all well. Should he be ill during the night send for me at once, don't call a messenger, ring up a cab, and tell the driver it's a fiver if he gets me here in no time."

With that, this serviceable writer of immoral fiction buttoned his Inverness and left the house.

"Patrick," said Nevius a little later, "here is a prescription, take it to Asquith's on the corner, get it filled and tell the druggist I want to speak to him. You found some whisky, did you? Very good, put it there."

Pouring a little of the liquor out, he drank it off. Under its influence the stupor fell from him. He began a letter, which must have been difficult however; the right words would not always come and there was a blur in his eyes besides. But he got it done, and addressing it to his wife, immediately be began another to Miss Adulam, a third to Tredegar. In writing these also his pen often stopped, hesitant and perplexed, but when at last they were all finished, and on a fresh sheet he began the "Know all men by these presents;" his pen went rapidly enough, as he devised his property, real and personal, of whatever kind, nature and description, to Hilda Nevius, her heirs, executors and assigns forever.

"The druggist is below, sir." At the door stood Patrick. "Shall I leave the prescription with you?"

"Yes, put it there. Ask him up. And, Patrick, do you wait."

A moment, and Nevius rose in greeting of a meager man in a frock coat

"Mr. Asquith, this is very kind of you. Here is my will. Will you witness it for me?"

"Certainly, anything to oblige."

"I sign it then in your presence. Put your signature here, please, and your address. Patrick, I want you to witness it too. Thank you both very much."

"Nothing else, Mr. Nevius, is there?"

No, there was nothing, and presently when he was alone again he repeated that word a little sadly to himself.

"What was that I once heard Jones say?" he queried. "We should prolong life, not death? That is it; and this is death. Well, let me not prolong it."

Before him was the prescription; opening it he filled a goblet to the brim and tossed it off. How good it was! A little hot to the throat, a little cloying to the palate, but clean to the tongue, fragrant, too.

On the mantel lay his hat, he took it up and seating himself, his head covered, he drew on a glove and buttoned it. But why were the books, the yellow shelves of law, the darker tomes of history, retreating through that little space which he had noticed earlier in the night? Before he could account for anything so strange, the walls, too, had retreated, joy and fear, love and anguish, all had gone and in their stead was oblivion and rest for memory.

XIII.

"IMBECILE that you are! Don't you know, haven't I told you, haven't I arch-told you that nothing could cause her greater joy?"

"But what a reason! Am I to live merely because my death might gratify another?"

With an expression that was both furious and indulgent, Jones glowered in amicable rage.

"And truly," Nevius added, "I don't thank any of you."

Long before he had awaked, conscious, if at all, only that people were leaving the room. Presently he had recognized Patrick; at once the episode of the previous night returned, and with it the perception of failure. Later he learned that Patrick, attracted by his breathing, alarmed at his attitude, had sent for a physician, for Jones as well. The physician had been the first to arrive, and after hours of labor, had gone, threatening to prosecute the druggist.

But now, three days later, clothed and in his right mind the resurrected sat talking with his friend.

"No," Jones answered. "That would be mediæval. I mean nothing so Hugoesque. But, dear boy, you have no right to leave the planet until yon have shown this accusation to be as false as you and I know it to be. The bare bodkin may be simpler, but it is not at all chivalrous to leave Miss Adulam in the plight she is. Can't you understand that if this effort had succeeded even her own mother would have believed that the story was true? No, you must live for the reporters, you must live for your wife, and meanwhile get a verdict. When you have got that kill yourself as often as you like. Yet there is just the eccentricity of the whole thing. A man never commits suicide twice. If he recovers he has no desire to repeat the experiment, and if he doesn't that is the end of that. But don't you have anything to drink in this house?"

Oh, yes. Though little else had been discoverable drink there was in plenty, and presently, comforted by a Scotch and soda, the garrulous novelist ran on:

"But whatever possessed you to do a thing of that sort with your hat on? Do you know, that is what we call a document. I shall have a suicide in my next novel merely for that hat. I would give the whole story, for that matter, were it not so bald. It would not do for New York. Here the reporter can be as pornograph as the Marquess of Sade, if he knows how, and he usually does, but the novelist must be like

Marguerite's home, chaste and pure. We are willing enough to applaud Tristan and Isolde, when it is put to music and sung in a language which is not a court-tongue. But beyond that we won't go. The unbribable Comstock won't let us. But even apart from that, I couldn't handle the thing. No one would think it probable, and to my reputation for realism a long farewell."

The novelist looked into his glass. "It's a good subject though. A deuced good subject. I might call it, let me see—I might call it *Bagatelles*, yes, *Bagatelles* or *One of the Ten Commandments.*

"Why not several of them while you are about it?"

"Several of the Ten Commandments?" Why, that would be a tip-top title. Take in all classes of readers. Dear boy, if you don't object I think I will."

Nevius jumped from his seat.

"If you say one word," he cried hotly, "one word that a microscopist could detect as referring to my wife, by the Lord Harry I'll put daylight through you.'

"Dear me!" mumbled Jones, "how was I to suppose that you were in love with her still?"

At that you should have heard Nevius bluster. How he ranted, how he raved! In love with her? The idea! No indeed, not he. And when at last for sheer lack of breath he stopped, of the entire diatribe Jones believed actually not one word.

But, false friend that he was, he nodded as though he did.

"That's right, that's the way to talk, that's the way you must talk to O'Donnell. We went over the whole matter to-day. He'll be here now at any moment."

And, vatic as usual, Mr. Jabez O'Donnell, a member of the bar, still young, yet already famous, a man with the face of a cherub and the guile of a fox, was promptly announced.

"This," said Jones, as the lawyer entered, "this, my dear O'Donnell, is my friend and brother in Christ, Mr. Carol Nevius. His retainer will be large, his refreshers abundant. Let me earnestly commend him to your care."

"Devil a bit of a retainer will I take;" the gentleman answered with great cordiality and a little brogue, "I am out for gore, not for coin."

"Bravely said," cried Jones, glass in hand, toasting the occasion, toasting everything, toasting illicit commerce. "You are pleased to meet Nevius, I know; and as for him, he radiates with delight."

And at the way Nevius smiled, any one might have thought that really he was enjoying himself. Yet, how curious it was that the moment the smile visited his lips, a verse of Byron's fluttered there too:

> "And if I laugh at any mortal thing
> 'Tis that I may not weep: and if I weep
> 'Tis that our nature can not always bring
> Itself to apathy."

"*Poseur!*" sneered Jones, in an indignant aside.

Mr. O'Donnell seemed to appreciate. "I understand you, Mr. Nevius, I understand perfectly. It is a dreadful thing to have one's name in the papers."

"And still more dreadful not to."

This interruption came, of course, from the novelist. No one paid any attention to him. The lawyer continued:

"The outrage in this instance is heightened by the fact that there need have been no publicity at all. Professional etiquette, if nothing else, should have prevented Tooth and Tooth from serving you by publication. They tell me that they did not know you were a member of the bar, and as their acquaintance is limited to those who practice in the General Sessions, that is a thing which I can believe. They also tell me that Mrs. Nevius represented that you would not return to this country. They pretend to be vexed at the mistake, but I have reasons for thinking that they regard the whole business as an excellent advertisement. Now permit me to ask a question. What sort of a man is your father-in-law? They seemed to have been employed by him before. One would hardly think such a thing possible, but is he at all of their class of life?"

"Between the man who pays to have a young girl defamed and the men who take the money and do the job," Nevius promptly and grimly replied, "honors are easy."

"That they are, Mr. Nevius, that goes without saying. But if I ask, it is because from what Tooth and Tooth tell me he is not so dogmatic as he was before you returned. It appears that the night you landed he nearly gave up the ghost."

"He could have had no interest in doing so, however."

"No, precisely not, and perhaps for that reason he didn't. But understand me; Jones says that the plaintiff is not to be argued with, and is determined to push the thing to the end. If such be the case, there is no use losing time with her. But if her father were properly approached, might not something be done?"

"Beyond asking him to play pendulum I see nothing."

The lawyer laughed. "He hasn't inspired you with much regard, has he?"

"Yes," Nevius answered. "Yes, to such

an extent even that I have put him in my will. Mr. Snaith is a member of the Society for the Protection of Animals, and in recognition of his affection for beasts, I have left him a mirror."

Jones rolled over in spasms of delight. "Oh! Carol! *how* I wish I had said that!"

In unconscious rememoration of the famous retort which in similar circumstances was fired point blank at another man of letters, Nevius turned to him and consolingly answered: "There, never mind, Alphabet. *You will.*"

Then with a deprecatory glance at the lawyer, who was laughing still, he prepared to return to facts.

"Forgive me, Mr. O'Donnell. My levity is out of place, in poor taste as well. This is tragedy, not farce. You will believe me when I say that nothing is further from my mind than a desire to jest."

"I follow you there. I know quite how you feel. Years ago a man called on a physician; 'I am terribly depressed,' he said. 'I want something to stir me up.' 'Go and see Grimaldi,' the physician answered. 'He will make you laugh.' 'I am Grimaldi,' the patient replied. But to get down to business again. Tooth and Tooth have made a proposition, one however which they declare is made entirely on their own responsibility. It is this. They claim to have all the evidence they require against Miss Adulam, but the evidence against Miss Vührer, while equally plentiful, is not, to use their expression, so convenient. Now they offer to withdraw the charge against Miss Adulam, providing that you will supply them, through a third party of course, with a few additional facts concerning your acquaintance with Miss Vührer. This proposition, they wish me to assure you, is made solely out of deference to you. What shall I tell them?"

"What shall you tell them?" repeated Nevius wearily. "There is naturally no use in telling them that I am incapable of deserting the helpless, for they would not understand. But tell them I say they are shysters, that the suit may be withdrawn, that I have nothing to gain at their hands, and they will understand the message thoroughly."

"*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," the uncrushable Jones threw in. "And by the way, Carol, Dona Ferentes! What a tip-top name for the plaintiff!"

The lawyer nodded to his client. "I might have expected such an answer. But look at it in this light, wouldn't it be better—"

"There can be no better," Nevius interrupted. "And no worse. Miss Adulam is a young gentlewoman whom I have known all my life. Could I in any way sacrifice myself for her I would do so, but I can not sacrifice an innocent girl, nor, pre-supposing I could, would Miss Adulam permit me. Of Miss Adulam's justification there is no manner of doubt. If Tooth and Tooth, in saying that they have all the evidence against her which they require, speak truthfully, they have been imposed upon, precisely as Mrs. Nevius has been. There can be no evidence. Not a charge can they substantiate. They may have perjury at command, no doubt they have, in which case we shall know how to act when we get it in court. As for Miss Vührer, I did not know her first name, nor how her last was written until I saw it in the complaint. I have seen her but four times in my life. I never knew that she existed until Mrs. Nevius brought her into this room. Were I to act as Tooth and Tooth suggest, what would you think of me? And what should I think of myself?"

The lawyer took a long breath before he spoke.

"They have got something, make up your mind to that, though whether it be perjury or not I can't say. But they intimate they are in a position to prove a confession made by you to Mrs. Nevius previous to your departure."

For a moment Nevius fumbled in a drawer of the table.

"Yes, I know," he answered. "I read something of the kind in the papers. But just look at this. When I sailed Mrs. Nevius gave me a list of things which she wanted me to get for her in Paris. This morning I sent them to her. Here is an acknowledgment from her mother. It is hardly supposable, is it, if I left Mrs. Nevius in the manner which Tooth and Tooth describe, that she should ask me the morning I sailed, to purchase corsets, gloves and lingerie?"

"The morning you sailed?'

"Certainly."

"And this list is in her handwriting?"

"It is."

"Why, then," exclaimed the lawyer, "they can trot out all the perjury they like. That bit of paper stumps them. The alleged offences were condoned."

To this Nevius assented absently. "There must be no such plea though. The denial of the allegations is all that is required. They can never prove one."

"No doubt, no doubt." And the lawyer rose to go. "But I do not need to tell you that the greatest mistake a man can make is to underrate his adversary's abilities."

"Unless it be," laughed Jones, "to overrate his own."

XIV.

Like a lethargic snake disturbed, winter dragged itself away. April came, and with it an eager glitter, the surprise of violets, skies of silk, wadded with films of white cotton, all the caresses and surrenders of spring.

Upper Fifth avenue was well in the movement, alive with smart traps, Piccadilly accents, gems of bonnets, and grooms, the arms folded, impassible, correct. In all the world prettier women there are not than in that parade which circles through the Park, and descends again just in time to intercept the dusk. No, nor daintier either.

And pretty and dainty as the prettiest and daintiest, Mrs. Carol Nevius looked that spring. On her lips was the pink of the sea-shell, and in the depths of her sultry blue eyes the faintest petition for that sympathy which imaginary wrongs deserve. Ah, it was a pleasure to see her.

That pleasure was not enjoyed by her husband. But in those days his pleasures were few. Women, whom he had known all his life, forgot to remember him. Men, with whom he had lived on terms of off-hand familiarity, had become punctiliously polite.

These things were nothing in comparison to others. The letter which he had sent rather blurred to his wife had been returned through Tooth and Tooth, with the intimation that he was persecuting her. The letter which he had sent to Miss Adulam had been answered by her mother; the girl was lying at the house of her uncle, Erastus Wilberforce, too ill to hold a pen. From Tredegar no answer came, a rumor merely that the boy was drinking himself to death.

Then, too, the divorce required in such haste that service by publication was necessary, languished, moribund and mute. And not at all because of the calendar. On motion it could have gone before a referee at once. But the Snaiths had other matters to attend to, though a girl was dying because of them, and a lad was throwing his life away.

Nevius ceased to be seen. His office was closed. The Canal Company, with perfect civility, dispensed with his services; other corporations for whom he had acted withdrew their business from his hands. That Mr. Snaith had been at work he understood, but it was long before he understood that that gentleman's object was to attack the sinews of war, and thereby, the law's delays continuing, to force him to capitulate. When the understanding did come to him, he reflected with some satisfaction that while skies were still fair he had cut that gentleman in the street.

Meanwhile, he stalked, uncompanioned, through the untellable loneliness of that ghastly house, seeking a clue to the mystery that was devastating three lives.

That Hilda had cared for him he had to believe, or else to regard her as an actress more consummate even than Rachel. For where was the actress who could assume a rôle and hold it, impeccably, not for a season alone, not so many nights a week, but every minute of seven years? That she knew her accusations to be false he was now convinced. With these for premises what conclusion could he draw? It could not be that after years of tenderness she had left him, because there were moments when he was irritable and perverse. No, surely that was not the cause. Nor could it be that she had left him because her father had threatened disinheritance. Judas, indeed, had been bribed, yet, while in the present instance the bribe was greater, still, though times had changed and living become more expensive, Nevius was unable to accept any solution such as that. Beside, not being a bit more heroic than the rest of us, a conclusion of that kind diminished him in his own esteem.

In the night of his perplexity a single ray had come. Jones had enjoyed a second conversation with this lady, in which Mrs. Nevius, after stating that the man whose name she had taken, was heedless beyond the power of words, that he had constantly borrowed her buttonhook, added, by way of summing up, that she had married him uniquely to go into society, and as he had refused to take her, he should bear the consequences without complaint.

That was the ray of light, tremulous and thin no doubt, but which, by reason of the darkness in which he groped, led him ultimately to what he regarded as the day. As stepping-stones he had two facts, one pathological, the other psychological. The pathological fact was this: Women who at recurrent intervals suffer greatly, are afflicted not only physically, but mentally as well. Their minds become the haunt of vagaries, of illusions, sometimes of madness, too. For these sufferings, for these vagaries and illusions, there is but one cure, one to which nature prompts — motherhood. The psychological fact hung like a corollary to the first. When a woman has lived seven years with a man and borne him no child, unintentionally it may be, yet instinctively that man she hates.

At the intervals alluded to, Hilda, he was aware, had suffered for days with an intensity of agony which was pitiful to behold. Moreover, as the years accumulated, the union had remained unblessed. Such maternal affection as she possessed had been given to him, to the cat; but Nature, who is not to be balked, was there and watching, and this was the revenge.

Such was the solution to which at last he arrived. The accusations which she had made had been hatched in the distemper of her brain, and the venomous hatred which she had abruptly displayed was but the working of a natural law.

Logical as it was, this solution did not by any means come at once. Winter had gone, spring was going, and still he groped until, aided by the ray which Jones had intercepted, suddenly he divined the truth. She is insane, he decided, and told himself that of that insanity he would cure her yet.

Thenceforth he had that for an aim. What loyalty, what gentleness, what divine courtesy and affection had not an English gentleman just displayed to a woman who had forever disgraced him, who stood, the whole world looking on, a convicted felon at the dock? And should he, Carol Nevius, be other than loyal, courteous and gentle too? The malady which had prompted that fair English girl to steal was the same, no doubt, as that which had prompted his wife to libel. And when at last the prison door re-opened, was not that English gentleman there waiting to take his wife in his arms and carry her off to where health and sanity might be. And when this trial was at an end should not he, too, take his wife in his arms and carry her thence and nurse and guard her until reason returned and love as well? Ah, indeed he would. The cases were not parallel, but if it comforted him to think so, let that comfort be not begrudged.

In this wise months retreated, but with June, presto! a change. Enervated by the delay, possessed, perhaps, of a clearer understanding of resources and temperaments, Mrs. Nevius, in spite of her father and his policy, goaded her attorneys into asking that the matter be brought before a referee.

The day on which that motion was asked and granted, a curious episode occurred. Mr. O'Donnell was offered by an individual whom previously he had never seen, ten thousand dollars in current coin if he would agree to let the suit go against his client, ten thousand more if he carried out the agreement.

"It is not enough," was O'Donnell's reply.

On the morrow the offer was doubled, and on the morrow the reply was the same.

XV.

The day was hot and humid. In Upper Fifth avenue green blinds were down, and grey doors were up. In the Park there were still carriages, but latterly smartness had been confined to the traps of the cocottes, the others had livery stables without, the provinces within. Society had vanished to cool retreats, to country houses, and distant shores. In Wall street the chief change was the disappearance of the high hat, the frequency of straw. Men walked more leisurely, too, fanning themselves, choosing the shadows; some were unwaistcoated, and some wore handkerchiefs about the neck.

But that little lady with a waist that would fit in a garter, and who, merely in stepping from her carriage, pervaded the Nassau corner with aromas of the Rue de la Paix, she surely should be at Newport. And that obese little man with the look of one to whom Truth is always stranger than Fiction, what was he doing at her side? Surely he belonged on the box.

And who were these females in clothes not made for them who had just got from a cab? Surely they were detectives, and their duty to protect the little lady from the machinations of that unliveried lackey at her side.

And who, too, was this ponderous person that was now addressing them all. Why had he such a terrible twang? And why, as he spoke, did his words sound like wind escaping from a bladder inflated?

Mystery to all but one that passed that way. And he, though it was hot and humid, at sight of them grew cold. To the lady he raised his hat, and passing into the building before which this disparate group was assembled, had, himself, shot like a rocket five stories high and landed in the office of the Hon. John Metuchen, appointed by the court referee in the case of Nevius versus Nevius.

There was O'Donnell, and there, talking to him, was a white-haired gentleman with a patrician bearing to whom the intruder was introduced.

"Mr. Metuchen, permit me, this is my client, Mr. Nevius."

"Your most obedient servant, sir," murmured that courtly old man. Thereat lawyer and client passed into an inner room.

Nevius dropped in a chair. "They're below," he mumbled. "But what has *she* come for? She can't testify."

"To the fact of the marriage, she must, and that there has been no previous application. But that done, presumably she will go."

"I did not expect—"

The sentence was never finished. Mrs. Carol had entered, and at sight of her the defendant grew mute. But he rose from his seat, reseating himself only when that ponderous person who followed had found her a chair. Immediately, Mr. Metuchen appeared. Then a man with paper and pencils, then two females, escorted by Mr. Snaith.

The room was large, high-ceiled, yet to Nevius it seemed very small. O'Donnell and he were at the end of a long table, at the other end of which Mr. Metuchen sat down. On the inner side was the stenographer. And beyond, at the window, the others had taken seat, all, in fact, save the ponderous person, who seemed inclined to stand and domineer.

He was saying something, but what? Nevius neither knew nor cared; he was watching his wife who presently, with that air and manner he loved so well, advanced a little and began to tell about one or two things which no one questioned. Then the business of the hearing seemed about to begin.

"Just bring your chair a little nearer, Becky."

Becky? Who was Becky? But as one of the females tilted her seat, Nevius recognized the Rebecca of old. But to what was she to testify?

"Now Becky," twanged the ponderous person, "what is your name? Rebecca Hawes? Very good. And how old are you, Becky? Very good. Have you ever seen this lady before? Oho! you've lived with her, have you? In what capacity? As waitress, eh? And have you ever seen that gentleman? Aha! He is Mr. Nevius, is he? Now Becky, what were your duties as waitress? To wait at table? To serve at meals? Very good, very good. And what else? You answered the door, did you? Aha! You answered the door! Now, Becky, in answering the door, in waiting on the table, did you ever see any one by the name of Janet Adulam? Oh, you have, have you? Often? Very often, eh? Very good, Becky, very good. Ever heard Mrs. Nevius say anything about her?"

"Ject," snapped O'Donnell.

"Well, Counsellor," the ponderous man with great affability retorted, "we won't quarrel over a little thing like that; I'll get at it in another way."

"Now, Becky," he continued, "Mrs. Nevius, so far as you could see, treated this Adulam girl like a friend, didn't she—"

Nevius raised a hand.

"I submit, your Honor, that the attorney should not be permitted to refer to this young gentlewoman in the manner which he has done."

The referee looked up.

"I think, Mr. Tooth, that Mr. Nevius is perhaps right—"

"Oh! oh!" the man protested, "that's only my way."

"The way of a cad," muttered Nevius.

But the attorney, accustomed since boyhood to being so described, caught up the thread unruffled.

"Now, Becky, am I to understand that you regarded this Miss Adulam as a friend of Mrs. Nevius? I am, am I? And why am I? Because she was always coming there, eh? Well, coming where? Oho! to the Nevius house! I see, I see. But you say she was always coming there. You don't mean that she liked it so much that she used to come when Mrs. Nevius wasn't at home? Oho, you do, do you? Well, now, Becky, do you remember any particular occasion that she came when Mrs. Nevius was not at home? Lots of them? Why, what could she do there in Mrs. Nevius' absence? Be kissed by Mr. Nevius! Do you mean to say that you saw Mr. Nevius kissing her? What, you have seen them in each other's arms! You saw them? you positively swear that you saw them? Very good, Becky, very good. Now, what else did they do? Ate and drank, did they? Well, while they were eating and drinking what did they talk about? You don't know? Don't you remember? Oh, you didn't understand, eh? And why not? Did they talk in whispers so that you couldn't hear? Oho! They talked in Spanish, did they? Or in Italian! Anyway they talked in some lingo you didn't understand. Now, then, Becky, when Mrs. Nevius was at home, you have heard Mr. Nevius talking to her, haven't you? Well tell us then what language he talked to her in? In English did he? No Italian folderols to his wife, eh? Only to Miss Adulam, eh? Very good, Becky, very good indeed. Now, when Mrs. Nevius was at home where did she sit at table? At the head of it, eh? And where did Mr. Nevius sit? At the foot, did he? Well, when this carousing was going on, where did Miss Adulam sit? At the head of the table, too? Took the wife's place, eh? And where did Mr. Nevius sit? Right beside her! Why, I thought you said he sat at the foot of the table! Oho! he only sat at the foot of the table when his wife was there! I see. But when Miss Adulam came he moved his seat, eh? Sat close to her, I suppose. Well, how close? Close enough, you say. And while they were sitting as close as they could get, they talked in a language you couldn't understand, did they? Now, when you had finished clearing up in the dining-room where did you go? Down stairs, eh? And when did you come up again? Two or three hours later, eh? Now, what had Miss Adulam and Mr. Nevius been doing in the meantime? You don't know, you say, but when, at the end of two or three hours, you came up stairs again, you found them in each other's arms. Is that what I am to understand? Very good. Now when did this occur? On the 10th of November, eh? And was anything of the kind repeated? On the 11th, eh? And on the 12th, and on the 14th? Did you tell any one of these goings on? Oh, you told Mrs. Nevius! What did she do? She accused her husband, did she? And what did he do? He confessed, eh? Confessed what? Confessed that he had been untrue, eh? Then what? Mr. Nevius went abroad did he? And what did Mrs. Nevius do? Packed up and left Mr. Nevius' house, eh? Has she seen Mr. Nevius since? Hasn't, eh? Very good, Becky; that will do for to-day."

And with an air of satisfaction that would have been unpardonable in Napoleon at Marengo, Mr. Tooth caressed his chin with one hand and waved the other at O'Donnell.

"Brother O'D, if you have any questions—"

"I have," O'Donnell answered shortly. "Hawes, look this way. Where are you living now?"

"At Mr. Snaith's."

"In what capacity?"

"Er—er—" The woman turned helplessly about, and suddenly spat, "*Seamstress.*"

"Mr. Referee," said O'Donnell, "I beg you to remind Mrs. Nevius that she is not permitted to prompt the witness. Hawes," he continued, "look at me. How do you remember the dates you have given?"

The witness made no answer.

"Come, out with it."

"I—I—I wrote them down each time Miss Adulam came."

"With what object?"

"Mrs. Snaith told me to."

"When did she tell you?"

"I don't remember."

"Then you have got to remember. Did Mrs. Snaith tell you to keep a memorandum before Miss Adulam began to come to the house or afterward?"

"Afterward, sir."

"Do you swear to that?"

"Yes, sir."

"I thought you said you wrote the dates down each time Miss Adulam came."

"So I did, sir."

"Why did you?"

"Because Mrs. Snaith told me."

"A moment ago you said that Mrs. Snaith did not tell you to do so until afterward. Now, look at me, which is it? Did she tell you before or after?"

"Before."

"Do you swear to that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what the penalty for perjury is?"

"I object," threw in Mr. Tooth airily.

O'Donnell turned to Metuchen: "Here's a witness, your Honor, who swears to two contradictory statements, and as they are material to--"

'They are not material," retorted Mr. Tooth. "Mrs. Snaith has nothing to do with this suit. I have shown that Miss Adulam called on the defendant in the plaintiff's absence. I have also shown what occurred. When Mrs. Snaith learned the facts is irrelevant—"

"But not obscure," answered O'Donnell;

"Mr. Stenographer, when does witness swear Mrs. Snaith instructed her to take notes. Before Miss Adulam called? Thank you."

"Now, Hawes," he continued. "Besides keeping a memorandum for Mrs. Snaith, to whom did you mention these incidents?"

"To Mrs. Nevius, sir."

"When?"

"When she returned home, sir."

"When was that?"

"A few days later."

"That must have been about the 16th or 17th of November, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did Mr. Nevius go abroad?"

"Some time in December."

"Were you present when Mrs. Nevius accused her husband of being untrue?"

"No, but—"

"I want no buts. Answer yes or no. Did

you hear him admit the accusation?"

"Well—he—"

"Answer my question. Did you or did not you?"

"No, sir, I didn't, I—"

"That's enough. Of what was the parlor floor composed?"

"Of the dining-room, parlor and butler's pantry."

"On the first occasion when Miss Adulam called do you know of her being in any other part of the house than on the parlor floor?"

"No, sir."

"Can you on any of the subsequent occasions swear that she was in any other part of the house?"

"No, sir."

"Very good, Becky, that will do for this afternoon."

Mr. O'Donnell turned to his client, and with the air of one commenting on the weather remarked audibly yet indifferently: "Chops and tomato sauce!"

XVI.

Day in, day out, the testimony continued. The cook testified. The waitress recalled, testified anew. The cook testified again, and a third time the waitress took the stand. By common consent objections ceased. Questions inane, idiotic, indecent, passed unchallenged, unrebuked.

Nevius ceased to attend. The coarseness was disgusting enough, but apart from that the presence of one who continued to come perplexed and tormented him. To those who have agreed to be bound by form, no law ever codified is rigider, and but for its shackles, at the first hearing he would have called to her, "Hilda, this is unworthy of you; let us go." But no remonstrance being possible, it was easier to avoid that chamber where she listened exultingly to each fresh batch of scurrilities concerning himself.

For the exultation was there, one not dissimilar to that which that vestal must have displayed when her lover the gladiator fell and her delicate thumb reversed. It was this that unnerved him. He had fathomed the cause, but the effect he was unable to endure. But soon the exultation, the scurrilities must end, and then in what gentle ways would he woo her back to sanity and herself.

O'Donnell was not so sanguine. "They have got something," he would insist, "or else Tooth is milking his client. He consumes hours over nothing. Yesterday we learned what you preferred for breakfast. The fact that you drank moselle for dinner was shown to the satisfaction of every one, the stenographer included. Metuchen went into the other room; I read a paper. No one listened except the plaintiff, and, by the way, did you tell me that she was pretty? Why, she is hideous; never in all my life have I seen a woman with an expression as malignant as hers."

"*Souvent femme varie,*" Nevius inconsequently replied.

"You are well rid of her. And the way she bullies Tooth! Were she a client of mine—however, that's not the point. Tooth must have something else. Thus far the testimony of the servants has the value of a zero from which the periphery has been eliminated. But even otherwise the testimony of detectives is valueless unless corroborated. Tooth knows that, and he knows, too, that I can show the servants to have been in the pay of Mrs. Snaith. Now who is to corroborate them, for, mark my words, some corroboration there will be. Tooth is waiting for something, he is consuming time with no other object. Now what is it?"

"There is nothing. You have heard all you will ever hear."

But O'Donnell was skeptical as a rag-picker, and with cause. When he next appeared in Tenth street the I-told-you-so was in his eye.

"We are sailing very close to the wind," he announced. "What do you suppose happened to-day?"

Nevius was not good at conundrums and said so.

"Your friend Miss Vührer appeared," the lawyer, with a great assumption of indifference, remarked, and then stopped to enjoy his client's surprise.

"Did she?" that client answered, but with an apathy that was stagnant. "I had forgotten that she lived."

"I had not, then. Though I admit I was

not prepared for what occurred. Yesterday Tooth began with the waitress about her, showed that you were closeted with her for hours and exhibited a hair-pin which was found on that sofa where you are sitting now. I had so little difficulty in putting that hair-pin straight back into Mrs. Nevius' hair that even Metuchen laughed."

"Well?"

"Well, that was merely the prelude. This morning she appeared, as Jones would say, *in impropriâ personâ.* No, Nevius, she is worse than Becky, though, after all, she must get higher pay. With her was counsel, if you please, retained, of course, by Tooth. Pennell his name is, B. F. Pennell. When I saw him I knew that the surprise was at hand. He is a bad egg, but rottener than I had believed. Do you know, the plaintiff is very clever. It was she, I will take my oath, who put Tooth up to it."

The apathy which Nevius had displayed was departing, he came nearer to O'Donnell and stood, looking at him, impatient of details and phrases. Was the diagnosis wrong, after all? Was there another explanation of this mystery? Only the day before he had asked himself that question. And now what was the cleverness over which O'Donnell seemed inclined to harp?"

"Tooth is fly enough," the lawyer was saying," but unaided he would never have thought of this. Pennell got the young woman on the stand, and in no time at all had her white as snow. He had her take off her bonnet and show that in those blonde curls of hers there was not a hair-pin to be found, he had her explain at some length that while her relations with you had been most friendly and pleasant, they had been also entirely innocent and that you had invariably treated her like what she called "a perfect gentleman." Then he turned her over to Tooth."

"Well?"

"Tooth began very greasily; he asked her a few gentle little questions which gave her an opportunity to repeat all she had said, and finally brought out that a few months ago you had met her in the street and had assured her you were doing everything to serve her interests. Very nice as far it goes, isn't it? Wait a bit. 'And what did you say to Mr. Nevius?' Tooth asked. 'I asked Mr. Nevius,' the little beast answered, 'whether the other young lady was as innocent as I was?' 'And what was Mr. Nevius' reply?' Tooth inquired. 'Mr. Nevius' reply was that unfortunately she was not."

"That she was *not?*" gnashed Nevius.

"That is what she swore."

"Then to the Tombs she goes."

"There, it's only your word against hers. You can do nothing."

"But something must be done."

"Precisely, and for that purpose I have got an adjournment. Now where is Miss Adulam? She must appear. There is no use in her standing on her dignity any longer. Where is she?"

"In Boston," Nevius answered. "And she is ill."

"Though she come on a shutter, come she must. Write her the facts, tell her the moment she arrives to communicate with me, but write to her at once." With that the lawyer left.

For an hour Nevius sat, uncertain how to act. He tried to write and did, page after page, but the point he was unable to reach. No matter what circumlocutions he attempted, no matter how delicate the shadings, the fact stood out, bald and repugnant, that the accusation must stand unless rebutted by herself. And there had been his pride, could pride there be where only shamelessness was, that this young gentlewomen had answered the accusation in the only manner which it deserved, by making no answer at all. How was he to tell her to unseal her unsullied lips? Though he used arguments that might lure a saint from Paradise, the abomination would still be there, he was asking her to be cross-questioned in regard to her honor by a man such as his wife had employed. No, he could not. Better a thousand times the divorce than that ineffaceable indignity to her. Something else there must be. But what? As a child who plays a game, he felt that something burning yet still withheld. And suddenly it was his.

The letter which he presently wrote was not, however, for Miss Adulam, it was addressed to her uncle, Erastus Wilberforce. And as it lay signed and sealed before him, he covered his face with his hands. When he stood up, an illusion had unmasked, he had looked in his heart, it was empty.

The morrow was blank. Another day went by, during which he wandered through that dismal house from which even a ghost had fled. At noon, on the third day, a wire came:

"Victory! Will be with you at nine.

"J. O'DONNELL."

The message left him strangely unmoved, though one may wonder whether spring is sweeter than summer to a flower once dead. Punctual as a comet, the lawyer appeared. "Look at that!" he exclaimed. "You told me that Miss Adulam was a thoroughbred, but you didn't tell me she was another Lady Flora Hastings too."

At the paper he extended Nevius glanced and shuddered. It was a certificate, attested by two physicians that Miss Janet Adulam was *virgo intacta.*

"Why, Nevius, it is the Hastings affair over again. It will turn Tooth inside out. Outwitted, foiled, cornered, undone is that unholy shyster. Farewell to the Nevius divorce! And I may tell you Metuchen will be tickled to death. So far as he could he intimated he was with us every trip. I think I will take a drink. But what the devil are you looking so glum for? Nevius, listen to me, it was your duty to deny everything, but till I got that certificate, I'll be shot if—

Nevius checked him as with a bit. "What will Tooth do?" he asked, and so seriously that O'Donnell's jubilance evaporated. "What will he do when you produce this thing?"

"Increase the charges on his bill, I suppose. What is there for him to do except to return to his Tombs practice?"

"Do you know," added Nevius absently, "I would prefer it not to go on record."

"Are you mad?" O'Donnell snarled. "This is the case. We have won it without calling a witness. Could I have foreseen it, do you suppose I would have bothered over those wenches your wife employed?"

Nevius shook his head, his eyes strange and weary.

"No, and could I have foreseen that my wife—O'Donnell, the point is here. If you show this privately to Tooth he will understand that he has lost. And yet he likes to win, does he not?

"Where is the attorney who don't? I myself—

"Yes, I know. You have been very kind, O'Donnell, but there is one thing more you can do. Show this to Tooth, tell him to withdraw the charge against Miss Adulam, to amend his complaint, and if he agrees, assure him that I will not further contest his efforts."

"I don't understand."

"After this Vührer business, he is not above a trick or two, is he? Tell him to invent a co-respondent, the servants he can coach to testify to what he wants, and—the divorce is his. I am tired of it all. O'Donnell, do this for me, won't you?"

Sweet to the profession is the smell of an enemy's corpse, and just as that fragrance was to be O'Donnell's why should he be taken afar? He was not at all pleased and said so, but to the loss of the odors for which he had hungered, at last he became reconciled. A fortnight later a report was handed up recommending that divorce be granted to Hilda Nevius, plaintiff, on the ground of her husband's illicit commerce with a woman unknown. Which report was promptly and properly confirmed.

A day or two and Nevius found his name again in leaded type. Beneath, augmented with new embroideries, was the old story retold. There was the initial accusation of the grief-stricken wife, his own admission of guilt and headlong flight. Then his return, denying everything but doing nothing to defend charges which had just been substantiated in full. According to the reporter the evidence was of such a character that it had to be heard in camera. Nevius had not even had the courage to appear. But every accusation had been proved, and now his poor, wounded wife, who had borne with his infidelities until forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, at last was free. In dissolving the miserable bands the court had granted her permission to assume her maiden name, a permission of which she would at once avail herself. She was the daughter of the wealthy banker, Thomas B. Snaith, and very prominent in society, as were also the co-respondents, one of whom was a dashing western widow, the other, one of Saratoga's reigning belles. And so on and so forth at the rate of eight dollars a column and a tenner for the "beat." "The Lord loveth a cheerful liar," Nevius reflected as he put the *Chronicle* down.

But O'Donnell had not been deprived of certain fragrances for nothing. He wrote a note, the substance of which—that Miss Adulam had been fully exonerated and her name withdrawn—appeared on the morrow in the *Chronicle's* obscurest corner and in the *Chronicle's* smallest type.

XVII.

The paths to happiness are not many, but they are well defined. The finger-posts of the easiest are those which point to health and indifference.

But there are others that have a value, and between them the wayfarer has halted and will halt and conjecture. One leads to religion, and the pilgrim, if he be sorely depressed and temperamentally disposed will find it an excellent route. It may be tortuous, the goal may be remote, there may be ghosts at the crossings, but at least the traveller has that greatest of consolations—the belief that he is still a child, watched over and protected.

Another leads to that pure realm of ideas where individual preoccupations may not enter, where only the mysteries of beauty and of life endure.

But this route, rarely chosen, is adapted but to the student to whom solitude can offer the dual advantage of being with himself and of not being with others.

Nevius selected it. Health had ceased to interest him, temperamentally he was too nervous to acquire and preserve that suspension of judgment of which indifference is the fruit, and mentally he was too agile to accept dogmas unquestioned. He indeed tried to fatigue the mind in the fatigue of the body, but when, after hours of that sponge for thought which the saddle alone supplies, there was a question-mark in waiting. The why and wherefore of the divorce haunted him still. And as law was no longer possible, and his career at an end, he had a choice between drink and study. In the former he tried to drown that interrogation mark. But the interrogation mark knew how to swim. Then he plunged into history.

Between Cæsar and Heliogabalus there was a moment when the gods no longer were, when Christ had not come, when man alone existed. In disgust of modernity it was to that epoch that he turned. The classics were at his elbow, and in the splendors which they evoked he reconstructed Rome. Presently the booksellers were at work and he had invoices of curious lore. Before the roses could fade he wreathed himself with them. He had adventures in the Subura, escapades with dazzling young empresses and re-lived the inimitable life. To the hum of harps he floated on a ship that had gardens, bowers, spangled sails and a jewelled prow. On painted elephants he quarried lions in their African fens. Throbbing through the rushes of the Nile there cam to him the grave music of archaic hymns. Serapis whispered to him. Isis visited him unveiled. He sailed the Ægean, scaled Parnassus, lounged in the Academe. He prayed in temples that never heard an atheist's voice, passed initiate into the mysteries of Eleusis, encountered divinities and monsters, curious superstitions and untellable creeds. He found grace and lust, deformity and magnificence, unimagined depravities, torturesome delights. He wandered from palace to lupanar, from prison to shrine, from forum to camp. There was not a sin nor an altar that he passed unexamined, not a secret that he left unprobed.

When antiquity was his, he rose from its study perplexed. Nowhere had he encountered hypocrisy. Therewith the Why returned.

XVIII.

"Yes, I am off for Europe. For centuries I have been travelling on the map, now I am to try another tack. Come with me, Carol. You don't know what a charming companion I am. No one does. I never open my head."

Jones, a leg over the arm of a chair, a cigarette in his fingers, a smile of protracted amiability fluttering in and out his tawny beard, was discounting the pleasures of a trip abroad.

"In the autumn we could visit that city from which you have just returned. Mention Egypt and you see a priest, Persia, and you see a king, Greece—a goddess, but Rome was Might Triumphant. And to think that I have never been there—in this existence I mean, for I can swear I have jolted in chariots over those wide white roads. I can swear that I have supped with Lalage and thrown dice with Faustine. When I read history, memories return in floods. Let us go together and see what remains of the temples in which we have lived."

He puffed at his cigarette. "And such good as it would do you. A change of scene and you would begin to forget. You need to forget. This accursed divorce is assuming the proportions of a pyramid. It is over a year since it ended, and still you brood. You will kill yourself as Tredegar has if you sit moping in this horror of a house. Not but what I appreciate the advantage of sorrow. *Che non soffre, non vince,—non Leonardo da Vinci.* The tragedy of my life is that there has been no tragedy at all. If I have not written a great novel, there is the cause. An artist's one value consists in his sorrows. They are all aspirations. The world is filled with people whose lives are so puerile, whose aims are so narrow that we should bless the misfortune which makes us nobler than they. Why, grief is a pleasure, it is a joy to weep. But—"

"*Si je doute des larmes!*" Nevius inconsequently objected. "*C'est que je l'ai vu pleurer.*"

"Ah, we have been reading de Musset have we? *Fort bien, Monseigneur, fort bien, mais écoute:*

"N' es-tu pas jeune, heureux, partout le bien venu,
Et ces plaisirs légers qui font aimer la vie,
Si tu n' avais pleuré, quel cas en ferais-tu?
Lorsqu'au déclin du jour, assis sur la bruyère—
La bruyère c' est ton fauteuil—
Avec un vieil ami—le vieil ami, c'est moi—tu bois en
liberté—
Oh, pour ca! Comme un Polonais même—
Dis moi, d' aussi bon cœur lèveras-tu ton verre
Si tu n' avais senti le prix de la gaieté?
Aimerais-tu les fleurs, les prés et la verdure
Les sonnets de Pétrarque et le chant des oiseaux,
Michel-Ange et les arts, Shakespeare et la nature
Si tu n' y retrouvais quelques anciens sanglots?

Comprendrais-tu des cieux l' ineffable harmonie,
Le silence des nuits, le murmure des flots
Si quelque part, làbas, la fiévre et l' insomnie
Ne t' avait fait sônger a l' éternel repos?
Plains la donc, plains la donc, cette belle infidèle—"

"Yes, had she been that," Nevius interrupted, moved in spite of himself by the beauty of lines which he, too, knew by heart. "Had she been *infidéle,* I could see my way clearer. But though a year has gone by since she got the decree, still I am unable to understand why she asked for it. There was a moment when I thought her insane, when I thought, God forgive me, that this affair at an end I could win her back, reason with her, plead with her, love her again. But there was no insanity in her eyes when we met in court, a malignant exultation merely. And why? That Why is the first thing I find in the morning, the last that leaves me at night. For a year I have been haunted by interrogation marks, they are everywhere, they are in the food I eat. I close my eyes and still I see them. Even in sleep they pursue me, they fill my dreams."

"It is of course supposable," Jones, with singular acquiescence, replied, "that in asking for a divorce this lady had a motive. The malignity was due to your effort to thwart her. The exultation came of the prospect of showing that her lies were true."

"But why drag herself through all that mud? I am a gentleman at least, am I not? If she wanted a divorce why in God's name didn't she tell me before I went to Paris. I am not a bit better than another, I have had my little *écarts* as well as anyone else, and I could have got it for her, without scandal, without disgrace, without the ruin of three lives—Well, Patrick, what is it?"

From the tray which the man held he took a pink card, gilt-edged.

"A lady, sir."

Jones laughed loud and long. "*En avant les amourettes. Va donc, farceur.*"

"Blythe Sisseton," Nevius repeated. "Never heard of her. Patrick, ask her what she wants."

"That's Ablaut's Ex," said Jones, as Patrick turned, but he bit his tongue as he did so.

"Ablaut's Ex?"

"Oh, a little chorus girl whom he invited to dance the waltz in Faust. Man proposes you know, and chorus girls accept. But in accepting she meant Forever and he meant To-night."

"Well?"

"That's all. What do you expect? A three-volume novel? He wrote *Finis* on a cheque ages ago. In the circumstances it would be foolish of you to see her."

"Foolish of me? What in thunder do you mean? What have I got to do with her? Why should it be foolish of me to see her? But what are you staring at me for?"

"I'm not staring at you;" Jones snapped back. "I am merely giving you a little friendly advice. The girl is probably here out of curiosity, to have a look at the defendant in a *cause célèbre.* If you are going to make a freak of yourself, run right down and show yourself off. But in your place I would send word that I was out, that I was dead. Now here's Patrick—"

"She says she won't detain you but a moment, sir, she—"

Nevius stood up and made for the door. Before he could reach it Jones had him by the arm.

"Carol, let *me* go."

Without a word Nevius shook him off and left the room. But what was the meaning of that strange look he had?

'Does he suspect?" The novelist queried. "But when he *knows!*" He paused and looked about. "Anything would be better than to see the newspapers dripping again with his name. I must suggest something, but what?"

Ten minutes later the front door closed. When Nevius re-entered the library Jones was reading Spinoza.

"You knew this!" Nevius blurted. The strange look had gone from his face, but a stranger one had come. He was livid, and the corners of his mouth had widened. "Why have I been gulled on every side? Why could you not tell me?"

"Dear boy, what omniscience is it that you attribute to me?" And Jones tossed aside the book he held and smiled. "The announcement of your lady's engagement to Ablaut, if it is that to which you refer, was news to me until I read it in the *Herald* this morning."

"Bah! Why didn't you tell me she was his mistress? Why couldn't you have told me?

I committed suicide because of that woman. And look at these letters!"

But Jones had no need to look at those blue, iris-scented communications, each stamped with the Nevius crest, to divine what they contained.

"Look at them," Nevius repeated. "Months before she began that suit, she was writing to him things like these."

With a wrench he tore his collar apart.

"Why couldn't you have told me," he gasped, "why—why?"

"How could I, dear boy, I didn't know," the novelist with splendid mendacity replied. "But supposing, even that suspecting such a thing, I had so much as hinted at it, you would have held me up. 'Your evidence or your life,' you would have bawled. And I am not like you, Carol, alone in the world. I have my publishers to support. But now that the cat is out of the bag, the one thing for you to do is to say *Schwamm darüber* and pray that Ablaut may make an honest woman of her. Do sit down now and be quiet. Write to him, why don't you? Paper is a splendid conductor for steam. Send him your congratulations. Say that you have just learned of the engagement, and that if the fair betrothed makes him half as happy as she has made you, he is the man of all others to be envied."

"Yes," Jones continued with a twist to his beard, but an eye on his host. "A little eighteenth-century *politesse* of that kind is far better than big words and short phrases. Anything, Carol, anything but a row. I don't wonder though that you look as if a scrap would be a revel. Divorce is like matrimony, dear boy, a fellow has got to go through it three or four times before he knows how. By the time this lady gets done, what an expert she will be! It is true she is exceptionally gifted, *facile principessa*, as one might say, but—now give that to me, I am ashamed of you."

"It is not loaded," Nevius muttered from between his teeth.

"Even if it is not, it is capable of becoming so I suppose. Were Ablaut in this room and you shot him you would be acquitted—provided these letters were read. But would you permit them to go before a jury? I wouldn't let the villain in a novel defend himself at the expense of a woman's honor, and you, Carol, are a gentleman in flesh and blood. You remember that episode at Nice. There the lady showed even less foresight. The husband surprised the lover in her arms, but when he shot, civilization revolted at the mediævalism of the act. Legally he was justified, but law and good breeding are not the same."

Jones gave another twist to his beard and the douche of words continued.

"No, dear boy, you can't shoot Ablaut. On the contrary, you should be very nice to him. He is in trouble. He has been led astray, and these are the wages of sin. From the announcement of the engagement I suppose he considers that this lady is in honor bound to make reparation, and while I can understand that, I can not understand what induced him to commit the error which makes the reparation needful. No, he deserves your sympathy. A more venomous, soulless little *catin* than she who is to lead him to the halter—altar, I mean—doesn't exist, and never has, outside the walls of St. Lazare."

"H'm—"

Nevius muttered something, but whether in agreement or rebuke, Jones did not care. He drawled on uninterruptedly in the leisurely fashion in which he had begun:

"This morning, when I read the announcement, it took me a moment before I understood why she waited as long as she has. Knowing her, as several of us do, it was quite on the cards that she should bring Ablaut to book the day the decree was signed. But remember on what grounds it was granted. The woman in the amended complaint existed only in Tooth's imagination, and existed there only at your suggestion. It was the Frick case upside down. Tandems and tally-ho's could have been driven straight through it—which was the reason, I fancy, when the newspapers were jubilating over your defeat that you held your tongue. And, by the way, do you know who it was that inspired that jubilee? This lady, dear boy, no one else. She had the articles written to order, and she had marked copies sent to every one she knew. Actually she sent one to me. She did not think it worth while, though, to send O'Donnell's contradiction. *Ah, mais non!*" And Jones drew breath.

"But to return to the point, had she led Ablaut to the altar as precipitately as she led you to court, you, had you chosen, could have vitiated her decree, vitiated her marriage, and very neatly turned the tables by applying for a divorce from her. All that you could have done, dear boy, more too, had she been stupid enough to let you. But she wasn't. The dear little thing knew a trick worth two of that. You had one year in which to appeal, yesterday the year expired; to-day the engagement is announced. And you can do nothing. Not a thing, dear boy. You can't even shoot her; no, not any more than you can shoot Ablaut. Put any such idea as that out of your head. She has been malignant as syphilis, I admit; she has disgraced, corroded and destroyed; her conduct has been without parallel, without excuse; that she should be lapidated I admit also; I have nothing but contempt for her; she has unsexed herself, and if you struck her in the face with your glove, you would pay her an honor she does not deserve. But you can't shoot her. To defend any such act these letters would have to be read. And though you may say now that they could be read, and not only that but all the secrets of this divorce be ventilated, yet when the time came you would permit nothing of the sort, and you would be electrocuted, dear boy, because of this *fallatrix* for whose sake a skunk is too good to die."

The novelist paused and contemplated his finger-tips. Presently, with a glance that noted the effects of the douche, he began anew:

"No, you are too young, life holds too many possibilities yet, for you to jeopardize it for her or for her *maquereau* either. Could you kill her, as I have killed many a culprit in my novels, without a suspicion resting on the executioner, I am rather inclined to think I would approve. But the difficulty is that she is not under your roof and not being a cracksman you can't get under her's. Were she here in Tenth street, a bit of catgut tied across the head of the stairs, a slight shove, and there you are. The catgut vanishes and another accident in high life is recorded. Failing that, you could try a folding-bed; many a person has been smothered in them, you could imitate Incoul and turn on the gas when she was asleep, you could give her a vibrio in a mushroom, or squeeze a taste of cyanide of potassium into her champagne. Any one of these things, or of a hundred others, you could do if she were here, but luck is hers and she isn't.

"Now, in view of all the circumstances, were this one of my novels, I would have the injured hero experiment in what will be one of the fine arts of the next century—Execution at a Distance. There are bunglers who send explosives by express, which is well enough in its way when it happens to be successful, but even then the intention is manifest and the police are running right and left. The art of Execution at a Distance, as practiced by the adept, will consist in projecting an agent in such a manner that it kills and leaves no trace either of its purpose or of its advent.

"For instance—by the way, I think I will take a little of that whisky—for instance, a young man is enamoured of a young woman. Difficulties ensue. Correspondence there must be, but how? By invisible ink, let us say, which becomes visible when breathed upon. For a year and a day the young man writes to his Dulcinea with ink of this description. Suddenly she wearies or he does. What does he do, give her aconite pills? He gives a sheet of paper a bath of hydrocyanic, a coating of starch to protect it and drops it in a letter box. When the young woman receives it, she breathes on it to decipher what he has written, and falls dead, a piece of white paper in her hands. Coroner's verdict: heart disease.

"On the other hand, supposing he has had no time or no need to train her to the advantages of invisible ink. As a love-token he sends her a box of flowers saturated with a similar preparation. She opens the box, the hydrocyanic escapes and she is dead. Verdict: heart failure."

The novelist emptied his glass and looked at Nevius. But the latter had got his face in the shadow, a hand before it as well.

"All that," Jones added thoughtfully, "all that is for the Year of our Lord 2001. Nowadays people have such prejudices, and yet if stupidity hurt how many would yell!"

For a while neither spoke, and to amuse himself perhaps, Jones took a sheet of paper and began to scribble. Presently he looked up.

"But what a rattling good story the whole thing would make. And what a lot I could do with you. I could begin with you from the cradle, carry you right through everything, put your hat on and kill you. Suicide is always a good climax. And I could call it—let me see, I should have to find something comprehensive, a title both neat and terse, one that would convey an entire existence."

His eyes roamed to the ceiling, consulted the pencil, fell again on the paper on which he had written, and lighted sagaciously.

"I have it—*From Womb to Tomb*. Carol, dear boy, what do you say to that?"

As Nevius seemingly had nothing to say,

Jones nodded complacently to himself and rose from his seat.

"I have accomplished my object, *beau ténébreux.* I have bored you so that your anger is gone. Thank me now and let me go also, but remember I sail on Saturday and you must sail, too."

For a while longer Nevius sat, a hand before his face. But behind that hand were passing the incidents of the day; the coming of that little girl, the letters which she had found in her lover's rooms, letters with which she had threatened the lover until threats were idle and his engagement was announced. And these letters, brought to him with the intelligence of that engagement, were written by one who had pretended to love him, whom he had defended, lauded and worshipped, who called herself Mrs. Nevius still and who had wrecked three lives. Back to him crowded the memories of the past. The scraps of the letter found in the basket. That was to Jenny, was it? How clever she had been that day. How cleverly black had been turned to white. How clever, too, had been her tactics in regard to that poor girl. And with what neatness and despatch had she not brought Vührer to the house. Yes, she had been very clever, but the cleverest thing of all was in declaring herself broken-hearted. And this was the little Hilda whom he thought would be so sorry when she learned the truth. The truth indeed! It had been for him to learn it. And now that he had,—Madam Sapphira, be on your guard!

He repeated the menace; the echo perhaps aroused him. On the table were the letters, and near them a bit of paper embroidered with pencil-marks, the rough sketch of a tombstone. on which in neat characters was writ:

HERE LIES HILDA SNAITH,
AND THAT IS ALL SHE EVER DID.
Requies catin pace.

At this effort of the novelist's he barely glanced; his eyes were fumbling the shelves. There was a book on chemistry that he wanted, and having got it he opened it, questioned it, and sitting down again interrogated the future and roamed through the past.

XIX.

The Why had gone. He was no longer haunted, he knew. There are people to whom doubt is better than certainty and Nevius was one of them. The problem had occupied him; that gone he had nothing left—a duty merely—to which he presently turned his attention.

Of the incidents remote and dismissed which had suddenly returned was one he detained—the memory of a young girl examining her wedding gifts. Among these gifts were two vinaigrettes, and he could see her still, holding one, then the other to the mirror to judge which was the more becoming. The choice made, the rejected vinaigrette had been returned to Tiffany and some exchange effected.

It was the one incident of the old prenuptial days that had jarred, and it had particularly jarred in that the vinaigrette which had been exchanged, was the gift to his bride of one whose hand he had held and whose hand he had loved to hold. Apart, then, from any sentiment which he might have attached to the tribute, the commercial aspect with which it was regarded annoyed, and continued to annoy until, other incidents intervening, it was forgot.

But it had returned, and of an afternoon when the heat was such that man and beast fell dead in the streets he ventured out to shop. There was a scent-bottle, covered with gems, one which it would delight any woman to have and display, which, without any difficulty, he made his own. And there was also a phial of anhydrous prussic acid—but that he did not obtain until he had produced a jumble of Latin and hieroglyphics.

Later, in the quiet of the library, with mouth and nostrils bandaged, his eyes protected, his hands well gloved, he poured the contents of the phial into the jewelled toy, and re-stoppering both bottles,removed the bandage and breathed. It is not every neophite whose initial effort in laboratory work is attended with such success, and that fact he doubtless appreciated, for having breathed, he smiled. If all else failed, might he not turn chemist? The idea must have amused him, for, as he put the vinaigrette back in its case, the smile was still there, and as he wrapped up the case and directed it, he laughed. But then, chemistry is one of the most delightful pursuits imaginable, and he had been so long unoccupied that a possibility with even less perspective might have charmed.

Yet where, apart from Ceylon, is that prospect which always pleases? An hour had not passed before the vistas disclosed must have lost their allurement. The laughter, the smile had gone. In their place came a look perplexing and enervating, and through the quiet of the house pulsated a throbbing so loud, *so loud*, that to still it, perhaps, too, to rid his mind of chemistry and its charms, he drank.

It was the drink, no doubt, which on the morrow confined him to his room. But such a sedative is rest that on the succeeding day he was able to get to the floor below and breakfast too. Melon is not unpalatable at any hour, and when he had eaten a little he was quite in the humor to smoke a cigarette and learn the news of the day. It was the *Times* which he selected for the purpose, and after reading of the Homestead rebellion as he turned from the fourth page where the editorials are to the fifth where the advertisements such as death notices appear, the paper fell from him, the name

Nevius had jumped out and stabbed him in the eyes.

He got to the window, the court was deluged with sunshine, and on the fence a piebald cat was enjoying a promenade.

But could it be possible that that package had been sent? Had he not hid it somewhere?

With a sidelong suspicious glance the cat continued its gingerly way.

Could it be possible? he repeated. But what had he done with it? Why could he not collect his thoughts? He went up stairs, and down once more, and up again. Patrick appeared, he fled away. He could not go out, he could not sit still, he could neither write nor speak, nor act nor think, and in his bed-room where he hid at last, he locked the door.

If rest be a sedative, suspense is not. And do what he might, suspense urged him from sofa to armchair, from armchair to sofa, and finally to the library, that he might see for himself if the package were there.

On the table was a telegram. It was from Bronx he knew. But not a bit.

"Touraine sails at noon to-morrow. Your berth retained. Have wired congratulations to Mrs. A.

"A. B. FENWICK CHISHOLM-JONES."

Congratulations to Mrs. A! Who was Mrs. A? He put the telegram down and looked about. There was no one to reply. But who was Mrs. A? What had he to do with any Mrs. A?

Again he looked about. But still there was no one. Yet he must ask, he must speak, he must know. The bell was there, he rang it but could not wait and ran to the hall.

"Patrick," he called. "Patrick."

"Yes, sir, coming, sir."

"Patrick," he cried, while the man was yet below. "Patrick, what is there in the papers to-day?"

"In the papers, sir!"

"Tell me, can't you. Don't you see I am going mad. What was in the papers? Who is Mrs. A?"

Perplexed, astounded, the man halted midway on the stair.

"There's a Mrs. Nevius who has been and married a gentleman whose name I disremember, sir, but—"

"Then why the devil couldn't you say so before. Come up here. Don't you hear me? Come up I tell you. I am going to Europe to-morrow and I want you to pack. And Patrick—"

"Yes, sir."

"Here's a hundred or more that you may find serviceable." And as Nevius turned on his heel, gently if incorrectly, he repeated a verset from the Scriptures.

"Beautiful on the hill-slope are the feet of the bearer of glad news."

But what he meant by that absurdity who shall say?

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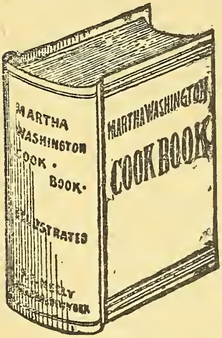

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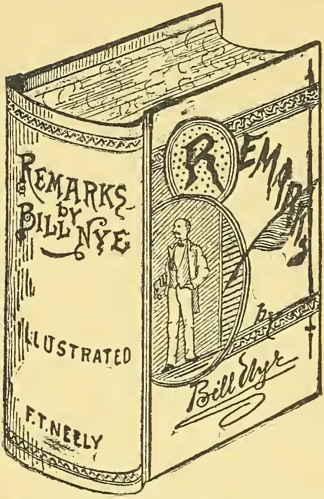

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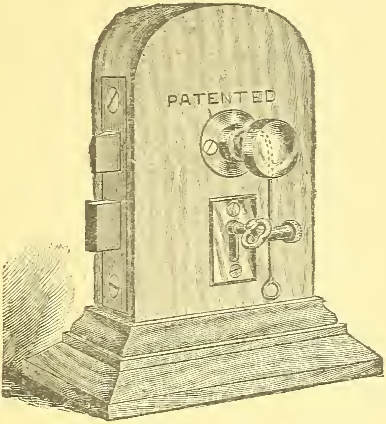

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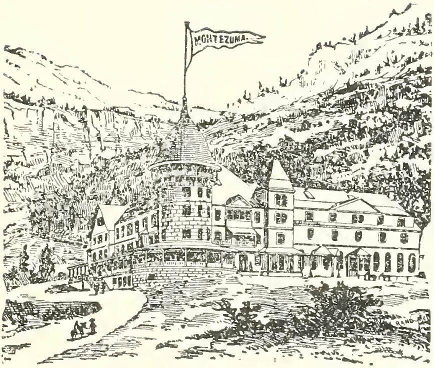

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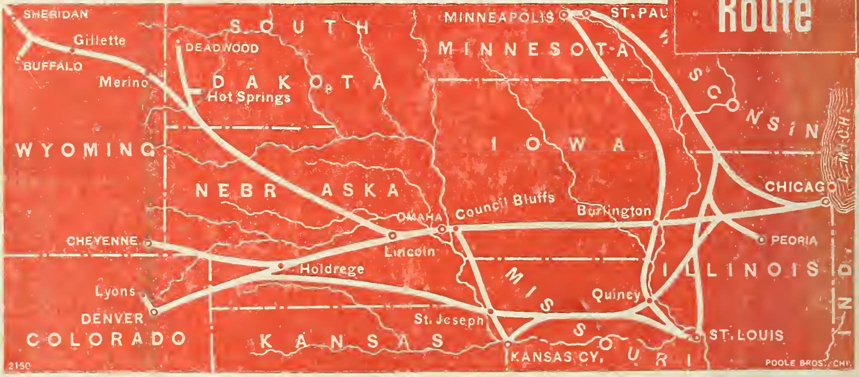
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Then headlong down the stair of life he fell, while up that stairway others laughed and mounted and all were drunken with the wine of youth.

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THE PALISER CASE

I

THE murder of Monty Paliser, headlined that morning in the papers, shook the metropolis at breakfast, buttered the toast, improved the taste of the coffee.

Murdered! It seemed too bad to be false. Moreover, there was his picture, the portrait of a young man obviously high-bred and insolently good-looking. In addition to war news and the financial page, what more could you decently ask for a penny? Nothing, perhaps, except the address of the murderer. But that detail, which the morning papers omitted, extras shortly supplied. Meanwhile in the minds of imaginative New Yorkers, visions of the infernal feminine surged. The murdered man's name was evocative.

His father, Montagu Paliser, generally known as M. P., had lived in that extensive manner in which New York formerly took an indignant delight. Behind him, extending back to the remotest past when Bowling Green was the centre of fashion, always there had been a Paliser, precisely as there has always been a Livingston. These people and a dozen others formed the landed gentry—a gentry otherwise landed since. But not the Paliser clan. The original Paliser was very wealthy. All told he had a thousand dollars. Montagu Paliser, the murdered man's father, had

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stated casually, as though offering unimportant information, that, by Gad, sir, you can't live like a gentleman on less than a thousand dollars a day. That was years and years ago. Afterward he doubled his estimate. Subsequently, he quadrupled it. It made no hole in him either. In spite of his yacht, his racing stable, his town house, his country residences and formerly in the great days, or rather in the great nights, his ladies of the ballet, in spite of these incidentals his wealth increased. No end to it, is about the way in which he was currently quoted.

All New Yorkers knew him, at any rate by repute, precisely as the least among us knows Mr. Carnegie, though perhaps more intimately. The tales of his orgies, of his ladies, of that divorce case and of the yacht scandal which burst like a starball, tales Victorian and now legendary, have, in their mere recital, made many an old reprobate's mouth champagne. But latterly, during the present generation that is, the ineffable Paliser—M. P. for short—who, with claret liveries and a yard of brass behind him had tooled his four-in-hand, or else, in his superb white yacht, gave you something to talk about, well, from living very extensively he had renounced the romps and banalities of this life.

Old reprobates could chuckle all they liked over the uproar he had raised in the small and early family party that social New York used to be. But in club windows there were no new tales of him to tell. Like a potentate outwearied with the circumstance of State, he had chucked it, definitely for himself, and recently in favour of his son, Monty, who, in the month of March, 1917, arrived from Havana at the family residence, which in successive migrations had moved, as the heart of Manhattan has moved, from the neighbourhood of the Battery to that of the Plaza.

In these migrations the Palisers had not derogated from their high estate. Originally, one of the first families here, the centuries, few but plural, had increased what is happily known as their prestige. Monty Paliser was conscious of that, but not unwholesomely. The enamellings that his father had added gave him no concern whatever. On the contrary. He knew that trade would sack the Plaza, as long since it had razed the former citadels of fashion, and he foresaw the day when the family residence, ousted from upper Fifth Avenue, would be perched on a peak of Washington Heights, where the Palisers would still be among the first people in New York—to those coming in town that way.

That result it was for him to insure. Apart from second cousins, to whom he had never said a word and never proposed to address, apart from them, apart too from his father and himself, there was only his sister, Sally Balaguine, who, one night, had gone to bed in Petersburg and, on the morrow, had awakened in Petrograd. Though, in addition to this much surprised lady, before whose eyes Petrograd subsequently dissolved into Retrograd and afterward into delirium, there was her son, a boy of three. Mme. Balaguine's prince did not count, or rather had ceased to. As lieutenant of the guards he had gone to the front where a portion of him had been buried, the rest having been minutely dispersed.

To perpetuate the clan in its elder branch, there was therefore but this young man, a circumstance which, on his return from Havana, his father advanced.

They were then at luncheon. For the father there was biscuit and milk. For the son there was an egg cooked in a potato. Yet, in the kitchen, or, if not there, somewhere about, were three chefs. Moreover on the walls were Beauvais. The ceiling was the spoil of a Venetian palace. The luncheon however simple was not therefore disagreeable.

With an uplift of the chin, the elder man flicked a crumb and sat back. The action was a signal. Three servants filed out.

Formerly his manner had been cited and imitated. To many a woman it had been myrrh and cassia. It had been deadly nightshade as well. After a fashion of long ago, he wore a cavalry moustache which, once black, now was white. He was tall, bald, very thin. But that air of his, the air of one accustomed to immediate obedience, yet which could be very urbane and equally insolent, that air endured.

In sitting back he looked at his son for whom he had no affection. For no human being had he ever had any affection, except for himself, and latterly even that unique love had waned.

The chefs, originally retained on shifts of eight hours each, in order that this man might breakfast or sup whenever he so desired, that he might breakfast, as a gentleman may, at four in the afternoon, or sup at seven in the morning, these chefs were useless. His wife, who had died, not as one might suppose of a broken heart but of fatty degeneration, had succumbed to their delicately toxic surprises with groans but also with thanksgiving.

That is ancient history. At present her widower supped on powdered charcoal and breakfasted on bismuth. The cooks he still retained, not to prepare these triumphs, but for the benefit of his heir, for whom he had no affection but whom he respected as the next incumbent and treated accordingly, that is to say, as one gentleman treats another.

On this high noon, when the servants had gone, the father sat back and looked at his son, who, it then occurred to him, astonishingly resembled his mother. He had the same eyes, too big, too blue; the same lashes, too long, too dark; the same ears, too small and a trifle too far forward. In addition he had the same full upper-lip, the same cleft in the chin, the same features refined almost to the point of degeneracy. But the ensemble was charming—too charming, as was his voice, which he had acquired at Oxford where, at the House, he had studied, though what, except voice culture, one may surmise and never know. Men generally disliked him and accounted the way he spoke, or the way he looked, the reason. But what repelled them was probably his aura of which, though unaware, they were not perhaps unconscious.

His father motioned: "Thank God, you are here. At any moment now we may be in it and you will have to go. You are not a divinity student and you cannot be a slacker."

The old man paused and added: "Meanwhile you will have to marry. If anything should happen to you, there would be but Sally and the Balaguine brat and I shouldn't like that. God knows why I care, but I do. There has always been a Paliser here and it is your turn now—which reminds me. I have made over some property to you. You would have had it any way, but the transfer will put you on your feet, besides saving the inheritance tax."

"Thank you. What is it?"

"The Place, the Wall Street and lower Broadway property, that damned hotel and the opera-box. Jeroloman wrote you about it. Didn't you get his letter?"

"I may have. I don't know that I read it."

"When you have a moment look in on him. He will tell you where you are."

"And where is that?"

The old man summarised it. Even with the increased cost of matrimony, it was enough for a Mormon, for a tribe of them. But the young man omitted to say so. He said nothing.

His father nodded at him. "You think marriage a nuisance. So it is. So is everything. By Gad, sir, I wish I were well out of it. I go nowhere—not even to church. I have grown thin through the sheer nuisance of things. But if nothing happens over there and you don't make a mess of it, the next twenty years of your life ought not to be profoundly disagreeable. Now I dislike to be a nuisance myself, but in view of the war, it is necessary that there should be another Paliser, if not here, at least en route."

"I will think it over," said this charming young man, who had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

"The quicker the better then, and while you are at it select a girl with good health and no brains. They wear best. I did think of Margaret Austen for you, but she has become engaged. Lennox his name is. Her mother told me. Told me too she hated it. Said you must come to dinner and she'd have a girl or two for you to look at. Oblige me by going. Plenty of others though. Girls here are getting healthier and stupider and uglier every year. By Gad, sir, I remember——"

The old man rambled on. He was back in the days when social New York foamed with beauty, when it held more loveliness to the square inch than any other spot on earth. He was back in the days when Fifth Avenue was an avenue and not a ghetto.

With an air of interest the young man listened. The air was not feigned. Yet what interested him was not the outworn tale but the pathological fact that the reminiscences of the aged are symptomatic of hardening of the arteries.

Mentally he weighed his father, gave him a year, eighteen months, and that, not because he was anxious for his shoes, but out of sheer dilettantism.

The idea that his father would survive him, that it was he who was doomed, that already behind the curtains of life destiny was staging his death—and what a death!—he could no more foresee than he foresaw the Paliser Case, which, to the parties subsequently involved, was then unimaginable, yet which, at that very hour, a court of last resort was deciding.

He looked over at his father. "Palmerston asked everybody, particularly when he didn't know them from Adam, 'How's the old complaint?' How is yours?"

With that air that had won so many hearts, and broken them too, the old man smiled.

"When I don't eat anything and sit perfectly still, it is extraordinary how well I feel."

How he felt otherwise, he omitted to state. A gentleman never talks of disagreeable matters.

II

IN the shouted extras that succeeded the initial news of the murder, Margaret Austen was mentioned, not as the criminal, no one less criminal than the girl could be imagined, but as being associated with the parties involved.

That was her misfortune and a very grievous misfortune, though, however grievous, it was as nothing to other circumstances for which she subsequently blamed herself, after having previously attributed them to fate, or rather, as fate is more modernly known, to karma.

Any belief may console. A belief in karma not only consoles, it explains. As such it is not suited to those who accept things on faith, which is a very good way to accept to them. It may be credulous to believe that Jehovah dictated the ten commandments. But the commandments are sound. Moreover it is perhaps better to be wrong in one's belief's than not to have any.

Margaret Austen believed in karma and in many related and wonderful things. Her face showed it. It showed other things; appreciation, sympathy, unworldliness, good-breeding and that minor charm that beauty is. It showed a girl good to look at, good through and through; a girl tall, very fair, who smiled readily, rarely laughed and never complained.

It is true that at the time this drama begins it would have been captious of her to have complained of anything were it not that life is so ordered that it has sorrow for shadow. The shadow on this human rose was her mother.

Mrs. Austen had seen worse days and never proposed to see them again. Among the chief assets of her dear departed was a block of New Haven. The stock, before collapsing, shook. Then it tripped, fell and kept at it. Through what financial clairvoyance the dear departed's trustee got her out, just in time, and, quite illegally but profitably, landed her in Standard Oil is not a part of this drama. But meanwhile she had shuddered. Like many another widow, to whom New Haven was as good as Governments, she might have been in the street. Pointing at her had been that spectre—Want!

It was just that which she never proposed to see again. The spectre in pointing had put a mark on this woman who was arrogant, ambitious and horribly shrewd.

A tall woman with a quick tongue, a false front, an air of great affability and, when on parade, admirably sent out, she ruled her daughter, or thought she did, which is not quite the same thing.

Margaret Austen was ruled by her conscience and her beautiful beliefs. These were her masters. This human rose was their lovely slave. But latterly a god had enthralled her. It was with wonder and thanksgiving that she recognised the overlordship of that brat of a divinity, whom poets call Eros, and thinkers the Genius of the Species.

Mrs. Austen, who had danced many a time before his shrine, had no objection whatever to the godlet, except only when he neglected to appear Olympianly, as divinity should, with a nimbus of rentrolls and gold.

In view of the fact that he had come to Margaret in déshabille, that is to say without any discernible nimbus, he affronted Mrs. Austen's ambitious eyes.

Of that she said nothing to Margaret. But at dinner one evening she summarised it to Peter Verelst who sat at her right.

The room, which was furnished with tolerable taste, gave on Park Avenue where she resided. At her left was Monty Paliser. Farther down were Margaret, Lennox and Kate Schermerhorn. Coffee had been served. Paliser was talking to Miss Schermerhorn; Lennox to Margaret.

"I don't like it," Mrs. Austen said evenly to Peter Verelst. "But what can I do?"

Peter Verelst was an old New Yorker and an old beau. Mrs. Austen had known him when she was in shorter frocks than those then in vogue. Even as a child she had been ahead of the fashion.

"Do?" Verelst repeated. "Do nothing."

"I am a snob," she resumed, expecting him to contradict her. "I did hope that Margaret, with her looks, would marry brilliantly."

Peter Verelst bent over his coffee. "The young man next door?"

Out of the corner of an eye Mrs. Austen glanced at Paliser and then back at Verelst. "Well, something of the kind."

Verelst raised his cup. He had known Lennox' father. He knew and liked the son. For Margaret he had an affection that was almost—and which might have been—paternal. But, noting the barometer, he steered into the open.

"Have Lennox here morning, noon and night. See to it that Margaret has every opportunity to get sick to death of him. Whereas if you interfere——"

Mrs. Austen, as though invoking the saints, lifted her eyes. "Ah, I know! If I had not been interfered with I would not have taken Austen. Much good it did me!"

Verelst, his hand on the tiller, nodded. "There you are! That locksmith business is very sound. Love revels in it. But give him his head and good-bye. Sooner or later he is bound to take to his heels, but, the more he is welcomed, the sooner he goes. The history of love is a history of farewells."

Paliser, who had caught the last phrase, felt like laughing and consequently looked very serious. The spectacle of two antiques discussing love seemed to him as hilarious as two paupers discussing wealth. He patted his tie.

"Very interesting topic, Mrs. Austen."

The woman smiled at him. "Love? Yes. How would you define it?"

Paliser returned her smile. "A mutual misunderstanding."

Mrs. Austen's smile deepened. "Would you like to have one?"

"With your daughter, yes."

Et moi donc! thought this lady, who, like others of our aristocracy, occasionally lapsed into French. But she said: "Why not enter the lists?"

"I thought they were closed."

"Are they ever?"

But now Verelst addressed the too charming young man. "How is your father?"

"In his usual poor health, thank you."

"What does he say about the war?"

"Nothing very original—that the Kaiser ought to be sent to Devil's Island. But that I told him would be an insult to Dreyfus, who was insulted enough. The proper place for the beast is the zoo. At the same time, the fellow is only a pawn. The blame rests on Rome—rests on her seven hills."

Verelst drew back. In the great days, or more exactly in the great nights, he had been a pal of M. P. That palship he had no intention of extending to M. P.'s son, and it was indifferently that he asked: "In what way?"

Kate Schermerhorn, who had been talking to Margaret and to Lennox, turned. Lennox also had turned. Paliser had the floor, or rather the table. He made short work of it.

"It was Cæsar's policy to create a solitude and call it peace. That policy Rome abandoned. Otherwise, that is if she had continued to turn the barbarians into so many dead flies, their legs in the air, there would be no barbarian now on the throne of Prussia. There would be no Prussia, no throne, no war."

You ought to write for the comic papers, thought Verelst, who said: "Well, there is one comfort. It can't last forever."

With feigned sympathy Mrs. Austen took it up. "Ah, yes, but meanwhile there is that poor Belgium!"

"By the way," Paliser threw in. "I have a box or two for the Relief Fund at the Splendor to-night. Would anybody care to go?"

Kate Schermerhorn, who looked like a wayward angel, exclaimed at it: "Oh, do let's. There's to be a duck of a medium and I am just dying to have my fortune told."

Verelst showed his handsome false teeth. "No need of a medium for that, my dear. Your path is one of destruction. You will bowl men over as you go."

Kate laughed at him. "You seem very upright."

Mrs. Austen turned to Margaret. "If you care to go, we might get our wraps."

A moment later, when the women had left the room and the men were reseated, Verelst stretched a hand to Lennox. "Again I congratulate you and with all my heart."

Keith Lennox grasped that hand, shook it, smiled. The smile illuminated a face which, sombre in repose, then was radiant. Tall and straight, hard as nails, he had the romantic figure. In a costume other than evening clothes, he might have walked out of a tapestry.

With ambiguous amiability, Paliser smiled also. Already Margaret's beauty had stirred him. Already it had occurred to him that Lennox was very invitingly in the way.

III

THE ballrooms of the Splendor, peopled, as Mrs. Austen indulgently noted, with Goodness knows who from Heaven knows where, received her and her guests.

Not all of them, however. At the entrance, Verelst, pretexting a pretext, sagely dropped out. Within, a young man with ginger hair and laughing eyes, sprang from nowhere, pounced at Kate, floated her away.

Mrs. Austen, Margaret, Lennox and Paliser moved on.

In one room there was dancing; in another, a stage. It was in the first room that Kate was abducted. On the stage in the room beyond, a fat woman, dressed in green and gauze, was singing faded idiocies. Beyond, at the other end of the room was a booth above which was a sign—The Veiled Lady of Yucatan. Beneath the sign was a notice: All ye that enter here leave five dollars at the door.

The booth, hung with black velvet, was additionally supplied with hierograms in burnished steel. What they meant was not for the profane, or even for the initiate. Champollion could not have deciphered them. Fronting the door stood a young woman with a dark skin, a solemn look and a costume which, at a pinch, might have been Maya.

In those accents which the Plaza shares with Mayfair, she hailed Margaret. "Hello, dear! Your turn next."

For a moment, the dark skin, the solemn look, the costume puzzled Margaret. Then at once she exclaimed: "Why, Poppet!" She paused and added: "This is Mr. Paliser—Miss Bleecker. You know Mr. Lennox."

But now, from the booth, a large woman with high colour, grey hair and a jewelled lorgnette rushed out and fastened herself on the sultry girl.

"Gimme back my money. Your veiled lady is a horror! Said I'd marry again!"

She raised her glasses. "Mary Austen, as I'm a sinner! Go in and have your misfortunes told. How do do Margaret? Marry again indeed! Oughtn't I to have my money back?"

"Poppet ought to make you pay twice," Mrs. Austen heartlessly retorted at this woman, the relict of Nicholas Amsterdam, concerning whom a story had come out and who had died, his friends said, of exposure.

Mrs. Amsterdam turned on Paliser whom she had never seen before. "What do you say?"

"I am appalled," he answered.

She turned again. "There, Poppet, you hear that? Gimme back my money."

But Miss Bleecker occupied herself with Lennox, who was paying for Margaret.

Margaret entered the booth where a little old woman, very plainly dressed, sat at a small deal table. From above hung a light. Beside her was a vacant chair.

"Sit there, please," the medium, in a low voice, told the girl. "And now, if you please, your hand."

Margaret, seating herself, removed a glove. The hand in which she then put hers was soft and warm and she feared that it might perspire. She looked at the woman who looked at her, sighed, closed her eyes and appeared to go to sleep. Then, presently, her lips parted and in a voice totally different from that in which she had just spoken, a voice that was thin and shrill, words came leapingly.

"You are engaged to be married. Your engagement will be broken. You will be very unhappy. Later, you will be thankful. Later you will realise that sorrow is sent to make us nobler than we were."

With an intake of the breath, the medium started, straightened, opened her eyes.

At the shock of it Margaret had started also. "But——"

The medium, in her former voice, low and gentle, interrupted.

"I can tell you nothing else. I do not know what was said. But I am sorry if you have had bad news."

Margaret stood up, replacing her glove. She knew, as we all know, that certain gifted organisms hear combinations of sound to which the rest of us are deaf. She knew, as many of us also know, that there are other organisms that can foresee events to which the rest of us are blind. But she knew too that in the same measure that the auditions of composers are not always notable, the visions of clairvoyants are not always exact. The knowledge steadied and partially comforted, but partially only.

At the entrance, Lennox stood with Miss Bleecker. A little beyond were Paliser and her mother. Mrs. Amsterdam, minus her money, must have rushed away.

Poppet Bleecker laughed and questioned: "No horrors?"

Lennox questioned also, but with his eyes.

Margaret hesitated. Then she got it. Taking the girl's hand she patted it and to Lennox said, and lightly enough: "Do go in. I want to see if what the medium says to you conforms with what she said to me."

Yet, however lightly she spoke, behind her girdle was that sensation which only the tormented know.

Beyond on the stage, the fat woman, now at the piano, was accompanying a girl who was singing a brindisi. The girl was young, good-looking, unembarrassed, very much at home. Her dress, a black chiffon, became her.

Then, in a moment, as Lennox entered the booth, Margaret joined her mother and looked at the girl.

"What is she singing?"

Paliser covered her with his eyes. "Verdi's *Segreto per esser felice*—the secret of happiness. Such a simple secret too."

"Yes?" Margaret absently returned. She was looking now at the booth. Quite as vaguely she added: "In what does it consist?"

"In getting what we do not deserve."

There was nothing in that to offend. But the man's eyes, of which already she had been conscious, did offend. They seemed to disrobe her. Annoyedly she turned.

Paliser turned with her. "Verdi's bric-à-brac is very banal. Perhaps you prefer Strauss. His dissonances are more harmonic than they sound."

Now though there was applause. With a roulade the brindisi had ceased and the singer as though pleased, not with herself but with the audience, bowed. The fat woman twisting on her bench, was also smiling. She looked cheerful and evil.

"I do believe that's the Tamburini," Mrs. Austen remarked. "I heard her at the Academy, ages ago." The usual touch followed. "How she has gone off!"

The fat woman stood up, and, preceded by the girl, descended into the audience.

Margaret looked again at the booth. Lennox was coming out. He said a word to Miss Bleecker and glanced about the room.

Margaret motioned. He did not notice. The girl who had been singing was bearing down on him, a hand outstretched and, in her face, an expression which Margaret could not interpret. But she saw Lennox smile, take her hand and say—what? Margaret could not tell, but it was something to which the girl was volubly replying.

"Who's his little friend?" Mrs. Austen in her even voice inquired. "Mr. Paliser," she added. "Would you mind telling—er—my daughter's young man that we are waiting."

Margaret winced. She had turned from Paliser and she turned then from her mother.

Paliser, whom the phrase "my daughter's young man" amused, sauntered away. He strolled on to where Lennox stood with the girl. The fat woman joined them.

Lennox must have introduced Paliser, for Margaret could see them all talking at once. Then Lennox again looked about, saw Margaret and her mother, and came over.

"Who's your friend?" Mrs. Austen asked.

Lennox' eyes caressed Margaret. Then he turned to her mother. "She is a Miss Cara. Cassy Cara her name is. I know her father. He is a violinist."

And my daughter is second fiddle, thought Mrs. Austen, who said: "How interesting!"

With his sombre air, Lennox summarised it. "She is studying for the opera. The woman with her, Madame Tamburini, is her coach. You may have heard of her."

"A fallen star," Mrs. Austen very pleasantly remarked. Quite as pleasantly she added: "The proper companion for a soiled dove."

The charm of that was lost. Margaret, who had not previously seen this girl but who had heard of her from Lennox, was speaking to him.

"It was her father, was it?" Then, dismissing it, she asked anxiously: "But do tell me, Keith, what did the medium say?"

"That I would be up for murder."

Margaret's eyes widened. But, judging it ridiculous, she exclaimed: "Was that all?"

"All!" Lennox grimly repeated. "What more would you have?" Abruptly he laughed. "I don't wonder Mrs. Amsterdam wanted her money back."

On the stage, from jungles of underwear, legs were tossing. The orchestra had become frankly canaille. Moreover the crowd of Goodness know's who had increased. A person had the temerity to elbow Mrs. Austen and the audacity to smile at her. It was the finishing touch.

She poked at Margaret. "Come."

As they moved on, a man smiled at Lennox, who, without stopping, gave him a hand.

He was an inkbeast. But there was nothing commercial in his appearance. Ordinarily, he looked like a somnambulist. When he was talking, he resembled a comedian. In greeting Lennox he seemed to be in a pleasant dream. The crowd swallowed him.

"Who was that?" Mrs. Austen enquired.

"Ten Eyck Jones."

"The writer?" asked this lady, who liked novels, but who preferred to live them.

Meanwhile Paliser was talking to Cassy Cara and the Tamburini. The latter listened idly, with her evil smile. Yet Paliser's name was very evocative. The syllables had fallen richly on her ears.

Cassy Cara had not heard them and they would have conveyed nothing to her if she had. She was a slim girl, with a lot of auburn hair which was docked. The careless-minded thought her pretty. She was what is far rarer; she was handsome. Her features had the surety of an intaglio. Therewith was an air and a look that were not worldly or even superior, but which, when necessary as she sometimes found it, could reduce a man, and for that matter a woman, to proportions really imperceptible.

A little beauty and a little devil, thought Paliser, who was an expert. But leisurely, in his Oxford voice, he outlined for her a picture less defined. "You remind me of something."

With entire brevity and equal insolence, she returned it. "I dare say."

"Yes. Of supper."

"An ogre, are you?"

Paliser, ruminating the possibilities of her slim beauty served Régence, smiled at this girl who did not smile back. "Not Nebuchadnezzar at any rate. Vegetarianism is not my forte. Won't you and

Madame Tamburini take potluck with me? There must be a restaurant somewhere."

The fallen star moistened her painted lips. "Yes, why not?"

Born in California, of foreign parents, she had neither morals or accent and spoke in a deep voice. She spoke American and English. She spoke the easy French of the boulevards, the easier Italian of the operatic stage. She never spoke of Tamburini. She left him to be imagined, which perhaps he had been.

From the room they went on into a wide, crowded hall, beyond which was another room, enclosed in glass, where there were tables and palms.

As they entered, a captain approached. There was a smell of pineapple, the odour of fruit and flowers. From a gallery came the tinkle of mandolins. Mainly the tables were occupied. But the captain, waving the way, piloted them to a corner, got them seated and stood, pad in hand.

Paliser looked at Cassy Cara. She was hungry as a wolf, but she said indifferently: "A swallow of anything."

"One swallow does not make a supper," Paliser retorted and looked at the Tamburini who appeared less indifferent.

"Ham and eggs."

Without a quiver, the captain booked it.

"Also," Paliser told him, "caviare, woodcock, Ruinart." From the man he turned to the girl. "It was very decent of Lennox to introduce me to you."

Cassy put her elbows on the table. "He could not be anything else than decent. Don't you know him well?"

Paliser shrugged. "Our intimacy is not oppressive."

"He saved her father's life," the Tamburini put in. "Her father is a musician—and authentically marquis," she added, as though that explained everything.

"We are Portuguese," said Cassy, "or at least my father is. He used to play at the Metro. But he threw it up and one night, when he was coming home from a private house where he had been giving a concert, he was attacked. There were two of them. They knocked him down——"

"Before he had time to draw his sword-cane," the fat woman interrupted.

"Yes," Cassy resumed, "and just then Mr. Lennox came along and knocked them down and saved his violin which was what they were after."

"It's a Cremona," said the Tamburini who liked details.

"But that is not all of it," the girl continued. "My father's arm was broken. He has not been able to play since. Mr. Lennox brought him home and sent for his own physician. He's a dear."

"Who is?" Paliser asked. "The physician?"

But now a waiter was upon them with a bottle which he produced with a pop! Dishes followed to which Cassy permitted the man to help her. Her swallow of anything became large spoonfuls of rich blackness and the tenderness of savorous flesh. She was not carnal, but she was hungry and at her home latterly the food had been vile.

The Tamburini, with enigmatic ideas in the back of her head, ate her horrible dish very delicately, her little finger crooked. But she drank nobly.

Paliser too had ideas which, however, were not enigmatic in the least and not in the back of his head either. They concerned two young women, one of whom was patently engaged to Lennox and the other probably in love with him. The situation appealed to this too charming young man to whom easy conquests were negligible.

He had been looking at Cassy. On the table was a vase in which there were flowers. He took two of them and looked again at the girl.

"Sunday is always hateful. Couldn't you both dine with me here?"

The former prima donna wiped her loose mouth. She could, she would, and she said so.

Paliser put the flowers before Cassy.

"Le parlate d'amor," the ex-diva began and, slightly for a moment, her deep voice mounted.

Cassy turned on her. "You're an imbecile."

With an uplift of the chin—a family habit—Paliser summoned the waiter. While he was paying him, Cassy protested. She had nothing to wear.

She had other objections which she kept to herself. If it had been Lennox she would have had none at all. But it was not Lennox. It was a man whom she had never seen before and who was entirely too free with his eyes.

"Come as you are," said the Tamburini, who massively stood up.

Paliser also was rising. "Let me put you in a cab and on Sunday——"

Cassy gave him a little unsugared look. "You take a great deal for granted."

Behind the girl's back the Tamburini gave him another look. Cheerful and evil and plainer than words it said: "Leave it to me."

Cassy, her perfect nose in the air, announced that she must get her things.

Through the emptying restaurant Paliser saw them to the entrance. There, as he waited, the captain hurried to him.

"Everything satisfactory, sir?"

"I want a private dining-room on Sunday."

"Yes, sir. For how many?"

"Two."

"Sorry, sir. It's against the rules."

Paliser surveyed him. "Whom does this hotel belong to? You?"

The captain smiled and caressed his chin. "No, sir, the hotel does not belong to me. It is owned by Mr. Paliser."

"Thank you. So I thought. I am Mr. Paliser. A private dining-room on Sunday for two."

But now Cassy and the Tamburini, hatted and cloaked, were returning. The chastened waiter moved aside. Through the still crowded halls, Paliser accompanied them to the street where, a doorkeeper assiduously assisting, he got them into a taxi, asked the addresses, paid the mechanician, saw them off.

Manfully, as the cab veered, the Tamburini swore.

"You damn fool, that man is rich as all outdoors."

IV

THE house in which Cassy lived was what is agreeably known as a walk-up. There was no lift, merely the stairs, flight after flight, which constituted the walk-up, one that ascended to the roof, where you had a fine view of your neighbours' laundry. Such things are not for everybody. Cassy hated them.

On this night when the taxi, after reaching Harlem, landed her there and, the walk-up achieved, she let herself into a flat on the fifth floor, a "You're late!" filtered out at her.

It was her father, who, other things being equal, you might have mistaken for Zuloaga's "Uncle." The lank hair, the sad eyes, the wan face, the dressing-gown, there he sat. Only the palette was absent. Instead was an arm in a sling. There was another difference. Beyond, in lieu of capricious manolas, was a piano and, above it, a portrait with which Zuloaga had nothing to do. The portrait represented a man who looked very fierce and who displayed a costume rich and unusual. Beneath the portrait was a violin. Beside the piano was a sword-cane. Otherwise, barring a rosewood table, the room contained nothing to boast of.

"You're late," he repeated.

His name was Angelo Cara. When too young to remember it, he had come to New York from Lisbon. With him had come the swashbuckler in oil. He grew up in New York, developed artistic tastes, lost the oil man, acquired a wife, lost her also, but not until she had given him a daughter who was named Bianca, a name which, after elongating into Casabianca, shortened itself into Cassy.

Meanwhile, on Madison Avenue, then unpolluted, there was a brown-stone front, a landau, other accessories, the flower of circumstances not opulent but easy, the rents and increments of the swashbuckler's estate, which by no means had come from Lisbon but which, the rich and unusual costume boxed in camphor, had been acquired in the import and sale of wine.

The fortune that the swashbuckler made descended to his son, who went to Wall Street with it. There the usual cropper wiped him out, affected his health, drove him, and not in a landau either, from Madison Avenue, left him the portrait, the violin, the table and nothing else.

But that is an exaggeration. To have debts is to have something. They stir you. They stirred him. Besides there was Cassy. To provide for both was the violin which in his hands played itself. For years it sufficed. Then, with extreme good sense, he fought with the Union, fought with Toscanini, disassociated himself from both. Now, latterly, with his arm in a sling, the wolf was not merely at the door, it was in the living-room of this Harlem flat which Cassy had just entered.

It was then that he repeated it. "You're late!"

For the past hour he had sat staring at things which the room did not contain—a great, glowing house; an orchestra demoniacally led by a conductor whom he strangely resembled; a stage on which, gracile in the violet and silver of doublet and hose, the last of the Caras bowed to the vivas.

Then abruptly the curtain had fallen, the lights had gone out, the vision faded, banished by the quick click of her key.

But not entirely. More or less the dream was always with him. When to-day is colourless, where can one live except in the future? To-day is packed with commonplaces which, could we see them correctly, are probably false for in the future only beautiful things are true. It is stupid not to live among them, particularly if you have the ability, and what artist lacks it? In the future, there is fame for the painter, there is posterity for the poet and much good may it do them. But for the musician, particularly for the song-bird, there is the vertigo of instant applause. In days like these, days that witness the fall of empires, the future holds for the donna, for the prima donna, for the prima donna assoluta, the grandest of earthly careers.

That career, Angelo Cara foresaw for his daughter, foresaw it at least in the hypnogogic visions which the artist always has within beck and call. In the falsifying commonplaces of broad daylight he was not so sure. Her upper register had in it a parterre of flowers, but elsewhere it lacked volume, lacked line, lacked colour, and occasionally he wondered whether her voice would not prove to be a voix de salon and not the royal organ that fills a house. Yet in the strawberry of her throat, the orifice was wide, the larynx properly abnormal. In addition the Tamburini was prophetically comforting.

But did the woman know her trade? He did not believe it. He believed though that she had no morals, never had had any, even as a child. It was the same way with Rachel and the fact left him cold. He was artistically indifferent to what the putana did or omitted, to what anybody omitted or did. But anybody by no means included his daughter. At the thought of anything amiss with her, presto! his sad eyes flamed. Very needlessly too. Cassy was as indifferent to other people's conceptions of decorum as he was himself. The matter did not touch her. Clear-eyed, clean-minded, she was straight as a string.

"How did it go?" he asked.

Cassy laughed. She had had a glass of champagne. She had too, what is far headier, the wine of youth.

"Well, I didn't see any showmen tumbling over each other. Mr. Lennox was there. He asked after you, and introduced a man who had us out to supper. It was very good. I did so wish for you, poor dear."

"What man? What is his name?"

"Paliser, I think. Something of the kind. Ma Tamby told me."

"Not old M. P.?"

"Perhaps, I don't know. He has hair like a looking-glass. He did not seem old; he seemed very impudent. Ma Tamby says he's rich as all outdoors."

"That's the son then. Don't have anything to do with him. They're a bad lot."

"As if I cared! Ma Tamby said he could get me an engagement."

"Ha! In vaudeville with acrobats and funny men and little suppers to follow."

"Why not big ones?"

"Big what?"

"Big goose!" replied Cassy, who removed her gloves, took off her hat, ran a pin through it, put it down.

Her father stared. Behind the girl stood a blonde brute whom the supper had evoked. He wore a scowl and a bloody apron. In his hand was a bill. Behind him was the baker, the candlestickmaker. Behind these was the agent, punctual and pertinacious, who had come for the rent. Though but visions, they were real. Moreover, though they evaporated at once, solidly they would return. He had been staring at her, and through her, at them. In staring his eyes filled. Immediately they leaked.

Cassy bit her lip. The tumbril and the guillotine would not have made her weep. Dry-eyed she would have gone from one to the other. Besides, what on earth was he wowing about? But immediately it occurred to her that he might be experiencing one of the attacks to which he was subject. She leaned over him. "You poor dear, is it your heart?"

He brushed his eyes. Dimly they lighted. With artistic mobility his face creased in a smile. "No, farther down."

Cassy moved back. "What in the world——"

But now his face clouded again. "I am glad you had supper. To-morrow we'll starve."

The exaggeration annoyed her, she exclaimed at it and then stopped short. Already she had envisaged the situation. But it was idle, she thought, to excite him additionally.

"Well?" he almost whinnied.

But as he would have to know, she out with it. "There's the portrait, there's the violin. Either would tide us over."

In speaking she had approached him again. He shoved her aside. With a jerk he got to his feet, struck an attitude, tapped himself on the breast.

"I, Marquis de Casa-Evora, sell my father's picture!

I, Angelo Cara, sell my violin! And you, my daughter, suggest such a thing! But are you my daughter? Are you—oh!"

It trailed away. The noble anger, real or assumed, fell from him. No longer the outraged father, he was but a human being in pain.

Cassy hurried to the mantel where, in provision of these attacks, were glass tubes with amyl in them. She took and broke one and had him inhale it.

Then, though presently the spasm passed, the wolf remained. But the beast had no terrors for Cassy. Buoyant, as youth ever is, his fangs amused her. They might close on her, but they would not hurt, at any rate very much, or, in any case, very long. Meanwhile she had had supper and for the morrow she had a plan. That night she dreamed of it. From the dream she passed into another. She dreamed she was going about giving money away. The dream of a dream, it was very beautiful, and sometimes, to exceptional beings, beautiful dreams come true, not in the future merely, but in a walk-up.

V

IN Park Avenue that night there was no dramatic father in waiting. There were no bills, no scenes, no thought of secret errands; merely a drawing-room in which a fire was burning and where, presently, Margaret and Lennox were alone.

"I have letters to write," Mrs. Austen told them.

She had no letters to write, but she did have a thing or two to consider. What the wolf was to Cassy's father, Lennox was to her.

At dinner, Peter Verelst's advice to do nothing had seemed strategic. At the Splendor, it had seemed stupid. The spectacle of that girl hobnobbing with Lennox had interested her enormously. If a spectacle can drip, that had dripped and with possibilities which, if dim as yet, were none the less providential, particularly when viewed spaciously, in the light of other possibilities which Paliser exhaled. Mrs. Austen was a woman of distinction. You had only to look at her to be aware of it. Yet, at the possible possibilities, she licked her chops.

Meanwhile, with the seriousness of those to whom love is not the sentiment that it once was, or the sensation that it has become, but the dense incarnate mystery that it ever should be, Margaret and Lennox were also occupied with the future.

In connection with it, Lennox asked: "Can you come to-morrow?"

As he spoke, Margaret released her hand. Her mother was entering and he stood up.

"Mrs. Austen," he resumed, "won't you and Margaret have tea at my apartment to-morrow?"

He would have reseated himself but the lady saw to it that he did not.

"You have such pleasant programmes, Mr. Lennox. You are not going though, are you? Well, if you must, good-night."

It was boreal, yet, however arctic, it was smiling, debonair. As such, Lennox had no recourse but to accept it. He bent over Margaret's hand, touched two of Mrs. Austen's fingers. In a moment, he had gone.

Mrs. Austen, smiling still, sat down.

"Nice young man. Very nice. Nice hats, nice ties, nice coats. Then also he is a theosophist, I suppose, or, if not, then by way of becoming one. What more could the heart desire? Would you mind putting out one of those lights? Not that one—the other."

Gowned in grey which in spite of its hue contrived to be brilliant, Mrs. Austen rustled ever so slightly. Always a handsome woman and well aware of it, she was of two minds about her daughter's looks. They far surpassed her own and she did not like that. On the other hand they were an asset on which she counted.

She rustled, quite as slightly again.

"And such a taking way with him! That little singing-girl whom we saw to-night, quite a pretty child, didn't you think? She seemed quite smitten. Then there are others, one may suppose. Yes, certainly, a very nice young man."

"Mother!"

"Well, what? Young men will be young men.

Only a theosophist could imagine that they would be young girls. I make every allowance from him—as doubtless he does for others. This is quite as it should be. I have no patience with model young men. Model young men delight their mothers' hearts and ruin their wives' temper. They remodel themselves after marriage. Whereas a young man who is not model at all, one who has had his fling beforehand, settles down and becomes quite fat. You have chosen very wisely, my dear. If you had waited you might have had Paliser and I should not have liked that. He is too good."

Margaret stretched a hand to the fire. She was not cold and the movement was mechanical. But she made no reply. In Matthew we are told that for every idle word we utter we shall answer at the day of judgment. That passage she had longly meditated. She did not believe that Matthew wrote it and she did not believe in a day of judgment. Matthew was a peasant who spoke Syro-Chaldaic. It was not supposable that he could write in Greek. It was not supposable that there can be a specific day of judgment, since every moment of our days is judged. But through Margaret had her tolerant doubts, she knew that the message itself was sound. It did not condemn evil and vulgar words, for they condemn themselves. What it condemned was idle words and she regretted that her mother employed them. But theosophy is, primarily, a school of good manners. The Gospel condemns idle words, theosophy forbids disagreeable ones.

To her mother's remarks, she made therefore no reply. Instead, she changed the subject.

"Will you care to go with me to his rooms to-morrow?"

With a mimic of surprise and of gentle remonstrance that was admirably assumed, Mrs. Austen lifted a hand.

"But, my dear! Were you thinking of going alone?"

The remonstrance, however gentle, was absurd and she knew it. Margaret could go where she liked. It would all be chaste as a piano-recital. But the flea that she had been trying to put in the girl's ear seemed very ineffective. She is just as I was at her age, thought this lady, who, in so thinking, flattered herself extraordinarily.

She shook her head. "For if you were, it would not do. Such things may pass in London, they don't here. But to-morrow is Saturday, isn't it? Yes, to-morrow is Saturday. At three I have an appointment with the dentist. I'll telephone though. That always pains them and, where a dentist is concerned, I do think turn about is fair play."

It was pleasantly said. To make it pleasanter, she stood up and added: "Are you to sit here and read? There is a French book lying around somewhere that belonged to your dear father. I don't remember who wrote it and I have forgotten the title, but you are sure to like it. There! I have it. It is called: 'L'art de tromper les femmes.' "

Mrs. Austen moved to the door and looked back.

"But if you don't find it readily, let it go for to-night. Your young man is sure to have a copy. No nice young man is without one."

VI

LENNOX was a broker, a vocation which he practised in Wall Street. Early on the following afternoon, while returning from there, he sat wedged between a gunman and a Hun. He was unconscious of either. The uncertain market; the slump, momentarily undiscernible, but mathematically inevitable; customers, credulous or sceptical, but always avid; the pulse of the feverish street which the ticker indifferently registered; the atmosphere of tobacco and greed; the trailing announcements; "Steel, three-fourths; Pennsy, a half," these things were forgotten. The train crashed on. Of that too he was unconscious.

Before him a panorama had unrolled—the day he first saw her, the hour he first loved her, the moment he first thought she might care for him—the usual panorama that unfolds before any one fortunate enough to love and to be loved in return.

"Grand Central!"

The gunman disappeared, the Hun had gone, the car emptied itself on a platform from which it was at once refilled. Lennox ascended the stair, reached the street, boarded a taxi, drove to his home.

The latter, situated on the ground floor of an apartment house a step from Park Avenue, was entirely commonplace, fitted with furniture large and ugly, yet minutely relieved by a photograph which showed the almost perfect oval of Margaret's almost perfect face.

The photograph stood on a table in the sitting-room beyond which extended other rooms that, in addition to being ugly, were dark. But Lennox had no degrading manias for comfort. Pending the great day he camped in these rooms, above which, on an upper storey was a duplex apartment which, if Margaret liked, he proposed to take.

It was for her opinion regarding it that he had asked her to come. In the forenoon she had telephoned that she and her mother would both be with him. He had instructed his servant accordingly and now a silver tea-service that had belonged to his grandmother and which, being Victorian, was hideous, gleamed at him as he entered the rooms.

Something else gleamed also. On a rug, a puddle of sunlight had spilled.

Above, on the embossed platter, were petits fours, watercress sandwiches, a sack of sweetmeats, a bunch of violets, a scatter of cups. Beneath was the puddle.

Lennox looked. It seemed all right.

Harris, his servant, a little man, thin as an umbrella, sidled silently by. The vestibule took him. From it came the sound of a voice, limpid, clear, which Lennox knew and knew too was not Margaret's.

"A lady to see you, sir," Harris, reappearing and effacing himself, announced.

The doorway framed her. There, with her shock of auburn hair, her cameo face, her slim figure and her costume which, though simple, was not the ruinous simplicity that Fifth Avenue achieves, Cassy presented a picture very different from that on the table, a picture otherwise differentiated by a bundle that was big as a baby.

Lennox did not know but that it might contain a baby and the possibility alarmed this man who was afraid of nobody.

"Hello!" he exclaimed.

In exclaiming, he stared. He liked the girl. But at the moment she was in the way. Moreover, why she had come to these rooms of his, where she had not been invited, and where she had not ventured before, was a mystery.

"How's your father?" he added.

There are people, as there are animals, that cannot be awkward and are never ridiculous. Cassy was one of them. None the less she stood on one foot. The tea-table had become very talkative. It told her that it was expecting somebody; that watercress sandwiches were not for her; no, nor Victorian horrors either.

"Be off!" it shouted.

"Sit down," said Lennox.

Cassy, hugging the bundle, remained in the doorway. It was not the tea-table merely, but something else, the indefinable something which one may feel and not describe that was telling her to hurry. Afterward, with that regret which multiplies tears and subtracts nothing, she wished she had hurried, wished rather that she had not come, wished that she had defied the wolf, outfaced the butcher, done anything except enter these rooms.

She shifted the bundle. "I have been gadding about in Wall Street. I never was there before, but it is so nice and windy I may go there again. This is just a good-day and good-bye."

As she spoke she turned, and as she turned Lennox' heart smote him. He hurried to her.

"See here! You can't go like this. Have a cup of tea."

Cassy gave him the rare seduction of her smile. "Thank you. I am out on business and I never drink in business hours."

But now Lennox had got himself between her and the vestibule.

"Business!" he repeated. "What is it? Anything in my line? Let's transact it here. Wall Street is no place"—for a pretty girl he was about to say but, desisting, he substituted—"for you."

"But you are expecting people."

"How in the world did you know? Anyway, they are not here yet and if they were they would be glad to meet you."

"I wonder!" said Cassy, whose wonder concerned not their pleasure but her own, and concerned it because she hated snobs, among whom she knew that Lennox moved.

"Now, tell me," he resumed.

Cassy, realising that it must be then or never, looked up at him.

"You remember father's violin?"

"I should say I did."

"Well, my business in Wall Street was to offer it as—what do you call it?—as collateral."

Lennox indicated the bundle. "Is that it?"

Cassy nodded. "I had to hide it and smuggle it out without his knowing it. He thinks it stolen. If he knew, he would kill me. As it is, he has gone crazy. To quiet him, I said I would go to the police."

Lennox laughed. "And I am the police!"

"Yes, you're the police."

"All right then. The police have recovered it. Take it back to him. How much do you need? Will a hundred do?"

That was not Cassy's idea. She shook her docked head at it. "You're the police but I am a business man. If you make the loan, you must keep the collateral."

"You are a little Jew, that's what you are," Lennox, affecting annoyance, replied.

Cassy smiled, "I like your jeu d'esprit. But not well enough to accept money as a gift."

"Good Lord!" Lennox protested. "Look here! I am not giving money away. I don't mean it as a gift. Pay me back whenever you like. Until then, what do you expect me to do with that thing? Give serenades? No, take it back to your father. I know just how he feels about it. He told me."

Cassy shifted the bundle. "Good-bye then." But as he still blocked the way, she added: "Will you let me pass?"

Moralists maintain that a man should never argue with a woman, particularly when she is young and good-looking. He should yield, they assert. Cassy's youth and beauty said nothing audible to Lennox. They said nothing of which he was then aware. In addition he was not a moralist. But there are influences, as there are bacilli, which unconsciously we absorb. For some time he had been absorbing a few. He did not realise it then. When he did, he was in prison. That though was later. At the moment he threw up his hands.

"I surrender. Will you mind putting it down somewhere?"

Cassy turned. Beyond was a table and near it a chair to which she went. There she dumped the violin. In so doing she saw Margaret's picture.

"What a lovely girl!"

Lennox, who had followed, nodded. "That is Miss Austen to whom I am engaged."

"Oh!" said Cassy. She did not know that Lennox was engaged. But suddenly the room had become uncomfortably warm and she blurted it: "How happy she must be!"

At the slip, for he thought it one, Lennox laughed.

"You mean how happy I must be," exclaimed this rare individual to whom the verb to be happy had a present tense, yet one which even then it was losing.

He had been fumbling in a pocket. From it he drew a wad of bills, fives and tens, and made another wad. "Here you are. I will mail you a receipt for the collateral."

Cassy, taking the money in one hand, extended the other. "May I say something?"

"Why, of course."

Cassy could talk and very fluently. But at the moment she choked. What is worse, she flushed. Conscious of which and annoyed at it, she withdrew her hand and said: "It's so hot here!"

Lennox looked about, then at her. "Is it? Was that what you wanted to say?"

Cassy shook herself. "No, and it was very rude of me. I wanted to thank you. Good-bye, Mr. Policeman."

"Good-bye," he threw after the girl, who, in leaving the room, must have taken the sunlight with her. As she passed over the rug, the puddle passed too. It followed her out like a dog.

That phenomenon, to which Lennox then attached no significance, he afterward recalled. For the moment he busied himself with pen and ink. Presently he touched a button.

From regions beyond the little old man appeared.

Lennox motioned at the bundle. "Take that to this address. Ask for Mr. Cara and say it comes from the police. From the police, don't forget, Harris."

"I'll not forget, sir."

"And go now. When the ladies come, I'll open the door."

As it happened, only shadows came. The shadows lengthened. They lapped the floor, devoured the silver, turned the rug into a pit, the room into darkness. Apart from shadows, no one came, no one rang. But, though Lennox was unaware of it, two people did come, and of the two one would have rung, had not the other prevented.

Lennox did not know that. On the inaccessible planes where events are marshalled, it was perhaps prearranged that he should not.

VII

MARGARET, on her way to Lennox that afternoon, wondered whether it might not be possible for them to live elsewhere.

Born and bred in the sordid hell with a blue sky that New York was before the war, latterly the sky itself had darkened. The world in which she moved, distressed her. Its parure of gaiety shocked. Those who peopled it were not sordid, they were not even blue. Europe agonised and they dined and danced, displayed themselves at the opera, summarised the war as dreadful, dismissed it, gossiped and laughed. It was that attitude which distressed this girl who, had she been capable of wishing ill to any one, might have wished them treated as were the élegantes of Brussels.

Margaret had no such evil wish. But she did hope that when married, she might reside elsewhere.

"There goes that Mrs. Tomlinson," said her mother. "Last night at the Bazaar—what do you suppose? She asked me to dinner. She actually did! The woman must be mad."

Margaret made no reply. Park Avenue was very bright. To her also for the moment the scientific savagery of the Huns was remote. The brightness of the April day was about her.

"I am in rags," continued Mrs. Austen, who was admirably dressed. "On Monday I must really look in on Marguerite. She is an utter liar, but then you feel so safe with her. Where is it that your young man lives? Somebody said that lies whiten the teeth. It must be there, isn't it? Or is it here? These places all look alike, none of them seems to have any numbers and that makes it so convenient."

They had reached a chalk cliff, on the face of which were windows, balconies and, at the base, two low steps. On the upper step, in large black letters, was the cliff's name.

Through glasses, which she did not need, Mrs. Austen surveyed it. "The Sandringham! Why not The Throne?"

Margaret went on and up. Mrs. Austen followed. At once they were in a large, marble-flagged hall. Beyond, from a lift, a boy in green and gilt, peered greedily. At the left was a door with a brass plate that said: "Dr. Winship." Opposite was another door with another plate on which was "Lennox."

That, also, Mrs. Austen surveyed. "I did not know your young man was an earl, but perhaps he is merely a duke. Shall we send that boy or do we ring? In bachelor quarters one hardly knows what to do—or what goes on in them either," she immediately and suggestively added.

The door at the right had opened. Cassy was coming out. The flush was still on her face and in her hand was the money. Mechanically she thumbed it. She had looked down at the roll of bills and through them at the butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker. She looked up and saw Margaret whose photograph she had seen a moment before. Instantly she recognised her. Instantly she realised that it was for her the violets and the sack of bonbons were waiting. As quickly she understood why the teapot had shouted: "Be off!"

From Margaret she glanced at Mrs. Austen, who was well worth it. In and about her eyes and mouth there was an expression of such lofty aloofness, an air of such aristocratic disdain, that though she stood without motion, movement, or gesture; though, too, there was no draught, the skirt of her admirable frock seemed to lift and avert itself. It was the triumph of civilised life. Yet that triumph she contrived to heighten. Raising the glasses which she did not need, she levelled them at Cassy.

Cassy, who had but glanced at her, arrested the glance and, for a second, held it on her, but with an unconcern so obliterating that it had the effect of blotting-paper. Mrs. Austen felt herself disappearing. It was as though Cassy had looked at her and had seen nothing whatever.

And that to Mrs. Austen! The lady squirmed but she rallied, the more readily perhaps since now Cassy had gone, and she said and pleasantly enough: "What a charming vestal! Such an engaging manner! Seemed, too, so at home! Let me see? It was she, was it not, who was singing last night? Rather a coincidence, don't you think?"

Margaret made no reply. The incident, though long in the telling, had barely outlasted a moment, and crossing the hall, she was approaching Lennox' door.

Without haste, Mrs. Austen circumvented her. "Not to-day, my dear. As it is, it is fortunate we came on foot. Otherwise, it would have been awkward and that is always so distressing. Another day."

Quietly, easily she had got herself in front of Margaret who, without shoving, could not reach the bell.

With candid eyes she looked at her mother. "You seem to be suggesting——"

"Perish the thought!" Mrs. Austen sweetly and quickly cut in. "I would not even suggest that one and two make three, for perhaps they don't. No, my dear, I suggest nothing. I merely insist. To-day we must postpone our little visit and to-night, when he comes, you can have it out with him. A lover's quarrel! What more could you wish? But here now is the lift-boy. We must dissemble. It's quite like a play.

"No," she interrupted herself to remark at the approaching, greedy and enquiring youth, "I want nothing whatever except not to be engaged in conversation."

"Whachyer mean?" asked the boy, who, however, promptly blighted by her level stare, omitted to pursue it.

She turned again to Margaret. "We will find a taxi at the corner. These first spring days are so enervating."

Margaret faced her. "I am going in."

The sight of Cassy issuing from Lennox' rooms had surprised her, as the unexpected will surprise. But in saying that she was going in, it was not at all for explanations. Explanations are for strangers. Love understands—or should understand, and Margaret divined that Cassy had come on some errand from her father, of whose waylaying and rescue Lennox had long since told her.

"Will you please move a little?" she added.

Mrs. Austen, after routing the boy, had lowered her glasses. She raised them again. "Look there!"

At the entrance were two women with a child between them. On the stair was a man. The door marked "Dr. Winship" had opened. The wide hall was suddenly full of people.

Mrs. Austen lowered her lorgnette. "Don't make a scene, my dear. At least, don't make one over my dead body."

Resistance was easy, but to what end? Margaret felt that she could persist, insist, ring and go in, but now only to be accompanied by her mother's mocking and stilted sneers. The consciousness of that subtracted the brightness from the day, the pleasure from the visit. Then, too, that evening he would come. Then they would be alone.

She turned. A moment more and both were in the street, where Mrs. Austen forgot about the taxi. Other matters occupied the good woman and occupied her very agreeably. She had been playing a game, and a rare game it is, with destiny. The stakes were extravagant, but her cards were poor. Then abruptly, in one of the prodigious shuffles that fate contrives, a hand, issuing from nowhere, had dealt her a flush. She purred at it, at the avenue, at the world, at her daughter.

"I am so glad we are not going anywhere to-night." A car flew by, a gloved hand waved and the purr continued. "Wasn't that Sarah Amsterdam? By the way, what did the medium tell you? Anything about a dark man crossing your path? If not, it was very careless of her. But what was I talking about? Oh, yes, I am so glad we are to be at home. You can have a nice, quiet evening with your young man. Only, do you know, I wouldn't say anything about that little vestal. He might not like it. Men are so queer. They hate to be misunderstood and to be understood makes them furious. No, I wouldn't mention it. But now isn't he as full of surprises as a grab-bag? I thought him a model of the most perfect propriety, and that only shows how wrong it is to judge by appearances. Model young men always remind me of floor-walkers. Who was that that just bowed? Dear me, so it was, and he looked so down in the mouth he might have been a dentist. On Monday I really must go to my dentist. He does hurt terribly and that is so reassuring. You feel that you are getting your money's worth. Don't your teeth need attending to? Ah, here we are at last! God bless our home!"

Entering the hall, she looked at a little room to the right in which the manager awed prospecting tenants. Usually it was empty. It was empty then. Mrs. Austen looked, passed on and, preceding Margaret, entered a lift that floated them to the home on which she had asked a blessing.

VIII

THE Italians have a proverb about waiting for some one who does not come. They call it deadly. Among the lapping shadows Lennox felt the force of it. But concluding that visitors had detained his guests, he dressed and went around a corner or two to the Athenæum Club where usually he dined.

In the main room which gives on Fifth Avenue, he found Ten Eyck Jones talking war. Jones was a novelist, but he did not look like one. There was nothing commercial in his appearance, which was that of a man half-asleep, except when he talked and then he seemed very much awake. He was not fat and though an inkbeast, he dressed after the manner of those who put themselves in the best hands and then forget all about it. But for Lennox he had a superior quality, he was a friend. With him was Harry Cantillon, who, the night before, had danced away with Kate Schermerhorn. Straddling an arm of Cantillon's chair was Fred Ogston, a young man of a type that, even before the war, was vanishing and which was known as about town. Adjacently sat Peter Verelst. Servants brought little decanters and removed others. In a corner an old man glared with envious venom at the liquors of which he had consumed too many and of which, at the price of his eyesight, he could consume no more.

Jones waved at Lennox. "I have been telling these chaps that before they are much older they will be in khaki."

"Houp!" cried Cantillon. He sprang up, ran to the arched entrance, where, lightly, without effort, he turned a somersault and was gone.

The old man in the corner raised himself, shuffled to a table, sat down and wrote to the house committee. Such conduct could not be tolerated! Having said it, he raised himself again and shuffled over with the letter to Dunwoodie, a lawyer with the battered face of a bulldog and a ruffian's rumpled clothes.

Dunwoodie, instead of taking the letter, gave the old man a look, one look, his famous look, the look with which—it was said—he reversed the Bench. Angrily the old man turned tail, collided with Paliser, apologised furiously, damning him beneath his breath, damning Dunwoodie, damning the house committee, damning the club.

"Are you to dine here?" Jones asked Ogston, who swore gently, declaring that, worse luck, he was due at his aunt's.

"But you are," Jones told Lennox. "Come on and I'll make your hair stand on end." He turned: "And yours, too."

Peter Verelst smoothed the back of his head. "Thank you, Ten Eyck. But such hair as I have I prefer should remain as it is."

The two men went on and up into another room, spacious, high-ceiled, set with tables, where a captain got them seated, took their orders, carefully transmitted them to a careful waiter, an omnibus meanwhile producing ice-water which Jones had promptly removed.

He smiled at Lennox. "Who was the jeunesse you and Paliser were talking to last night? She had been singing."

Lennox unfolded a napkin. "I thought you were to make my hair stand on end."

"Well," said the novelist, who spoke better than he knew, "she may make Paliser's. There's a young man with plenty of perspective. I saw him in London just before the deluge. He was then en route for the Marquesas. I envied him that. I envied him the vanilla-scented nights; the skies, a solid crust of stars, and also, and particularly, the tattooed ghosts. But I am forgetting your hair. Were you ever in Berlin?"

Lennox scowled. "Yes. Once."

"And once is too often. The last time I was there, I looked down the Wilhelmstrasse and it got up and threatened me. Barring the possibilities of future avatars, I shall not promenade there again. But I would give a red pippin, I would give two of them, to have been in Potsdam on that night, that cloudless night, the night in July, when in a room, gorgeous as only vulgarity could made it, there was sounded the crack of doom."

Jones gestured and a waiter hurried to him. He motioned him away.

"You can picture it, Lennox, or, if not, who am I to refuse my aid? At the doors were lackeys; at the gates were guards. Without and beyond, to the four points of the compass, an unsuspecting world slept, toiled, feasted, fasted, occupied with its soap-bubble hates and loves. But, in that room, saurians, with titles as long as your arm, were contriving a cataclysm that was to exceed the deluge. Since then, and though it be but through the headlines, you and I stand witness to events that no mortal ever saw before. That night, in that room they were concocted. By comparison, what are the mythical exploits of Homer's warriors, the fabulous achievements of Charlemagne's paladins, the fading memories of Napoleon's campaigns? What are they all by comparison to a world in flames? Hugo, with his usual sobriety, said that Napoleon inconvenienced God. Napoleon wanted Europe. These gunmen want the earth. They won't get it. Hell is their portion. But, while they were planning the crib-cracking, I would give a red pippin to have been in their joint that night. A little more trout?"

Jones turned to the waiter. "Take it away and fetch the roast."

He was about to give other orders, yet these Lennox interrupted.

"But look here. You spoke of an unsuspecting world. The Kaiser had been rattling the sabre for years. Everybody knew that."

"So he had," said Jones, who contradicted no one. "But England did not take him seriously, nor did this country either. Consequently, when the war began it was regarded as but another robber-raid which shortly would be over. That was an idea that everybody shared, even to the Kaiser, who afterward said that he had not wanted this war. Incredible as it may seem he spoke the truth. He did not want a war in which he would be tripped on the Marne, blocked on the Yser and foiled at Verdun. He wanted a war in which France would be felled, Russia rolled back, a war in which, over Serbia's ravaged corpse, his legions could pour down across the Turkish carpet into the realm where Sardanapalus throned, beyond to that of Haroun-al-Raschid, on from thence to Ormus and the Ind, and, with the resulting thralls and treasure, overwhelm England, gut the United States, destroy civilisation and, on the ruins, set Deutschland über Alles!"

"Hear! Hear!" said Lennox from between bites.

Jones, after a momentary interlude with a fork, got back at it. "That is what he wanted! But to get it, he lacked one thing, one thing only. He had everything else, he had everything that forethought, ingenuity and science could provide. The arsenals were stocked. The granaries were packed, the war-chests replete. Grey-green uniforms were piled endlessly in heaps. Kiel—previously stolen from Denmark, but then reconstructed and raised to the war degree—at last was open. The navy was ready. The army was ready. Against any possible combination of European forces, the oiled machine was prepared. In addition, clairvoyance had supplied the pretext and stupidity the chance. Petersburg was then in the throes of a general strike—which the Wilhelmstrasse had engineered. In Paris, the slipshod condition of the army had been publicly denounced. England and Ireland were nearly at each other's throats. Yet, had they been in each other's arms, the Kaiser was convinced that England would not interfere. Moreover in France, mobilisation required weeks; in Russia, months; and even then the Russian army, otherwise unequipped, the Tsarina had supplied with two hundred Teuton generals. That woman used to exclaim at her resemblance to Marie Antoinette. She flattered herself. It is Bazaine whom she resembled. But where was I? Oh, yes. The opportunity was so obvious and everything so neatly prepared that, for good measure, the pretext was added. An archduke, sinister when living and still more sinister dead, was, by the Kaiser's orders, bombed to bits and the bombing fastened on Serbia. Allied stupidity provided the opportunity, imperial forethought supplied the rest. Since highwayry began, never was there such a chance. On the last gaiter was the last button. The Kaiser lacked but one thing."

Lennox shoved at his plate. "So you have said."

Jones, abandoning his fork, repeated it. "One thing! In Potsdam, on that cloudless July night, when the world, on which he proposed to batten, slept, toiled, feasted, fasted, occupied with its futile loves and hates, that thing must have occurred to him."

"Yes, but confound it, what was it?"

Jones lit a cigar. "Bernstorff said, or is said to have said—I do not count him among my acquaintances—that on that night this supercanaille showed symptoms of what I think I have seen described as vacillation. That is quite on the cards. It bears out my theory. In any event the fellow had his ambitions. He wanted to descend into the red halls of history disguised. He might have succeeded. History is very careless and to-day barely recalls that at five o'clock on the morning succeeding his marriage to a dowdy fat girl, he treated his regiment to a drill. The fact is uninteresting and would be equally unimportant were it not for the note that it struck. Subsequently, when he leaped on the throne, he shouted that those who opposed him he would smash. "There is no other law than mine"; he later announced—a fine phrase and yet but a modern variant of Domitian's: "Your god and master orders it." Incidentally, in addition to the Garter, an honorific which the Duke of Cambridge admirably summarised as "having, sir, none of the damned nonsense of merit about it," he had other distinctions. He had—and has—uranomania, that is to say, a flight of fancy in which the patient believes himself associated with God. He had also defilirium tremens, which manifested itself in those manœuvres that are war's image and in which the troops defile. Yet, when it came to the real thing, it may be that this paradomaniac lacked the stomach. Apart from the Kruger incident, and one or two other indecencies, his observance of international etiquette was relatively correct. The lackeys of history might therefore have deodorised him. With a sow's ear a lot may be done. Have a cigar?"

Lennox laughed. "I would prefer the point."

"Now, how greedy you are. Well then, here it is. On that fatidic night in July, this fellow was fifty-five."

"What of it?"

"Everything. At his age Alexander had been dead twenty years."

As Jones spoke he raised his hands. "Spirit of the Great Sinner, forgive me! This scrofulous dwarf has no kinship with thee!

"No," Jones, dropping his hands, resumed. "None. His kin are Herod, Caracalla, Attila, Genghis Khan, and Cloacus, Lord of Sewers. Those are his kin. To the shade of the Lampsacene, whom the world had forgotten; to that of Cloacus, whom civilisation had ignored, subsequently he devoted the army. For the troops he invoked them. But that night the ghosts of the others gave him pause. At his age, Caracalla, Attila, Genghis, were dead. They had died hideous, monstrous—but young. Herod alone may have seemed a promising saint to swear by, though, in the obscurities of Syrian chronology, even of him he could not be sure. The one kindred hyena who, at fifty-five, had defied the world was Tsi An, the Chinese Empress, and he had helped to squelch her. Do you see it now? To burglarise the world, this thug had every advantage. The police were asleep. The coast was clear. The jimmies and the dynamite sticks were ready. Even the dark lantern was packed. The kit was complete. He had everything. He lacked nothing, except the one essential—Youth! The eyes of youth are clear. His were too dimmed to foresee that the allies——"

Lennox was rising.

Amiably Jones switched on and off again. "Hold on a minute. You have not given me the "Who's Who of that young woman."

In Lennox' brain, instantly cells latent, alert, and of which he was entirely unconscious, functioned actively. Before him Cassy stood. Beside her was another. This other, very lovely, was a saint. Yet, prompted still by the cells and equally unaware of it, it occurred to him that a lovely saint may resemble a vase that is exquisite, but unresilient and perhaps even empty. Whereas a siren, like Cassy——

Abruptly he caught himself up. The unawaited disloyalty into which he had floundered, surprised and annoyed him. He could not account for the delicate infidelity and perplexedly he looked at Jones who still was at it.

"The diva I mean. The diva in duodecimo who sang at the Bazaar."

Lennox shook himself and sat down again. Modestly then the thrice-told tale was repeated—Angelo Cara, a violin in one hand, a sword-cane in the other, trudging home. The attack, the rout, the rescue, the acquaintance with Cassy that ensued.

Jones, absorbing the story, pigeonholed his memory with the details which, sometime, for copy purposes, might be of use.

"They are Portuguese," Lennox, rising again, concluded.

Jones peered about. The great room was filled with members, eating, drinking, laughing, talking—talking mainly of nothing whatever. He motioned. "Isn't that Cantillon over there with—of all people!—Dunwoodie?"

Lennox looked and nodded. "Cantillon is in Dunwoodie's office. He asked me to give him my law business." Indifferently, with the air of one considering the improbable, Lennox added: "Some day I may. Good-night."

But in the night into which he then went, already that day was breaking.

IX

THAT same evening, as Lennox was leaving the club, Mrs. Austen, rising from the dinner-table, preceded Margaret into the drawing-room and looked at the clock, a prostrate nymph, balancing a dial on the soles of her feet. At the figures on the dial, the nymph pointed a finger.

From the clock Mrs. Austen turned and exclaimed at the windows which she had already examined. "The jardinières have not yet been attended to! It is inconceivable!"

Margaret, who had seated herself, said: "You might send for the manager."

"He would only keep me waiting and then expect me to tell him what I wanted. He ought to know. Besides, I might have forgotten. It is very tiresome."

Margaret stood up. "I will tell him."

With a click, Mrs. Austen unfurled a fan and, with another click, refurled it. "No. I will see him myself. I am quite in the humour."

Margaret looked after her mother, who was leaving the room. The sudden tempest in a flowerpot surprised her. But the outer door closed. Margaret reseated herself. Presently he would come and together they would make those plans that lovers make—and then unmake, unless, elsewhere, they have been made for them.

Meanwhile she waited. The incident at the Sandringham, the sight of Cassy, her mother's facile insinuations, these things had distressed her, because, and only because, they had prevented her from enjoying the innocent pleasure of the innocent visit to the rooms of her betrothed, whom she loved with a love that was too pure and too profound, to harbour doubt and suspicion and that evil child of theirs which jealousy is. Her faith was perfect. That faith showed in her face and heightened her beauty with a candour that should have disarmed her mother, who, in the hall below, was, at that moment, instructing a man and not about flower-boxes either.

"Mr. Lennox, you may know him, by sight I mean, will be coming here shortly. Please have him shown into that room there."

Mrs. Austen passed on. The little room at which she had glanced that afternoon received her—a hospitality in which a mirror joined. The latter welcomed her with a glimpse of herself. It was like meeting an old friend. But no; a friend certainly, yet not an old one. Age had not touched this lady, not impudently at least, though where it may have had the impertinence to lay a finger, art had applied another, a moving finger that had written a parody of youth on her face which was then turning to some one behind her whom the mirror disclosed.

In turning, she smiled.

"It is so good of you, Mr. Lennox, to look in on me. The door-man told you about Margaret, did he not? No? How careless of him. The dear child has a headache and has gone to bed."

"Has she?" said Lennox. He found but that. But at least he understood why Margaret had not come to his rooms. The headache had prevented her.

"It is nothing." Mrs. Austen was telling him. "To-morrow she will be herself again. Nice weather we are having."

"Very," Lennox answered.

As he would have said the same thing if Mrs. Austen had declared that the weather was beastly, the reply did not matter. It did not matter to her; it did not matter to him. She was thinking of something else and he was also. He was thinking of Margaret, wondering whether he might not go to her. Were it not for the strait-jacket that conventionality is and which pinions the sturdiest, he would have gone. He was a little afraid of Mrs. Austen, as an intelligent man sometimes is afraid of an imbecile woman. But his fear of her fainted beside the idea that if, disregarding the bagatelles of the door, he made his way to Margaret, she herself might not like it. That alone restrained him. Afterward he wished he had let nothing prevent him. Afterward he regretted it. It is the misery of life—and sometimes its reward—that regret should be futile.

But, at the moment, grim and virile, a hat in one hand, a stick in the other, his white tie just showing between the lapels of his overcoat, already he was consoling himself. He had not seen Margaret in the afternoon, and he was not to see her this evening. No matter. The morrow would repay—that morrow which is falser than the former day.

Pleasantly at him and at his thoughts, Mrs. Austen played the flute. "Won't you sit down?" In speaking, she sank on a sofa which she occupied amply.

Lennox, shifting his stick, took a chair. Later, in one of those evil moods that come to the best, as well as to the worst, he wished he had brained her with it.

With the magic flute, Mrs. Austen continued: "To-morrow is Sunday, is it not? You must be sure to come. Dear me! I can remember when everybody went to church on Sunday and then walked up and down Fifth Avenue. Fifth Avenue had trees then instead of shops and on the trees were such funny little worms. They used to hang down and crawl on you. The houses, too, were so nice. They all had piazzas and on the piazzas were honeysuckles. But I fear I am boasting. I don't really remember all that. It was my father who told me. Those must have been the good old days!"

Lennox again shifted his stick. "To-day I had hoped that you would look in on me."

The flute caressed the strain. "Yes. It was too bad! We had quite counted on it. Bachelor quarters must be so exciting."

"Well, not mine at any rate. They are rather dark."

"But that must make them all the more exciting! Blindman's buff! Hide and go seek! What fun you must have with your friends romping about!"

"My friends are too busy for that. Though to-day——"

"Yes?"

Lennox hesitated. He knew that this woman took no interest in him whatever, but he had intended to tell Margaret about Cassy.

Pleasantly Mrs. Austen prodded him. "Yes?"

"Nothing of any moment. This afternoon, Miss Cara, the girl who sang last night, came to see me. You may remember I told you I knew her father."

"It seems to me I do."

"Things have not gone well there and I advanced her a trifle for him."

Mrs. Austen unfurled her fan. It was all Honest Injun. She had not a doubt of it and never had. But if she had thought it a Sioux and Comanche story, it would have been the same to her.

"I am sorry you did not meet her," Lennox continued. "You might have lent her a hand."

"Professionally, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I might have her sing here," replied Mrs. Austen, who would have seen Cassy hanged first.

Lennox considered the picture: Mrs. Austen in the rôle of shepherdess, herding for Cassy's benefit the flock of sheep that society is. But the picture did not detain him. He stood up.

"That would be very good of you. Please tell Margaret I am sorry she has a headache and that I will look in on her to-morrow."

No you won't, thought Mrs. Austen, who said: "Yes, do."

In a moment, when he had gone, she looked again in the mirror. It showed her a woman who would not steal, unless she could do so undetectably; a woman who would not forge, because she did not know how. Crimes ridiculous or merely terrific she was too shrewd to commit. But there are crimes that the law cannot reach. There are cards, too, that fate may deal.

After looking at the woman, she looked at the cards. They were dreamlike. Even so, they needed stacking. Mrs. Austen arranged them carefully, ran them up her sleeve and floated to the room where Margaret waited.

As she entered, Margaret turned to her. Her face had that disquieting loveliness which Spanish art gave to the Madonna, the loveliness of flesh eclipsed certainly by the loveliness of the soul, but still flesh, still lovely.

At sight of it Mrs. Austen experienced the admiration tinctured with the vitriol of jealousy that some mothers inject. Mrs. Austen had been a belle in the nights when there were belles but her belledom, this girl, who was not a belle, outshone. Yet the glow of it while necessarily physical had in it that which was moral. Unfortunately the radiance of moral beauty only those who are morally beautiful can perceive. Mrs. Austen was blind to it. It was her daughter's physical beauty that she always saw and which, though she was jealous of it, had, she knew, a value, precisely as beauty had a value in Circassia where, before the war, it fetched as much as a hundred Turkish pounds. In New York, where amateurs are keener and beauty is more rare, it may run into millions.

Commercially conscious of that, Mrs. Austen felt for the cards and carelessly produced one.

"Do you know, I believe we are to have a shower. Your young man got off just in time."

Margaret, who had glanced at the prostrate nymph, looked at her upright mother. "Do you mean that Keith has come—and gone?"

Mrs. Austen sat down and extracted another card. "My dear, when I went below he was coming in. We——"

Margaret, with her usual directness, interrupted. "But he is coming back?"

"That depends on you."

"On me? How? What do you mean?"

"That you must do as you like, of course. But if you elect to see him, for goodness' sake don't refer to it."

"Refer to it!" Margaret exclaimed. "Refer to what?"

"The vestal whom we saw this afternoon."

"I don't understand."

Indulgently Mrs. Austen motioned. "It is hardly proper that you should."

Margaret winced and coloured. "Your insinuation is horrible."

Cheerfully Mrs. Austen smiled. Margaret's start, her heightened colour, her visible annoyance, these things comforted her. A grandee of Spain warmed his hands at the auto-da-fé. There are people just like him. There are people that take comfort in another's distress. Mrs. Austen did not know that she resembled them. She had nothing but Margaret's welfare in view. Nothing but that and her own. Her own though came first.

She raised the fan. "My dear, you misjudge me. I always said that he is a good young man and I stick to it. He is good, far too good, too good to be true." With that, lowering the fan, she produced a trump. "Downstairs, a moment ago, he told me so."

Margaret gasped. "He told you—he told you——"

"Precisely. That is just what he did tell me."

Margaret straightened. "I don't believe it."

Mrs. Austen waved at her. "Oh, I don't mean that he has deceived you. He has done nothing of the kind. It is you who have deceived yourself. That was to be expected. At your age I deceived myself quite as thoroughly. I thought your father a conquering hero and he was merely a bore. But he pointed a moral, though he adorned no tale. He married to settle down. That is this young man's idea and I must give him credit for the fact that while he has not deceived you, he did deceive me. I thought him a tedious person; whereas, not a bit of it. He is exceedingly lively. If he keeps it up, his wife will be blessed among women. But that is just it. He won't keep it up. He swore he would not and I believe him. He has turned over a new leaf. I can't cry over it, but it is really too bad."

Margaret, who had straightened, stiffened. "If I believed a word of what you tell me, I would forgive him entirely."

Mrs. Austen, unprepared for that, leaned forward. "My dear, I had no idea you were so sensible."

"I would forgive entirely," Margaret continued. "But I would never see him again."

How good that tasted! Mrs. Austen swallowed it contentedly. "Of course you will see him. You are not going blind, I suppose. But when you do see him, it will be only decent of you to ignore the matter which is not a fit subject for you to discuss."

Margaret, who had straightened and stiffened, now was rigid. "I certainly shall ignore it. It is not worth talking about."

Mrs. Austen leaned back. "Ah, my dear, how right you are. He could not tell you that he had loved wisely, it would not be very flattering. He could not say he had loved too well, for that would be embarrassing. What a pretty frock you have on. Did Marguerite make it? Of course he could not. It would not be nice at all. But to me he made a soiled breast of it. Don't you think the skirt a bit too long? Stand up a minute."

Margaret coloured again. She coloured with a flush that put two red spots on her. She did not believe it. She could not and would not. Yet credence, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth.

Mrs. Austen, noting the spots, knew that the card had been well played and leisurely selected another.

"Perhaps it is the way you are sitting. Yes, altogether it is quite ducky. I really must go to Marguerite on Monday. Don't let me forget about it or the dentist either. I shall have my hands full and my mouth also. The proper caper, too, apparently. That little dollymop, whom we saw this afternoon, had her hands full. Did you notice the roll of bills that she was counting? Such an enjoyable occupation! But it won't last. You need not worry on that score. He had been paying her off. He assured me of that and so unnecessarily. Why, I saw the whole thing at a glance. Anybody but you would have seen it too. But you are so theosophically nearsighted. It was for that reason I took you away. Now, though, he is going to begin on a clean slate. Those were his very words, and you, I suppose, are the clean slate. He has such original expressions, hasn't he? But there! I forgot. He did not mean me to tell you. In fact, he begged me not to."

From Margaret's face the flush retreating left it white with that whiteness which dismay creates. A bucket of mud had drenched her. It did more, it dazed her. The idea that the bucket was imaginary, the mud non-existent, that every word she had heard was a lie, did not occur to this girl who, if a Psyche, was not psychic. In her heart was the mud; in her mother's hand was the bucket. But the mire itself, he had put there. The evidence of her own eyes she might have questioned. But he had admitted it and the fact that he had induced in her the purely animal feeling to get away, to be alone and to suffer unseen.

She left the room, went to her own, closed the door and at a prie-Dieu fell on her knees, not to pray—she knew that the Lords of Karma are not to be propitiated or coerced—but in humiliation.

In humiliation there may be self-pity and that is always degrading. With uncertain hands she tried to transform that pity into sorrow, not for herself, but for him. The burnt offering seared her. In the secret chambers of her being her young soul tripped and fell. For support she clutched at her creed. Ordinarily it would have sustained her. Ordinarily it would have told her that her suffering was the penalty for suffering which she had caused, a penalty that the gods of the doors that close behind our birth were measuring to her. Ordinarily she would have realised that in some anterior, enigmatic and forgotten life, she, too, had debased herself and that this cross was the punishment for that debasement. Ordinarily the creed would have sustained her. But as she clutched at it, it receded. Only the cross remained and that was too heavy.

In the drawing-room an indifferent nymph pointed a finger at hours, all of which wound and of which the last one kills.

In that room Mrs. Austen was writing a note. Addressed to Montagu Paliser, jr., esqre., it asked him to dinner.

X

IN the subway, the following evening, Cassy saw a man eyeing her. She turned and saw another man who also was eyeing her. On the seat opposite two women were discussing her clothes.

The clothes, her own manufacture, were not of the fashion, not behind it, or ahead of it, but above it. A mode, or a mood of her own, they consisted in a blue silk smock and a yellow cloth skirt. On the sleeves and about the neck of the smock there was also yellow, touches of it, with which the skirt married. Therewith she was hatless, rebellious and handsome.

Accustomed to the inquisitiveness of appraising eyes, she ignored the women as, already, she had ignored the men. With obliterating unconcern, she reduced them to the fluidity of the inchoate. Other matters occupied her, and, primarily, a trick, an extremely shabby one, from which she had not yet recovered.

The day before, after paying the butcher, the baker, and the punctual and pertinacious agent, she had scaled the walk-up where she found her father with the violin, on which, an hour earlier, Lennox had loaned her the money.

The spectacle flabbergasted her. Then, realising what Lennox had done, his iniquity struck her as hateful. At once, in an effort to account, however imaginatively, for the apparent sorcery of it all, she tried to invent a fairy-tale. But the tale would not come. Nor was it needed. Her father dispensed with any. Impatient of detail, as the artist usually is, he required none. The extraordinary perspicacity of the police who had nailed and returned the violin instanter, this wizardry that would have thrown any one else into stupors of bewilderment, interested him not at all. He had the violin. That sufficed. The rest did not matter.

It mattered though and monumentally to Cassy. To owe the butcher, the baker, the candlestickmaker, and to have them look slantingly at you, that was disgusting. But to be beholden for a gift, which you had refused to accept, and which then, behind your back, was dumped in on you, that was degrading. Consequently, while conjecturing new versions of Perrault, versions which it relieved her to find were not wanted, she gnashed her milk-white teeth at Lennox, felt that she hated him, yet felt, too, and the feeling was maddening, that the hatred was very tender.

All this was irritating enough and the Tamburini had contrived to add to the irritation. It had been arranged that the fallen star was to come to the walk-up and accompany Cassy to the Splendor. Instead of which, at the last moment, the ex-diva had telephoned that she would join her at the hotel, and Cassy foresaw a tedious sitting about in the lobby, for Ma Tamby was always late. But when have misfortunes come singly? Cassy foresaw, too, that the tedium would not be attenuated by Paliser's conversation.

It was not for that, or for him, that she was then in the subway, but for dinner. Young, healthy and consequently carnal, though not otherwise carnal than hunger can make you, she liked food, on condition that she had not prepared it, and—in particular, and why not?—she liked the savorously truffled menus that walk-ups lack. She had another reason for being in the subway, one that Ma Tamby had lodged, like a flea, in her ear.

But now, near the heart of Manhattan, the train had stopped. Cassy got out, looked at her white gloves, wondered if they smelled of benzine, decided that they did, took them off and went on to the Splendor where Paliser was waiting.

Other people appeared to be similarly occupied. In the high, wide hall were groups of careful men and careless women, the latter very scrumptious in their imported frocks. The sight of these Parisianisms abashed Cassy no more than her appearance abashed Paliser. Etiquette, Formality, the Proper Thing, the great inane gods of the ante-bellum heavens, he had never acknowledged and now, though locally their altars remained and their worship persisted, he knew they were forever dead, blown into the dust-bin of the things that were, tossed there in derision by that atheist, the War.

The careless women looked at Cassy and carefully looked away. The careful men looked at her and carelessly looked again. In the severity of the wide, high hall, the girl with her rebellious beauty and harlequin gown, struck a note which it lacked, struck two of them, the go-and-be-hanged-to-you and originality.

In evening clothes that said Savile Row, Paliser approached. "You are punctual as a comet and equally luminous."

Cassy, ignoring the remark, ignoring, too, the hand that accompanied it, cut him short. "Haven't seen Madame Tamburini, have you?"

Paliser's hair had the effect of a mirror. He smoothed the back of it. The ex-diva he had certainly seen and not later than just before she telephoned to Cassy. But it is injudicious, and also tiresome, to tell everything. With the wave of a cheque, the complicity of the former first-lady had been assured, and assured moreover without a qualm on her part. Ma Tamby did not know what it is to have a qualm—which she could not have spelled if she had known. She was differently and superiorly educated. In the university that life is, she had acquired encyclopedias of recondite learning. She knew that ice is not all that it is cracked up to be: that a finger in the pie is better than two in the fire, and that angels have been observed elsewhere than at Mons—learning which, as you may see, is surprising.

Over the ham and eggs of an earlier evening, the syllables of Paliser's name had awakened echoes of old Academy nights and Mapleson's "grand revivals" of the Trovatore, echoes thin and quavering, yet still repeating hymns in glory of the man's angelic papa. On the way from ham and eggs to Harlem, she had, in consequence, conjured, for Cassy's benefit, with performing fleas. But when, on this afternoon, M. P. jr., had come and waved cheques at her, she had felt that her worst hopes were realised, that her finger was really in the pie, and she had agreed to everything, which, however, for the moment, was nothing at all, merely to abandon Cassy that evening; merely also to collaborate later in the evocation of a myth, and meanwhile to keep at it with the fleas.

Now, in the hall of the Splendor, as Paliser patted the back of his head, he was enjoying Cassy's open-air appearance that needed only a tennis-racket to be complete.

Cassy glanced about. She had a penny or two more than her carfare and yet, if she had owned the shop, she could not have appeared more at ease in this smartest of smart inns, a part of which, destiny, in its capriciousness, was to offer her.

"No," he answered. "But I have a private room somewhere. She can find her way there, unless you prefer palms and an orchestra."

"I do," said Cassy, to whom a room with this man said only boredom and who liked to see what was going on.

Then when, presently, they were seated at a table, to which the chastened captain of the ham-and-egg night had piloted the way, Cassy beheld what she had never beheld before, and what few mortals ever do behold, a cradled bottle of Clos de Vougeot. But to her, the royal crû was very much like the private room. It said nothing. A neighbouring table was more eloquent.

Among the people seated there was an imperial woman with an imperial manner, whom Cassy instantly recognised. She was prima donna, prima donna assoluta, and though Cassy did not know it—nor would it have interested her if she had known—dissoluta also.

To be in her shoes!

In that seven-leagued dream, she forgot Paliser, the delinquent Tamburini, the trick that Lennox had played. In a golden gloom, on a wide stage, to a house packed to the roof, Cassy was bowing. Her final roulade had just floated on and beyond, lost now in cyclonic bravas.

"It was the Duc d'Aumale," Paliser was saying.

"Eh?" Abruptly Cassy awoke.

"Or, if not, some other chap who, recognising it, ordered his regiment to halt and present arms."

"To whom?"

"To the vineyard where the grape in that bottle was grown."

Cassy shook out a napkin. "You talk just like my janitress. I never understand a word she says."

But now a waiter was bringing delicacies other than those obtainable in Harlem; in particular, a dish that had the merit of pleasing Cassy.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Muskrat."

"What!"

"Muskrat with terrapin for a pseudonym. The pseudonym shows imagination. Let us be thankful for that. Gastronomy is bankrupt. Formerly it was worshipped. Formerly gastronomy was a goddess. To-day the sole tributes consist in bills-of-fare that are just like the Sahara minus the oases. It is the oases we want and it is muskrat we get. That is all wrong. The degree of culture that any nation may claim is shown in its cookery and if there is anything viler than what we get here it must be served in Berlin. It must have been Solon who said: 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.' He added, or should have, that animals feed, man dines and, when permitted, dines devoutly. There are dishes, as there are wines, to which one should rise and bow. But hereabouts it is only by special dispensation that one gets them. In a hotel such as this there is an outward show of reverence, but it is sheer hypocrisy; of real piety there is none, a sham attempt to observe the sacred rites without knowing how. I admit I don't know either. From me the divine afflatus has been withheld. But elsewhere I have been conscious of the presence. Once or twice I was blessed. Here, though, in default of shrines there should be chairs. Harvard, Yale, Columbia, should establish a few. When I was in college I was taught everything that it is easiest to forget. If the youth of the land were instructed in gastronomy we would all be wiser and better. Chairs on gastronomy, that is what we need!"

Cassy laughed. "Why not tables?"

Paliser laughed with her. The laughter was a bond. It joined them however tenuously. It was what he had been driving at. Accustomed to easy successes, Cassy's atmosphere, with its flavour of standoffishness and indifference, appealed to this man, who had supped on the facile and who wanted the difficult. Cassy, he could have sworn, would supply it and, if he had, he would have sworn very truly.

Meanwhile the muskrat had gone. Dishes less false but equally fair had followed. Now, with the air of a conjurer, the waiter just showed them an entremets which he hastened to serve. It was a soufflée.

At it, Cassy, just showing the point of her strawberry tongue, exclaimed without rancour: "Ma Tamby has thrown us over."

Paliser lit a cigarette. "She may be singing in the private room."

Cassy laughed again. "Yes. 'Una voce poco fa!' That would be just the thing—wouldn't it?—to sing privately in private."

Paliser answered, though what, she did not hear. The orchestra drowned it and for a moment she considered him, conscious that he was less objectionable than he had seemed, yet entirely unconscious that such objection as she had experienced was due to his extreme good-looks, which in a man are always objectionable to a woman when she herself is handsome, for they make him resemble her and, in so doing, constitute an encroachment on her prerogatives, which, in itself, is an affront.

Cassy, ignorant of the psychology of it, equally unaware that familiarity which may breed contempt can also dissolve dislike, and feeling merely a lessening of her instinctive hostility, told herself that he was perhaps not as cocky as he looked and drank of the glass before her.

The Clos de Vougeot which, to the educated palate, is art, literature and song combined, meant nothing more to her than if it had been Médoc. She drank it because it was there at her hand, as she would have drunk water, without savouring it, without any realisation of the enormity of the crime. Yet though it meant nothing, nothing at least of which she was aware, the royal crû was affecting her. It modified and mollified, admonishing her that this man was an inoffensive insect who, circumstances favouring, might, as Ma Tamby when inserting the flea had told her, put her father on his feet.

In just what the favouring circumstances could consist, the fallen star had not bothered to indicate, and she had not bothered because they were too obvious and also because she was sure that Cassy was not insane.

Paliser abandoned his cigarette. "If you like, we might look in at the Metropolitan. I believe I have a box."

Apart from down-stage and the centre of it, apart, too, from the flys and the dressing-rooms, Cassy's imagination had not as yet conceived anything more beckoning than a box at the opera, even though, as on this occasion, the opera happened to be a concert. "Why, yes. Only——" Pausing, she looked about. The imperial lady had gone.

"Only what?" Paliser very needlessly asked for he knew.

"I fear I am a bit overdressed."

"Not for Sunday. The house will be full and nobody in it. Besides, what do you care?"

Cassy shrugged. "Personally, not a rap. It was of you I was thinking."

Paliser, who had been signing the check and feeing the waiter, looked at her. "I did not know that you were so considerate."

Cassy, in surprise not at him, but at herself, laughed. "Nor did I."

Paliser stood up and drew back her chair. "Be careful. You might become cynical. It is in thinking of others that cynicism begins."

The platitude slipped from him absently. He had no wish for the concert, no wish to hear Berlinese trulls and bubonic bassi bleat. But, for the tolerably delicate enterprise that he had in hand, there were the preliminary steps which could only be hastened slowly and anything slower than the Metropolitan on a Sunday night, it was beyond him to conjecture.

But though on that evening a basso did bleat, it may be that he was not bubonic. Moreover he was followed by a soprano who, whether trullish or not, at any rate was not Berlinese and whose voice had the lusciousness of a Hawaiian pineapple. But the selections, which were derived from old Italian cupboards, displeased Paliser, who called them painted mush.

But not twice! Cassy turned her back on him. The painted mush shook stars in her ears, opened vistas on the beyond. Save for him she would have been quite happy. But his remark annoyed her. It caused her to revise her opinion. Instead of an inoffensive insect he was an offensive fool. None the less, as the concert progressed, she revised it again. On entering the box she had seen his name on the door. The memory of that, filtering through the tinted polenta from the ancient cupboards, softened her. A man so gifted could express all the imbecilities he liked. Elle s'enfichait.

As a result, before it was over, in lieu of her back, she gave him the seduction of her smile, and, later when, in his car, on the way to the walk-up, he spoke of future dinners, fresher songs, she had so far forgotten the painted mush insult, that momentarily she foresaw but one objection. She had nothing to wear and frankly, with entire unconcern, she out with it.

For that he had a solution which he kept to himself. The promptly obliterating stare with which she would have reduced him to non-existence, he dodged in advance.

Apparently changing the subject, he said: "You know—or know of—Mrs. Beamish, don't you?"

"Never heard of her," said Cassy, entirely unaware that no one else ever had either.

"She was at the Bazaar the other night and admired your singing."

"Very good of her I am sure," replied Cassy, who, a born anarchist and by the same token a born autocrat, loathed condescension.

Paliser corrected it. "No, not good—appreciative. She wants you to sing at her house. If you are willing, could she arrange about it through Madame Tamburini?"

"If she tried very hard, I suppose she might," Cassy, with the same loftiness, answered.

But the loftiness was as unreal as Mrs. Beamish. Inwardly she jubilated, wondering how much she would get. A hundred? In that case she could repay Lennox at once. At the thought of it, again she revised her opinion. Paliser was young and in her judgment all young men were insects. On the other hand he was serviceable. Moreover, though he looked cocky, he did not presume. He talked rot, but he did not argue. Then, too, his car was a relief.

But now the car, after bolting through the Park and flying along the Riverside, had swerved. It was mounting the upper reaches of the longest highway on the planet. There it swerved again. From Broadway it barked loudly into a side-street where easily, with a soapy slide, it stopped.

Paliser got out, preceded Cassy to the steps of the walk-up and smiled in her face. "When?"

Cassy, the revised opinion of him about her, gave him her hand. "Ask the telephone."

The hall took her. She was scaling the stairs. On the way Mrs. Beamish accompanied her. She wished she could tell her father. Yet, if she told him, how could she account for what she did with the money? And would it be a hundred? Perhaps fifty, perhaps less.

But Paliser saw to it that Mrs. Beamish behaved properly. On the morrow Ma Tamby dumped in Cassy's astonished lap two hundred and fifty—less ten per cent., business is business—for samples of the bel canto which Mrs. Beamish was not to hear, and for an excellent reason, there was no such person.

XI

MRS. AUSTEN looked at Lennox, who had been looking at her, but who was then looking at the rug, in the border of which were arabesques. He did not see them. The rug was not there. The room itself had disappeared. The nymph, the dial, the furniture, the decorations and costly futilities with which the room was cluttered, all these had gone. Mrs. Austen had ceased to be. In that pleasant room, in the presence of this agreeable woman, Lennox was absolutely alone, as, in any great crisis of the emotions, we all are.

Of one thing he was conscious. He was suffering atrociously. Pain blanketed him. But though the blanket had the poignancy of thin knives, he kept telling himself that it was all unreal.

He raised his eyes. During the second in which they had been lowered, a second that had been an eternity in hell, his expression had not altered. He was taking it, apparently at least, unmoved.

Mrs. Austen, who was looking at him, saw it and thought: He is a gentleman. The reflection encouraged her and she sighed and said: "Believe me, I am sorry."

Lennox did not believe her, but he let it go. What he did believe was that Margaret could not see him. But whether she would, if she could, was another matter. On Saturday he had expected her at his rooms. She had not come. In the evening he had called. She had a headache. On the following day he had returned. She was not feeling well. Now on this third day, Mrs. Austen, who on the two previous occasions had received him, once more so far condescended, yet on this occasion to tell him that he was free, that it was Margaret's wish, that the engagement was ended.

In so telling him, Mrs. Austen told, for a wonder, the truth, though as will sometimes happen even to the best of us, not all the truth. It were extravagant to have expected it of her. But she told all that she thought good for him; more exactly good for Margaret; more precisely for herself.

It was then that the pleasant room with its clutter of costly futilities disappeared and this agreeable woman ceased to be. The avalanche of the modulated announcement sent Lennox reeling not merely out of the room, but out of the world, deeply into hell.

It was then, too, that with a sigh, modulated also, Mrs. Austen had added: "Believe me, I am sorry."

Lennox looked at her. "You say that Margaret wants our engagement broken. Why?"

"She has changed her mind."

"So I infer. But why?"

"Because she is a woman."

"But not the ordinary woman. It is the ordinary woman who changes her mind—when she has one to change. Margaret is not of that kind. Margaret is not the kind to promise herself to a man and then throw him over. You will forgive me if I speak heatedly, but I do not believe it."

With frosty indulgence Mrs. Austen reassured him. "You do not believe that I will forgive you? But, really, there is nothing to forgive. Though, whether Margaret is ordinary or superior, has nothing to do with it. Dear me, no. Women are not what they were. One often hears that and often, too, one hears people wondering why. That always amuses me. The reason is so simple, isn't it? Women are not what they were because they used to be girls. Before that they were children. At one time they were babes. Naturally they change. They can't help it. It must be a general law. Or at least one may suppose so. One may suppose, too, that, in changing, they develop and in developing acquire the extraordinary ability to think things over. That is just what Margaret had done. It is no reflection on you, Mr. Lennox, and I should be very sorry if you thought so. I am sure Margaret has the highest esteem for you. I know that I have."

Mrs. Austen, smiling frostily as she lied, thought: Now why doesn't he take it and go? I hope he won't be tedious.

Lennox too had his thoughts. She is trying to swamp me in words, he told himself. That angered him and he showed it.

"What are these things? When I last saw Margaret she said nothing about any things. There was no change in her then. I would stake my life that she had no idea of breaking our engagement. There must be a reason for it. What is it?"

Arrogantly Mrs. Austen took it up. "There is no reason for your raising your voice, at any rate. As for the things, they ought to be obvious. In addition to habits and customs, very suitable in Wall Street no doubt, but not otherwise appealing, Margaret has found you a bit rough, high-tempered, domineering for all I know to the contrary, and——"

That's a damned lie, thought Lennox, who aggressively cut in: "Margaret never found me anything of the kind. What is more I will thank you to understand that I will not accept this dismissal—if it be one—from you."

There is a show of decency that is due to any woman. But the veneer of civilisation is very thin. From beneath it, the potential troglodyte, that lurks in us all, is ready enough to erupt. Ready and eager then, he was visible in Lennox' menacing eyes, manifest in his threatening voice.

Mrs. Austen saw the brute, saw rather that little, if anything, restrained Lennox from jumping up, banging about, hunting for Margaret's room, entering there and catechising her violently. Margaret was ill but never too ill to tell the truth. Once he learned that, there was the fat in the fire.

She had no time to lose. From the wardrobe of the actress that she was, she snatched at an oleaginous mask and with the mucilage of it smiled at him.

"Why, of course not. Not for a moment would I have you accept it from me. I never dreamed of such a thing. It wouldn't be right. Margaret shall tell you herself. She would be here now, but the poor child had such a wretched night. You never had neuralgia, have you? At her age I was a martyr to it. I remember I took something that ended in 'ine.' Yesterday I suggested it but the doctor would not hear of it. Said she needed building up. Spoke of her just as though she were a town out West; so unsympathetic I thought him, but of course I did not say so. He might have charged extra and he is expensive enough as it is, and always so ready to talk about his own affairs, just like my dentist. I told him once—the dentist I mean—that I really could not afford to pay him thirty dollars an hour to hear about his wife and I don't think he liked it. I know I didn't when I got his bill. But where was I? Oh, yes. To-morrow or the next day, as soon as Margaret is the least bit better, you will be sure to have a line from her and if you do not, and you care to, you must certainly look in. For you must always regard us as friends. Me at any rate. Won't you, Mr. Lennox?"

Moistening her lips, mentally she continued: Yes, count on that. But inwardly she relaxed. Such danger as there may have been had gone. Under the dribble of the mucilage the fire in his eyes had flickered and sunk. He was too glued now for revolt. So she thought, but she did not know him.

During the sticky flow of her words, he knew she was trying to gammon him. But he knew quite as well that Margaret would make no such attempt, and he knew it for no other reason than because he knew she was incapable of it. Incidentally he determined what he would do. Having determined it, he stood up.

"Very good. I shall expect to hear from Margaret to-morrow. If I do not hear I will come, and when I come——"

Lennox paused and compressed his lips. The compression finished the sentence. If come he did, no power of hers, or of any one else, would budge him an inch until he saw Margaret and had it out with her.

"Good-evening," he added and Mrs. Austen found herself looking at his retreating back which, even in retreat, was a menace.

"Merciful fathers!" she exclaimed, and, with that sense of humour which is the saving grace, the dear woman put her hand to her stays. She was feeling for her heart. She had none. Or any appetite, she presently told a servant who came to say that dinner was served.

She misjudged herself. For twenty-five minutes, in an adjoining room, she ate steadily and uncomplainingly. She had bouillon, skate in black butter, cutlets in curl-papers, sweetbread and cockscombs, a cold artichoke, hot almond pudding, an apricot, a bit of roquefort, a pint of claret, a thimble of bénédictine and not a twinge, none of the indigestion of square-dealing, none of gastritis of good faith. She was a well-dressed ambition, intent on her food. No discomfort therefore. On the contrary. Margaret was in bed—safe there. Fate and the cook were kind.

With the taste of the liqueur still in her mouth, she went to her daughter who was ill with one of those maladies which, being primarily psychical, science cannot treat. Science is a classification of human ignorance. It has remedies for the flesh, it has none for the soul. The remedies exist, but they are dispensed only by the great apothecaries that time and philosophy are.

At the moment neither was available. Behind Margaret's forehead a monster crouched and crunched. That was nothing. It was in the tender places of her heart that the girl agonised and by comparison to the torture there, the monster was benign.

Margaret was nineteen, which is a very mature age; perhaps the most mature, since all girlhood lies behind it. Beyond are the pharmacopœias of time and, fortune favouring, the sofas of philosophy. But these sofas, even when within reach, are not adapted to everybody. To the young, they are detestable. Reposefully they admonish that nothing is important. They whisper patience to the impatient. To hope, they say, "Be still"; to desire, "Be quiet"; to wisdom, "Be foolish."

Conversation of that kind is very irritating, when you have heard it, which Margaret never had. She was otherwise ignorant. She did not know that a sage wrote a book in praise of folly. But she acted as though she knew it by heart. She believed, as many of us do believe, that love confers the right to run a fence around the happy mortals for whom we care. It is a very astounding belief. Margaret, who believed in many wonderful things, believed in that and, being credulous, believed also that her betrothed had crawled under the fence and into what mire! It polluted her, soiled her thoughts, followed and smeared her in the secret chambers of her being. Any cross is heavy. This cross was degrading.

In her darkened room, on her bed of pain, she had shrunk from it. Her forehead was a coronet of fire. That was nothing. A greater pain suppresses a lesser one. The burn of her soul was a moxa to the burn of the flesh.

The cross, at first, seemed to her more than she could bear. She tried to put it from her. Failing in that, she tried to endure it. But there are times and occasions when resignation in its self-effacement resembles suicide. She tried to resign herself, but she could not, her young heart rebelled.

In that rebellion, evil came, peered at her, sat at her side, pulled at her sleeve, sprang at her. The evil was hatred for this man who had taken her love and despoiled it. She clasped it to her. It bruised but it comforted. It dulled both the flame in her forehead and the shame in her soul. Then as suddenly she began to cry.

Philosophy she lacked, but theosophy, which is a pansophy, she possessed—when she did not need it. Now, when she needed it most, it was empty as the noise in the street. Even otherwise it could not have changed the unchangeable course of events.

There are sins that are scarlet. There are others, far worse, that are drab. Melancholy tops them. It is a mere duty to be serene. That she could not be. She could not face life, as life perhaps is. She could not smile at a lover who loved elsewhere. It was not herself, it was he who prevented her. So she thought and for hours in her darkened room she washed her hands of him, washed them in tears. It took a wise man to write the praise of folly.

The door of the room opened. It opened slowly, noiselessly, obviously. With exasperating precautions Mrs. Austen entered. The taste of bénédictine was still in her mouth and, savouring it, she whispered:

"Are you asleep?"

"No."

"Will you eat anything?"

"No."

"Are you able to talk?"

Margaret turned. She could talk, but to what end and to whom? Certainly not to her mother, who possessed in its perfection, the household art of misinterpreting everything. Margaret had tried to love her. But perhaps any affection is a habit when it does not happen to be an instinct. The habit had never been formed, the instinct had been repressed. Always her mother had treated her with that indulgence which is as empty as an unfilled grate. There was no heat there. You could not warm your heart at it. But a child must love some one. Margaret had begun by loving her mother. That is the way with children. They begin by loving their parents. Later they judge them. Sometimes, though not always, they forgive. One should not judge anybody. Margaret knew that, but she was a human being. She thought her mother a worldly woman. The fact that she was false as Judas was not apparent to this girl whose knowledge of Iscariotism was as hearsay as her knowledge of gorillas.

Now, as she turned in her bed, it was in defence against intrusion. Deference to her mother she had always observed. But she could not admit her to the privacy of her thoughts and, in turning her face to the wall, she told herself that she would not be cross-questioned.

Mrs. Austen had no intention of putting her daughter in the confessional. Anything of the kind would have bored her. Besides, what she thought was unimportant. It was what she did or might do that mattered.

Vacating the door she approached the bed. "Are you feeling any better?"

Margaret was feeling, if possible, worse. But she never complained, or, if she had to complain, then the complaint was solely by way of explanation. She turned again.

"For if you are," Mrs. Austen continued, "I ought to say something."

Margaret put a hand to her forehead.

But Mrs. Austen persisted. "It is important."

Margaret's eyes were open. She closed them and said: "Yes, mother, what is it?"

Through the door came light from the hall. Mrs. Austen looked about. Nearby was a chair on which was one of those garments, made of franfreluches, which the French call a Jump-from-bed. Removing it, she sat down.

"It is too bad. I know you don't feel like discussing affairs of State, but it is Luxemburg all over again. If I were alone concerned, I am sure I would capitulate. But where the State is concerned, and by that I mean you, I am like the little grand-duchess—pretty child, from her pictures, didn't you think?—and I must resist the invader. It is true, I don't know exactly what the grand-duchess did do, though they said she sat in a motor on a bridge and flourished a revolver. But you never can tell. I daresay she and her maids of honour hid in a cellar. Perhaps we may have to."

Margaret lowered her hand. "Mother, what are you talking about?"

"Your young man, of course. What else? A half-hour ago, he was roaring and stamping about and calling me a liar. If it had not been for my dead body, he would have rushed in here and killed you. My dead body, or what I told him about passing over it, was the revolver that I flourished. He has gone, but he swore he would return. Now, unless you rally to the colours, we will have to hide in the cellar, or rather, as we haven't any, in the pantry. Don't you think you could eat a bit of sweetbread, or perhaps some almond pudding?"

Again Margaret put her hand to her forehead. "Don't say that, mother. Keith did not call you a liar and it is not like him to roar and stamp about."

"My dear, I don't wonder you don't believe me. He went on like a madman. He could not get over the fact that his dollymop was one too many for you. He seemed to think that it was none of your business."

"Don't."

"My dear Margaret, you must do me the justice to admit that I stood up for him. I said he was an attractive young man. So he is. But that is just it. Attractive young men are most unreliable and reliable young men are most unattractive. At your age, I used to like them fair and false. That was your father's fault. He perverted me. He was so domestic!"

It was an old wound that Mrs. Austen touched then and under it Margaret winced. "The poor dear! He was a saint and you know it."

"Know it! I should say I did. I know too that he made me hate saints. But you love them and thought you had one, instead of which you got a devil. Your luck is far better than mine. If you take my advice, you will hang on to him like grim death. It is not too late. To-morrow he will be here, thundering at the gates."

Dimly at the moment the girl's creed turned a ray on her. She lifted her head.

"He will not thunder at the gates and he is not what you say. But perhaps I am. I may have done worse than he has and what he has done is my punishment."

It was very little but it was too much. Mrs. Austen, in spite of her facile digestion, gagged at it.

"If that is theosophy, I will believe it when I am old, fat and a Hun."

Margaret sank back. "But I am sorry you have been annoyed. It won't happen again. I will write to him."

Later, she did write.

Forgive me, dear Keith, if I cause you pain, but I feel that I am not suited to you. Forgive me therefore for not recognising it sooner. I have thought it all over and, though it wrings my heart to say it, I cannot see you again. Forgive me and forget.

MARGARET.

XII

HELL was supposed to be very hot, very red, full of pugnacious demons. Educated people do not believe in it any more. It is curious how ignorant educated people have become. Hell is an actual plane, less vivid than was formerly imagined, not hot but cold, grey rather than red, but amply provided with demons, with the devils of self-accusation, with the fiends of insoluble queries. Very real and very actual, it is surprising how many educated people are there. The oddity of that is increased by the fact that they regard it as a private establishment. They regard their hell as unique. Perhaps the idea flatters them. Yet sooner or later everybody enters it. Hell may seem private. It is universal.

Headlong into it, Margaret's letter precipitated Lennox. Being a man, he struggled up. But not out. In hell there are no signposts. It takes time to find one's way. It takes more, it takes resignation. When both have been acquired, the walls part of themselves. The aspect of life has altered, but you are free.

Lennox, in struggling up, encountered the demons of enigmatic riddles. Each word of Margaret's letter they converted into a Why? They thrust it at him, demanding an answer. But the answer her heart alone possessed. That heart had been his. It was his no longer. The heart that she had given him, she had taken away. Nothing could be simpler and nothing more mysterious. The mystification was complete, but not the suffering. Suffering is never complete.

However deep the hell, there is always a deeper one.

From the letter he looked at the walls. They were dumb. There was no answer for the demons there, not anywhere, perhaps, except among werewolves, basilisks and Mrs. Austens. These monsters did not occur to him. The monstrous letter sufficed. But Margaret was still too near, her vows were too recent for him to credit it, and the fact that he could not disclosed itself in those words which all have uttered, all at least before whom the inexplicable has sprung.

"It is impossible!"

Yet there it was. Yet there too was something else. But what? At once he was back again in the issueless circle of infernal questions.

The day before he had known that something was amiss. The attitude of Mrs. Austen had been too assured, too venomous, too smiling, for him to doubt it. But though he did not doubt that, not for a second did he doubt Margaret either. Always aware of the woman's hostility, he had been equally aware that it could not influence the girl. Not for a moment therefore had he accepted the statement that the engagement was broken. At the time he had thought that when next he had a word with Margaret it would all be explained. But all what? His life was as clean as his face. It was not that then. On the other hand he was not rich. By the same token, Margaret's only idea of money was to help others with it. It was not that then either. Nor was it that she had not loved him. She had loved him. He could have sworn it and not out of vanity, for he had none, but because never could she have promised herself to him if she had not. None the less, she could not see him again. She had thought it over. She was not suited to him. He was told to forget her. Why?

That Why, repeating itself, forced him deeper into the circles of which hell is made.

But even in hell despair is brief. Unless it consume you utterly, and it would not be hell if it did, it goads. It compels you to seek an issue. Apart from time, which is very slow, and resignation, which is never prompt, there is another portal.

A poet, who discovered it, scrawled on it: "Lascia la donna e studia la matematica"—a cryptogram which subsequent pilgrims variously deciphered. To some, it spelled Thought; to others, Action. Action is thought put in motion.

Lennox, to whom time was too dilatory and resignation too remote, happened on the device which he translated after his manner.

But however you construe the hierograph, the door must be demolished before you get out. Across the door is written: Hope. It is a very hard door to crack. When you succeed you are covered with splinters. They cling to you and pierce you. Joiners, carpenters, pilgrims, poets and fiends have a name for them. They call the splinters Regrets. Though you have escaped, they accompany you. Hell encircles you still.

It was on the day following the conversation with Mrs. Austen that Lennox received Margaret's letter. In his dark rooms it was waiting. A moment previous he had intended to go to her. He had it all planned. Mrs. Austen could say what she liked; the physician might interfere; he would submit to no one. He proposed to see her, to adjust it, to swing up and out from the circles which already were closing about him.

On leaving Mrs. Austen he had gone to dinner. He could not eat. He had gone to bed. He could not sleep. In the morning his face was flushed. Always fit, hard as nails, these phenomena perplexed. Yet he knew it was not illness that produced them. What he did not know was that poison had. The poison was anger, an unphilosophic emotion which disturbs the circulation, the stomach and social intercourse. He could have wrung Mrs. Austen's neck.

In that murderous mood he went to Wall Street and in that mood returned. Already hell was gaping. Headlong into it the letter threw him. Being a man he sought and found the door, smashed it and passed out. Not at once however. It took him many a sleepless hour before he deciphered the device Lascia la donna. Leave the lady? Certainly. Since she so wished, what else in decency could he do? Go and badger her with complaints and questions? Not he. But how do you translate: Studia la matematica? The dictionary that is in every man, who is a man, told him. Then he knew. Meanwhile the flush in departing left him grey.

In every affection there is the germ of hate. Margaret, confronted by the unawaited, hated Lennox. Lennox, confronted by the inexplicable, hated Margaret. Hatred is love turned inside out. Love is perhaps a fermentation of the molecules of the imagination. In that case so also is hate. Of all things mystery disturbs the imagination most. Margaret could not understand how Lennox could have acted as he had. Lennox could not understand how Margaret could act as she did. Dual misunderstanding, in which the imagination fermented. Hence the hate. Yet each, in hating, loved the other. Each felt the splinters which, as Browning somewhere noted, kept fresh and fine. Only a touch and the splinters would have joined.

Mrs. Austen, for all her horrible shrewdness, could not have prevented that. But pride, that gives so many of us a fall, was more potent than she. Margaret, insulted, could but turn away. Lennox, dismissed, could but let her go.

Any emotion is unbecoming. Pride is merely ridiculous. It resides in the youthful-minded, however old. In residing in these young people, it resisted the touch that would have combined them and, through its opposition, made one of them ill and the other grey. To be proud! How splendid it seems and how stupid it is. Hell is paved with just such imbecilities.

It is said of Dante that children peered at him and whispered: "That man has been in hell."

None of the children that clubmen are, pointed at Lennox, though two of them whispered. The others did not know, not yet at least. But Verelst knew and Jones guessed. The guess was due to the romantic profession that endows a novelist with the wonderful faculty of putting two and two together.

Hitherto, that is since the engagement was announced and, for that matter, long previously, Lennox had passed the evening in Park Avenue. Where else would he have passed it? After the rupture he sat about and read all the papers. When a man is down and out that is just what he does do, though not necessarily in the Athenæum Club.

Jones, noticing it, rapidly divined the reason which Verelst confirmed.

"Yes, her mother told me."

It was in a club window, of an afternoon. Before them was Fifth Avenue which, in the Aprils of not so long ago, used to be a horse-show of fair faces, ravishing hats, discreet liveries, folded arms and yards of yodling brass.

Verelst, eyeing the usurping motors, added: "It is because of some girl I believe, or rather I don't believe it."

Jones sat back. Instantly the motors were replaced by the picture of a girl whose face was noble and reserved. He had seen the face at the Bazaar. He had seen Lennox talking to it. Afterward Lennox had told him that the girl was Portuguese. The picture was attractive but unconvincing. In agreement with Verelst he was about to say so. But behind him he heard a voice that he knew and he switched and said:

"What a remarkable country Portugal is! Born dumb, she spoke twice: once when she gave Asia to Europe, again when she presented the Lusiades to the world. Her history is resumed in two miracles, a discovery and a masterpiece. But when the Cape of Good Hope was succeeded by Camoens, once more she relapsed into a silence that was broken only when she shouted her defiance at the Huns."

Now though that voice was addressing them. Both turned and Lennox asked: "What are you talking about—war?"

"Sit down," said Verelst, who gave him a hand.

Jones gave him another. "What else is there to talk about? It will be talked of forever. So will that scrofulous Kaiser. Unfortunately he knows it and that pleases him. Last year or the year before he called for the death and destruction of all who opposed him. With singular modesty he added: 'God who speaks through my mouth so orders!' Loti claims that what spoke through him was a hyena. Loti is lacking in literary sobriety. When a hyena has eaten he is at peace with the world. But when was bestiality ever filled? It is insatiable and so is this thug whom God, at most, may have permitted to look in the mirror without vomiting. Meanwhile we stand by. A generation ago we fought for Cuba. What is Hecuba to us in comparison to the Anima Mundi?"

Verelst turned on the novelist. "And what is literary sobriety? You are hurling words in massed formation."

Jones smiled at him. "Where is my harp?"

"You mean your megaphone," Lennox put in. "You are always rehearsing copy. One of these days I may give you some."

"From the front?" Jones asked.

"Yes, though I don't see how you knew. The President has asked for war. Why aren't we up and at 'em? If Congress hems and haws over it much longer, I'll get my gun and join the Foreign Legion."

Jones nodded. He had guessed that also and he said: "Wait and join the legions here. At present, the country is alarmingly apathetic. The man in the subway is muddled. The call to arms does not stir him. The issues, clear enough to us, seem to him mixed as macaroni. He does not understand a war that is three thousand miles away. But in a year, every man in the country—a country that has never been beaten!—will be in it body and soul. Undividedly, shoulder to shoulder, we will be in it as we have never been in anything before."

The novelist touched a bell. "Lennox, have a Bronx. Verelst, what will you take? I'll wager a pippin that war is declared to-morrow."

"Done," said Verelst—who lost it.

XIII

THE two hundred and fifty—less ten per cent—which an imaginary Mrs. Beamish had paid for the pleasure of not hearing Cassy sing, transported the girl who was not given to transports. These subsiding, she viewed the matter from its business aspect. She needed a frock, a wrap, a hat, gloves, shoes and certain things that are nowhere visible except in advertisements, shop-windows and extreme privacy. Also, her hair required tralalaing. Meanwhile, first and foremost, Lennox must be paid. The subsidy was not too much by a penny. These considerations occupied but an instant.

"When is it?" she asked the Tamburini, who, a moment before, had dumbfounded her with the money.

"When is what?" inquired the ex-star who already had forgotten Mrs. Beamish.

"Why, the concert!"

Carlotta Tamburini was dressed like a fat idol, in silk and false pearls. There the idolatry ceased. In her hand was an umbrella and on her head a hat of rose-leaves which a black topknot surmounted. About her shoulders was a feather boa. It seemed a bit mangy. Seated on Cassy's bed she looked at a window that gave on a wall. Cassy was standing. Behind Cassy was a door which the extinguished light had closed. Beyond, in the living-room, was the marquis. Anything that he did not hear would not hurt him.

"Oh, she'll let us know."

"What sort of a catamount is she?"

At that the former prima donna's imagination balked. But she got something out. "Nice enough. What do you care?"

"I hate all those snobs."

"So do I," said the Tamburini, who worshipped the breed even when non-existent. "But don't go and include him. If it hadn't been for him——"

"Was he with her?"

"You ought to have heard the way he went on about you. She said: 'Why, Monty, I do believe you'd like to marry her.' "

Cassy's mouth twitched as she munched it. "She presumed to say that! She's an insolent beast."

"He shut her up, I can tell you. He said if he got on his knees, you wouldn't dust your feet on him."

"That jackanapes! I should say not!"

"You might say worse. Take the Metro. You're spat on if you're down and spat at if you're up. A dog's own life." Lifting her voice, the fat woman sang: "Croyez-moi car j'ai passé par la."

"What has that to do with it?"

Nothing whatever, the Tamburini truthfully reflected but omitted to say so. Paliser, in producing Mrs. Beamish, had also produced the programme. With both was a cheque. With the cheque was the assurance of another and a bigger one. She had only to earn it. To earn it she had only to follow the programme. The poor soul was trying to. The job was not easy. Cassy was skittish. A pull on the rein and she would kick the apple-cart over.

Femininely she discounted it all. Cassy was not worth the time, the trouble, particularly the careful handling. There were girls in plenty, quite as good-looking, who, without stopping to count two, or even one, would jump at it. But there you were! Paliser did not want partridges that flew broiled into his mouth. A true sportsman, he liked to snare the bird. The feminine in her understood that also. Besides it was all grist for her mill. But the grist was uphill, and if the noble marquis got so much as an inkling of it, he was just the sort of damn fool to whip out his sword-cane and run her through. The honour of the Casa-Evora, what? Yet, being on the job, she buckled to it.

"What will you get, dearie?"

Cassy sat down. Her previous ruminations returned. Escorting them was a vision of a baronial castle. In the hall, a guest-book in which you wrote your name. A squad of lackeys that showed you into a suite of salons. Rugs on which there was peace; sofas on which there was ease; étagères on which there were reveries. Nothing else. No cupboards hung with confections. No models sailing in and out. Nothing so commercial as anything for sale. Nothing but patrician repose and the châtelaine—a duchess disguised as a dressmaker—who might, or might not, ask you upstairs.

In war time at that! Though, it is true, Congress had only just declared it.

But, Cassy reflected, two hundred and fifty, with Lennox deducted and less ten per cent, would not take her as far as the drawbridge. The fleeting vision of the castle passed, replaced by the bargain seductions of department-stores.

Fingering the money, she said: "Where does this person live? She ought to send a taxi."

"Certamente," replied the fat woman, lapsing, as she occasionally did lapse, into the easy Italian of the lyric stage. "She certainly will."

Cassy jumped up. "Well, then, you come along while I take a look about. Afterward we will have lunch. I'll eat, you can watch me and I'll tell you how it tastes. There's the telephone!"

Cassy opened the door, went out into the narrow and shadowy hall and took the receiver.

"Yes? Oh! None the better for the asking. To-night? Impossible. To-morrow? Perhaps. Good-bye."

"Who was that?" the noble marquis called from the room beyond.

"An imbecile who wants me to dine and go to the opera."

"Not that Paliser?"

Cassy, poking her head in at him, threw him a kiss and returned to the Tamburini with whom, a little later, she was praying among the worshippers that thread the sacred and silent way where Broadway and Sixth Avenue meet.

In an adjacent basilica, the atmosphere charged with pious emanations, with envy, malice, greed and all other charitableness, choked the girl. But at last the holy rites were ended. To the voluntary of $109.99, she passed into the peace of Herald Square where the ex-diva swayed, stopped and holding her umbrella as one holds a guitar, looked hopelessly and helplessly about.

"You're not preparing to serenade the Elevated?" Cassy bawled in her ear.

In the slam-bang of trains and the metallic howls of surface cars that herded and volplaned about them, the fat lady, now apparently gone mad, was gesticulating insanely. Yet she was but indicating, or trying to indicate, the relative refuge of a side street in which there was a cook-shop.

Then, presently, after all the dangers that may be avoided in remaining at home, and supplied with such delights as clam fritters offer, she savorously remarked: "I hope I am not going to be sick."

The charm of scented streets, the sedatives of shopping, the joy of lightsome fritters, these things, combined with the job, the unearned cheque and the fear of losing both, made her ghastly.

Cassy, devoid of pity, said: "Have some beer."

The Tamburini gulped. "I couldn't talk to you this morning and I've got to. It's for your own good, dearie; it is, so help me! Supposing he is a jackanapes. What do you want? A prize-fighter? Take it from me, whether he is one or the other, in no time it will be quite the same."

Cassy's lips curled. "Croyez-moi car j'ai passé par la." But, in mocking the woman, she frowned. "What business is it of yours?"

The fallen star gulped again. Conscious that she had struck the wrong note, she struck another. "Your papa is no better, is he? Between you and me and the bedpost, I doubt if he ever will be. I doubt if he plays again. You'll have to look after him. How're you going to? You can't expect to sing every night to the tune of two hundred and fifty. Not with war marching in on us. Not with everybody hard up."

Cassy had been about to order a chocolate éclair. The new note stayed her. But though new, it was not novel. She had heard it before. It rang true. Absently she shoved at her plate.

In theory she knew her way about. The migratory systems of domestic experience said nothing to her, nor, thus far, had the charts of matrimony either. In the sphere of life to which a walk-up leads, the charts were dotted with but the postman and the corner druggist. Men and plenty of them she had met, but they too said nothing and not at all because they were dumb, but because, as the phrase is, they did not talk her language. But for every exception there is perhaps a rule. The one man who did speak her language, had held his tongue.

Now, as she shoved at her plate, she saw him, saw the tea-caddy, saw his rooms and saw too, as she left them, the girl to whom he was engaged. In the memory of that she lingered and looked down.

"Why, he could lead an orchestra of his own, your papa could."

Cassy looked up. She had been far away, too far, in a land where dreams do not come true. Impatiently she twisted. "What?"

"Didn't you hear me, dearie? I was talking about money—bushels of it."

About the bushels the woman rolled her tongue. They tasted better than the fritters.

A waiter approached. The room was long, dark, narrow, slovenly, spaced with tables on which were maculate cloths and lamps with faded shades. Greasily the waiter produced the bill.

"Bushels!" she appetisingly repeated.

Cassy paid. The waiter slouched away.

"You will drive through life in a hundred horse-power car and be fined for speeding. The papers will say: 'Mrs. Pal——' "

"What did he pay you to tell me that?" Cassy exploded at her.

Unruffled by the shot, which was part and parcel of the job, and realising that any denial would only confirm what at most could be but a suspicion, the former diva fingered her pearls and assumed an air of innocence.

But already Cassy had covered her with her blotting-paper look. "As if I cared!"

"Dearie, he did pay me. He paid me the compliment of supposing that I take an interest in you. But he said nothing except what I said he said. He said if he got down on his knees you would turn your back on him."

"Then he is cleverer than he looks."

"Well, anyway, he is clever enough to have bushels of money and that is the greatest cleverness there is."

"In New York," retorted Cassy, who had never been anywhere else, physically at least, though mentally her little feet had trod the streets of Milan, the boards of the Scala.

"It can't be much different in Patagonia," replied this lady, who, to save her life, could not have told whether the land was Asiatic or African, nor who, to save her soul—if the latter were still salvable—could not have told that it was neither. "Besides," she added, "I was only thinking of your poor, dear papa."

Cassy said nothing. She stood up. She was making for the door and the charm of the scented streets.

Ma Tamby sighed, rose and followed. It was the devil's own job. Housebreaking must be easier!

XIV

CASSY'S department-store investments reached her the next day. Her father, who opened the door to them, fell back before the sum total of the C. O. D. With an arm in a sling, he could not hold the packages, much less pay for them, and he gasped as he called for aid.

The money that Cassy then produced seemed to him darkly mysterious and although he believed as firmly in her virtue, as, before the break, he had believed in the maestria of his own right hand, none the less, in addition to aid, he exacted light.

Cassy, dumping the packages on her bed, occupied herself in verifying the change which amounted to one cent. Then she sketched it.

His surprise fell away. The mythical catamount, the imaginary concert, the ponderable subsidy—two hundred and fifty, less ten per cent.—seemed to him natural and an unnatural world.

"And there's about ten dollars remaining," Cassy resumed. "Ten dollars and a penny. You can have the penny and I will keep the ten, or I'll keep the ten and you can have the penny."

That also seemed natural. But the addition or subtraction disclosed a deficit and he exclaimed at it. "You said two hundred and fifty!"

Cassy too saw the hole, but she could not lie out of it. "Well, I owed the difference."

In speaking she turned. Before her was a mirror in which she glanced at her hair that had been superiorly tralala'd. She turned again, reflecting that Lennox must have already received the postal-order, which she had mailed the night before, and wondering whether he had liked her little scrawl of indignant thanks.

"I'll tell you about it later," she added. "Now I must get your dinner. How would you like a tenderloin, a salad, and a box of Camembert?"

He shuffled. "There is no Camembert any more." The tragedy of that seemed to overwhelm him. "I wish I were dead."

Cassy laughed. "Now it's the cheese. On Saturday it was the violin. Well, you got it back. What will you say if I find some Camembert? Do stop meowing. Any one might think you didn't have me."

At her young laughter, he groaned. "Formerly if I let a day go without practising, I noticed it. If I let two days go, Toscanini noticed it. Now it's weeks and weeks. It's killing me."

To cheer him, Cassy said gaily: "The artist never dies."

But it did not cheer him. Besides, though Cassy had laughed, there had been a tugging at her heartstrings. Shabby, unkempt, in a frayed dressing-gown, his arm in a dismal sling, he looked so out of it, so forlorn, so old.

He had shuffled away. She bit her lip. Later, when he had had his tenderloin and she had department-stored herself, a pint of grocer's burgundy had reduced him to tears.

The day before it had seemed to her that the frock would do. But her judgment had been hurried. Shops, crowds, the vibrations of both, devitalised and confused her. In choosing the frock she had not therefore given it the consideration which it perhaps did not merit, and now her mirror shrieked it. The frock was not suited to her. Nothing was suited to her, except the produce of baronial halls, where the simplest thing exceeded the dreams of avarice, or else the harlequinades which she herself devised. None the less she would have liked to have had her father exclaim and tell her how smart she looked. He omitted it.

"Where are you going?"

"I told you. Dinner and the opera."

"Opera! There is no opera to-night. What do you mean? What did you tell me?"

On the table were dishes and the lamentable bottle. Cassy, in doubt whether to clear them then or later, hesitated. The hesitation he misconstrued.

"You told me nothing. You tell me nothing. I am kept in the dark."

Cassy, adjusting the wrap which she had left open that he might admire the unadmirable, moved to where he sat and touched him. "You're the silliest kind of a silly. I told you yesterday. Perhaps the opera was last night. But how could I go? Except that old black rag I had nothing to wear. If there is no opera to-night, there will be a concert or something. Don't you remember now? I was at the telephone."

He did remember, but apparently the recollection displeased. He growled. "Yes. It was that Paliser."

"Well, why not? If it had not been for him, I would not have got the catamount's money and you would not have had the burgundy."

But he was not to be mollified. The growl sharpened into a snarl. "Paliser! I don't like the breed. By God, if——"

The peradventure of that Cassy got before he could utter it. Paliser! Of all men! The absurdity convulsed her. Her laughter ran up and down the scale.

"You're the dearest old duck of a goose I ever heard of." She turned. Her wrap swished. "I only wish you were going too."

Below, in the street, a man, precipitatingly vacating the box of a machine, touched his cap at her. "Beg pardon, mem. Miss Cara? Mr. Paliser's compliments and he's sent a car."

Cassy glanced at the man, who looked like a Roman emperor. From the man she turned to the car. Superiorly and soberly finished, it beckoned. Now, though, the Cæsar was holding open the door. Cassy got in. The emperor hopped up. The car leaped.

On the front seat was a box with her name on it. In it was a handful of orchids. The luxury of the car, the beauty of the demon-flowers, the flight from the walk-up, yet more, perhaps, the caresses and surrenders of spring, affected her. If, she thought, if only the things that might be could be the things that are! If only——

On the pale cushions she leaned back. Before her a curtain parted. In a wide, marble-flagged hall she was looking at a girl who was looking at her. A moment before he had said: "That is Miss Austen to whom I am engaged." A moment before she had seen her picture. The girl was good to look at, so good that, without further acquaintance, you knew she was good through and through. There was no mistaking that. But was she good enough? Was any girl good enough for him? And who was that with her? Probably her mother who probably too was the catamount's sister. They had a family likeness. Then at once the scene shifted. Cassy was in a room floored with thick rugs, hung with heavy draperies, and in that room the catamount had hired her to sing!

But the disgust of it passed. The curtain fell. Cassy turned to the window, through which a breath of lilac blew.

She sniffed and stared. Where was she? Where was the Riverside? Where, for that matter, was the roar of the glittering precinct in which the Splendor tossed its turrets to the sky? Here were dirty and reeling goblins; budding trees that bowed and fainted; a stretch of empty road that the scudding car devoured. Afar was a house that instantly approached and as suddenly vanished. Dimly beyond was another.

Cassy, leaning forward, poked at the emperor. "I will thank you to tell me where you are going. Don't you know where the Splendor is?"

Back at her he mumbled, but what she could not hear.

"Stop at once," she called.

Easily, without a quiver, almost within its own length, the car drew in and the Cæsar, touching his cap, was looking at her. "Beg pardon, mem. There was a note for you in the box. Mr. Paliser said——"

But now Cassy had it.

Chère demoiselle—though I do not know why I call you that, except that it sounds less perfunctory than dear Miss Cara, who, I hope will do me the honour of dining in the country, if for no better reason than because there is no opera to-night and I am her obedient servant.

M. P., JR.

Cassy looked up from it. "Country! He says country. What country? What does this mean?"

"The Place, mem. Paliser Place. It's not far now."

Cassy had not bargained for that. Stories of girls decoyed, drugged, spirited away, never heard of again, sprang at her. Quite as quickly she dismissed them. But, being human, she had to find fault.

"You should have told me before. That will do. Drive on."

She sank back. The car leaped and she smiled. Paliser in the rôle of white-slaver! Her momentary alarm was now a mile behind her. But would they be alone? Though, after all, what did it matter? Yet in Harlem there was a broken old man who would not like it. And the basilica investments! If she had known she would have worn the black rag. But they would do for that tiresome Mrs. Beamish. As yet she had not decided what she would sing. The *Caro nome* occurred to her. Under her breath she began it and abruptly desisted. The *Dear Name* suggested another.

For it she substituted the *Ombra leggiera.* In its scatter of trills that mount, as birds mount, there were no evocations, though she did begin wondering again about Mrs. Beamish's music-room. If it were not too impossible she might give the *Ernani involame.* But at that and very unintentionally she thought of Lennox again.

She made a face and looked through the window. As usual she was hungry. The car now was bellowing through opening gates which, as she looked back, a man in brown was closing. On either side was a high stone wall, but beyond, as she looked again, was an avenue bordered with trees and farther on a white house with projecting wings in which was a court, an entrance and, above and about the latter, a pillared perron.

From the entrance she could see a man in livery hastening. Behind him, a man in black appeared. The car stopped. The first man opened the door.

Cassy got out. The other man additionally assisted by looking on and moving aside. Cassy went into a hall where a young person who did not resemble the Belle Chocolatière but whose costume suggested her, diligently approached.

"Would madame care to go upstairs?"

No, madame would not. But Cassy, instinctively insolent to pretentionness, was very simple with the simple. "Thank you. Will you mind taking my wrap? Thank you again."

She looked about the hall. Before she could inventory it, here was another man. "A nice trick you played on me," Cassy threw at him. "I was half-way before I discovered it. The orchids reconciled me. Thank you for them. Who is here?"

Smiling, deferential, apparently modest, perfectly sent out in perfectly cut evening clothes, Paliser took her hand. "You are and, incidentally, I am."

Cassy withdrew her hand. "I suppose you think you are a host in yourself."

"Merely the most fortunate of mortals," replied Paliser, who could be eighteenth-century when he liked, but who seldom bothered to keep it up.

Already he had been doing a little inventorying on his own account. The basilica frock did not say much and what it did say was not to his taste. The Sunday night fantasy he much preferred. It was rowdy, but it was artistic. But beauty may be dishonoured, it cannot be vulgarised. Even in pseudo-Parisianisms Cassy was a gem. A doubt though, one that had already visited him, returned. Was the game worth the possible scandal?

But now Cassy was getting back at him. "To stand about with the most fortunate of mortals ought to be a shape of bliss. As it happens, I would rather sit."

"Naturally. Only, worse luck, there is no throne."

Cassy gave it to him again: "There is a court fool, though. Where are your cap and bells?"

"Not on you at any rate."

He motioned and Cassy passed on into a room beyond which other rooms extended, each different, but all in the same key, a monotone attenuated by lustres and the atmosphere, infinitely relaxing, which wealth exhales.

Cassy's thin nostrils quivered. Since childhood, it was her first breath of anything similar. It appeased and disarmed this anarchist who was also an autocrat.

"Will you sit here?"

Paliser was drawing a chair. The table before it lacked the adjacent severity. On it were dishes of Sèvres and of gold. Adjacently were three men. Their faces were white and sensual. They moved as forms move in a dream.

The stories of girls decoyed, spirited away, never heard of again, returned to Cassy. She had put the orchids beside her. Her flexible mouth framed a smile.

"You know, for a moment, I had the rare emotion of feeling and fearing that I was being eloped with."

A pop interrupted. She turned to a man at her elbow. "Only half a glass, please, and fill it with water." She returned to Paliser, who was opposite. "I had been thinking of something. I had not noticed where the car was going; and all of a sudden, I found myself I did not know where. Then, houp! It got me."

Paliser helped himself to a clam. "The charm of elopements passed with the post-chaise. Then they had the dignity of danger and pistol shots through the windows. Nowadays you go off in a Pullman and return as prosaic as you started."

"Sometimes even more so," Cassy put in.

Paliser helped himself to another clam. "You speak feelingly and that is only right. This is a very important matter. It is a shame that romance should have passed with the post-chaise. Why should it not revisit us in the motor?"

Cassy sipped and considered it. "There ought to be a law on the subject."

"There is one. You may be summoned for speeding and get your name in the papers."

"Then the dignity of danger remains."

"But not in clams. Aren't you going to eat any?"

Cassy laughed. "I had some yesterday with Ma Tamby. They did not seem to agree with her. She became very noisy about a Mrs. Beamish. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Beamish?" Paliser repeated. He also had forgotten. But, with a click, memory raised a latch. From behind it the lady emerged. "Oh, she's a cousin of mine."

"Rather distant, I should fancy," said Cassy, who was conscious of the delay, though not of the click. The delay she had noticed without, however, divining the cause. But how could she possibly imagine that Mrs. Beamish had been evolved for the sole purpose of providing her with basilica opportunities? Yet the fault, if fault there were, resided in her education. She had never read Eliphas Levi. She did not know that genii can be evoked.

"Well, she is more my sister's cousin than mine," Paliser anxious to get out of it, threw in. "I mean my sister has a more cousinly nature."

"I did not know you had a sister," said Cassy, who not only did not know but did not care. "Though, come to think of it, a sister with a cousinly nature must be so gratifying. Another distant relative, isn't she?"

"Very. She is in Petrograd."

That too was evocative. Cassy began talking about the biggest cropper that history has beheld—a tsar tossed from the saddle to Siberia!

Paliser, glad to be rid of Mrs. Beamish, took it up. The sordid story of the Russian chief of staff, bought by Hindenburg and shot by the Grand-Duke Nicholas, whom the tsar then exiled, was told once more.

"What else could you expect of that Hun?" Paliser concluded.

"A Hun!" Cassy exclaimed. "Why he is a Romanov."

"No more than you are," Paliser replied. "The last of the Romanovs married Catherine the Greater. There the breed ended. Paul, who followed and who married a German drab, was Catherine's son but not her husband's. The rest of the litter, down to the father of the recent incumbent, all married German drabs. The father of the ex-tsar married a Dane. The fellow is therefore one-eighth Dane and seven-eighths Hun. Totally apart from which, a grocer who knew his business would not have had him for clerk. His family knew that and, before he had time to be tsar, tried to poison him. To the misfortune, not of Russia merely, but of Christendom, they failed. If they had succeeded the eastern front would be secure. As for his wife, I saw her once. It was in the Winter Palace which, before it was sacked, was a palace. Since the palace of the Caliphs of Cordova crumbled, there has never been a palace like it. It outshone them all. Well, that woman tarnished it."

Meanwhile dishes were brought and removed by servants, wooden-faced, yet with ears alert. The subject of elopements had seemed promising, but it led to nothing. At their own table, talk was gayer.

Cassy enjoyed the food, the diluted wine, Paliser's facile touch. He appeared to know a lot and she surprised herself by so telling him. "I wish I did," she added. "I am ignorant as a carp."

"You know how to charm," he replied. But, seeing her stiffen, he resumed, "With your voice. That is enough. It would be a mistake for you to be versatile. Versatility is for the amateur. The artist is a flower, never a bouquet."

It was decently said. In the decency of it, the agreeable insult which a compliment usually is was so chastened that Cassy flushed and felt that she had. It annoyed her, and she attributed it to the wine.

It was not the wine. Other influences were at work on this girl, born to a forsaken purple and whose soul was homesick for it. But purple is perhaps picturesque. It was not that for which her soul sighed, but the dream that hides behind it, the dream of going about and giving money away. To her the dream had been the dream of a dream, realisable only on the top rungs of the operatic ladder, which, later, she felt she was not destined to scale. None the less there are dreams that do come true, though usually, beforehand, there is a desert to cross.

"I wonder if I might have a cavatina?" Paliser asked, rising and moving to her.

Cassy shrugged. I have to pay for my dinner, she thought, but she too got up.

Preceding her, he led the way to a room of which the floor, inlaid and waxed, was rugless. The windows were not curtained, they were shuttered. In the centre was a grand and a bench. Afar, at the other end, masking a door, was a portière, the colour of hyacinth. Near it, were two unupholstered chairs; one, white; the other, black. Save for these, save too for a succession of mirrors and of lights, the room was bare. In addition, it was spacious, a long oblong, ceiled high with light frescoes, the proper aviary for a song-bird.

Cassy curtsied to it. At table she had not wanted to sing. The mere sight of this room inspired.

Paliser opened the piano and, seating himself, ran his long thin fingers over the keys. He was heating them, preluding a score, passing from it to another. Presently he looked up; she nodded and the *Ah, non giunge* floated from her.

"Brava!" Paliser muttered as the final trill drifted away. Again he looked up. "You will be a very great artist."

He did not mean it. He judged her voice colourful but lacking in carriage.

Cassy, leaning forward, struck the keys, giving him the note and again she sang, this time the *Libiamo,* which, old as the hills, claptrap, utterly detestable, none the less served to display the bravura quality of her voice.

When it passed, Paliser sprang up, faced her. "Open your mouth! There! Wide!"

Cassy, familiar with the ritual, obeyed. Paliser peered into the strawberry of her throat. It was deep as a well and he moved back.

"You have the organ but you do not know how to use it. You don't know how to breathe."

Cassy forgot that he was young, that she was, that in the great room in the great house they were alone.

Through the shutters came the smell of lilacs, the sorceries of spring. In the sexlessness of art these things were unnoticed. For the first time she liked him. It was his frankness that drew her, though if he had been a frank old woman she would have liked him as well.

"My father says that. He says it is Ma Tamby's fault. He can't bear her."

For a while they discussed it. Paliser maintaining that were it not for the war she ought to go to Paris and Cassy asserting, though without conviction, that the specialty of the Conservatoire consisted in dried fruit.

Finally she said: "It must be late. I have a wrap somewhere and oh! my orchids."

The young person was summoned. The wrap was recovered, the orchids reappeared.

Paliser, helping Cassy with the wrap, said: "Shall I see it here again?" He knew he would but he thought it civil to ask.

Cassy too had her thoughts. The freedom with which, during the ham-and-eggs episode, his eyes had investigated her, where was it? On Sunday he had bored her to tears. That also had gone. During the past hour or two he had shown himself reasonably intelligent, unpresuming, without offensiveness of any kind. With a movement of the hand she lifted the wrap at her neck. "Here?"

It occurred to her that she did not know where the polished and inlaid floor on which she stood was located. Nor did she particularly care. Besides if her geography were vague, the floor was pleasant, a bit slippery perhaps, though just how slippery she was yet to learn.

"Yes. The day after to-morrow. Why not? I would like to run over a score or two with you."

"Good heavens! You are not composing an opera, are you?"

Paliser laughed. "I want to lead you away from painted mush into the arms of——"

"Not Strauss?" Cassy interrupted. "Art does not recognise frontiers but the Huns do not either and I will not recognise a Hun. Is the car at the door?"

He saw her out and away, and reentering the house went to a room in the wing. It was lined with bookcases that you did not have to break your back to examine. They began four feet from the floor and ended two feet higher. The room contained other objects of interest.

From among the latter, Paliser helped himself to a brandy and soda. It had been dry work. The drink refreshed him. It stimulated too. Also it suggested. He put the glass down and lightly swore at it.

"Damn Benny! He has only one thumb."

For a moment he eyed the glass. Then taking from a shelf Gautier's very spiritual account of the de Maupin, he eyed that. Not for long though. He put it back. He did not want to read. He did not want to drink. There were several things that he did not want. In particular he did not want to be alone.

He rang, ordered out a car and went sailing in town, to a brownstone front where you could lose as much money as you liked and not in solitude either. On the way, the thought of the damned and thumbless Benny accompanied him.

XV

THROUGH the inflated proprieties of social New York, Paliser's father had driven four-in-hand, and at a pace so klinking that social New York cut him dead. A lot he cared! The high-steppers in their showy harness flung along as brazenly as before. He did not care. He had learned to since. Age is instructive. It teaches that though a man defy the world, he cannot ignore it. But tastes are inheritable. Monty Paliser came in for a few, but not for the four-in-hand. Less vigorous than his father, though perhaps more subtle, he preferred the tandem.

In preparation for one that he had in view, he looked in, not at a mart, but at a shrine.

It was on the afternoon succeeding Cassy's visit to his slippery floor. The day was radiant, a day not of spring, or of summer, but of both. Above was a sky of silk wadded with films of white cotton. From below there ascended a metallic roar, an odour of gasoline—the litanies and incense of the temple, Semitic and Lampsacene, that New York long since became.

Lampsacus worshipped a very great god and worshipped him uniquely. New York, more devout and less narrow, has worshipped him also and has knelt too to a god almost as great. Their combined rituals have exalted the temple into a department-store where the pilgrim obtains anything he can pay for, which is certainly a privilege. Youth, beauty, virtue, even smiles, even graciousness, Priapus and Mammon bestow on the faithful that garland the altars with cash.

In Park Avenue, on this radiant afternoon, Mrs. Austen and Paliser were occupied with their devotions. Mrs. Austen was priestess and Paliser was saying his prayers; that is, he was jingling his money, not audibly, but none the less potently in the lady's uplifted eyes.

"Yes," said the lady, who as usual did not mean it. "It is too bad. Margaret, the dear child, is so inexperienced that I feel that I must blame myself. I have kept from her—how shall I put it? Well, everything, and when she learned about this, I could not tell her that it was all very usual. It would have offended her modesty too much."

Pausing, Mrs. Austen smiled her temple smile. "I could not tell her, as somebody expressed it, that actresses happen in the best of families, but I left her to decide whether she cared to have them happen in her ménage."

The priestess, looking to the north and south, resumed: "It might have been different if she had been older, more experienced and had really cared for him. But how could she care? The child's nature is dormant. She does not know what love is. He is very nice, I have not a word to say against him, not one, but a lamp-post would be quite as capable of arousing her affection. She accepted him, I grant you that and you may well ask why. I know I asked myself the same thing, until I remembered that Mr. Austen offered to take me to Niagara Falls and I married him just to go there. At the time I was a mere chit and Margaret is little more. Now, I am not, I hope, censorious and I do not say that she had a lucky escape, but I can say she thinks so. It was such a relief that it gave her neuralgia. But the child will be up and about in no time and then you must come and dine. You got my note?"

Paliser stifled a yawn. The priestess was, he knew, entirely willing to deliver whatever he wanted at temple rates. But he knew, too, there were forms and ceremonies to be observed. Being bored was one of them.

At another portal he has been obliged to go through the forms with Carlotta Tamburini. She also had wearied him, though less infernally than Mrs. Austen, and of the two he preferred her. The ex-diva was certainly canaille, but her paw was open and ready, whereas this woman's palm, while quite as itching, was delicately withheld. Their gods were identical. It was the shrines that differed. The one at which the Tamburini presided was plain as a pikestaff. The Austen's was bedecked like a girl on her wedding-day. Behind each Priapus leered. Above both was the shining face of Mammon.

In the present rites, that which wearied Paliser was the recital of the reason of the broken engagement. It was broken, that was the end of it, an end which, in ordinary circumstances, he would have regretted. Ordinarily it would have made the running too easy. The hurdles were gone. There were no sticks, no fences. It would not even have been a race, just a canter. The goal remained but the sporting chance of beating Lennox to it would have departed. That is the manner in which ordinarily he would have regarded it. But the war, that was to change us all, already had changed his views. The draft act had not then been passed, yet it was realised that some such act would be passed, and generally it was assumed that among the exempt would be men with wives dependent on them and cogently he had reflected that if he married that would be his case precisely. At the same time he could not take a possible bride by the scruff of the neck and drag her off to a clergyman. Though it be to save your hide, such things are not done. Even in war-time there are wearisome preliminaries and these preliminaries, which a broken engagement abridged, the neuralgia of a possible bride prolonged. That was distinctly annoying and a moment later, when he had the chance, he vented the annoyance on Lennox.

"You got my note?" Mrs. Austen was asking.

"Yes," he replied, "and I will come with pleasure. Meanwhile, if my sympathy is not indiscreet, please convey it to your daughter." The kick followed. "Though, to be sure, Lennox is a loose fish."

"He is?" Mrs. Austen unguardedly exclaimed. Not for a moment had she suspected it and, in her surprise, her esteem for him jumped. Good heavens! she thought. How I have maligned him!

In the exclamation and the expression which her eyes took on, Paliser divined some mental somersault, divined too that behind it was something obscure, something that she was keeping back. Warily he backed.

"Oh, as for that, loose fish may mean anything. It is a term that has been applied to me and I dare say very correctly. If I did not live like a monk, I should be jailed for my sins."

He is his father all over again, Mrs. Austen cheerfully reflected and absently asked: "How is he?"

"Lennox? I haven't an idea."

"I mean your father."

"In a great hurry, thank you. The war has gone to his head."

"At his age? Surely——"

"He wants me to go," said Paliser, who had no intention of it whatever and whom subsequent events completely exempted. "He is in a hurry for me to enlist and in a greater hurry to have me marry."

Austerely, this pleasant woman grabbed it. "It is your duty!"

That was too much for Paliser, who, knowing as well as she did what she was driving at, wanted to laugh. Like the yawn, he suppressed it.

The priestess's austerity faded. A very fair mimic of exaltation replaced it. "Whoever she is, how proud she will be! A war-bride!"

But Paliser, who had his fill, was rising and, abandoning histrionics, she resumed: "The 24th at eight; don't forget!" Then as he passed from the portal, the priestess lifted her hands. "What a fish! Fast or loose, what a fish!"

Above her Mammon glowed, behind her leered Priapus.

Through the sunny streets, Paliser drove to the Athenæum, where everybody was talking war. The general consensus of ignorance was quite normal.

Lennox, seated with Jones at a window, was summarising his own point of view. "In a day or two I shall run down to Mineola. Perhaps they will take me on at the aviation field. Anyway I can try."

Jones crossed himself. He is signing his death-warrant, he thought. But he said: "Take you, Icarus. They will fly away with you. You will become a cavalier of the clouds, a toreador of the aerial arena, an archangel soaring among the Eolian melodies of shrapnel. I envy, I applaud, but I cannot emulate. The upper circles are reserved for youth and over musty tomes I have squandered mine. I am thirty-two by the clock and I should hie me to the grave-digger that he may take my measure. And yet if I could—if I could!—I would like to be one of the liaison chaps and fall if I must in a shroud of white swords."

Sombrely Lennox considered his friend. "Your shroud of white swords is ridiculous."

Jones agreed with him. To change the subject, he rattled a paper. "Have you seen this? There is an account here of a man who shot his girl. He thought her untrue. Probably she was."

"Reason enough then," said Lennox, who latterly had become very murderous.

"I wonder! Anyway, though the paper does not say so, that was not his reason. The poor devil killed her not because she had been untrue, but because he loved her. He killed the thing he loved the best out of sheer affection. Unfortunately, for his virtues, he loved her innocently, ignorantly, as most men do love, without any idea that the one affection worth giving is a love that nothing can alter, a love that can not only forgive but console."

"Is that what you call originality?" Lennox severely enquired. "If so, I have never run across any of it in your books."

"Heaven forbid that you should, dear boy. I live by the sweat of my pen. Originality never has, and never will make a best-seller."

It was while Jones was airing these platitudes that Paliser entered the room. He approached the two men. Lennox at once got up, turned his back, marched away.

A few days later, Jones, in reviewing the incident, wondered whether Lennox could, even then, have suspected. But, at the moment, in apology for him, he merely lied.

"I frightened him off with shop-talk."

Paliser took the vacant seat. "What are you writing?"

"Cheques. There is nothing simpler and, except cash, nothing so easily understood. To keep my hand in I will write one now."

Then Jones too got up. Paliser, to whom solitude was always irksome, found himself alone. But his solitude was not prolonged. A man joined him. Another followed. Presently there was a group.

From the table where Jones had gone, the inkbeast saw and seeing thought: Empires may totter, nations fall. The face of the earth will be changed. But the toady endureth forever.

CHAPTER XVI

IT was another perfect day, a forenoon after Veronese, a day of which the charm was heightened by the witcheries that Harlem knows—the shouted temptations of push-carts; the pastimes of children, so noisy, so dirty, so dear! the engaging conversation of German ladies; the ambient odour of cabbage and the household linen fluttering gaily on the roofs. It was rapturous. Just beyond was a sewer—the Hudson. But above was the turquoise of the mid-April day.

Cassy went by and on, turned a corner, crossed the street, descended into a cave, smiled sweetly at a man who was closing a door and who, seeing that smile, smiled at it, smiled wantonly, held the door open, yet, noting then but an arid blankness where her smile had been, banged the door and shouted fiercely: "Hundred-thirty-seven-street-next."

The train crashed on. Cassy, her nose in the air, assumed a barbed-wire attitude, her usual defensive against the conjecturing eyes of old men and the Hello, Kid! glances of New York's subtle youth. This attitude, which enabled her to ignore everything and everybody, enabled her also to think of what she liked, or of what she did not like, a circumstance that happened to her then and which was induced by her father.

That day he had been terrible. The tragedies of the fated Atrides, what were they to his? A lamentation longer than Jeremiah's followed. His arm, his skill, his art, his strength, his money, everything, for all he knew even his daughter, was taken from him. How long, O Lord, how long! And presto! da capo, all over and afresh she had it.

Then, shaking a finger, he cried: "Where were you last night?"

Cassy, reduced to tears, exclaimed at him. "Why here. Where else?"

Darkly he eyed her. "Yes, but earlier, before you came in, where were you?"

Cassy could not help it, she shook. A moment before she had been crying whole-heartedly, associating herself, as a daughter may, in her father's woe. But that was too much. With the tears still in her eyes, she laughed. "Gracious goodness! You don't take me for a fly-by-night?"

The noble marquis, who had been standing, sat down. Before him, on the ginger of the wall, hung the portrait of the gorgeous swashbuckler. Behind the latter were portraits, dim, remote, visionary, of other progenitors who probably never existed. But he was convinced that they had, convinced that always, sword in hand, they had upheld the honour of the Casa-Evora. No, surely, his daughter had not forfeited that. No, certainly, he did not suspect her. But there was much that he did not understand. The misery of the mystery of things overcame him. He wept noisily.

Cassy, who had been seated, stood up. She had on her rowdy frock. She also had on a hat—if you can call a tam-o'-shanter a hat. Therewith were white gloves which she had got at the basilica and which as yet were free from benzine. Her father had distressed her inhumanly, but she had survived it, as youth survives anything, and she looked then, not tear-stained in the least, but, as usual, very handsome.

Bending forward, she touched him. "There, you dear old thing, don't take on so. I have been planning something fat for you. Everything will come out right. Just wait and see—and when you're hungry, there's some nice cold veal in the kitchy."

But though in the kitchen there was cold veal, which it were perhaps poetic to describe as nice, yet even the poetry of that was exceeded by the poetry of the plan. Cassy had planned nothing lean or fat, nothing whatever. She had spoken as a little mother may, in an effort to console, though perhaps prompted subconsciously by the inscrutable possibilities of life. Anything may happen. Already on the stage of which destiny is the scene-shifter, the fates, in their eternal rôle of call-boy, were summoning the actors to the drama in which the leading rôle was hers and on which the curtain was about to rise.

Her father, comforted by the imaginary, looked up. She had gone. From the sling he took his arm. The elbow was stiff, though less stiff than it had been. Moreover the wrist moved readily and the fingers were as flexible as before. Consoled by that, comforted already, he shuffled into the kitchen and consumed the cold veal.

Now, in the crashing car, Cassy's thoughts went forward and back. Her father's question, that had succeeded in being both pointed and pointless, returned. She smiled at it. It would take another Don Juan than Mozart's to entice me, she serenely reflected. Yet, after all, would he have to be so remarkable? At any rate he would have to be fancy free and not engaged as was a certain person who had not so much as said Boo!

Cassy coloured. Always corsetless, she was not straight-laced. Given the attraction and with it the incentive, and that tam-o'-shanter might have gone flying over the windmill. The tam was very safe. There was no incentive and, though there was no moral corset either, she was temperamentally unable to go poaching on another's preserves. Barring the chimerical, that any girl may consider and most girls do, she was straight as a string. A shabby old man had no need to ask.

"Seventy-second!" The trainman bawled unmollifiably at her.

Cassy left a certain person there. Into her thoughts another man had hopped. She surveyed him. He was good-looking. He was rich. These attributes said nothing. A beautiful male—always an anomaly—never attracts a beautiful woman. That other anomaly, a man of inherited wealth, is disgusting to the anarchist. Cassy was a beauty and an anarchist. She was also an aristocrat. The tattered portières of the House of Casa-Evora, the bedrabbled robes of the marquisate, all that was ridiculous to her. She was an aristocrat none the less. She had a high disdain for low things. In the kitchen, which she called the kitchy, she bent her back but not her head. Her head was unbowed. She sullied her hands but not her conscience. A dirty act she could not perform. Aristocrat and anarchist, she was also an artist. With simple things and simple people, she was simple as you please. Stupidity and pretentiousness enraged her. The philistine and the ignoble she loathed.

Now, through the windows of her soul, she surveyed him. His looks, his money, said nothing. On the other hand there was about him an aroma that appealed. The aroma was not the odour that local society exhales. At that Cassy's nose was in the air. A lot of nobodies occupied with nothing—and talking about it! Such was her opinion of the gilded gang, an opinion which Paliser—to do him the justice that the historian should—would have had put to music and arranged for trumpets. It was not that, therefore. The aroma was more fetching. The man talked her language, liked what she liked, never presumed. In considering these factors, she considered her gloves. Thank God, they did not smell of benzine!

"Grand Central!"

Cassy, abandoning Paliser there, went on to Fifth Avenue, where, with the protection of cross-town traffic, she attempted to get to the other side. But halfway, she saw, or thought she saw, the young woman to whom a certain person was engaged. She turned to look, backed into the traffic-sign and put it in motion. Instantly motors were careering at each other. Instantly a purple policeman grown suddenly black, was smitten with St. Vitus.

Dancing and bellowing as he danced, he righted the sign and swore at Cassy, who, for added outrage, had flung herself at him and was smiling sweetly in his swollen face. About them the torrent poured. Then all at once, in a riot that afterwards seemed to her phantasmagoric, the policeman raised a forefinger in salute. From the maelstrom she was hoisted bodily into a car. Somebody, the policeman probably, was boosting her from behind. Never had she suffered such indignities! To accentuate them, somebody else was shouting in her face.

"I've saved your life, you'll have to marry me."

"Well, I declare!" Cassy, horribly ruffled, exclaimed at Paliser, who had the impudence to laugh. She smoothed the smock, patted the hat, passed a gloved hand over her nose.

"You're all there," Paliser, amused by the mimic, was telling her. "What is more, one pick-me-up deserves another."

With his stick, he poked at the mechanician, gestured with it, indicating a harbour.

The car veered and stopped at a restaurant that had formerly resided in Fourteenth Street, but which had moved, as the heart of Manhattan moved, and was then thinking of moving again.

In the entrance were Cantillon and Ogston, agreeable young men, who stood aside for Cassy, raised their hats at Paliser, nudging each other with unfathomable good-fellowship.

"A peach!"

"No, a pair!"

Their pleasantries were lost. Cassy and Paliser moved on and in to the Fifth Avenue room, crowded as usual on this high noon. But what are head-waiters for? Promptly there was a table, one not too near the orchestra and yet which gave on the street.

"What would you dislike the least?" Paliser from over a bill-of-fare inquired. He had brought his hat and stick with him and, in spite of a waiter's best efforts, had put both on the floor.

I am not fit to be seen, thought Cassy, looking about at two and three hundred dollar frocks and at blouses that were almost as cheap.

Paliser, turning to the waiter, translated passages from the menu. "Surprised tomatoes, cocottish eggs, suprême on a sofa, ice Aurora Borealis. And a baked potato." He turned to Cassy. "Barring the ice, a baked potato is the only thing in which they can't stick grease."

"Et comme vin, monsieur?" enquired the waiter who ought to have been at the front.

"Aqua pura. But probably you have not got it. Celestial Vichy, then." He looked again at Cassy. "What else might displease your ladyship?"

"Do stop talking like a low comedian," Cassy vexatiously retorted. "If you had not used force I would not be here. I could not make a row at the door."

"No, one scene on Fifth Avenue is enough for one day."

"I should say so and it was you who made it. I was going quietly about my business when I was derricked into your car."

"Not at all. You threw yourself at my head. If it had not been for me, the policeman would have marched you off to prison."

Cassy laughed. "The dear man! He knew I would be worse off with you."

"Yes. He was certainly perspicacious. Where did you say you were going?"

Cassy removed her gloves. "Before I was attacked? To a music-shop. There is a song I want to get for Mrs. Thingumagig's, Mrs. Beamish——"

"Mrs. Who?" Paliser asked. Again he had forgotten the lady. But from one of memory's pantries her wraith peered out. "Ah, yes, of course! Well, we can stop by for it and you can run it over in the country to-night. You remember that you are to dine with me, don't you?"

Cassy lifted a lip as a dog does when about to bite. "Remember it, I have thought of nothing else."

But now the waiter put a dish between them and Paliser said: "You make me feel like this surprised tomato."

Then came the bite. "While you are about it, you can feel like both of them. I am not going."

Argument weakens everything and wearies everybody—except the young. The mouths of youth are naturally full of objections and insults. Were it otherwise, young people would be too servile to the past, too respectful to the present and the future would not know them as guides.

Paliser, young in years, but old at heart, omitted to argue. He did what is perhaps superior, he changed the subject. "What is this song you were speaking of? Why not try that thing of Rimsky-Korsakov, the 'Chanson Hindoue'?"

Then, throughout that course and the courses that followed, peace descended upon them. Even to talk music soothes the savage breast. It soothed Cassy and to such an extent that, finally, when the ice came she made no bones about admitting it was her favourite dish.

"Du café, monsieur? Des liqueurs?" the slacker asked.

But no, Paliser did not wish anything else, nor did Cassy. The ice sufficed. She ate it slowly, a little forkful at a time, wishing that her father could share it, wishing that he, too, could have sofa'd suprêmes and some one to pay for them. She raised her napkin.

Paliser lit a cigarette and said: "You made no reply to that statement of mine."

She stared. "What statement?"

"About saving your life."

"And ruining my reputation?"

"Well, life comes first. I said you would have to marry me to pay for it. Will you?"

Cassy lowered the napkin. He was talking in jest she knew, or thought she knew, but the subject was not to her taste, though if he had been serious she would have disliked it still more. She wanted to give it to him, but no fitting insolence occurred to her and she turned to the window before which two Japanese were passing, with the air, certainly feigned, which these Asiatics display, of being hilarious and naïf.

"Will you?" he repeated.

"Will I what?"

"Marry me?"

Perhaps he did mean it, she thought. He was cheeky enough for anything. But now he was prodding her. "Say yes. Say to-morrow; say to-day."

She turned on him. "Why not yesterday? Or is it just another of your pearls of thought? You are simply ridiculous."

Paliser put down his cigarette. "That is the proper note. Marriage is ridiculous. But it is the most ancient of human institutions. Divorce must have been invented at least three weeks later."

Cassy did not mean to laugh and did not want to, but she could not help herself and she exploded it. "You are so ardent!"

Innocently Paliser caressed his chin. He had made her laugh and that was a point gained. But such pleasure as he may have experienced he succeeded in concealing.

"Again the proper note! I am ardent. Yet—shall I admit it?—formerly I walked in darkness. It is all due to my father. I have forgotten the prophet preaching on the hillside who denounced respectability as a low passion. But my father, while deeply religious, has views more advanced. He dotes on respectability. He tried to instil it into me and, alas! how vainly! I was as the blind, the light was withheld and continued to be until, well, until a miracle occurred. You appeared, I was healed, I saw and I saw but you. What do you say?"

"That your conversation is singularly edifying." In speaking, Cassy gathered her gloves with an air slightly hilarious but not in the least naïf. Before Paliser could cut in, she added: "If I don't hurry, Ma Tamby will be out and I shall lose my lesson."

Paliser shifted. She is devilish pretty, he thought. But is she worth it? For a second he considered the possible scandal which he had considered before.

He stood up. "Let me take you. We can stop for the song on the way."

XVIII

"MY Carlottatralala! Dear Carlottatralala!"

Lightly at the door, Cassy strung the words to a mazourka. Her voice twisted, swung, danced into a trill that was captured by echoes that carried it diminishingly down the stairway of the mansion where Carlotta Tamburini lived.

"Eh?"

Partially the door opened. A fat slovenly woman showed an unpowdered nose, a loose unpainted mouth, and, at sight of Paliser, backed. "For God's sake! One moment, dearie. Straight ahead. With you in two shakes."

Cassy, her yellow frock swishing, led the way to a room furnished with heaped scores, with a piano, a bench, chairs and a portrait, on foot, of a star before the fall. Adjacently were framed programmes, the faded tokens of forgetless and forgotten nights, and, with them, the usual portraits of the usual royalties, but perhaps unusually signed. The ex-diva had attended to that herself.

Paliser, straddling the bench, put his hat on the piano and looked at Cassy, who had gone to the window. It was not the palaces opposite that she saw. Before her was a broken old man revamped. In his hand was a baton which he brandished demoniacally at an orchestra of his own. The house foamed with faces, shook with applause, and without, at the glowing gates, a chariot carried him instantly to the serenities of elaborate peace.

"It won't take over an hour."

The vision vanished. Across the way, in a window opposite, a young man was dandling, twirling one side of a moustache, cocking a conquering eye. Cassy did not see him. Directly behind her another young man was talking. She did not hear.

On leaving the restaurant and, after it, the music-shop, the car had taken them into the Park where Paliser, alleging that he was out of matches, had handed her into another restaurant where more Vichy was put before her and, with it, that question.

The air was sweet with lilacs. On the green beyond Cassy could see them, could see, too, a squirrel there that had gone quite mad. It flew around and around, stopped suddenly short, chattered furiously and with a flaunt of the tail, disappeared up a tree.

"What a dear!" was Cassy's reply to that question.

But Paliser gave her all the rope that she wanted. He had no attraction for her, he knew it, and in view of other experiences, the fact interested him. It had the charm of novelty to this man who, though young, was old; who, perhaps, was born old; born, as some are, too old in a world too young.

He struck a match and watched the little blue-gold flame flare and subside. It may have seemed to him typical. Then he looked up.

"Frankly, I have no inducements to offer, and, by the same token, no lies. It would be untrue if I said I loved you. Love is not an emotion, it is a habit, one which it takes time to form. I have had no opportunity to acquire it, but I have acquired another. I have formed the habit of admiring you. The task was not difficult. Is there anything in your glass?"

"A bit of cork, I think," said Cassy, who was holding the glass to the light and who was holding it moreover as though she had thoughts for nothing else.

But her thoughts were agile as that squirrel. A why not? Why not? Why not? was spinning in them, spinning around and around so quickly that it dizzied her. Then, like the squirrel, up a tree she flew. For herself, no. She did not want him, never had wanted him, never could.

"May I have it?" Paliser took the glass. Save for subsiding bubbles, and the bogus water, there was nothing there. "Will you take mine? I have not touched it."

Cassy took it from him, drank it, drank it all. Her thoughts raced on. She was aware of that, though with what they were racing she could not tell.

"I don't know why I am so thirsty."

Paliser knew. He knew that the taste of perplexity is very salt. She was considering it, he saw, and he payed out the rope.

"People who claim to be wise are imbeciles. But people who claim to be happy are in luck. I have no pretensions to wisdom but I can claim to be lucky if——"

Cassy, her steeple-chasing thoughts now out of hand, was saying something and he stopped.

"It is very despicable of me even to listen to you. I don't think I would have listened, if you had not been frank. But you have had the honesty not to pretend. I must be equally sincere. I——"

It was Paliser's turn. With a laugh he interrupted. "Don't. A little sincerity is a dangerous thing and a great deal of it must be fatal. Besides I know it all by heart. I am the son of rich and disreputable people. That is not my fault, and, anyway, it is all one to you. But what you mean is that, should you consent, the consideration will not be—er—personal with me or—er—spiritual with you, but—er—just plain and simple materialism."

Cassy looked wonderingly at him. It was surprising how quickly and how completely he had nailed it. But into the bewilderment there crept something else. "Yes, and I am ashamed to look myself in the face."

Paliser gave a tug at the rope. "Then don't do that either. Look at me. Matrimony is no child's play. It is like a trip to England—close confinement with the chance of being torpedoed. Interference is the submarine that sinks good ships. If you consent, there is only one thing on which I shall insist, but I shall insist on it absolutely."

Visibly the autocrat stiffened. "Shall you, indeed!"

Paliser pounded, or affected to pound, on the table. "Yes, absolutely."

You may go to Flanders then, thought Cassy, but, with that look which she could summon and which was tolerably blighting, she said, "Ah! The drill sergeant!"

"Yes, and here is the goose-step. The drill sergeant orders that you must always have your own way in everything."

Considerably relaxed by that, Cassy laughed. "You are very rigorous. But don't you think it is rather beside the mark?"

"Beside it!" Paliser exclaimed. "It tops it, goes all over it, covers it, covers the grass, covers everything—except a fair field, a free rein and every favour."

Cassy was gazing beyond where the squirrel had been. A limousine passed. A surviving victoria followed. Both were superior. So also were the occupants. They were very smart people. You could tell it from the way they looked. They had an air contemptuous and sullen. The world is not good enough for them, Cassy thought. In an hour, car and carriage would stop. The agreeable occupants would alight. They would enter fastidious homes. Costly costumes they would exchange for costumes that were costlier. They would sit at luxurious boards, lead the luxurious life and continue to, until they died of obesity of the mind.

None of that! Cassy decided. But already the picture was fading, replaced by another that showed a broken old man, without a penny to his name, or a hope save in her.

From the screen, she turned to Paliser, who, aware of her absence, had omitted to recall her. Now, though, that she again condescended to be present, he addressed her in his Oxford voice.

"But what was I saying? Yes, I remember, something that somebody said before me. Nowadays every one marries except a few stupid women and a few very wise men. Yet, then, as I told you, I have no pretensions to wisdom."

"Nor I to stupidity," Cassy thoughtlessly retorted. Yet at once, realising not merely the vanity of the boast but what was far worse, the construction that it invited, she tried to recall it, tangled her tongue, got suddenly red and turned away.

"You do me infinite honour then," said Paliser, who spoke better than he knew. But her visible discomfort delighted him. He saw that she wanted to wriggle out of it and, like a true sportsman, he gave her an opening in which she would trip.

"Matrimony is temporary insanity with permanent results. You must not incur them blindfolded. Do me the favour to look this way. Before you sits a pauper."

In the surprise of that, Cassy did look and walked straight into it. "What?"

"Precisely." In sheer enjoyment he began lying frankly and freely. He lied because lying is a part of the game, because it is an agreeable pastime and because, too, if she swallowed it—and why shouldn't she?—it might put a spoke in such wheels as she might otherwise and subsequently set going.

"Precisely," he repeated. "It is different with my father. My father has what is called a regular income. One of these days I shall inherit it. It will keep us out of the poorhouse. But meanwhile I have only the pittance that he allows me."

Yes, Cassy sagaciously reflected. What with Paliser Place, its upkeep and the rest of it, it must be a pittance. But the lie behind it, which she mistook for honesty, tripped her as it was intended to do. A moment before she might have backed out. Now, in view of the lie that she thought was truth, how could she? It would be tantamount to acknowledging she was for sale but that he hadn't the price. Red already, at the potential shame of that she got redder.

Paliser, who saw everything, saw the heightening flush, knew what it meant, knew that he was landing her, but knew, too, that he must bear the honours modestly.

"Bread and cheese in a cottage and with you!" he exclaimed. "But, forgive me, I am becoming lyrical."

He turned, summoned the waiter, paid for the water, paid for the service and took from the man his stick.

Cassy went with him to the car. She had made no reply. If she were to take the plunge, there was no use shivering on the brink. But what would her father say? He would be furious of course, though how his fury would change into benedictions when he found himself transported from the walk-up, lifted from Harlem and cold veal! Presently there would be a flower in his button-hole and everything that went with the flower. Moreover, if the poor dear wanted to be absurd, she would let him parade his marquisate; while, as for herself, she would have to say good-bye to so much that had been so little. Good-bye! Addio per sempre! The phrase from La Tosca came to her. It told of kisses and caresses that she had never had. Yet, beneath her breath, she repeated it. Addio per sempre!

Then suddenly, without transition, she felt extraordinarily at peace with herself, with everybody, with everything. After all, she did not know, stranger things had happened, she might even learn to care for him and to care greatly. But whether she did or she did not, she would be true as steel—truer! He had been so nice about it! Yes, she might, particularly since she had made a clean breast of it and he knew she was marrying him for what it pleased him to describe as his pittance.

The car now was flying up the Riverside. An omnibus passed. From the roof, a country couple spotted the handsome girl and the handsome young man who were lolling back so sumptuously, and the lady stranger, pointing, said to her gentleman: "Vanderbilt folk, I guess, ain't they dandy!"

Behind the lady sat a novelist who was less enthusiastic. Another girl gone gay, was his mental comment. Well, why not? he reflected, for Jones' prejudices were few and far between. Besides, he added: Les Portugais sont toujours gais. But he had other things to think about and he dismissed the incident, which, in less than a week, he had occasion to recall.

Cassy, meanwhile, after serenading a fat woman's door and looking from a palatial window at the moving-pictures of her thoughts, at last heard Paliser, who, already, had twice addressed her.

"It won't take over an hour or so."

But now the Tamburini, ceremoniously attired in a wrapper, strode in and Paliser, who had been straddling the music-bench, stood up.

The fact that they had come together and were together, had already darkly enlightened the fallen star and as she strode in she exclaimed with poetry and fervour: "Two souls with but a single thought!"

Paliser took his hat. "We are a trifle better provided. I have as many as three or four thoughts and one of them concerns a license. I am going to get it."

His face was turned from Cassy and his eyes, which he had fastened on his hostess, held caveats, commands, rewards.

Massively she flung herself on Cassy. "Dearie, I weep for joy!"

Cassy shoved her away. "Not on me, Tamby."

But the dear lady, in attacking her, shot a glance at Paliser. It was very voluble.

Cassy, too, was looking at him. Her education had been thorough. She knew any number of useless things. In geography, history, and the multiplication-table she was versed. But Kent's Commentaries, passionate as they are, were beyond her ken. The laws to which they relate were also. None the less, on the subject of one law she had an inkling, vague, unprecised, and, for all she knew to the contrary, incorrect. She blurted it. "Don't I have to go, too?"

Ma Tamby grabbed it. "Go where, dearie?"

"For the license?"

Ma Tamby tittered. "Not unless you love the song of the subway. The license is a man's job." Twisting, she giggled at Paliser. "But not hard labour, he, he!"

"A life-term, though," he answered and added: "I'll go at once."

That settled it for Cassy. A chair stretched its arms to her. She sat down.

Wildly the fat woman gesticulated. "Dearie, no! But how it gets me! As true as gospel I dreamed so much about it that it kept me awake. I do believe I have a pint of champy. Shall I fetch it? I must."

Coldly Cassy considered her. "Don't. You'll only get tight."

Paliser, making for the door, called back: "Save a drop for me."

"May the Lord forgive me," sighed the fat woman. "I was that flustered I forgot to congratulate him. But how it takes me back! Dearie, I too was young! I too have loved! Ah, gioventu primavera della vita! Ah, l'amore! Ah! Ah!"

"You make me sick," said Cassy.

"Dearie——"

"Be quiet. My father won't like it and I can't lie to him about it. But I shall need some things and you will have to go for them. What will you tell him?"

With one hand, the fat woman could have flattened Cassy's father out. But not his tongue. The nest of vipers there, even then hissed at her.

"Why, dearie, to-morrow you'll have your pick of Fifth Avenue and until then, if you need a tooth-brush, I'll get one for you around the corner."

"But my father will have to be told something. He'll worry to death. I might write though, and put on a special delivery. Look here. Have you any note paper that isn't rotten with scent? If not, I do believe I'll chuck it."

"For God's sake, dearie!"

Hastily, in search of scentless paper, the fat woman made off.

XIX

OVER the way, on the jimcrack of the stately mansion opposite, the westering sun had put an aigrette of gold. The young man with the conquering eye had gone. A lovely Jewess, leaning like a gargoyle, violently threatened some Ikey in the unlovely street below. Above was a pallid green. Beyond, across the river, the sun, poised on a hill-top, threw from its eternal palette shades of salmon and ochre that tinted an archipelago of slender clouds. But in the street was the music of carefree lads, playing baseball, exchanging chaste endearments. There too was the gaiety of little trulls, hasty and happy on their roller-skates. While perhaps to generalise these delights, a trundled organ tossed a ragtime. The charm was certainly affecting and that charm the horn of Paliser's approaching car merely increased.

Long since the letter had gone and, with it, another to Mrs. Yallum. In the former, Cassy had tried to gild the pill, yet without succeeding in disguising it.

Dear Daddy:

You are the best man in the world and the next best your little girl is to marry now, right away, and become Mrs. Monty Paliser. But my heart will be with you and so will Mrs. Yallum. Don't fuss with her, there's a dear, and take your medicine regularly and be ready to give me your blessing as soon as I can run in, which will be at the first possible moment, when I shall have more news, good news, better news, best of daddies, for thee.

A whirlwind of kisses,
CASSY.

Adjacently, on the upper reaches of Broadway, Ma Tamby was shopping. The sun now, gone from the river, was painting other spheres. From a corner, shadows crept. They devoured the floor, absorbed the piano, assimilated the room. They left pits where they passed. They enveloped Cassy.

Suddenly, she shivered.

She had been far away, outside of the world, in a region to which the clamouring street could not mount. Her thoughts had lifted her to a land that had the colours, clear and yet capricious, of which dreams are made. There beauty stood, and truth with beauty, and so indistinguishably that the two were one. But truth, detaching herself, showed her candid face. The shadows elongating, reached up and darkened it. The candour remained, but the candour had become terrible. Cassy saw it. She saw that the land to which she had been lifted was the land of beauty and horror. It was then she shivered.

Instantly something touched her. There was no one. The land, the beauty, the horror had faded. No longer on the heights, she was in a trivial room in Harlem. She was awake. She was absolutely alone. None the less something that was nothing, something invisible, inaudible, intangible, imperceptible, something emanating from the depths where events crouch, prepared to pounce, had touched her. She knew it, she felt it. Her impulse was to scream, to rush away. But from what? It was all imaginary. Commonsense, that can be so traitorous, told her that. Then, immediately, before the wireless from the unknown, which modern occultism calls the impact, could impel her, the room was invaded.

Ma Tamby, tramping in, switching on the lights, was exclaiming and gesticulating at her and at Paliser, who had followed and who was standing in the doorway.

"Dearie! For God's sake! The child's asleep! In all my born days I never knew the likes of that!"

Icily Cassy eyed her. "What have you there?"

"Where? What? This?" Feelingly the woman exhibited a nice, big package. "Why, the things I bought for you!"

"And do you for a moment suppose that I am going to carry a bundle?"

"Saints alive, child! Didn't you tell me——"

But now Paliser, in his cultured voice, intervened. "If I may have it?" He took it, moved to the window, leaned from it, called: "Mike! You see this? Then see too that you don't muff it."

The bundle vanished.

He turned to Cassy. "I telephoned to Dr. Grantly. He is a clergyman. It might seem uncivil to keep him waiting."

Cassy saw him at once—a starchy old man, with a white tie and little side whiskers, who lived—and would die—in a closed circle of thought.

Then again that nothing touched her, though, because of the others, more lightly, less surely. But it touched her. She was quite conscious of it, equally conscious that there was still time, that she could still desist, that she had only to say that she would not, that she had changed her mind and tell them no, right out and be hanged to them. On the strawberry of her tongue it trembled. At once before her there floated another picture, the picture of a shabby old man, without a penny in the world, or a hope save in her.

She stood up.

"Dearie, dearie, I wish you joy, I do!" the fat woman sobbed, or appeared to sob, and everything being possible, it may be that she did not sob. La joie fait peur. She had done her part. On the morrow a cheque would reach her. "Dearie, dearie!"

"Don't be a fool," Cassy frigidly threw at her.

"Will you take my arm?" Paliser asked.

"Don't be a fool either," she threw at him and bravely, head up, went on to the events that waited.

In the street below a strain overtook her. Ma Tamby was amusing herself with "Lohengrin."

XX

PALISER, alighting, turned to help Cassy. But Cassy could get out unassisted.

The gravel crunched beneath the wheels of the retreating car. From afar came the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated. Otherwise the air was still, very sweet. The house too was silent. In the hall and in the windows there were lights, but there seemed to be nobody about and that and the quiet gave her the delicious impression that the house was enchanted. It was a very nonsensical impression, but it was the nonsense that made it delicious.

Paliser was saying something, though what she did not hear. The sky now was indigo and in it hung a yellow feather. On the Hudson it had been very pale, the ghost of a feather. But, as Harlem receded, it had ridden higher and brightened in the ride. Cassy had watched it, wishing that Paliser would not talk. He had sat next to her, on the same seat, yet if the portion of it which he occupied had been in a Queensland back-block, he could not have been farther from her heart. He took her hand and she let him. He kissed her and she submitted to that. But she wondered whether courtesans do not hate the men who pay them, more than they hate themselves. Was she any better? However a priest mumbled at her, she was selling herself. Love alone is marriage. She had none, nor had he. The whole thing was abominable, and, as he held her hand and pressed her lips, her young soul rebelled. Even for her father's sake, this cup was too much.

Now though, the empty hall and the great silent house took on the atmosphere of the Palace of the White Cat. The cup became a philtre. The abomination changed into deliciousness. There are fairy-tales that are real. For all she knew, Paliser might change into Prince Charming and certainly he looked it.

He had been saying something, what she did not hear. But on the steps beneath the perron, she turned and saw that which previously she had not realised, he was extraordinarily good-looking, and about her closed a consciousness that her rowdy frock was a tissue of diamonds and that he was in doublet and hose.

A moment only. But during it something melted about her. Immediately aware of the phenomenon, she felt that she ought to freeze. She tried to and failed. The atmosphere of deliciousness prevented and, though she did not know the reason, she did know that she had failed and the fact instead of annoying, amused. Then, as she followed Paliser into the house, she told herself that she was an imbecile, that she did not know her own mind and, without transition, wondered how her father was taking it.

From the hall, they passed through a succession of rooms vacant, subdued, rich, and on into that other room where she had sung. At the farther end was a hyacinth curtain that masked a door. But near the entrance through which she had come was an ivory chair. Cassy, seating herself on it, wondered what had become of the bundle. She was sure that it held everything except what she wanted. Then suddenly behind her blue smock came a gnawing. She thought she would ask Paliser to have somebody fetch her a sandwich, two sandwiches, or else some bread and butter, but, now that she looked for him, he had gone.

She got up, crossed the room and sat down on another chair which was black, probably ebony. It had a curial appearance that suggested the senate, not the senate at Washington, but the S. P. Q. of Rome. It was quite near the hyacinth curtain and behind the latter she heard voices. Like the rooms they were subdued. She could distinguish nothing. Yet there must be a bell somewhere and she decided that if Paliser did not shortly return, she would ring. The gnawing was sharper. She was very hungry.

Again she got up and looked from a window. It gave on a garden in which there was underbush that the moon was chequering with amber spots. After all, it was a queer sort of a wedding. But what had she expected? Grace Church? St. Thomas'? Invitations a fortnight in advance, aisles banked with flowers, filled with snobs and the garbage of the Wagner score that Ma Tamby had tossed after her? Not by a long shot!

She turned. Paliser was entering. But the gnawing had nibbled away the enchantment and, as she turned, she looked rather cross.

Paliser, noticing that but mistaking the cause, said very sympathetically: "During the Terror, a princess jogged along, smelling a rose. Marriage is no worse than the guillotine, besides being much less summary. Will you come?"

"Less summary? I should say so!" Cassy retorted. "It is far too lingering."

But she followed him out into another hall, one that was hung with tapestries. They were dim and embroidered with what seemed to be pearls. On the floor was a rug, dim also, narrow, very long, that extended to a room, lined with high-placed bookcases and set with low-placed lights. In the room stood a man. He wore a long black coat and a waistcoat that reached to his collar. In his hand was a book.

"Dr. Grantly," said Paliser, who added, "Miss Cara."

Dr. Grantly bowed but without distinction. Because of the position of the lights, his face was obscured and what Cassy could discern of it she judged young and uninteresting. When Paliser had first mentioned him—and how long ago it seemed!—she had fancied him old. She had fancied too that he would have little side whiskers. The fact that he was young was not a disappointment. Clergymen, whether old or young, did not interest her. She did not care for them, or for churches, or the services in them. The ceremonial of worship seemed to her empty. Creeds professed but not practised seemed to her vain. But she would carry an injured cat for miles. A lost dog was found the moment she spotted it. She did what good she could, not because it is a duty, but for a superior reason. She liked to do it. One may be a Christian without caring for churches.

"Dearly beloved——"

In the depths over which she had passed, excitement and the novelty of it had, until then, supported her. But at that exordium, instantly, they fell away; instantly fear, like a wave, swept over her. Instantly she felt, and the feeling is by no means agreeable, that she was struggling with the intangible in a void. But she had not intended to drown, or no, that was not it, she had not wanted to marry. Aware of the depths, not until then had she known their peril. Until that moment she had not realised their menace. Then abruptly it caught and submerged her.

"I require and charge you both as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment——"

The solemnity of the sonorous exhortation was water in her ears. The sound of it reached her confusedly, in a jumble. She was drowning and it was unconsciously, in this condition, that poked by Paliser, she heard herself uttering the consenting words that are so irrevocable and so fluid.

It was over then—or nearly! The thought of it shook her from the mental swoon. Behind her some one spoke and she wondered who it could be. But a movement distracted her. Dr. Grantly had shifted the book from one hand to the other and as absently she followed the movement, she saw that the hand that now held the book was maimed or else malformed.

But what immediately occupied her were other words which, prompted by him, she was automatically repeating. The words are very beautiful, really exalting, they are words that spread peace as dawn spreads upon the sea. Yet, in their delivery, twice Dr. Grantly tripped and, though on each occasion he pulled himself up and went on again without embarrassment, it seemed to Cassy that he did so without dignity.

The impression, which was but momentary, drifted; another distraction intervened, her finger was being ringed. I'm done for! she despairingly thought.

"Amen!"

"Ouf!" Cassy gasped. It was really over, over at last, and still a little bewildered, she turned. The butler and the maid were leaving the room, which they must have entered when the ceremony first overwhelmed her. From the hall a slight cackle floated back.

It amused them, she generously reflected.

Paliser did not notice. He was addressing the clergyman. "Thank you very much, doctor." He turned to his bride. "Cutting your head off may have been worse, don't you think?"

If I can't be gay at least I should appear so, she told herself and desperately she laughed.

Meanwhile the man of God, relapsing into the man of the world, or of its neighbourhood, did not seem to know what to do with himself. He dropped the book, picked it up, put it on the table. Considerately, in his Oxford voice, Paliser instructed him.

"You must be going? Ah, well, I appreciate. Let me thank you again."

Dr. Grantly mumbled something, smiled at the bride, smiled at the happy man or, more exactly, he smiled at an envelope which the happy man was giving him and which, Cassy divined, contained his fee. How much? she wondered. However much or little, it was excessive.

The hall took him and the groom grappled with the bride, embracing her with that rudimentary paranoia which lawful passion comports.

She struggled free and, a bit breathless, but with the same desperate gaiety, exclaimed: "If this is matrimony, give me war!"

"Perhaps you would prefer dinner first," Paliser, with recovered calm, replied.

Wouldn't she, though! Now that she was definitely dished, hunger again bit at her and she accompanied Paliser through the dim hall, through the music-room, through the long suite, into the dining-room where, as before, three men, with white sensual faces, stood waiting.

Paliser motioned. "Mrs. Paliser will sit there. Move the other chair here." He drew a seat for her and gave additional instructions. "There will be people here to-morrow. If we are motoring, have them wait."

"What people?" asked Cassy, before whom an uncomfortable vision of her father and Ma Tamby jumped.

Paliser replied in French. "A man and a woman or two from Fifth Avenue."

I wonder where that bundle is, thought Cassy who said: "A man? What man?"

"Oh, just a clerk. That is almond soup. Do you care for it?" He looked down at his plate which appeared to engross him.

Cassy raised her spoon. "A penny for your thoughts."

He looked up. "They are worth far more. I was thinking of the night I first met you."

Cassy laughed. "And Ma Tamby's ham and eggs?"

Paliser, raising his own spoon, added: "It was Lennox who introduced us. You knew he was engaged to Miss Austen? Well, she has broken it."

Cassy must have swallowed the soup the wrong way. She coughed, lifted her napkin and saw a road, long, dark, infinitely fatiguing on which she was lost. But the soup adjusted itself, the road turned to the right. Lennox had never so much as said boo! In anger at herself she rubbed her mouth hard and put the napkin down.

Paliser, who had been tasting and sniffing at a glass, looked at the butler. "What is this? Take it away.

It is not fit for a convict." He looked over at Cassy. "I am sorry."

"One gets so bored with good wine," said Cassy, who recently had been reading Disraeli. Yet she said it absently, the unscrambled eggs about her.

But the saying was new to Paliser, to whom few things were. He relished it accordingly and the more particularly because of its fine flavour of high-bred insolence.

From where he sat, he eyed her. Although she was eating, which is never a very engaging occupation, her face had an air that was noble and reserved. At the moment, a scruple in which there was a doubt, presented itself. In view of the coming draft act, it occurred to him that he might have gone the wrong way about it. But the scruple concerned merely the expediency of the adventure. It was not related to his conscience. He had none.

Now, though, a new decanter was before him; he tried it, drank of it, judged it decent and drank again. Being decent, it was not heady. It did not affect him. Cassy had done that. In her was a bouquet which the vineyard of youth and beauty alone produces. He had hankered for it. Now, like the decanter, it was before him. He could drink his fill. Then like the other wine, he could send it away.

XXI

THE elder Paliser, seated in the hall of his town house, held a cup. In the chair, a doge had throned. On the bottom of the cup was an N topped by a crown. The cup contained hot milk.

Returning, a little before, from a drive, he had been helped up the steps, into the hall, into the chair. He had not wished to be helped farther. In the hall, the milk had been brought. As he sipped it, he looked placid, dignified, evil. He looked very much like a wicked old doge.

"When I don't move, it is remarkable how well I feel."

His son, to whom he spoke, sat in a sedan-chair which, delicately enamelled without, was as delicately upholstered within. Through the window of the chair, only the young man's face showed. If you had not known better you might have mistaken it for the face of a lady of an earlier, a politer, though not of a bloodier age. But you would have known better. The hair, powdered white, was absent; so too were the patches; so also was the rouge.

Behind the doge's chair a servant stood. Adjacently was a malachite bench. Beyond was a malachite stairway. The elder Paliser, finishing with the milk, extended the cup. The servant took it and turned. Recesses, back of the stairway, engulfed him.

Monty Paliser straightened. The movement disclosed his collar, the white of his tie.

It was the evening of the fourth day since the wedding. He had motored in to dine at the Austens'. Cassy had seen him go and had seen too uninterrupted hours in the music-room. The prospect was consoling.

But, pending the dinner and with an ample quarter of an hour to the good, he had looked in on his father whom he had found in the hall. Nothing filial had motived this looking-in. On the surface, it was a visit of circumstance such as one gentleman may pay to another. But, beneath the surface, was an object which, when the servant and the cup had gone, he approached.

"I hope Benny has not been in your way."

"Not in the least. I told him to go back to you."

"Is he still here?"

"I haven't an idea."

"You might send him to Newport."

"You want to be rid of him, eh?"

"The Place does not need three gardeners."

The old man, who seemed to be feeling about for something, scowled. "What it does not need is the atmosphere that you are giving it. You may go to the devil your own way. I sha'n't stop you. But it puts a bad taste in my mouth to have you turn it into a road-house. Damn it, sir, you were born there."

Through the window of the sedan-chair, the young man was watching. He saw it coming and masked himself.

"How funny of Benny to give you such an idea."

Then, straight at him, went the bomb.

"It was not a gift. What I got, I extracted. Why don't you marry? Eh? Why don't you? In order that you might, I made over to you a thing or two. I wish to God, I hadn't. But perhaps you are satisfied. If you are, well and good. As it is, unless you marry, I'll leave the property to Sally's brat and have him change his name. By Gad, sir, if I don't have some assurance from you and have it now, I'll send for Jeroloman. I will make a new will and I'll make it to-night. If you came here to dine, you can stop on and listen to it."

The bomb was full of fumes. In the still air they floated. But in throwing it, the old man's scowl had deepened. It had become a grimace that creased every wrinkle into prominence. His hand had gone to his chest. Gasping, he held it there. Then presently it fell. His features relaxed and dryly, in an even tone, he resumed: "It is remarkable how well I feel, if I don't talk. Any excitement suffocates me."

In the trench, that the sedan-chair had become, Monty Paliser tightened the mask. "There is no need for any excitement. I will marry. You have my word."

On the great blasoned throne, the old man shifted. The easy victory mollified him. "Ah! You dine here?"

"Thank you, no. I am dining at the Austens'."

"Where?" the elder Paliser asked. He had heard but he wanted it repeated. It seemed vaguely promising.

"At the Austens'. You may remember that the pearl of the household was engaged. It's off."

Slowly the old man twisted. "What is? The engagement?"

"So her mother told me."

"And you are dining there."

"In a few minutes."

The old man took it in, turned it over. It seemed not only victory but peace, and peace with annexation.

"Very good then. I draw the veil over your roadhouse. Put the young woman in a flat. Put her in two flats. Nobody who is anybody ever sees anything that was not intended for them. Don't beat the drum. That is all that the right people ask and all I require, except——"

He paused, considered the annexation and added: "I wish you an excellent appetite. Austen himself was a drivelling idiot and his wife used to be a rare old girl—is still, I daresay—but they came of good stock, and the daughter has looks and no brains. You couldn't do better."

He paused again, appeared to lose himself in the past, looked up and suddenly exclaimed: "You are ridiculous in that damned thing! Oblige me by getting out."

The young man extracted himself and sat down on the malachite bench. It was more exposed than the trench and the fumes of the gas bomb that his father had hurled were hazardous still. Additional protection from them was needed and he said: "What will you do about Benny?"

The old man disliked to be questioned. On the arm of his chair he beat with his fingers a quick, brief tattoo.

"Benny belongs to the Place. His father served me there. His grandfather served yours. You don't get such people nowadays."

Negligently the young man smoothed his tie. "Very picturesque and feudal. But I don't want him."

His father did not seem to hear, or to care. He was afar, wandering from it. "Ever notice that he has only one thumb? Same way with his father. Probably a family trait. I wish there were more families like 'em. This house is full of trollops and rascals. So is Newport. The house at Newport is full of rapscallions. Believe I'll offer it to the Government for a hospital. I wish to God Sally would come over and run it. Do you ever hear from her?"

The young man stood up. "Never."

"I don't doubt she is well rid of Balaguine. I've run into a baker's dozen of Russian princes. All canaille. What she wanted to marry him for, God only knows, and in saying that I exaggerate. Nice mess they have made of things there. Are you going? Oblige me by touching the bell."

The young man touched it and, while he was at it, something else. "Couldn't you oblige me by shipping Benny to Newport?"

The old man motioned. It was as though he dismissed it. "My compliments to her mother and remember that I have your word. Don't dilly-dally. Good God, sir, can't you realise that any day now you may be drafted? You've no time to lose. If I were your age, I'd enlist to-morrow. Don't stand on one foot, you make me nervous."

The son, putting on a white glove, got back at it. "I was asking you about Benny."

Again the old man shifted. "Hum! Well! Since you make a point of it. Yes. I'll send him to Newport."

"You won't forget?"

"I never forget," replied the old man, who, from that moment, forgot it utterly—until the following night when throttlingly it leaped at him.

Even if he had remembered, it could only have delayed the course of events. Benny went the next day and, in going, merely accelerated a drama which perhaps was preordered.

But now, from behind the recesses of the malachite stairway, a rascal appeared and approached and opened a bronze door, from which a young gentleman passed out and entered his car.

It was dark then, darker than convenient. There are ways that are obscure. The martyr who discovered that virtue is its own reward, died unwept, unhonoured, unsung. History does not know him. Perhaps he was an editor. But he bequeathed a valid idea.

As the car swam on, Monty Paliser was conscious of it. It would, he reflected, simplify matters very much if his father died immediately. He had no ill-feeling toward him, no good-feeling, no feeling whatever. For the property conveyed to him and otherwise bestowed, he had no gratitude. These gifts were in the nature of things. Gifts similar or cognate his father had received, as also had his grandfather, his great-grandfather and so on ab initio. They were possessions handed down and handed over for the greater glory of the House. He had therefore no gratitude for them. When the time came he would repeat the process and expect no gratitude either. Meanwhile though the gifts were adequate, there were more en route, so many that they would lift him within hailing distance of the richest men in the world. Though whether that were worth five minutes of perplexity, ten minutes of tears, a row and, possibly, your name in the papers, depended on the point of view.

In considering it, he found himself—and very much to his disgust—rememorating a moral axiom: Great wealth is a great burden. The axiom was a favourite with his father, who had sickened him with it. But on its heels always there had trod a variant. "By Gad, sir, you can say what you like, it puts you in a position to tell anybody to go to hell."

The variant had a lilt, a go, a flourish. To employ a vulgarism of the hour, it had the punch. It landed you and between the eyes. It required neither commentaries nor explanation. It was all there. It was tangible as a brickbat, self-evident as the sun.

In admiring it, the young man philosophised stoically. Did he not have enough for that already?

Yes, but later? Later might he not want to philosophise less stoically and more luxuriously? It was a problem. Meanwhile there was Cassy. He had no wish to lose her. Yet about him already was the shadow of the inevitable draft act. That was not a problem merely, it was a pit.

Meanwhile there was Cassy whom he did not wish to lose. She was delightful, delectable, delicious. Not divine though, thank heaven! The gleam in her eyes could be quite infernal. The gleam heightened a charm which in itself was fugitive. He recognised that. However delicious a dish may be, no man can feed on it always. Not he at any rate. But, for the time being, it was very appetising. For the present, it did very well. On the other hand, Margaret Austen represented a succession of courses which, in addition to being appetising, would lift him to a parity with the super-rich.

It was certainly perplexing. But it is a long turning that has no lane. He was a decent whip and a string made up of Margaret and Cassy was one that, let him alone for it, he could handle.

But now the car had stopped. Abandoning perplexity, he went on and up.

XXII

"HERE you are! Bright and late as usual!"

In her fluted voice, with her agreeable smile, Mrs. Austen greeted him. The lady was attired in a manner that left her glitteringly and splendidly bare. With her, in the cluttered drawing-room, were Margaret, Kate Schermerhorn, Poppet Bleecker, Verelst, Cantillon and Ogston.

"Will you take my daughter out?" Mrs. Austen, with that smile, continued. "Oh!" she interrupted herself to remark. "You have not congratulated Mr. Cantillon. Has no little bird told you? It's this dear child Kate. Just now—don't you think?—engagements, like lilacs, are in the air." She turned to Verelst. "Grey deceiver!"

Verelst crooked his arm. "However much I tried to deceive, I got grey before I could."

"What are you laughing at?" Mrs. Austen with her tireless smile enquired of Paliser, who, after speaking to the girls, had said something to Cantillon.

"Somersaults being a specialty of his, I was telling him that now is the time for a triple one."

Paliser turned to Margaret. She had said nothing. She was very pale. Mute, white, blonde, she was a vision.

At table, Verelst, addressing him, asked: "How is your father?"

"Thank you. Enjoying his usual poor health." He turned again to Margaret. "No one could mistake my father for an auctioneer. He has so few admirations. But he knew your father and admired him greatly."

Margaret made no reply. She was thinking of the land of Splendours and Terrors, where the princess sat in chains. Margaret envied her. Over the hill the true knight was hastening and Margaret knew, as we all know, what happened then. It is a very pretty story, but it can be equally sad to a sorrowing girl who has no true knight, or who had one, and who found that he was neither knightly nor true.

Paliser misconstrued her silence. About her eyes and mouth was an expression that is displayed by those who have suffered from some long malady or from some perilous constraint. That also he misconstrued. He had been told she had washed her hands of Lennox and had washed them with the soap of indifference, which is the most effective of all. He was not credulous but he had believed it. The idea that her throat was choked and her heart a haunt of regret, did not occur to this subtle young man. He attributed both her silence and her expression to neuralgia. The latter did not disturb him. But her loveliness did. It inundated him. The gallery of his memory was hung with fair faces. Her face exceeded them all.

The dinner proceeded. Presently, Kate Schermerhorn called over at him. "Who was the damsel I saw you making up to in the Park the other day?"

Paliser turned to her. "I have forgotten."

"I don't wonder. You seemed to have lost your head."

"Probably then because it wasn't you."

"Fiddlesticks! You looked as though you could cut your throat for her. Didn't you feel that way? I am sure you did."

"You must be thinking of Cantillon. That's the way he looks at you. If he didn't, he wouldn't have any feeling at all. One might even say he was quite heartless."

Kate was laughing. In laughing she showed her red mouth and her teeth, small, white, a trifle uneven, and, though she continued to show them, her laughter ceased. With her red mouth open, she stared. That mouth closed, opened again. She was saying something.

Everybody was exclaiming. All were hurriedly getting up.

Paliser turned to Margaret. She had gone.

Verelst now was between him and her chair. He was bending over. Bending also was Mrs. Austen. On the other side were Cantillon, Ogston and Miss Bleecker.

Then, as the surprise of it lifted Paliser, he saw that they were lifting her.

"Brandy!" said Verelst. "Tell the man."

"Permit me!" Without officiousness, without noticeable shoves, Paliser got among them and got on his knees beside the girl whom Verelst and Mrs. Austen were supporting.

Mrs. Austen wanted to wink at him. Instead, she made way. He took her place, took the girl in his arms and thought he would like to keep her there—though not, of course, forever. But he said: "The other room, perhaps."

Margaret's head was on his shoulder. She raised it. Her eyes had opened. She looked at him, at the arms that were about her. A shudder shook her. Verelst stretched a hand, Ogston another. With them, but otherwise without effort, she stood up.

Cantillon exclaimed at her. "Right as rain again! I say, Miss Austen, you did give us a start!"

Yet at once, and so endearingly, with the air of an elder sister, Mrs. Austen resumed the maternal functions. "Dearest child, you have been overdoing it!"

Kate patted the girl. "Margaret! I nearly fainted too. I was looking at you. You went over like that!"

"Sorry," said Margaret evenly. Her hands had gone to the back of her head. She dropped them and added: "If you will excuse me."

Lovingly her mother dismissed her. "The smelling-salts! You will find them somewhere." The lady looked about. "Shall we have coffee in the other room? You men can smoke there if you like, or here if you prefer."

It was quite modern. But Verelst was old, therefore old-fashioned. He preferred the dining-room. Already the girls had followed Margaret. Mrs. Austen passed out. Verelst sat down. So also did Cantillon and Ogston. But Paliser, who had nothing to say to them, accompanied Mrs. Austen.

"It never happened to her before," she told him. "Where shall you sit? Here, by me?" In speaking she made room on the sofa and with amiable suspicion eyed him. "You hadn't said anything to her, had you?"

Paliser shook his handsome head. "I wanted to."

Pleasantly she invited it. "Yes?"

"I wanted to ask her to marry me."

There he was dangling, and what a fish! The dear woman licked her chops, not vulgarly, of course, but mentally.

Paliser, who knew perfectly well what she was at, smiled tantalisingly. "It is beastly to boast, but I am an epicure."

What in the world does he mean? the dear woman wondered. But she said: "Of course you are."

Paliser, who was enjoying himself hugely, resumed:

"An epicure, you know, postpones the finest pleasures. He does so sometimes because of the enchantment of distance and again because he can't help himself. That has been my case."

It was fully a moment before Mrs. Austen got it. Then she said: "But I told you, didn't I? Mr. Lennox is dead and buried."

It was quick work. Paliser, admiring her agility, laughed. "So recently though! The immortelles have not had time to fade."

That would have made a saint swear! Not being a saint, Mrs. Austen contented herself with virtuous surprise. "But there were none! I told you that. I told you that any attraction he may have had for my child, he shocked straight out of her. Not deliberately. Dear me, I would not have you fancy such a thing for a moment. Nor would I misjudge him. I hope I am too conscientious. But such interest as the child had in him—an interest I need hardly say that was girlish and immature—he destroyed."

The picture, bold but crude, had its defects. To remedy them, Mrs. Austen applied the brush. "That singing-girl! You know whom I mean. I saw you with her the night we went to the Bazaar."

Paliser nodded. He knew indeed! He knew too that, for a moment, he had fancied that Cassy was in love with Lennox. But that idea he had long since abandoned and what she could now be doing in this galley intrigued him.

With a free hand Mrs. Austen laid on the colours. "You will hardly credit it, but we as good as caught him with her. As good or as bad. It is a matter of taste. For me it was very painful. A woman should be spared such an experience. As for Margaret, while the child certainly did not understand—how could she?

—yet, even in her innocence, she realised—well—that he is just what you said."

It was a bit thick and Paliser began to laugh.

Mrs. Austen saw that he did not believe her. The fact annoyed and in vexation she piled it on. "Afterward, in this very room, I taxed him with it and he admitted it."

What a lie! thought Paliser, who specialised in that article. But, a second thought prompting, he wondered whether it were a lie. His knowledge of Cassy refuted it. At the same time, where women are concerned, you never know. One thing, however, he did know. In his quality of expert he knew that there are statements which, whether true or false, may come in handy and, comfortably, he smiled.

"So that was the reason why the engagement was broken."

"What more would you have?" replied the candid creature, who now felt that he had swallowed it.

Quite as comfortably, Paliser returned to his muttons. "I may cease then to be an epicure?"

There was the fish again, but how to land him? The glittering fisherlady could not bind and gag the bait and drop her into his mouth. At any such attempt, the bait would pack and go, might even go without packing. Yet there was the fish, eager, willing, the gills awiggle. Barring a few gold-fish in Bradstreet, in Burke and in Lemprière, this fish was the pick of the basket. To see him glide away, and for no other earthly reason than because the bait refused to be hooked, was simply inhuman. Flesh and blood could not stand it. No, nor ingenuity either. Instantly the angler saw that in default of bait, a net may do the trick and, with the ease of a prestidigitateur, she produced one.

"You have my blessing!"

Paliser laughed and bowed. He was in it, it was where he wanted to be and he liked it. But in view of existing domestic arrangements, he was in it a bit too soon and, wriggling through a mesh, he stopped laughing and looked solemn.

"You are very good. But beforehand my father will expect to be consulted and, just at present, that is impossible. The physicians would forbid it."

"The poor dear old man! You don't mean——"

Paliser half raised a hand. The gesture was slight but expressive. One never knew!

But so much the better, thought Mrs. Austen. Pending the delay she could so bombard the bait, bombard her day in, day out, and the whole night through, that, like Liège and Namur, her resistance would crumble, and meanwhile he would come in for everything, or nearly everything, she reflected, and the reflection prompting, she affected concern.

"Has your sister been informed?"

"I cabled her to-day," said Paliser, who had done nothing of the kind.

With the same concern, Mrs. Austen lied as freely. "It is too sad for words." But at once the air of the sympathiser departed, replaced by that of the hostess. Through one door the men were entering. Through another came the girls.

Kate Schermerhorn approached. "Dear Mrs. Austen, Margaret's all right, but she has a headache." As she spoke, she threw a glance at Cantillon.

Poppet Bleecker also approached. "It is too bad, Margaret is such a dear! I would like to stop on but they tell me my maid is here. Thank you so much, dear Mrs. Austen.

The lady stood up. "But you are not all going!"

They all were though. She knew it and was glad of it. The object of the dinner was achieved and achievement, however satisfactory, is fatiguing. "You too!" she successively exclaimed at Ogston and Cantillon. "And you also!" she exclaimed at Paliser, to whom, dropping her voice, she added: "If possible, remember me to him."

As they went, Verelst surveyed her. He stood against the mantel, his back to the empty grate.

Turning she saw him. "Well, what now?"

Verelst, adjusting his glasses, said, and distantly enough: "What now? No, what next?"

Mrs. Austen sat down. "Peter, if you ever loved me, don't adopt that tone."

"It is not the tone, it is the tune and the tune is yours."

"Tune? What tune? What on earth are you talking about?"

"The tune to which the dinner was set. I heard it. Margaret heard it. It knocked her out."

She raised her eyes to him, made them pathetic. "Peter, I haven't a penny."

"You have twenty thousand a year."

"Nineteen, not a dollar more, and that is genteel poverty and there's nothing genteel in poverty now."

Verelst tugged at his moustache. "Tell me this. Is she to marry him?"

In affected surprise, she started. "How you do jump at conclusions."

Angrily he nodded. "I appear to have jumped at the correct one."

But his anger had gained her. She faced him. "Heavens and earth! What have you against him? What have you all against him? My eyes are as good as any one's. I can't see it."

"You might feel it then."

"Feel what?"

Verelst tugged again at his moustache. He had never heard of elementals and, if he had heard, he would not have believed in them. He knew nothing of auræ—which photography has captured. He was very old fogy. But he knew an honest man when he saw one and a gentleman before he opened his mouth.

"Feel what?" Mrs. Austen repeated.

Verelst, thrashing about, could not get it, but he said: "I can't describe it, but it's something. His father had it. He——"

"His father is at death's door."

"Ah! Is he? Well, I'm sorry for that. M. P. used to be no better than the law allows—and the law is very lenient."

"You were too."

"I daresay. But M. P. has got over it. Without boasting, I think I have also. But that is neither here nor there. In the old days, I have seen people shrink from him."

"Nonsense! Precious little shrinking I ever did."

"Timidity was never one of your many virtues."

"Don't be coarse, Peter, and if possible don't be stupid. If you know anything against Monty, say it. I may find it in his favour."

Impatiently Verelst motioned. "Decent men avoid him."

"And you!" Mrs. Austen retorted. "What do you call yourself? You are always civil to him."

Verelst showed his teeth. "One of the few things life has taught me is to be civil to everybody."

"Except to me. Now do sit down and make yourself uncomfortable. You have made me uncomfortable enough. Any one might think you a country parson."

But Verelst, scowling at the dial which the legs of the nymph upheld, removed his glasses. "I am going." He moved to the door, stopped, half turned, motioned again. "Tell Margaret I would rather see her in her coffin."

Angrily she started. "I'll tell her nothing of the kind."

It was his back that she addressed. She saw him go, saw too her anger go with him. The outer door had not closed before the tune of which he had spoken was dispersing it.

But was it a tune? It seemed something far rarer. In it was a whisper of waters, the lap of waves, the muffled voice of a river, which, winding from hill to sea, was pierced by a note very high, very clear, entirely limpid, a note that had in it the gaiety of a sunbeam, a note that mounted in loops of light, expanding as it mounted, until, bursting into jets of fire, it drew from the stream's deepest depths the sonority and glare of its riches.

The ripple of it ran down the spine of this woman, who at heart was a Hun and to whom the harmonies disclosed, not the mythical gleam of the Rheingold, but the real radiance of the Paliser wealth.

At the glow of it she rubbed her hands.

XXIII

IN the club window, on the following afternoon, Jones was airing copy.

"Capua must have been packed with yawns. It is the malediction of mortals to want what they lack until they get it, when they want it no more. Epicurus said that or, if he did not, Lucretius said it for him. 'Surgit amari aliquid.' But here I am running into quotations when the only ones that interest anybody are those in the Street. Conditions here are revolting. Nowhere at any time has there been a metropolis that so stank to heaven. The papers drip with stocks and scandals and over there, before the massed artillery, the troops are wheeling down to death. But wheeling is perhaps poetic. The Marne was the last battle in the grand style."

"I don't see what that has to do with Capua," said Verelst.

"Nor I," Jones replied. "But, come to think of it, there is a connection. In Capua everybody yawned their heads off. In Flanders and Champagne they are shot off. Life swings like a pendulum between boredom and pain. When the world is not anæmic, it is delirious. If ever again its pulse registers normal, sensible people will go back to Epicurus, whose existence was one long lesson in mental tranquillity. By the Lord Harry, the more I consider it, the more convinced I become that there is nothing else worth having. Niente, nada, rien. Nothing whatever."

Verelst smiled. "In that case it is hardly worth while getting excited over it." He raised the lapel of his coat. There were violets in it. He took a whiff and added: "Has Lennox been here to-day?"

But Jones did not know.

Regretfully, Verelst continued: "He goes to Mineola to-morrow and soon he will be over the top."

Jones lit a cigarette. "Assuming that he gets back, the women will be mad about him. Some of them at any rate."

Verelst rolled an enquiring eye.

"Of course they will," Jones resumed. "Times have changed precious little since Victor Hugo.

'Les belles ont le goût des héros. Le sabreur
Effroyable, trainant après lui tant d'horreur
Qu'il ferait reculer jusqu'à la sombre Hécate,
Charme la plus timide et la plus delicate.
Sur ce, battez tambours! Ce qui plait à la bouche
De la blonde aux yeux doux, c'est le baiser farouche.
La femme se fait faire avec joie un enfant,
Par l'homme qui tua, sinistre et triomphant.
Et c'est la volupté de toutes ces colombes
D'ouvrir leur lit à ceux qui font ouvrir les tombes.'

"What rhythm! What music! The score is Napoleonic but——"

"Hello!" Verelst interrupted. Before the window a car had passed. He was looking at it. On the back seat was a man in a high hat and an overcoat. "M. P.!" he exclaimed.

"What of it?" Jones asked.

Verelst removed his glasses and looked distrust-fully at them. It was as though he doubted their vision. Then, after a moment he said: "Last night I heard he was dying."

"Which," Jones remarked, "is the aim, the object and the purpose of life. But apparently he has not achieved it yet. Apparently also you are a futurist. The Napoleonic score did not interest you."

Verelst, resuming his glasses, replied: "It would not interest Lennox, if that is what you mean. He has been hit too hard."

Jones nodded. He knew all about it. It had even suggested a story, a famous story; one that was told in Babylon and has been retold ever since; the story of lovers vilely parted in the beginning and virtuously united at the end. It is a highly original story, to which anybody can give a fresh twist and Jones had planned to have the hero killed at the front and the heroine marry the villain, but only to divorce the latter before the hero—whose death had been falsely gazetted—limps in.

But Jones knew his trade. He knew that the reader always balks unless the hero gets the heroine first-hand and he had thought of making the villain an invalid. Yet at that too he knew the reader would balk. The reader is so nice-minded!

Now, the plot recurring, he said to Verelst: "Your knowledge of women has, I am sure, made you indulgent."

"Not in the least."

"But——"

"Look here," Verelst interrupted. "When I was young and consequently very experienced, I was indulgent. But monsters change you. Last night I dined with one."

"Enviable mortal!"

"You remember Abraham?" Verelst continued. "His name was Abraham—wasn't it?—that benevolent old man in the Bible who made the sacrifice of sacrificing an animal instead of his son? Well, last night it seemed to me that there are women Abrahams, only less benevolent. The altar was veiled, the knife was concealed, but the victim was there—a girl for whom, at your age, I would have died, or offered to die, which amounts to the same thing. What is more to the point, at your age, or no, for you are much older than your conversation would lead one to believe, but in my careless days I offered to die for her mother. I swore I could not live without her. That is always a mistake. It is too flattering, besides being untrue. Perhaps she so regarded it. In any event another man fared better or worse. Afterward, time and again, he said to me: 'Peter, for God's sake, run away with her.' Am I boring you?"

"Enormously."

"Well, he was very gentlemanly about it. Without making a fuss at home, he went away and died in a hospital. She was very grateful to him for that. But her gratitude waned when she came in for his money. It was adequate but not opulent, the result being that she tried to train her daughter for the great matrimonial steeplechase. Just here the plot thickens. Recently the filly shied, took the bit in her teeth and—hurrah, boys!—she was off on her own, until her mother jockied her up to a hurdle that she could not take and the filly came a cropper. But her mother was still one too many for her. She had her up in a jiffy and now she is heading her straight for the sweepstakes."

"Excuse me," Jones with affected meekness put in. "I assume that the sacrificial victim and the filly are one and the same."

"Your perspicacity does you much credit."

Jones laughed. "I have my little talents. But you! The wizardry with which you mix metaphors is beautiful. You produce a dinner-table and transform it into an altar which instantly becomes a racecourse. That is what I call genius. But to an every-day sort of chap like me, would you mind being less cryptic?"

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes."

"So can I."

Again Jones laughed. "Not in my neighbourhood. You were talking of Lennox and drifted from him into the Bible. Your thoughts of the one recalled studies of the other and at once you had Abraham's daughter downed on the racecourse. Well, she won't be."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is my business to see things before they occur. Miss Austen——"

"I never mentioned her," Verelst heatedly exclaimed. "You have no right to——"

"I admit it. But because of Lennox the whole matter has preoccupied me and quite as much, I daresay, as it has distressed you."

"I don't see at all what you have to do with it."

"Perhaps not. But preoccupation may lead to crystal-gazing. Now I will wager a red pippin that I can tell what you said at the steeplechase to the steeplestakes. You asked after his father."

Verelst stared. A man of the world and, as such, at his ease in any circumstances, none the less he was startled. "How in God's name did you get that?"

"It is very simple. Five minutes ago his father sailed by. You made a remark about him. The remark suggested a train of thought which landed you at the racecourse where you saw, or intimated that you saw, the steeplestakes. But what visible sweepstakes are there except M. P.'s son? You and M. P. are friends. It is only natural that you should ask about him."

Verelst turned uneasily. "I don't yet see how you got it. The only thing I said is that I heard he was dying."

"And five minutes ago you exclaimed at his resurrection. There is a discrepancy there that is very suggestive."

"It is none of my making then."

"It is none the less suggestive. The death-bed was invented."

"M. P. may have recovered."

"Yes, men of his age make a practice of jumping into their death-bed and then jumping out. It is good for them. It keeps them in training."

"Oh, rubbish!" Verelst resentfully exclaimed.

"No," Jones pursued. "The story was invented and the invention had a reason. If you like, you may ask what it is."

"You seem to be very good at invention yourself. I shall ask nothing of the kind."

"But you would like to know and I will tell you. It was invented to delay a possible announcement. It could have had no other object."

"I said nothing of any announcement," Verelst angrily protested. "What anouncement are you talking about?"

"The heading of the filly for the sweepstakes. The expression—very graphic by the way—is your own."

"Graphic or not I wish you would drop it. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"Why, confound it, admitting the engagement, which I ought not to admit for it is not out yet, why should he play for delay?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Jones, whom the spectacle of Paliser and Cassy sailing up the Riverside had supplied with an impression or two. "I thought I would interest you. He played for delay because he feared that if it were known, a pitcher of ice-water might come dashing over it."

"Why do you say that?" asked Verelst, eager and anxious enough for a spoke—if spoke there could be—to shove in a certain lady's wheels.

"Given the man and the deduction is easy."

The spoke was receding. Verelst, swallowing his disappointment, retorted: "Incoherence is easy too."

"Well, you are right there," Jones, lighting another cigarette, replied. "But there is nothing incoherent in the fact that fear is magnetic. What we dread, we attract. If our winning young friend fears the pitcher, the pitcher will probably land on him. That is the reason why, to vary your various metaphors, I declared that there would be no downing on the racecourse. On the contrary and look here. I will wager you not one pippin or two pippins, I will go so far as to lay a whole basket that Miss Austen becomes Mrs. Lennox."

Verelst sniffed. "You don't know her mother."

"No. I have not that honour. But I enjoy a bowing acquaintance with logic."

"Do you, now? I wonder if it bows back. I'll book your bet."

"Very good. Make it fancy pippins."

Verelst stood up. "Fancy is the only term that could be applied them."

"And of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," Jones told himself as the old man moved away.

He looked about. The great room had filled. Stocks, money, war, the odour of alcohol, the smell of cigars, the rustling of evening papers, the sound of animated talk about nothing whatever, the usual atmosphere had reassembled itself.

From it he turned to the window, to the westering sun, to the motors, the smart gowns and the women who looked so delightful and of whom all had their secrets—secrets trivial, momentous, perverse or merely horrible.

Again he turned. Lennox, who had approached, was addressing him. "You were at the law school. I have to make a will. Will you help me?"

Serviceably Jones sprang up. "Come to my shop. It is just around the corner"

XXIV

AMONG the old brocades with which the room was fitted and which, together with the silver bed and the enamelled faïence, gave it an earlier century air, Cassy stood before a cheval-glass.

She was properly dressed. Her costume, light cloth, faintly blue, was exquisitely embroidered. Beneath it was lingerie of the kind which, it is said, may be drawn through a ring. Behind and between was Cassy, on whose docked hair sat a hat that was very unbecoming and therefore equally smart.

A moment before she had thanked and dismissed Emma. Emma was the maid. With a slant of the eye, that said and suppressed many things, Emma had gone.

Through the open windows came the call of birds, the smell of fresh turf. A patch of sky was visible. It was tenderly blue. There was a patch too of grass that showed an asparagus green.

From the mirror Cassy went to a table and, from a jade platter, took a ring. It was made of six little hoops each set with small stones. She put it on. The platter held other rings. There was a sapphire, inch-long, deep and dark. She put that on. There was also an Australian opal and an Asian emerald, the latter greener than the grass. She put these on. Together with the wedding-ring they made quite a show. Too much of a show, she thought.

Like the costume, the hat, like other costumes, more hats and box after box of lingerie, they had all surprisingly dumped themselves, there, at her feet, the day after the wedding. The bundle, which she had brought with her, she had found very useless and so awkward that she would have given it to Emma, had it not seemed unsuited to a young person manifestly so fine. Since then it had been tucked away in a cupboard, safely out of sight.

That was just five days ago, a brief eternity, during which life seemed to be driving her headlong to some unimagined goal. Until the evening previous she had had barely a moment. But on that evening, Paliser, who was dining at the Austens', had given her a few hours to herself.

Now, on this afternoon, he was again in town.

The air was very still. Afar, a train bellowed, rumbled, died away. From the garage came the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated on the hillside beyond. On the lawn, a man in an apron was at work. Otherwise the air was still, fragant, freighted with spring.

Cassy, turning from the table, went to the mirror again and tilted the hat. However unbecoming, it was certainly smart, and Cassy wondered what her father would think of Mrs. Monty Paliser.

In the spaciousness of the name, momentarily she lost herself. It is appalling to be a snob. But there are attributes that pour balm all over you. In the deference of the bored yet gracious young women who, with robes et manteaux, had come all the way from Fifth Avenue, there had been a flagon or two of that balm. In the invariable "Thank you, mem's" of the

Paliser personnel there had been more. It is appalling to be a snob. There are perfumes that appeal.

Then also, particularly after Harlem, the great, grave, silent house had a charm that was enveloping, almost enchanted. Apparently uncommanded, it ran itself, noiselessly, in ordered grooves. Cassy fancied that somewhere about there must be a majordomo who competently saw to everything and kept out of the way. But she did not know. In her own rooms she was now at home, as she was also at home in the state chambers on the floor below. In regard to the latter, she had an idea—entirely correct, by the way—that at Lisbon, the royal palace—when there was one—could not have been more suave. But the rest of the house was as yet unexplored, though in regard to the upper storey she had another idea, that there was a room there close-barred, packed with coffins.

The idea delighted her. In this Palace of the White Cat it was the note macabre, the proper note, the note that synchronised the circumambient enchantments. In the historical nights of which Perrault told, the princess had but a gesture to make, the offender sank dead. At once a bier was produced, the corpse was hurried away, and the veils of charm restored fell languorously.

Yet, in that historical epoch, there subsisted—perhaps as a reminder of the vanities even of fairyland—the rose-leaf suggestively crumpled. The crumple affected Cassy but far less than she had expected. Paliser had been very gentlemanly. He had deferred to her in all things, agreed with her about everything, and though none the less he always had his own way, yet the pedestal was so obvious that if she had not known otherwise she might have thought herself continuously upon it.

The crumple was not there, or at least only such crumple as she had naturally awaited. The discomfort of the leaf consisted in the fact that married she was not mated, that she did not love him, and probably never could.

Now, as she tilted her hat, the spaciousness of the name recurred to her. Its potentialities she had considered before she accepted it, but only because of her father. The idea that it would lift him out of the walk-up, out of Harlem and cold veal, was the one excuse for her voyage to Cytherea. The voyage had been eminently respectable. Undertaken with full ecclesiastical sanction, Aphrodite and her free airs had had nothing to do with it. None the less it was to Cytherea that she had gone—and to Lampsacus also, for all she and her geography knew to the contrary.

Now, though, in tilting her hat, the disreputable beauty of the land was forgotten. She was in another and a fairer realm. A modern garden of the Hesperides lay about her. She saw herself distributing the golden fruit. The mirror showed her a red-crossed Lady Bountiful in an ambulance, in two ambulances, in a herd of ambulances, at the front. There was no end to the golden fruit, no end to his father's money, no end to the good he might allow her to do.

The picture so delighted her that she flushed and in the emotion of it two tears sprang to her eyes that were not of the crying kind.

She dried them, telling herself that if he framed the picture, she could love him, and she would.

It would be all so perfect, not the loving, but the giving, the joy of giving, the joy of always giving, of giving with both hands, of just shovelling it out and keeping at it, of never saying "No," of saying, "Yes, and here is more and here is more," of saying, too, "Don't thank me, it is for me to thank you." What joy ever was there, or ever will be, that can compare to that!

Why, I'm crazy, she thought, and thought also, he never will but he might, he could and if he should——

Then at once the Paliser of the Savile Row clothes and the St. James's Street boots, the Paliser of the looking-glass hair and the Oxford voice, assumed the hue and stature of a deva. Love him! It would be something higher. It would be worship!

She made a face. It was sheer nonsense. He had an allowance which, obviously, was very liberal and with which he was liberal enough. Unlike many rich men he was not close. But to fancy him beneficent was laughable. Cassy could not imagine him in the rôle of Lord Bountiful. Then too there was something queer about him. He hated to be alone. There are people who kill silence and he was one of them. He was always talking. Cassy could not understand it. To be silent with any one procures an intimacy which talk cannot supply. Moreover solitude was as necessary to her and as refreshing as her bath. Silence and solitude he could not endure. She tilted her nose and went to the window.

That night they were to go to the opera. But in a moment she was to motor in and see her father. Since she put Harlem behind her, she had wondered and worried about him. The condition of his heart was hazardous and she had been told that any excitement might be fatal. She had worried over that, over his sudden rages at tradespeople, and she had been fearful lest Mrs. Yallum, the janitress, who spoke no known tongue, had, instead of being of use, only enraged him further.

She would see to it, though. It was for that she was going in. As yet she had no money. But there were the rings and one more or one less, what did it matter? Of the lot she preferred the string of hoops. It was quaint, there was nothing philistine about it and probably it had not cost so very much. The emerald was different. It was a stone that would please any woman with plenty of money and a modicum of taste. Probably it had cost a thousand on Fifth Avenue, in which case it would fetch a hundred on Broadway. Or if not, then the sapphire would. Either or both she would hock very willingly. But not the hoop-ring and not the opal, unless she had to, and if Paliser, who apparently noticed nothing and saw everything, asked concerning them, why then she would out with it. Her father was a beggar! Did he expect her to let him starve? But what on earth do you suppose I married you for? For yourself? Take a walk. I sold myself for bread—and butter, and you can fork them over.

At the possibility of any such conversation—and of such language!—she flushed afresh and again called herself a fool. There could be no such conversation. Paliser would never question. He was too indifferent. The consciousness comforted, precisely as, a moment before, the picture of herself shovelling gold had moved her to tears.

Then absently she found herself looking in the garden where the aproned man was at work. But it was Lennox that she saw. Again and again since the wedding-evening, when Paliser had told her of the unscrambled eggs, she had wondered about the broken engagement. On that evening she had felt that she had taken the wrong road and had lost her way. The feeling was momentary. If Lennox had never been engaged, the result would have been the same. Not once had he so much as said boo! He had not even looked it. At table, on the wedding-evening, the unscrambled eggs had not tasted very good, but reflection had salted them and since then, in reviewing the matter, it had occurred to her that it was none of her business.

Now as she looked out on the garden she wondered whether he had cared very greatly for this girl, for if he had, what then did she mean by throwing over a man who was too good for her, too good for anybody?

She sighed and absently looked again at the gardener. He was bending down, occupied in planting something. Since she had first noticed him he had half-circled a parterre and she was about to telephone and ask if the car were ready when he straightened, turned, extracted a pipe and attempted to light it.

The air was very still, there was no breeze, but the match was ineffective. On his trousers, with a backward movement, he struck another match and raised it to the bowl. The flame, faintly blue, mounted and, with it, a curl of smoke. But it was not Cassy or, more exactly, it was not her objective self, that saw it. It was her subjective self that registered and afterward reproduced that momentary and entirely commonplace incident. What the objective Cassy saw was not the flame or the smoke or the pipe, but the hand that held the match. It was thumbless. Many hands are. From the hand she looked at the man's face and gave a little scream, instantly suppressed.

But her mouth twitched, she tried to swallow and she experienced, what was new to her, an odd sensation in the epiglottis. She did not remember that she had ever been what is called sick at the stomach, none the less she realised that she was on the point of becoming so. Like the little scream, she choked it back. But the immanence of nausea stifled her, and she sat down on a brocade-covered chair.

Her hand had gone to her throat and though almost at once the sensation subsided, she held it there. The gold bands of the rings that were pressed against her throat cooled it, but the palm of the hand was wet. Unconscious of that, she was unaware that she could not think. A crack on the head makes you dizzy and into her dizziness a somnolence had entered. The somnolence dulled all the cells of the brain save one and that one cell, vehemently active, was inciting her to some effort, though to what she did not know.

"I must get up," she presently told herself and told it once more.

In the repetition of the words there was the effect of a spray. The irritability of the one active cell subsided, that of the others was aroused. Somnanbulism ceased. The entire brain awoke. But the truth had not yet fully permeated all the cerebral convolutions and the fact that it had not, manifested itself in the melodramatic phrase which, a week previous, Lennox had uttered, which all have uttered, all at least before whom the unforseen has sprung.

"It is impossible!"

She got up, went to the window, looked again. There was no impossibility there, no doubt even, or the peradventure of one. There was only the ineluctable truth. The aproned man disclosed it. His thumbless hand had held the book. From his mouth, in which there was a pipe, had come the benediction. He was Dr. Grantly. That was the ineluctable truth, the truth which already perhaps she had intercepted in the land of Beauty and Horror.

The first sight of it had sickened. Now the physical effect had gone. But the nausea in passing had been replaced by another sensation, deadlier, equally human, that made her red and hot, blurred her eyes, set her quivering, shook her, put her thoughts on fire, vitriolised her with hate.

Nietzsche said that a woman's ability to hate is in proportion to her inability to charm. The brute omitted to add that a woman's ability to charm corresponds to her evolution.

There was nothing evolved about Cassy then. She had lapsed back into the primitive. Like Armide, she could have burned the palace that enchanted her. None the less, she did nothing. To do nothing may be very important. The inactivity saved her. During it, the vitriol vaporised; the hate fell by. She was still trembling, her hands were unsteady, but the fever was departing, the crisis had passed, the primitive had slunk back into the cellars of the subconscious, and, in the chair, to which without knowing it she had returned, she faced it.

Without, some one knocked and, getting no answer, accepted the invitation as most people do.

"Beg pardon, Mrs. Paliser. The car is at the door."

Cassy half turned. "What?"

Emma reconstructed it. "Whenever you are ready, mem, the car will be waiting."

Cassy turned away. "That will do."

"Thank you, mem."

With that air which servants assume, Emma pursed her lips, reopened them, thought better of it, closed them and closed too the door.

Facing it still, Cassy sat in the brocaded chair. Anger had shaken her and gone, taking with it its spawn which hatred is. What inhabited her then was disgust.

I am in a nice mess, she told herself. But she told it without surprise, as though all along it was something which she might have known, could have avoided, but into which she had put her foot. A momentary vision of the red-crossed Lady Bountiful returned and she even smiled at it. It was a sad little smile though.

Abstractedly, she had been turning and twisting the rings. The motion aroused her. It drew her attention to them. They also had something to say. Something which they had been saying ever since the smoke curled from the pipe. She had not heard it then. There had been too many things tumbling about her. But now she did hear. She took them off, stood up and dropped them on the table where they fell between gold-backed brushes and a vase, gorgeous in delicacy, the colour of ox-blood.

From a cupboard she took the rowdy frock, the tam, the basilica underwear and, for a moment, searched and searched vainly for a pair of stockings. In hunting for them she unearthed the bundle, and that together with the other things, she threw on the bed, which was not brocaded, or even daised. It was silver. A few days before, when she had first seen it, she had clapped her hands. The vase too she had applauded. Now the lovely room, that had seemed so lovely, a curl of smoke had turned into a lupanar.

Quickly, one after another, the modish hat, the delicious frock, the things that could be drawn through a ring, were removed and replaced. In the mirror she looked, stopped, looked again, adjusted the tam and was going to the bed for the bundle when she heard a horn. Head-drawn, she listened.

She would have so much preferred to leave without seeing him or speaking to him. If she could, she would have gone without a word, silently, in the only dignified manner that was possible. But, apparently, matters had arranged themselves otherwise. She went to the bed, took the bundle, moved back to the table and waited.

She did not wait long. Paliser, with the pretence of a knock and a smile on his lips walked in—but not far. That frock, that bundle, the sight of her there, sufficed. He knew. With an awkwardness that was unusual with him, he closed the door and twisted his hat. The smile had gone from his lips. They were dry.

Then as he looked at her and she looked at him—and with what a look!—words seemed such poor things. It was as though already everything had been said, as perhaps in the silent temples of their being, everything, accusations, recriminations, all the futilities of speech had been uttered, impotently, a moment since. A moment earlier she had said her say. As he looked at her he knew that she had and knew too, that before he entered the room, already she had heard his replies.

The consciousness of this, equally shared by both, was so intense that, for a second, Cassy felt that everything happening then had happened ages ago, that she was taking part in a drama rehearsed on a stage that memory cannot reconstruct but which stood, and, it may be, still stands, back of those doors that close behind our birth.

The hallucination, if it be one, and which, given certain crises of the emotions, is common enough, vanished abruptly as it had come. But two seconds had gone since Paliser entered the room, yet, in those seconds, both recognised that eternity had begun between them.

With his hat, a hat studiously selected, made to order, Paliser motioned and with the same studiousness, selecting a platitude, he produced it. "I was going to take you out."

"After taking me in," Cassy in reviewing the situation subsequently commented. But at the time she said nothing. She merely looked. Her rage was gone, her anger spent. Only disgust remained. It was that which her face expressed. It was withering.

Paliser, steadying himself and, as was perhaps only natural, hedging still, resumed: "But apparently you have other intentions."

What a cad that blackguard is! thought Cassy who still said nothing.

"May I ask what they are?"

Cassy threw up her chin. "My intentions are to leave——"

"But why?"

"Don't presume to interrupt me. My intentions are to leave your assignation-house and have you horsewhipped."

Paliser had been served with strong drink before, but none ever as strong as that. It steadied him. He had expected that when it got to her, as eventually it must, there would be the passionate upbraidings, the burst of sobs, the Oh! Oh's!, the What will become of me?, the usual run up and down the scale and the usual remedies which a bank account supplies. He had expected all that. He had prescribed for it often. There was not a symptom for which he did not know the proper dose and just when to administer it. But barely had he crossed the threshold before he realised that all his science would be in default.

Cassy presented an entirely new case, but, fortunately, in the drink which she had served, he saw or thought he saw how to treat it.

He gestured again. "I never cared for scenes. But this house, which it has pleased you to describe from your knowledge of other establishments, is——"

Whatever he may have intended to add, was interrupted. Cassy, previously inexorable as fate, but converted then into a fury, dropped the bundle and caught up the vase. Missing him, it hit the door, where musically it crashed and shattered.

He turned, looked at it, looked at her, at the table. Barring the gold-backed brushes, the jade platter and that bundle, there was nothing that she could conveniently shy, and, in his Oxford voice, but civilly enough, he gave it to her.

"Allow me. There is no necessity whatever for your acting in this manner. The situation, such as it is, it had been my intention to remedy. It had been my intention, I say. But yesterday it came to my knowledge that it is because of your relations with Lennox that his engagement is broken."

Take that, he mentally added and continued aloud: "I might not have believed the story, but I was told that Lennox admitted it." Take that, too, he mentally resumed. I shall be treated to tears in a minute and in no time it will be "Kamerad!"

Sidewise he looked at the ruin of the vase, on which Daughters of Heaven and an ablated dynasty may have warmed their eyes. It affronted his own. Insult, yes, that could be tossed about, but not art, not at least the relatively unique.

With a crease in his lips which now were dry no longer, he looked at Cassy. The awaited tears were not yet visible. But the blood-madness that had seized her, must have let her go, routed, as hæmatomania may be, by the trivial and, in this instance, by a lie. That lie suffocated her. It was as though, suddenly, she had been garroted.

The condition was only momentary, but, during it, a curtain fell on this vulgar drama, which was to affect so many lives. Before the girl a panorama passed. She saw herself leaving Lennox' rooms. She saw Margaret Austen, saw the woman with her, saw the former's candid eyes; saw the latter's ridiculous airs, saw the construction which between them they had reached and saw, too, the consequences that had resulted. The dirt with which she had been besplattered she did not see. The panorama did not display it. What it alone revealed was Lennox' disaster. Of herself she did not think and regarding Margaret she did not care. That which occupied her was Lennox.

But was it true? In Paliser nothing was true, not even his lies. For it was unaccountable that a matter so simple could not have been cleared with a word. But it was not unaccountable at all. It was obvious. Margaret, a born snob, had given Lennox no chance for that word. Some one, Paliser probably, had invented the admission and she had refused to see him, after condemning him unheard.

I will attend to that, Cassy decided.

At once the suffocation ceased, the panorama sank, the scene shifted, the curtain parted, the drama proceeded and she found herself staring at Paliser, who was staring at her.

"As it is——" he tentatively resumed and would have said more, a lot, anything to coerce the tears to her eyes and with them surrender.

She gave him no chance. She took the bundle and, before he could continue, she passed him, opened the door, slammed it with a din that had in it the clatter of muskets, went down the stair and out to the perron, before which stood a car.

"The station!" she threw at the mechanician.

The house now, jarred a moment earlier by the crash of porcelain and the slamming door, had recovered its silence.

From within, Emma, very agreeably intrigued, a footman with a white sensual face beside her, looked out with slanting eyes.

XXV

HARRIS, wrinkled as a sweetbread and thin as an umbrella, blinked at Cassy. "Mr. Lennox is out, mem."

"Then go and fetch him."

Past the servant, Cassy forced her way through the vestibule, into the sitting-room, where the usual gloom abided, but where, unusually, were a smell of camphor, two overcoats, two trunks and a bag.

Cassy, putting down the bundle, exclaimed at them. "He is not leaving town?"

"Yes, mem, to-morrow morning, for Mineola." He spoke grudgingly, looking as he spoke like a little old mule at bay.

Cassy, noticing that, said: "See here, I don't mean to bully you, but it is most important that I should see Mr. Lennox—important for him, do you hear?"

"I hear you, mem, but I don't know where he is."

"Then find out. There must be a telephone."

Harris scratched his head but otherwise he did nothing.

"Come!" Cassy told him. "Hurry!"

Harris shifted. "I don't know as how he'd like it. He's been that upset these last few days. I——" He hesitated. Visibly an idea had visited him with which he was grappling. "You're not from Miss Austen, now, are you?"

Cassy caught at it. To confirm it would be fanciful.

To deny it would be extravagant. Choosing an in-between for the benefit of this servant whom she knew to be English, she produced it.

"I am the Viscountess of Casa-Evora."

Harris wiped his mouth. A viscountess who had come only the other day with a bundle, and who now forced her way in with another bundle, did not coincide with such knowledge as he had of the nobility. But she was certainly overbearing enough to be anybody.

He turned. "Very good, your ladyship, I'll telephone."

Don't ladyship me, Cassy was about to reply, but judging that impolitic, she sat down.

On the train in she had debated whether she would go first to Harlem or to Lennox and in either case what afterward she should do. She had a few dollars which her father would need. The thought of these assets reminded her that in changing her clothes she had omitted to change back into her own stockings. Well, when she changed again she would return the pair which she had on and, as she determined on that, she saw Paliser's face as she had seen it when she threw the vase. That relapse into the primitive shamed her. She had behaved like a fish-wife. But though she regretted the violence, she regretted even more deeply the vase. The destruction of art is so despicably Hun! For moxa, she evoked the Grantly masquerade.

The entire lack of art in that seemed to her incongruous with the surface Paliser whom she had known. But had she even known the surface which itself was a mask? Yet behind the mask was an intelligence which at least was not ordinary, yet which, none the less, had descended to that! She could not understand it. She could not understand, what some one later explained to her, that a high order of intellect does not of itself prevent a man from soiling it and, with it, himself and his hands. The explanation came later, when other matters were occupying her and when Paliser, headlined in the papers, was dead.

Meanwhile the train had landed her in the Grand Central and she decided to go to Lennox first.

Now as she sat in his sitting-room where, for all she knew, she might have to sit for hours, it comforted her to think that she had so decided. If she had put it off until the morrow, Lennox would, by then, have gone to the aviation-field, where he might be killed before she could patch things up. At thought of that, she wondered whether he might not stay out undiscoverably all night and send for his things to be fetched to the station.

But in that case, Cassy promptly reflected, I'll go to her, pull her out of bed, drag her there—and no thanks either. I didn't do it for you, I did it for him. He's too good for you.

On the mantel, a clock struck, while thinly, through a lateral entrance, Harris emerged.

"The hall-porter at Mr. Lennox' club says he's just gone out with Mr. Jones. Yes, ma'am."

"Mr. Jones! What Mr. Jones? The novelist?"

"I'm thinking so, ma'am. A very haffable gentleman."

"Try to get him. Ask if Mr. Lennox is there. Or, no, I'll do the talking."

Then presently she was doing it, collaborating rather in the dialogue that ensued.

"Mr. Jones?"

"Yes, darling."

Cassy, swallowing it, resumed: "Mr. Jones, forgive a stranger for intruding, I——"

"Beautiful voice, forgive me. Triple brute that I am, I thought it was my aunt."

"Then let me introduce myself. This is Miss Cara."

"Casta diva! You do me infinite honour!"

"Mr. Jones, I must see Mr. Lennox. It is a matter of life and death."

"Lennox is engaged with death now."

"What!"

"He is preparing for the great adventure. At this moment he is making his will. Miss Cara?"

"Yes?"

"Lennox takes even serious matters gravely."

"But he is with you?"

"In my workshop and at your service as I am."

"You will let me come there?"

"Enthusiastically and yet with all humility for I have no red carpet to run down the stair."

"Then hold on to him, please."

Ouf! sighed Cassy, as she hung it up. Another man who might be Mrs. Yallum's husband! She took the telephone-book, found and memorised the address and turned to Harris. "Thank you very much. Will you mind giving me that package?"

"Beg pardon, ma'am," the little man said, as he opened the door for her. "There's nothing more amiss, is there?"

Cassy covered him with her lovely eyes. "When Mr. Lennox comes back here, he may tell you to unpack."

"Then may God bless your ladyship."

Cassy went on.

At Jones' shop, a floor in a reconstructed private house, a man who had the air of performing a feat, showed her into a room that was summarily, but not spartanly, furnished. On one side was a bookcase supported by caryatides. Above, hung a stretch of silk on which was a flight of dragons. Above the silk was an ivory mask. Fronting the bookcase was the biggest table that Cassy had ever seen.

Jones, vacating the table, advanced to greet her. Perched on his shoulder, was a cat that peered at her. It had long hair, the colour of smoke; a bushy tail; the eyes of an angel and a ferocious moustache.

Although Cassy had other matters in hand, she exclaimed at it. "What a duck!"

Jones, who saw, and at once, that she had not come to ask the time of day, exclaimed also: "Yes, but ducky is as ducky does. That cat talks in her sleep."

But now Lennox, advancing too, had taken her hand.

Withdrawing it, she put the bundle on the table, on which were papers, and, noticeably, a dagger, brilliant, wicked, thin as a shadow. On the blade was a promise—Penetrabo.

She looked up. Jones and the cat had gone. She looked at Lennox. "I don't know where to begin."

Lennox could not tell her. On learning that she wanted to see him, he had supposed it was about her father and he had said as much to Jones. But in greeting her, the novelist knew from her vibrations that whatever her object might be, at least it was not ordinary. Then, taking the cat, he had gone.

Now, though, Cassy was at it. "The day you loaned me a hundred, you remember? As I went out I had the money in my hand. In the hall was Miss

Austen. You had just shown me her picture. I recognised her at once. With her was a woman, thin-faced, thin-lipped, thin-minded. She saw me, saw the money, gave me a look. I did not forget it. But it is only to-day that I learned what it meant. It meant that I am no better than I ought to be—or you either."

Lennox had one hand on the table. He raised the other. "Who told you this?"

"Paliser. He said it was the reason your engagement was broken."

In the palm of the upraised hand, the fingers moved forward and back, regularly, methodically, mechanically. Lennox was unaware of it. He was unaware of anything except the monstrous perversity of the tale.

"I came directly from him to your rooms. Your man said you were going away. Thank goodness, I am not too late."

Cassy had seated herself, but now, reaching for the bundle, she stood up. Across the street, in the house opposite, a boy was lowering a shade. It seemed to Cassy that she had raised one. But there are explanations that explain nothing. To Lennox there was a shade suspended before Margaret, who had judged him unheard. It obscured her. He could not see her at all.

Over the way, the boy lowered a second shade and Cassy, as though prompted by it, raised another. "Paliser said you admitted it."

From the obscurity Lennox turned, but it was still about him. "Admitted what?"

Cassy reddened. "What I told you."

With the movement of the head that a bull has when he is going for you, Lennox bent his own. The movement, which was involuntary, was momentary. The shade had lifted. He saw Margaret, but behind her he saw others holding her back, telling her he was not fit to be spoken to. He was going for them. Meanwhile he had forgotten Cassy. He looked up, saw her, remembered the part attributed to her in the story and struck the table.

"It is damnable that such a thing should be said of you."

"Oh," Cassy put in. "It was not at all on my account that I told you. I——" She stopped short. The promised horsewhipping occurred to her.

Lennox took up the knife, gave it a turn, shoved it away. It was very much as though he had twisted it in somebody's gizzards. The idea had come to him that Paliser had concocted the admission. But, as he was unable to conceive what his object could be, he dismissed it. None the less, for what the man had said, he deserved to be booted down the club steps.

Cassy had stopped short. The story behind the story did not concern Lennox, yet as he might wonder how Paliser had ventured with her on such a subject, she began at it again.

"We were married recently, or anyway I thought so. To-day I discovered that the ceremony was bogus. Then I told him a thing or two and he told me that."

Lennox stared. Angry already, angry ever since the rupture, angry with that intensity of anger which only those who love—or who think they do—and who are thwarted in it ever know, and all the angrier because he had no one and could have no one to vent it on, until he got to the front and got at the Huns, at that last fillip from Cassy he saw some one on whom he could vent it, and yet to whom none the less he felt strangely grateful. For, whatever Paliser had done or omitted, at any rate, he had completely clarified the situation.

"I must run," said Cassy. "But you can tell Miss Austen, can't you?"

Lennox, controlling himself, motioned. "Would you mind repeating this to Jones?"

Cassy's eyebrows arched themselves. "It was hard enough to tell you. Were it not for your engagement, I wouldn't have said anything. When dreadful things happen to a girl, people always think that she must be dreadful herself. Isn't that nice of them? I——"

"See here," Lennox interrupted, "you can't leave it like this. Something has got to be done. I can give Paliser a hiding and I will. But that isn't enough. I don't know whether a criminal action will lie, but I do know that you can get damages and heavy ones."

Cassy's lovely eyes searched the room. "Who was that speaking? It wasn't you, was it?"

Lennox, recognising the rebuke, acknowledged it. "Forgive me. I forgot whom I was addressing. Jones will be less stupid. Let us have him in."

But when Jones, immediately requisitioned, appeared, Cassy again putting down her bundle, protested. "Mr. Lennox regards me as an Ariadne and expects me to act like a young lady in a department-store. Either rôle is too up-stage."

Jones, taken with her mobile mouth, her lovely eyes, the oval of her handsome face, said lightly: "It seems to me that you might assume any part."

Lennox struck out. "Paliser hocuspocused her with a fake marriage. He——"

"Oh," Cassy gently put in, "I have no one to blame but myself. I ought to have known better."

Jones nodded. "Probably you did know. The misadventure is rare of which we are not warned in advance. We cannot see the future but the future sees us. It sends us messages which we call premonitions."

Instantly Cassy was back in the Tamburini's room, where she had seen both beauty and horror. She had not reached the latter yet and the sudden vision Lennox dissipated.

"Stuff and nonsense! Haven't you anything else to say?"

Amiably Jones turned to him. "I can say that no one is wise on an empty stomach." He turned to Cassy. "The Splendor is not far. Will you dine with us, Mrs. Paliser?"

Violently Lennox repeated it; "Mrs. Paliser! Miss Cara is no more Mrs. Paliser than you are."

"To err is highly literary," Jones with great meekness replied. "I hear that it is even human."

Cassy reached again for the bundle. "It is only natural. If I had been told in advance, I could not have believed it. I could not have believed that mock marriages occur anywhere except in cheap fiction. But we live and unlearn. Now I must run."

Lennox took her hand. "I owe you a debt. Count on me."

He spoke gravely and the gravity of it, the force that he exhaled, comforted Cassy's bruised little heart and the comfort, the first that she had had, made her lip twitch. None of that, though! Reacting she rallied and smiled.

"Good-bye—and good luck!"

Jones saw her to the door, followed her out, followed her down to the street, where for a moment he detained her.

"Just a word, if you don't mind. You have been abominably treated and you seek no revenge. That is very fine. You have been abominably treated and you bear no malice. That is superior. You have been abominably treated and you accept it with a smile. That is alchemy. It is only a noble nature that can extract the beautiful from the base. Where do you live?"

At the change of key Cassy laughed but she told him. "Good-bye," she added. "My love to your cat."

She passed on into the sunset. The bundle seemed heavy now, but her heart was lighter. She had got it off, Lennox knew, presently a young woman would be informed and though she could not be expected to dance at the wedding, yet, after all——

The Park took her.

XXVI

WHEN Cassy had gone, Jones went back to his rooms. He went absently, his mind not on her story, which was old as the Palisades, but on a situation, entirely new, which it had suggested.

"Nice girl," he remarked as he re-entered the workshop. "Suppose we go and have dinner."

Sombrely Lennox looked up. At the table where he sat, he had been fingering some papers. He threw them down.

"I am going to have a word with Paliser."

Jones cocked an eye at him. "See here, you are not a knight-errant. The age of chivalry is over." The novelist paused and exclaimed: "What am I saying! The age of chivalry is not over. It can't be. Last night, Verelst dined with a monster!"

Lennox pushed at the papers. "If I were alone concerned, I would thank Paliser. He has done me a good turn. He has set me straight."

Then, to the listening novelist, who later found the story very useful, Lennox repeated Cassy's version of the rhyme and reason of the broken engagement.

The tale of it concluded, Lennox flicked at a speck. "I am grateful to Paliser for that, but for the manner in which he treated her, I shall have a word with him. Just one."

Jones sat down. "A word, eh? Well, why not? Flipping a man in the face with a glove was fashionable in the days of Charles II. Tweaking the nose was Georgian. The horsewhip went out with Victoria. Posting your man was always rather coffee-house and a rough-and-tumble very hooligan. If I were you, which I am not, but if I were, I would adopt contemporaneous methods. To-day we just sit about and backbite. That is progress. Let me commend it to you."

With a wide movement, Lennox swept the papers, shoved them into a pocket and stood up.

Jones also stood up. "Got an appetite? Well, dining has the great disadvantage of taking it away. Come along."

Lennox put on his hat. "I am going first to Park Avenue."

No you're not, thought Jones, who, with an agility which for him was phenomenal, hurried to the door and backed against it.

Lennox motioned him aside.

Jones, without budging, lied. "They're out of town." It was very imbecile. He knew it was, knew, too, that Lennox knew it, and, for the imbecile lie, he substituted another. "I mean they are dining out."

"What the devil are you driving at?" Lennox asked, and not very civilly either.

"A windmill, I suppose. You look like one. I——"

Jones broke off. The expression on Lennox' face arrested him. The attempt at interference, the stupid evasions, the conviction which these things produced, that there was something behind them, something secreted, something about Margaret that Jones knew and which he was concealing, made him livid.

"Out with it."

Jones looked at him, looked away, adjusted his neckcloth, vacated the door, crossed the room and sat down. He did not know to what saint to vow himself. But realising that it was all very useless, that everything is, except such solicitude as one pilgrim may show to another, and that, anyway, Lennox would soon hear it, he gave it to him.

"She is engaged to Paliser."

Lennox, who was approaching, stopped short. "Miss Austen is?"

Jones nodded.

"To Paliser?"

But it seemed too rough and, to take the edge off, Jones added. "It may not be true."

"How did you hear?"

"Verelst told me. He dined there last night."

Lennox turned on his heel. Futilely in that hell to which one may look back and see that it was not hell but purgatory prior to paradise, futilely there he had sought the reason of his damnation. A few minutes before he had thought that Cassy's story revealed it. In the light of it he had seen himself condemned, as many another has been, for crimes which he had not committed. But he had seen, too, the order of release. He had only a word to say. He was going to Park Avenue to say it.

When Jones was below with Cassy so he had thought and not without gratitude to Paliser either. If the cad had held his tongue, enlightenment might have been withheld until to his spirit, freed perhaps in Flanders, had come the revelation. Personally he was therefore grateful to Paliser. But vicariously he was bitter. For his treatment of that girl, punishment should follow.

That girl! Obscurely, in the laboratory of the senses where, without our knowledge, often against our will, our impulses are dictated, a process, intricate and interesting, which Stendhal called crystallisation, was at work.

Unaware of that, conscious only of the moment, to his face had come the look and menace of the wolf.

Now——!

"There is a book over there," Jones, who was watching him, cut in. "It is Seneca's 'De animæ tranquilitate.' Take a peek at it. It will tell you, what it has told me, that whatever happens, happens because it had to happen and because it could not happen otherwise. There is no sounder lesson in mental tranquillity."

But for all Lennox heard of that he might then have been dead. Without knowing what he was doing, he sat down. Paliser, Margaret! Margaret, Paliser! Before him, on encephalic films, their forms and faces moved as clearly as though both were in the room. He saw them approaching, saw them embrace. The obsession of jealousy that creates the image, projected it. He closed his eyes, covered his face with his hands. The image got behind them. It persisted but less insistently. The figures were still there. It was their consistence that seemed to fade. Where they had been were shadows—evil, shallow, malign, perverse, lurid as torches and yet but shades. For the jealousy that inflames love can also consume it and, when it does, it leaves ashes that are either sterile with indifference or potent with hate. At the shadows that were torches Lennox looked with closed eyes. Obscurely, without his knowledge, in the laboratory of his senses, crystallisation was at work.

Jones, leaning forward, touched him. "I say, old chap!"

Lennox had been far away, on a journey from which some men return, but never as they went. At Jones' touch he dropped his hands. The innate sentiment of form repossessed him. He straightened, looked about and, after the manner of the deeply preoccupied, who answer a question ten minutes after it is put, said evenly:

"Suppose we do."

Do what? But Jones, getting it at once, stood up. "Come along, then."

On the way to the neighbourly Athenæum, the novelist talked endlessly about the disadvantages of not being born, which is a very safe subject. Talking still, he piloted Lennox to the dining-room where, the advantages of sedatives occurring to him, he ordered a bottle of Pommard, which is mother's milk.

But when it was brought Lennox would not touch it. He wanted brandy and soda and told Johnson, a captain, to see to it.

In the great high-ceiled room, other members were dining. From one of the tables Ogston sauntered over and, noting that Jones and Lennox had not dressed, which he had, and very beautifully, remarked brilliantly: "You fellers aren't going to the opera, are you? It's the last night."

It was another safe subject and Jones smiled falsely at him. "But you are, eh? Sit down."

Ogston put a hand on the novelist's chair. "No. I'm off to a theatre-party. But I have a ticket for the Metropolitan. You don't either of you want it, do you?"

"Let me see, what is it, to-night?" Jones, with that same false smile, enquired. "And where is the seat?"

"In Paliser's box. He's to be alone and left it here with a note asking me to join him."

Deeply, beneath his breath, Jones swore, but with the same smile, he tried to shift the subject. "You're quite a belle, aren't you?"

"See here, Ogston," Lennox put in, "let me have it."

Ogston, fumbling in his white waistcoat, extracted the ticket and handed it over.

"By the way, Lennox, do you mind my doing a little touting for Cantillon? He's with Dunwoodie. Give him your law business—some of it, anyhow."

"I'll give him some, when I have it," answered Lennox, who was to have some, and sooner and far more monumentally, than either he, or even Jones, suspected.

"Good for you, Lennox. Good-night, Jones." The brilliant and beautifully dressed young man nodded and passed on.

But now the captain was bearing down on them.

Jones looked at Lennox. "You will have to come back to my shop after dinner. There is a phrase in your will that I omitted. I forgot the 'seized and possessed.' "

Lennox drank before he spoke. Then he said: "After dinner, I shall do for Paliser."

Jones, waiting until the captain had gone, looked at Lennox again. "The greatest revenge is the disdain of any."

Lennox made no reply. A waiter put a plate before him and another before Jones. Members passed, going to their tables or leaving them. Occasionally one of them stopped, exchanged the time of day and then passed on. In each exchange Jones collaborated. Lennox said nothing. The food before him he tormented, poking at it with a fork, but not eating it.

Presently he asked for coffee, drank a cup and got up.

Jones, too, got up and, to stay him, put out a hand.

Lennox, treating it, and him, like a cobweb, went on.

Afterward, Jones thought of the Wild Women of whom Æschylus tells, the terrible Daughters of Hazard that lurk in the shadows of coming events which, it may be, they have marshalled.

Afterward he thought of them. But at the moment, believing that Lennox would do nothing and realising that, in any case, nothing can be more futile than an attempt to avert the inevitable, he was about to resume his seat, when something on the floor attracted him. He bent over, took it, looked at it and tucked it in a pocket.

Then, sitting down again, mentally he followed Lennox, whom later he was to follow farther, whom he was to follow deep in the depths where the Wild Women, lurking in wait, had thrown him.

XXVII

THE Park that had taken Cassy and from which, at that hour, children and nursemaids had gone, was green, fragrant, quiet. Its odorous peace enveloped the girl who had wanted to cry. In hurrying on she had choked it back. But you cannot always have your way with yourself. The tears would come and she sat down on a bench, from behind which a squirrel darted.

Before her the grass departed, the trees disappeared, the path wound into nothingness. In their place was the empty vastness that sorrow is. The masquerade that had affected her physically, had affected her psychically and in each instance profoundly. It had first sickened and then stabbed. There had been no place for sorrow in the double assault. There had been no time for it either. Occupied as she had almost at once become with the misadventures of another, she had no opportunity to consider her own. Yet now the aspect that sorrow took was not that of disaster. What it showed was the loneliness of the soul, solitary as it ever is in that desert which, sooner or later, we all must cross. Vast, arid, empty, before her it stretched.

Nearby, on the bench, crouching there, eager, anxious, wary, a squirrel, its fluffy tail and tiny nostrils aquiver, watched her with eyes of bead. From the desert she turned and seeing the little gracious thing, stretched her hand. She would have liked to take it and pet it. It would have made her solitude less acute. At the movement, a ball of misty fur bounded. Where it had been, there was air.

The abrupt evaporation distracted her. Before her the desert lay, but in it now was her father. She had been going to him. Previously, she had thought that, when she did go, her hands would be filled with gifts. Instead they were bruised, bare to the bone. They would madden him and she wondered whether she could endure it. The long, green afternoon, that had been so brief, had been so torturesome that she doubted her ability. But he would have to be told. She could not lie to him and humanly she wished that it were to-morrow, the day after, the day after that, when it would be over and done for, put away, covered by woes of his own, though inevitably to be dragged out again and shown her, and shown her, too, with the unconscious cruelty that those who love you display.

It would be crucifying, but there was no help for it. Reaching for the bundle, she stood up and went her way, across the Park, to the subway, from which she got out in Harlem.

The loveliness of that land of love seemed to have changed, though the change, she then recognised, was in herself. But at least the walk-up was unaltered. In the grimy entrance was Mrs. Yallum, a fat Finn, who looked like a dirty horse, and who yapped at her volubly, incomprehensibly, but with such affection that Cassy, yapping back, felt less lonely as she ascended the stair.

The comfort was mediocre. In the afternoon she had gone from a ruin. Now she had the sensation of entering another, one from which she had also gone, but to which she was returning and with a spirit so dulled in the journey! Had she, she wondered, any spirit left at all? At least enough remained to prevent any wish for the reconstruction of the ruin behind her. About the fallen walls were forms of filth; in the crevices there were vermin, and though, before her, the desert stretched, it was clean. However arid, it was wholesome.

But now she was at the door. She let herself in, hurried to the living-room, where, with the feigned cheerfulness of the unselfish, she beamed at her father and bent over him.

"Here I am to look after you again! How well you look. I am so glad and oh! where is your sling?"

In speaking she stroked him. His skin was clearer, she thought, and the abandoned sling was a relief.

He looked up at her. "You got married without me. I ought to have been there. Why didn't you tell me? It was for me to give you away. Who did?"

"Who did what?"

"Who gave you in marriage?"

With the mimic of gaiety, Cassy laughed. "Why, you old dear, all that has gone out. Hereabouts, nowadays, a father never goes to a wedding—only to funerals."

She paused and, with the idea of breaking it to him in bits, resumed: "Besides, it was all done in a hurry, in too much of a hurry."

He took it in, but at the wrong end. "Sick of him already, eh? Well, it isn't because I did not warn you. Where is he?"

Cassy moved back. Should she give it to him then or later? But the question, repeating itself, followed her.

"Where is your husband?"

Now for it, she thought. But at once he switched. "There was nothing in the papers. Why is that? What is that package?"

Cassy looked at the bundle which she still held. It gave her courage.

"I am not married."

For a second he stared. It was obvious that he had not got it. "Where have you been, then?"

Cassy fingered the bundle. Always she had hated to explain and of all possible explanations what could be more hateful than this? If only he would guess it, flare up, stamp about, get it over, let it go. But the cup was there and she drank it.

"I thought I was married. I am a fool."

For the awaited curse, she braced herself. The explosion did not come, but his eyes had widened. They covered her. Then, with an intake of the breath and of understanding, he lowered them. Apparently he was weighing it and Cassy thought he was trying to restrain himself, and she blessed him for it. It was less terrible than she had feared. But immediately it occurred to her that instead of trying to restrain himself, he was seeking the strength wherewith to rend her. And I am so innocent, she despairfully thought.

Her eyes were upon him and he looked up into hers.

"Why did you think you were married?"

"I told you, because I am a fool. There was a clergyman and a ceremony. Afterwards I found that the clergyman was not a clergyman and that the ceremony was a sham."

"When was that?"

"This afternoon."

"What did you do?"

"What was there for me to do? I left him."

"Where is he now?"

Cassy put down the bundle. She had no idea. But she said: "This evening we were to go to the opera. I hardly fancy he will miss it on my account." She paused and with a little catch in her voice continued: "I know it is all my fault, I ought to have known better and I shall be so unhappy if you mind. Won't you try not to?"

As she spoke, he stood up and she thought that the delayed volcano of his wrath was about to burst. To smother it, she touched him. "Of course you will mind. But I would not have been such a fool if I had not believed that everything would be so much nicer for you. Can't you see that and, if you do, can't you forgive me?"

He had moved from her to the piano; there he turned and looked. "There is nothing to forgive, Cassy. You have been a good girl always. I am sorry, of course I am sorry, but you are not to blame."

Understanding instead of maledictions! Sympathy in lieu of abuse! Such things are affecting. The tears swam to her eyes and wretchedly and yet thankfully she wept.

He did not seem to notice. In the narrow space he was moving about, shifting things on the piano, displacing and replacing a score, which, finally, he let fall. He stooped for it. As he raised it, Cassy saw through her tears that his hand was shaking. He, too, may have seen it. He left the room and she heard him pottering in the kitchen.

She wiped her eyes. Across the court was another kitchen in which were a woman and a child. Often she had seen them there, but if she had seen them elsewhere she would not have recognised them. They were but forms, the perceptions of a perceiver, and though Cassy had never read Fichte and was unacquainted with Berkeley, the idea visited her that they had no real existence, that, it might be, she had none either, that all she had endured was a dream drifting by, with nothing past which to drift.

It was her father's attitude that had induced these metaphysical hysterics. She had expected that some demon within him would spring out and gibber. Instead of which he had told her, and so gently, that she was not to blame. It is words like these that bring tears swiftest. The tears had come, but the words had also sufficed to reduce the people across the way into baseless appearances, in which, for the moment, she included herself.

But now at least her father was actual. He was coming in with glasses and a bottle which he put on the table.

"You are tired," he said. "Have a little."

Seating himself, he drank and Cassy feared that if the liquor exerted the authority that liquor has, he might go back into it and exact from her details which it would revolt her to supply. In helping himself, he had poured a glass for her. She did not want it. What she wanted was bed and the blanket of long, dreamless sleep. It could not be too long. She was tired, as he had said, but more so than he knew, tired with the immense fatigue that emotions and their crises create.

She moved over to where he sat. Several minutes had gone since he spoke yet it seemed to her but the moment before.

"Yes, I am tired, but you're a good daddy and I love you."

She bent over him, went to the kitchen, got a glass of milk and a biscuit, which she carried to her room, where she opened the window and closed the door.

Long later, when she awoke, it was with the consciousness of something there, something waiting, something evil, something that had jeered and pummelled her in her sleep. But what? Then, instantly, she knew. A palace of falsehoods had tumbled about her and the lies had laughed and bruised her as they fell. They had been laughing and falling the whole night through.

The light distracted her. In the morning, because of the building opposite, her room was dark. Now it was bright. The sun had scaled the roof. A gleam looked in and told her it was noon.

How could I have slept so long? she wondered. She put some things on and opening the door smelled coffee. The poor dear! she thought, he had to make it himself.

She went on into the living-room. There her father sat. On the table before him was a paper.

Without speaking he pointed at a headline. The letters squirmed. They leaped and sprang at her. From before them she backed. But what nonsense! It was impossible. She could not believe it. Yet there it was! Abruptly there also was something else. An electric chair, the man of all men in it!

From before the horror of that she reeled, steadied herself, looked at her father, looked without seeing him.

"God of gods! And I did it!"

XXVIII

IN high red boots, wide purple breeches and a yellow mandarin jacket, Jones entered the workshop. His appearance did not alarm him. He was invisible. Lloyd George and Clémenceau might have called. Mr. Ten Eyck Jones was not at home, sir. If necessary he was dead. Always, while he dressed, his servant put, unseen, a tray on the workshop table and, still unseen, disappeared. With the tray was the morning paper and the usual letters, which Jones never read. Morning in the workshop meant work. No interruptions permitted. On one occasion the house got on fire. His servant did not venture to tell him, though the firemen did. Apart from such outrages, necessarily infrequent, the only intrusion was the morning paper and the cat that talked in her sleep. The cat had many privileges, the paper had few. Sometimes it was briefly considered, more often it was not even looked at, but its great privilege consisted in being stacked.

On this morning Jones did look, but quite involuntarily, and only because a headline caught his eye. It was the same headline from before which Cassy backed. The leaping words shouted at the girl. They shouted at the novelist, a circumstance which did not prevent him from breakfasting.

The fruit, the crescents, the coffee he consumed, not as was customary, with his thoughts on his own copy, but on that which the paper supplied. It was very colourful. At the opera, the night before, Monty Paliser had been killed.

In New York, many men are killed, but not so many are murdered and of those that are murdered, few are millionaires and fewer still have a box at the Metropolitan, where, apart from stage business, no one up to then had been done for. The case was therefore unique and, save for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, without a parallel. In the circumstances, the leaded line of leaping words was justified.

According to the story that followed and which, Jones realised, must have reached the city editor just as the paper was going to press, an attendant, whose duty it was to visit the boxes after the performance and see what, if anything, the occupants had forgotten, had, on entering Paliser's box, found him at the back of it, unconscious, on the floor. There were no external marks of violence, but a commandeered physician pronounced him dead and, on examination, further pronounced that death was due to internal hemorrhage, superinduced by heart-puncture, which itself had been caused by some instrument, presumably a stiletto.

A picturesque detail followed. The box at the right was owned by the Leroy Thompsons. The box at the left was the Harriwells'. At the late hour, an attempt to communicate with the former had failed, but over the wire, Mr. Legrand Harriwell stated that the deceased had come in during the third act, that he had spoken to Mrs. Harriwell, after which he had moved back and had either gone, or remained in the rear of the box. Mr. Harriwell knew nothing else, he had been unaware of anything occurring, he was not in the habit of spying about and he wished it distinctly understood that he must not be mixed up in the matter, or Mrs. Harriwell either.

The dear thing! thought Jones, who saw him, a tall, thin-lipped beast of a brute, with a haw-haw manner and an arrogant air. God bless him!

But, Jones resumed to himself, voyons! The opera was Aïda. Paliser came in during the third act. The house then is brilliant. But during the fourth—the duo in the crypt—it is dark. It was then that he was done for and with what is assumed to have been a stiletto.

To cut out the account, Jones turned in search of a dagger, long, thin, wicked, which, one adventurous night in Naples, he had found—just in time—in his back. On the blade was inscribed a promise, Penetrabo. Now his eyes roamed the table. He lifted the tray, lifted his copy, looked on the floor. Yet only the evening before, when Lennox was there and Cassy Cara had come, he had seen it. Since then it had gone.

The disappearance did not disturb him. Occasionally, in hunting for an object, he found it in his hand. It is somewhere, he cogently reflected and, taking a pencil, set to work.

But the muse was timorous as a chicken. The metaphor is entirely metaphorical. Jones had no faith in the wanton. He believed in regular hours, in silence and no interruptions. No intrusions of any kind. A letter was an intrusion, so also was the news of the day. These things he considered, when he did consider them, after his work was done. Sometimes he ignored them entirely. Usually he had a bushel of letters that he had not opened, a bale of papers at which he had not looked. Of such is the life known as literary or, at any rate, such was the life led by Jones.

On this morning, his copy, ordinarily fluent enough, would not come. Ideas fluttered away just out of reach. The sequence of a chapter had been in his head. Like the dagger, it had gone. He could not account for that disappearance, nor did he try. It would turn up again. So, ultimately, would the ousted sequence. For the latter's departure he did not try to account either. The effort was needless. He knew. An interruption had occurred. The news of the day had intruded itself upon him. A headline had entangled his thoughts.

Abandoning the pencil, he lit a cigarette. Across the room, above the bookcase, was a stretch of silk, a flight of dragons that he had got in Rangoon. Above the silk was an ivory mask, the spoil of a sarcophagus, which he had found in Seville. He looked at them. The dragons fled on, the mask fell asleep. Something else took their place.

On the wall was the scene at the opera.

In the golden gloom of the darkened house, it showed Paliser, sitting back in his box, presumably enjoying the *Terra addio,* for which Caruso had, as usual, been saving himself. Without, in the corridor, a figure furtively peering at the names on the doors. Then the voice of the soprano blending with that of the tenor and, during the divine duo, the door of the box opening, letting in a thread of light; Paliser turning to look and beholding that figure and a hand which, instantly descending, deepened the gloom forever.

It was certainly *Terra addio,* Jones reflected. Certainly, too, the scene is easy enough to reconstruct. But whose was the hand?

Flicking his ashes, he looked about and saw two hands, between which, he also saw, he was entirely free to pick and choose. One hand, slight and fragile, was Cassy Cara's. The other, firm and virile, was Lennox'.

Lennox had threatened. He had been acidly murderous. He had a motive. He had the opportunity. He knew where Paliser would be. He had been supplied with a seat in that box. The hand was his. It was a clear case. That was obvious, particularly to Jones, who regarded the obvious as very misleading.

Given the chance, he reflected, and Lennox might have done for Paliser, but he would have done for him with bare fists, never with a knife. It was not Lennox to use one. It was not Lennox at all.

Jones threw him out and pulled in Cassy Cara.

The case against her was equally clear. Presumably she owned the stiletto which a hat pin is. In addition, she also had a motive. If ever a girl had cause to up and do it, she had. Then, too, the risk was negligible. Any jury would acquit and tumble over each other to shake hands with her. For equity has justice that the law does not know. Moreover there are crimes that jurists have not codified. Some are too inhuman, others too human. Cassy's righting of her own wrongs belonged among the latter. Cassy's, that is, provided she had done it. But had she? Logically, yes. If the police could look behind the scenes, logically they would say to her, "Thou art the man."

But, Jones resumed, logic when pushed far enough becomes incoherence. The psychologist prefers vision and it would display none to believe that she did it. In the abstract, that is to be regretted. A lovely assassin! A beautiful girl slaying a recreant lover! A future prima donna killing a local millionaire! Monty Paliser murdered by the Viscountess of Casa-Evora! And at the opera! If I had ever put anything of the kind in my copy, reviewers would have indolently asked: "Why doesn't this imbecile study life?"

Jones laughed. The enjoyment of one's own ideas —or of the absence of them—is a literary trait. When Dumas wrote, he roared.

Here it is, then, Jones continued. If the police knew certain things they would nab Lennox. If they knew others, they would nab Cassy Cara. If they knew more, they would nab me. I should be held as a witness. This is cheerful, particularly as my sole complicity in the matter has been due to a desire to be of use. But that is just it. Through the enigmatic laws of life, any kindness is repaid in pain.

Pleasurably, for a moment, he considered the altruism of that aphorism. Then he got back at the murder which, he decided, must have been premeditated by some one who knew where Paliser would be. That conclusion reached, he groped for another. Lennox knew, but did Cassy know, and, if she did, had she utilised the knowledge?

To decide the point he reviewed the visit of the previous evening.

Ostensibly Cassy's visit had been occasioned not by any wish to relate what had happened to her, but to acquaint Lennox with the cause of what had happened to him. In view of what had befallen her, the proceeding was certainly considerate. In the misadventures of life, the individual is usually so obsessed by his own troubles that they blind him to those of another. But ostensibly Cassy had sunk her troubles and had pulled them up, not to exhibit them, but to show Lennox the lay of the land as it affected not her at all but him. The proceeding was certainly considerate—unless it were astute, unless her object had been to employ Lennox for the wreaking of her own revenge.

That was possible, but was it probable?

An ordinary young woman would have gone at it differently, gone at it hammer and tongs. Cassy's methods were merely finer. That was the common sense view. But was it psychology? The common sense view that is applicable to the average individual is inapplicable to a problematic nature and, consequently, not to Cassy, who must therefore have had another incentive for her visit, an incentive stronger than the primitive instinct for revenge.

But, Jones asked himself, what are the fundamental principles of human activity? They are self-preservation and the perpetuation of the species. Every idea that has existed, or does exist, in the mind of man is the result of the permutations and combinations of those two principles, of which the second is the stronger and its basis is sex. That is what actuated Cassy. She is, or was, in love with Lennox, and told him for no other reason.

That is it, Jones decided. But the course of her true love could not have run very smooth and, knowing that Lennox was otherwise interested, she took up with Paliser out of pique.

Pique! he repeated. But no, that is not Cassy Cara either. She——

Like a thread snapped suddenly, the novelist's meditations ceased. On the wall before him the dragons alighted, the mask awoke. Between them a canvas was emerging. Dim, shadowy, uncertain, it hesitated, wavered, advanced.

Then, as it hung unsupported in the air—far too unsupported, he presently thought—he looked it over.

To apparitions he was accustomed. They were part of his equipment. Unsummoned, without incantations they came, sent, one might think, by the muse whom he derided, but more naturally and very simply produced by the machinery in his brain.

Now, as he examined the canvas, its imprecision diminished, the shadows passed, the obscurity lifted, the penumbra brightened, outlines defined themselves, the colouring appeared, a colouring, after the manner of Rembrandt, composed of darkness in which there is light and which, as such, reveals.

Jones stood up, turned around and sat down again as gamblers, disquieted by their luck, will do.

Before him still the picture floated. He disavowed it, disowned it. Yet there it was, the child of his fancy, the first-born of the morning, the fruit of his concentrated thought, and as, surprisedly, he considered it, it took on such semblances of legitimacy, that the disavowals ceased. Then, slowly disintegrating, its consistence lessened. It was departing, vaporously as it had come. Jones waved at it, omitting out of sheer abstraction to say Au revoir, yet omitting also, and through equal modesty, to say Eureka!

He pressed a button. Instantly, as though sprung from a trap, his servant appeared.

"Get Mr. Lennox on the telephone."

The minutes lengthened. Finally the servant reappeared.

"Mr. Lennox is not at home, sir. His man says he's gone to Centre Street. He's been arrested. Mr. Lennox has been arrested. Yes, sir."

Pausing, the servant cocked an ear and added: "They're calling extras, sir. Would you wish one?"

Circuitously, through the open door, the cat, her tail in the air, approached and wowed.

Jones leaned over and tickled her in the stomach. The cat hopped up on him. He put a finger to his forehead, held it there, removed it and looked at the man.

"In war-time, with the price of everything going up, it is a criminal waste of money to buy an extra—particularly when you know what isn't in it."

"Yes, sir."

Jones motioned. "Look through the old newspapers. Among the March issues there is one that has an article entitled 'The Matter of Ziegler.' Let me have it."

The cat, now on his shoulder, purred profusely in his ear. Raising a hand, he tickled her again.

"Mimi-Meow, this Matter of Ziegler may interest us very much and after we have looked it over, I will attend to our friend von Lennox, who seems to have become a Hun."

XXIX

ALREADY over the picked-up codfish, flapjacks, Hamburg steaks and cognate enticements on which the Bronx and Harlem breakfasts, the news of it had buttered the toast, flavoured the coffee, added a sweetness to this April day and provided a cocktail to people who did not know Paliser from the Pierrot in the moon. That he was spectacularly wealthy was a tid-bit, that he had been killed at the Metropolitan was a delight, the war news was nothing to the fact that the party with the stiletto had escaped "unbeknownst." These people were unacquainted with Paliser. But here was a young man with an opera-box of his own, and think of that! Here was the mythological monster that the Knickerbocker has become. Here was the heir to unearned and untold increments. These attributes made him as delectable to the majority who did not know him, as he had become to the privileged few who did.

Elsewhere, and particularly in and about fashion's final citadel which the Plaza is, solemn imbeciles viewed the matter vehemently. "Young Paliser! Why, there is no better blood in town! By Jove, I believe we are related!"

Or else: "That's M. P.'s son, isn't it? Yes, here it is. I never met the old cock but I heard of him long before we came East. A damned outrage, that's what I call it."

Or again: "Dear me, what is the world coming to? What a blessing it is we were not there. They might have come and murdered us all!"

Adjacently, in clubland, old men with one foot in the grave and the other on Broadway, exchanged reminiscences of the nights when social New York was a small and early family party and M. P. led the ball, and at a pace so klinking that he danced beyond the favours of the cotillon—the german as it, the cotillon, was then lovingly called—into assemblies, certainly less select, but certainly, too, more gay, and had horrified scrumptious sedateness with the uproar of his orgies.

The indicated obituaries followed. "Well, at any rate, they didn't murder him for it." "The son now, a chip of the old block, eh?" "Nothing of the kind, a quiet young prig." "The papers say——" "Damn the papers, they never know anything." "You mean they don't print what they do know." "I mean they don't give us the woman. For it was a woman. I'll eat my hat it was a woman." "Let's have lunch instead."

Generally, for the moment, that was the verdict, one in which the police had already collaborated. But what woman? And, assuming the woman, whence had she come? Where had she gone?—problems, momentarily insoluble but which investigations, then in progress, would probably decide.

At the great white house on upper Fifth Avenue, the servants knew only that they knew nothing. Nothing at all. Already coached, they were sure and unshakable in their knowledge of that. A Mr. Harvey—from Headquarters—could not budge them an inch. Not one!

The night before, at the first intelligence of it, M. P. came nearer to giving up the ghost than is commonly advisable. Suffocation seized him. An incubus within was pushing his life-springs out. So can emotion and an impaired digestion affect a father. The emotion was not caused by grief. It was fear. For weeks, for months, during the tedium and terror of the trial, his name, Paliser, would top the page! It had topped it before, very often, but that was years ago. Then he had not cared. Then the wine of youth still bubbled. No, he had not cared. But that was long ago. Since then the wine of youth had gone, spilled in those orgies which he had survived, yet, in the survival, abandoned more and more to solitude and making him seek, what the solitary ever do seek, inconspicuousness. For years he had courted obscurity as imbeciles court fame. And now!

If only the boy had had the decency to die of pneumonia!

It was then the incubus gripped him. For a second he saw the visage, infinitely consoling, that Death can display and possibly, but for an immediate drug, there too would have echoed the *Terra addio!*

He was then in white velvet. A preparation of menthe, dripping from a phial, spotted it green. He did not notice. At the moment the spasm had him. Then as that clicked and passed, he looked in the expressionless face of the butler who had told him.

The spasm had shaken him into a chair.

The room, an oblong, was furnished after a fashion of long ago. The daised bed was ascended by low, wide steps. Beyond stood a table of lapis-lazuli. A mantel of the same material was surmounted by a mirror framed in jasper. Beneath the mirror, a fire burned dimly. The lights too were dim. They were diffused by tall wax candles that stood shaded in high gold sticks. On the table there were three of them.

The chair was near this table, at which M. P. had been occupied very laboriously, in doing nothing, a task that he performed in preparation for the bed, which was always ready for him, and for sleep, which seldom was. There he had been told. It had shaken him to his feet, shaken apoplexy at him and shaken him back in the chair.

Now, as he looked at the servant's wooden mask, for a moment he relived an age, not a pleasant one either and of which this blow, had he known it, was perhaps the karma. He did not know it. He knew nothing of karma. None the less, with that curious intuition which the great crises induce, he too divined the woman and wished to God that he had kept his hands off, wished that he had not interfered and told Monty to put her in a flat and be damned to her! It was she, he could have sworn it. At once, precisely as he wished he had let her alone, he hoped and quite as fervently that she had covered her tracks, that there would be no trial, nothing but inept conjectures and that forgetfulness in which all things, good and bad, lose their way.

The futility of wishing passed. The time for action had come. He motioned. "Is Benny here?"

"He left this noon, sir."

"Did he say anything?"

The butler did not know whether to lie or not, but seeing no personal advantage in either course, he hedged. "Very little, sir."

That little, the old man weighed. A little is often enough. It may be too much.

"He spoke about a girl, eh?"

"He said a lady was stopping there. Yes, sir."

"What else?"

The butler shuffled. "He said she was very pretty, sir."

"Go on, Canlon."

"Well, sir, it seems there was a joke about it. The young lady thought she was married."

"How was that?"

"I'm not supposed to know, sir. But from what was let on, Benny was rigged out as a dominie and it made 'em laugh."

The old man ran his head out like a turtle. "Damnation, what has that to do with it?"

"Why, sir, he pretended to marry her."

"Benny did?"

"Yes, sir."

"He pretended that she was his wife."

"No, sir, he pretended to marry her to Mr. Monty."

"Good God!" the old man muttered and sank back. The blackness was blacker than any black he had entered. In days gone by, he had agreeably shocked New York with the splendid uproar of his orgies. He had left undone those things which he ought to have done and done those things which he should have avoided. He had been whatever you like—or dislike—but never had he been dishonest. Little that would avail him now. If this turpitude were published, it would be said that he had fathered it. At the prospect, he felt the incubus returning. In a moment it would have him and, spillingly, he drank the green drug.

The agony receded, but the nightmare confronted him. He grappled with it.

"The coat I had on at dinner. There is a card-case in the pocket. Give it to me."

Probably it was all very useless. Probably no matter what he contrived, the police would ferret her out. There was just one chance though which, properly taken, might save the situation.

The card-case, pale damask, lined with pale silk, the man brought him. He put it on the table.

"Canlon!"

"Yes, sir."

"Benny said nothing."

"Very good, sir."

"I have a few hundred for you here, between eight and nine, I think."

"Thank you, sir."

"To-morrow there will be more."

"I am sure I am very grateful, sir."

"Don't interrupt me. Recently my son returned from Cuba. Occasionally he went visiting. Where he went, he did not tell you. That is all you know. You know nothing else. You heard nothing. Nobody here heard anything. Nobody, in this house, knows anything at all. You understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then see to it. The police will come. You must be at the door. You know now what to say. They will want a word with me. I am too prostrated to see anybody."

"Thank you, sir."

"Telephone to the Place. Get Benny. Repeat my orders. Say I will do as well by him as I shall by you."

"Thank you, sir."

"Take the money. You may have the case also."

"I thank you, sir."

"Tell Peters to fetch me some brandy. The 1810. That will do."

Presently, when the police did come and, several hours later, in the person of Mr. Harvey, came again, they came upon the barriers, invisible and unscalable, which ignorance, properly paid, can erect. With an empty bag, Mr. Harvey made off; not far, however, a few squares below to the Athenæum Club.

There, the hall-porter succeeded in being magnificent. The strange and early visitor he rebuked. It was not customary for members to be murdered!

A badge, carelessly disclosed, disconcerted him. For a second only. However unusual a member might be, no information could be supplied concerning him. There was another rule, equally strict. Strangers were not admitted. Though, whether the rule applied to a bull, he was uncertain. Momentarily, the hall-porter, previously magnificent, became an unhappy man. Misery is fertile. A compromise surprised him.

He crooked a thumb. "Here! Go 'round by the back way and ask for Mr. Johnson—he's one of the captains."

From the steps, in the slanting rays of the morning sun, he saw him off. But the gaiety of the eager rays that charged the air with little gold motes, did not cheer him. The lustre of his office was tarnished. A member had been murdered! It was most unusual.

Meanwhile, down the area steps, a hostile and hasty youth in shirt-sleeves and a slashed waistcoat barred the way. The barring was brief. The badge and a smile demolished it. Within, beneath a low ceiling, at a long table, other youths, equally slashed but less hostile, were at breakfast.

Affably, the intruder raised a hand. "Gentlemen, don't let me disturb you. I'm just having a look-in on Mr. Johnson."

Mr. Johnson did not breakfast with slashed young men; it would have been subversive to discipline, and it was negligently, through a lateral entrance, that presently he appeared. In evening clothes on this early morning, he surveyed his visitor, a big fellow with a slight moustache, an easy way and a missing front tooth, who went straight at it.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Johnson. My name's Harvey. It's about young Paliser. There may be something in it for you. I'm from Headquarters."

The captain coughed. "It's awful. I can't tell you anything though. He wasn't here often. Doubt if I've seen him in a week." He looked about. The slashed youths were edging up. "Come in here."

In an adjoining room, he took a chair, waved politely at another, coughed again and resumed. "You say there may be something in it for me?"

Mr. Harvey sat down. "Cert. There'll be a reward—a big one."

The captain turned it over. "It is as much as my place is worth, but last evening one of the members was talking fierce about him."

"Yes, so I heard," said Mr. Harvey, who had heard nothing of the kind and who, not for an instant, had expected to tumble on a fierce-talking member. "I heard his name too. It's—er——"

"Lennox," the captain put in.

"Lennox, yes, that's it, and just to see how my account tallies with yours, what did he say?"

"He said he'd do for him. I could have laughed."

"It was funny, I laughed myself, and about a woman, wasn't it?"

"I don't know. But he was engaged to be married. I saw it in the papers."

"And this young Paliser butted in?"

"I couldn't say. But he threw up his business and sat around and last night he was going to do for him."

"At the opera?"

"He was talking random-like. He had just had a B. and S. I didn't hear anything about the opera. He wasn't got up for it. Just a business suit. But, Lord bless you, he didn't do it. He isn't that kind. Nice, free-handed feller."

"No, of course not. I wouldn't believe it, not if you told me so. Let me see. Where did I hear he lives?"

"I don't rightly know. Somewhere in the neighbourhood."

"So I thought and his first name is?"

"I've forgotten. Hold on! Keith! That's it. Keith Lennox. Are you going to see him? P'raps he can set you straight."

"P'raps he can."

"But don't let on about me, my friend."

"Not on your life," replied his friend, who added: "Where's your hat?"

"My hat!" Mr. Johnson surprisedly exclaimed.

Affably that friend of his nodded. "Ever been to Headquarters? Well, you're going there now!"

Then, presently, the captain and his friend ascended a stairway, down which, a few hours later, hoarse voices came.

"Extra! Extra!"

XXX

AT the Athenæum, that afternoon, members gathered together, buttonholed each other, talked it over and so importantly that, if you had not known better, you might have thought the war a minor event. It gave one rather a clear idea of the parochialism of clubland. But then, to discuss the affairs of people who never heard of you is, essentially, a social act.

Meanwhile the shouted extras had told of Lennox' arrest. The evening papers supplied the evidence.

In them you read that Lennox had said he would "do" for Paliser, that in his possession had been found a stiletto, an opera-check, together with a will, and that, when apprehended, he had been effecting what is called a getaway.

There you had the threat, the instrument, the opportunity and what more could you ask, except the motive? As for the rest, it was damning. On that point foregathering members agreed—with one exception.

In a seated group was Jones. His neighbours alarmed him. They belonged, he thought, to a very dangerous class, to a class which a sociologist defined as the most dangerous of all—to the stupid. According to them, Lennox was not merely guilty, he was worse. He had besplattered the club with the blood of a man who, hang it all, whether you liked him or not, was also a member. The Athenæum would become a byword. Already, no doubt, it was known as the Assassin's. Et cetera and so forth.

The group thinned, increased, thinned again, scattered.

Jones, alone with a survivor, addressed him. "How is my handsome friend to-day?"

Verelst turned impatiently. "In no mood for jesting. I ought to have hurried him off. Now he is in jail."

Jones lit a cigarette. "There are honest men everywhere, even in jail, perhaps particularly in jail. Whom has he, do you know?"

"To defend him? Dunwoodie. Ogston told me. Ogston says——"

"I daresay he does. His remarks are always very poignant."

"But look here. Before the arrest was known, Ogston was in this room telling everybody that, last night, he gave Lennox a seat in Paliser's box. He will have to testify to it. He can't help himself."

"Perhaps I can help him though. I was with Lennox at the time."

"You were? That's awkward. You may have to corroborate him."

"I certainly shall. I have the seat."

"What?"

"Lennox dropped the ticket. After he had gone, I found it on the floor. It is in my shop now."

"Well, well!" Verelst astoundedly exclaimed. "But, here, hold on. The papers say he had a return check."

Jones flicked his ashes. "I have one or two myself. Probably you have. Even otherwise return checks tell no tales, or rather no dates."

"I never thought of that."

"Think of it now, then."

"Yes, but confound it, there is the stiletto."

"As you say, there it is and I wish it were here. It is mine."

Verelst adjusted his glasses. "What are you talking about?"

"The war," Jones answered. "What else? In my shop last evening, Lennox was drawing his will. In gathering up the sheets, the knife must have got among them and, without knowing it, he carried it off. This morning I missed it. The loss affected me profoundly. It is an old friend."

"You don't tell me."

"Don't I? I'll go so far as to lay you another basket of pippins that the police can't produce another like it. On the blade is inscribed Penetrabo—which is an endearing device."

"But see here," Verelst excitedly exclaimed. "You must tell Dunwoodie. You——" In sheer astonishment he broke off.

Innocently Jones surveyed him. "You think it important as all that?"

"Important? Important isn't the word."

With the same air of innocence, Jones nodded. "I thought it wasn't the word. I should have said trivial."

"But——"

Wickedly Jones laughed. "If you feel reckless enough to go another basket of pippins, I will wager that if I tell Dunwoodie anything—and mind the 'if' —he will agree that the paper-cutter is of no consequence—except to its lawful owner, who wants it back."

"But tell me——"

"Anything you like. For the moment, though, tell me something."

"What?"

Jones blew a ring of smoke. "Do you happen to know whether Paliser had anything?"

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

Jones blew another ring. "I had an idea that his mother might have left him something. You knew her, didn't you? Any way, you still know M. P. Did he ever say anything about it?"

"He did not need to. It was in the papers. He made over to him the Splendor, the Place, and some Wall Street and lower Broadway property that has been part of the Paliser estate since the year One."

"What is it all worth?" Jones asked. "Ten or twenty million?"

"Thirty, I should say. Perhaps more. But what has it to do with Lennox?"

Negligently Jones flicked his ashes. "Well, it changes the subject. I can't talk about the same thing all the time. It is too fatiguing."

As he spoke, he stood up.

Verelst put out a hand. "Dunwoodie is sure to look in. Where are you off to?"

Jones smiled at him. "I am going to gaze in a window where there are pippins on view."

"Go to the devil!" said Verelst, who also got up.

Fabulists tell strange tales. It is their business to tell them. Jones had no intention of looking at pippins. What he had in mind was fruit of another variety. It was some distance away. Before he could make an appreciable move toward it, Verelst, who had turned from him, turned back.

"There!"

Beyond, through the high-arched entrance, a man was limping. He had the battered face of an old bulldog and the rumpled clothes of a young ruffian.

"There's Dunwoodie!"

Verelst, a hand on Jones' elbow, propelled him toward the lawyer, who gratified them with the look, very baleful and equally famous, with which he was said to reverse the Bench.

But Verelst, afraid of nothing except damp sheets, stretched a hand. "You know Ten Eyck Jones. He has something very important to tell you."

"Yes," said Jones. "In March, on the eighth or ninth, I have forgotten which, but it must be in the 'Law Journal,' a decision was rendered——"

He got no farther. Other members, crowding about, were questioning, surmising, eager for a detail, a prediction, an obiter dictum, for anything they could take away and repeat concerning the murder, in which all knew that the great man was to appear.

But Dunwoodie was making himself heard, and not gently either. It was as though already he was at the district attorney's throat.

"Where is the evidence? Where is it? Where is the evidence? There is not a shred, not a scintilla. On the absence of facts adduced, I shall maintain what I assert until the last armed Court of Appeals expires. Hum! Ha!"

Fiercely he turned on Jones. "What were you saying, sir?"

Before Jones could reply, Verelst cut in. "The stiletto is his. He has the opera-ticket. He——"

"Imbeciles tell each other that great men think alike," Jones, interrupting, remarked at Dunwoodie. "I merely happened to be forestalling your views, when a recent decision occurred to me and——"

Jones' remarks were lost, drowned by others, by questions, exclamations, the drivel that amazement creates.

"But, I say——" "Tell me this——" "No evidence!" "The stiletto his!" "How did Lennox get it?" "Then what about——"

Dunwoodie, fastening on Jones, roared at him. "You tell me the instrument is yours?"

Jones patted his chin. "I did not, but I will."

"How do you know, sir?"

"It has a little love message on it."

"Hum! Ha!" Dunwoodie barked. "Come to my office to-morrow. Come before ten."

Dreamily Jones tilted his hat. "I am not up before ten. Where do you live? In the Roaring Forties?"

But, in the mounting clamour, the answer, if answer there were, was submerged. Jones went out to the street, entered a taxi, gave an address and sailed away, up and across the Park, along the Riverside and into the longest thoroughfare—caravan routes excepted—on the planet.

On a corner was a drug-shop, where anything was to be had, even to umbrellas and, from a sign that hung there, apparently a notary public also. Opposite was a saloon, the Ladies Entrance horribly hospitable. Jones' trained eye—the eye of a novelist—gathered these things which it dropped in that bag which the subconscious is. Meanwhile the car, scattering children, tooted, turned and stopped before a leprous door.

In the hall, a girl of twelve, with the face of a seraph, and the voice of a fiend, was shrieking at a switchboard. Jones fearing, if he addressed her, that she might curse him, went on and up, higher, still higher, and began to feel quite birdlike. On the successive landings were doors and he wondered what tragedies, what comedies, what aims, lofty, mean or merely diabolic, they concealed. They were all labelled with names, Hun or Hebrew, usually both. But one name differed. It caressed.

There he rang.

When it opened, a strawberry mouth opened also. "Oh!" Cassy's blue eyes were red. There was fright in them. "It is horrible! Tell me, do you think it was he?"

Jones removed his hat. "I know it was not."

That mouth opened again, opened for breath, opened with relief. Gasping, she stared. "Thank God! I was afraid—— But are you sure? It was I who told him—I thought it my fault. It was killing me. Tell me. Are you really sure?"

Jones motioned. "His lawyer is. I have just seen him."

"He is! Thank God then! Thank God! And my father! It has made him ill. He liked him so! I am going for medicine now. Will you go in and speak to him?"

She turned and called. "It is Mr. Jones—a friend of Mr. Lennox." She turned again. "I will be back in a minute."

Beyond, in the room with the piano and the painted warrior, the musician lay on a sofa, bundled in a rug. There was not much space on the sofa, yet, as Jones entered, he seemed to recede. Then, cavernously, he spoke.

"Forgive me for not rising. This business has been too much for me. Sit down."

Jones put his hat on the table and drew a chair. "I am sorry it has upset you. It amounts to nothing."

Perplexedly the musician repeated it. "Nothing?"

"I was referring to our friend Lennox."

"You call his arrest nothing?"

"Well, everything is relative. It may seem unusual to be held without bail and yet, if we all were, it would be commonplace."

The musician plucked at the rug. "I suppose everybody thinks he did it?"

"Everybody, no. I don't think so and I am sure your daughter doesn't."

"I wish she would hurry."

"Nor do you."

"No, I don't think so."

"I doubt if the police do either."

"After jailing him!"

Jones, who had been taking in the room, the piano, the portrait, the table, sketched a gesture.

"We are all in jail. The opinion of the world is a prison, our own ideas are another. We are doubly jailed, and very justly. We are depraved animals. We think, or think we think, and what we think others have thought for us and, as a rule, erroneously."

From a phonograph somewhere, in some adjacent den, there floated a tenor aria, the *Bella figlia del amore,* pierced suddenly and beautifully by a contralto's rich voice.

Jones turned. "That's Caruso. I don't know who the Maddelena is. Do you remember Campanini?"

"Yes, I remember him. He was a better actor than Caruso."

"And so ugly that he was good-looking. Caruso is becoming uneven."

Vaguely the musician considered the novelist. "You think so?"

"It rather looked that way last night."

Angelo Cara plucked again at the rug.

"But," Jones continued, "in the 'Terra addio' he made up for it. What an enchantment that duo is!"

The musician's hand moved from the rug to his face. "You were there then?"

I was this morning, thought Jones, but he said: "How sinful Rigoletto is by comparison to Aïda—by comparison I mean to the last act."

The other duo now had become a quartette. The voices of Gilda and Rigoletto were fusing with those of the figlia and the duke.

The musician appeared to be listening. His sunken eyes were lifted. Slowly he turned them on Jones.

"You didn't see anything, did you?"

"Last night? I did not see Lennox, if that is what you mean, or Paliser—except for a moment, during the crypt scene."

Chokingly the musician drew breath. In the effort he gasped. "Then you know."

"Yes, I know."

The rug rose and fell. It was as though there were a wave beneath it.

With an air of detachment, Jones added: "Paliser turned to see who was there. A sword-cane told him."

The musician's lips twitched, his face had contracted, his hand now was on his breast. "I wish Cassy would hurry. She's gone for amyl."

"Is it far?"

"The corner. Are you going to do anything?"

Jones shook his head. "I don't need to."

The sunken eyes were upon him. "Why do you say that?"

"You are an honest man."

The sunken eyes wavered. "At least I never supposed they would arrest Lennox. How could I?"

"No one could have supposed it. Besides, in your own conscience you were justified, were you not?"

"You know about that, too?"

"Yes, I know about that."

The Rigoletto disc now had been replaced by another, one from which a voice brayed, a voice nasal, jocular, felonious.

"That beast ought to be shot," Jones added.

The musician raised himself a little. "You don't misjudge her, do you?"

Jones, annoyed at the swill tossed about, had turned from him. He turned back. "Believe me, Mr. Cara, there is no one for whom I have a higher respect."

A spasm seized the musician. For a moment, save for the effort at breath, he was silent. Then feebly he said: "I wish she would hurry."

"Can I do anything?"

"Yes, tell me. Do you condemn me?"

The novelist hesitated. "There are no human scales for any soul. Though, to be sure——"

"What?"

"It might have been avoided. As it is, they will suspect her."

"Cassy?"

"Naturally. They can't hold Lennox on a paper-cutter—that belongs to me, and a few empty words said in my presence and which, if necessary, I did not hear. They can't hold him on that. But when they learn, as they will, the circumstances of your daughter's misadventure, they will arrest her."

"Merciful God!"

The jeopardy to her, a jeopardy previously undiscerned, but which then shaken at him, instantly took shape, twisted his mouth into the appalling grimace that mediæval art gave to the damned.

"And you don't want that," Jones remotely resumed.

"Want it!" Galvanised by the shock, the musician sat suddenly up. "Last night, after I got back, I slept like a log. This morning, I felt if I had not done it, I would still have it to do and that satisfied me. But afterwards, when I learned about Lennox, it threw me here. Now—— My God!"

He fell back.

The poor devil is done for, thought Jones, who, wondering whether he could get it over in time, leaned forward.

"Mr. Cara, don't you think you had best make it plain sailing for everybody, and let me draw up a declaration?"

The disc now had run out. The grunt of the beast was stilled. From beyond came the quick click of a key. Almost at once Cassy appeared.

She hurried to her father. "There were people ahead of me. They took forever. Has Mr. Jones told you? Mr. Lennox did not do it."

Breaking a tube in a handkerchief, she was administering the amyl and Jones wondered whether she could then suspect. But her face was turned from him, he could not read it, and realising that, in any event, she must be spared the next act, he cast about for an excuse to get her away. At once, remembering the notary, he produced him.

"Your father wants me to draw a paper on which his signature should be attested. If I am not asking too much, would you mind going back to the druggist for the notary whose sign I saw there?"

Cassy turned from her father. "A paper? What paper?"

Bravely Jones lied. "A will."

Cassy looked from one to the other. "The poor dear often has these attacks. He will be better soon —now that he knows. Won't you, daddy?"

Angelo Cara's eyes had in them an expression infinitely tender, equally vacant. It was as though, in thinking of her, he was thinking too of something else. Though, as Jones afterward decided, he probably was not thinking at all.

Cassy exclaimed at him. "Besides, what have you—except me?"

"Everybody has to make a will," Jones, lying again, put in. "There has been a new law passed. The eternal revenue collector requires it."

Cassy smoothed the rug, put the handkerchief on the table, opened a drawer, got out some paper, a pen, a bottle of ink.

In a moment she had gone.

Jones seated himself at the table. "Forgive me for asking, but may I assume that you believe in God, a life hereafter and in the rewards and punishments which, we are told, await us?"

The musician closed his eyes.

"Thank you," said Jones, who began to write:

I, Angelo Cara, being in full possession of my senses and conscious of the immanence of death, do solemnly swear to the truth of this my dying declaration, which, I also solemnly swear, is made by me without any collusion with Keith Lennox. First; I firmly believe in God, in a life hereafter, and in future rewards and punishments. Second; I alone am guilty of the murder of Montagu Paliser, jr., whom I killed without aid or accomplices and without the privity or knowledge of any other person.

Jones, wishing that in his law-school days he had crammed less and studied more, looked up.

"I cannot compliment you on your pen, Mr. Cara. But then, pen and ink always seem so emphatic. Personally, I prefer a pencil. Writing with a pencil is like talking in a whisper."

It was in an effort to deodorise the atmosphere, charged with the ghastly, that he said it. The declarant did not appear to notice. His sunken eyes had been closed. Widely they opened.

"The other side!"

Jones blotted the declaration. "The other side cannot be very different from this side. Not that part of it at least which people, such as you and I, first visit. A bit farther on, I suppose we prepare for our return here. For that matter, it will be very careless of us, if we don't. We relive and redie and redie and relive, endlessly, ad infinitum. The Church does not put it in just that manner, but the allegory of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting amounts, perhaps, to the same thing. 'Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall cease to be never.' That is the way Edwin Arnold expressed it, after the 'Gita' had expressed it for him. But probably you have not frequented the 'Gita,' Mr. Cara. It is an exceedingly——"

"Cassy's lace dress is all torn. It was so pretty."

He is in the astral now, thought Jones, who said: "She will have a much prettier one."

But now again from the hall came that quick click and Cassy appeared, a little fat man behind her.

Jones stood up. "How do do. You know Mr. Cara. Mr. Cara wants his signature attested."

The little man exhibited his gold teeth. "With a will that is not the way. I told this young lady so but she would have it that I come along."

The young lady, who was taking her hat off, left the room.

Jones fished in a pocket. "It is very good of you.

Here, if you please, is your fee. The document is not a will, it is a release."

As the novelist spoke, he put the pen in the musician's hand and, finding it necessary, or thinking that it was, for, as he afterward realised, it was not, he guided it.

"You acknowledge this——" the notary began. But at the moment Cassy returned and, it may be, distracted by her, he mumbled the rest, took the reply for granted, applied the stamp, exhibited his teeth. Then, at once, the hall had him.

Cassy turned to Jones. Her face disclosed as many emotions as an opal has colours. Relief, longing, uncertainty, and distress were there, ringed in beauty.

"Miss Austen ought to know how she has misjudged him. Do you suppose she would let me see her?"

Bully for you! thought Jones, who said: "I cannot imagine any one refusing you anything."

In speaking, he heard something. Cassy turned. She too had heard it. But what?

With a cry she ran to the sofa. "Daddy!"

His face was grey, the grey that dawn has, the grey than which there is nothing greyer and yet in which there is light. That light was there. His upper-lip was just a little raised. It was as though he had seen something that pleased him and of which he was about to tell.

"Daddy!"

Jones followed her. He drew down the rug and bent over. After a moment, he drew the rug up, well up, and, with a forefinger, saluted.

Cassy, tearing the covering back, flung herself there. Jones could not see her tears. He heard them. Her slim body shook.

XXXI

ON leaving the walk-up Jones discovered a restaurant that he judged convenient and vile. But the convenience appealed, and the villainy of the place did not extend to the telephone-book, which was the first thing he ordered.

While waiting for it, it occurred to him that in a novel the death he had witnessed would seem very pat. Why is life so artificial? he wonderingly asked.

The query suggested another. It concerned not the decedent but his daughter.

By the Lord Harry, he told himself, her linen shall not be washed in public if I can prevent it, and what is the use in being a novelist if you can't invent?

But now the book was before him. In it he found that Dunwoodie resided near Columbia University. It was ages since he had ventured in that neighbourhood, which, when finally he got there, gave him the agreeable sensation of being in a city other than New York.

Hic Labor, Haec Quies, he saw written on the statue of a tall maiden, and though, in New York, quiet is to be had only in the infrequent cemeteries, deep down, yet with the rest of the inscription he had been engaged all day.

Gravely saluting the maiden, who was but partly false, he passed on to an apartment-house and to Dunwoodie's door, which was opened by Dunwoodie himself. In slippers and a tattered gown, he was Hogarthian.

"I thought it a messenger!" he bitterly exclaimed.

Jones smiled at him. "When a man of your eminence is not wrong, he is invariably right. I am a messenger."

In the voice of an ogre, Dunwoodie took it up. "What is the message, sir?"

Jones pointed at the ceiling. Involuntarily, Dunwoodie looked up and then angrily at the novelist.

"An order of release," the latter announced.

Dunwoodie glared. "I suppose, sir, I must let you in, but allow me to tell you——"

Urbanely Jones gestured. "Pray do not ask my permission, it is a privilege to listen to anything you may say."

Dunwoodie turned. Through a winding hall he led the way to a room in which a lane went from the threshold to a table. The lane was bordered with an underbush of newspapers, pamphlets, magazines. Behind the underbush was a forest of books. Beside the table were an armchair and a stool. From above, hung a light. Otherwise, save for cobwebs, the room was bare and very relaxing.

Dunwoodie taking the chair, indicated the stool. "Now, sir!"

Jones gave him the declaration.

With not more than a glance Dunwoodie possessed himself of the contents. He put it down.

"If I had not known you had studied law, not for a moment would that rigamarole lead me to suspect it."

In a protest which was quite futile, Jones raised a hand. "The notary is unnecessary, I know that. I know also that a dying declaration is not the best evidence, but——"

"Do you at least know that the declarant is dead?"

Jones, who favoured the dramatic, nodded. "He died in my arms."

Dunwoodie took it in and took it out. "It is curious how crime leads to bad taste."

Jones leaned forward. "I may tell you for your information——"

"Spare me, I am overburdened with information as it is."

Jones sat back. He had no intention of taking Dunwoodie then behind the scenes. That would come later. But he did want to try out an invention that had occurred to him. He sighed.

"Don't you care to hear why he did it?"

"Not in the least."

"But——"

Dunwoodie fumbled in a pocket. "The district attorney may be more receptive. I shall go to him in the morning and I will thank you to go with me."

"I am not up in the morning."

"Then don't go to bed."

From the pocket, Dunwoodie extracted an enormous handkerchief. It fascinated Jones. He had never seen one that resembled it.

"You dispose of me admirably. The district attorney, I suppose, will enter a nolle prosequi."

In that handkerchief, Dunwoodie snorted. "You may suppose what you like."

Jones laughed. "It is my business to suppose. I suppose, when the murder was committed, that Lennox was at home. If I am right, he has an alibi which his servant can confirm."

Dunwoodie stared. "Whatever your business may be, it is not to teach me mine."

Jones drew out a cigarette-case. "Let me sit at your feet then. What does Lennox say?"

"How inquisitive you are! But to be rid of you, he——"

"May I smoke?" Jones interrupted.

"Good God, sir! You are not preparing to make a night of it?"

"I have one or two other little matters in hand. But since I may suppose all I like, I take it that Lennox intended to go to the opera, though I fancy also that he had no intention of going to Paliser's box. I suppose that he intended to wait about and go for him hot and heavy when he came out. I suppose also that, while dressing, he changed his mind. And, by the way, isn't there such a writ as a mandamus, or a duces tecum? I would like my paper-cutter returned."

"Confound your paper-cutter! You don't deserve to have me admit it, but Lennox' account of it is that before going on to the opera, he stopped to write a letter to Miss—er—Hum! Ha!"

"Miss Austen?"

"And when he got through it was midnight."

"I'll lay a pippin he didn't send it."

"What, sir?"

"Lennox had a lot to say. It was gagging him. He would have suffocated if he had kept it in. The effect of getting it on black and white was an emetic. He read it over, judged it inadequate, tore it up. I have done the same thing. I daresay you have."

The great man sat back. "His scrap-basket has been visited. The letter was there."

"Well, then, I suppose the short and long of it is, you will have him out to-morrow."

"As I said, you may suppose all you like."

"Without indiscretion then, may I suppose that you live here alone?"

Dunwoodie flourished his handkerchief. It was cotton and big as a towel.

"I am not as young as you are, sir, and whether erroneously or not, I believe myself better informed."

"Ah!" Jones put in. "Your physiognomy corroborates you. I have sometimes thought that it were difficult for the Seven Sages to be as wise as you look —which is the reason, perhaps, why I do not quite follow you."

"I did not imagine that you would. You are a sociable being. Every imbecile is pitiably sociable. But for a thinking man, a man without vices and without virtues, what is there except solitude?"

Appreciatively Jones motioned. "Thank you for descending to my level. As it happens, I also have a cloister where I have the double advantage of being by myself and of not being with others. But now that I am in your hermitage, there is this Matter of Ziegler, concerning which I would like the benefit of your professional advice."

"Hum! Ha! Got yourself mixed up with a woman and want me to pull you out. Well, sir, you will find it expensive. But a hermitage is not an office. I shall expect you at mine to-morrow. I shall expect you before ten."

Dunwoodie stood up. "To-morrow, though, your turpitudes will have to wait. Have you been served?"

Jones laughed. "Not yet."

"Time enough then. You can find the door?"

Through the lane, bordered by rubbish, and on through the winding hall, Jones went out. As Dunwoodie had said, there was time enough. There had been no service—no summons, no complaint. It might be that there would be none. The matter might adjust itself without any. It might be that there was no ground for action. Jones could not tell. After the manner of those who have crammed for a law examination, there had been a moment when he knew, or thought he knew, it all. But also after the manner of those who have not taken the post-graduate course which practice is, the crammed knowledge had gone. Only remnants and misfits remained. It was on these that he had conjectured the suit which, meanwhile, constituted a nut to crack. There was time and to spare though. Besides, for the moment, he had other things to do.

Then, as he went on to attend to them, he wondered why Dunwoodie, who, he thought, must make a hundred thousand a year, lived like a ragpicker.

Before him, the starshell, which imagination projects, burst suddenly.

He said he had no virtues and probably told the truth, Jones decided. In which case he cannot be a miser. But he also said he had no vices and probably lied like a thief. The old scoundrel is a philanthropist. I would wager an orchard of pippins on that, but there is no one to take me up—except this policeman.

"Officer," he resumed aloud. "Behold a stranger in a strange land. By any miracle, is there a taxi-stand nearby?"

Then presently Jones was directing a driver.

"The Tombs!"

XXXII

IN a dirty cell Lennox sat on a dirty cot. Through a door, dirty too, but barred, came a shuffle of feet, the sound of the caged at bay and that odour, perhaps unique, which prisons share, the smell of dry-rot, perspiration, disinfectants and poisoned teeth. In addition to the odour there was light, not much, but some. Nearby was a sink. Altogether it was a very nice cell, fit for the Kaiser. Lennox took no pleasure in it. Rage enveloped him. The rage was caused not by the cell but by his opinion of it. That was only human.

Events in themselves are empty. It is we who fill them. They become important or negligible, according to the point of view. We give them the colours, violent, agreeable, or merely neutral, that they obtain. It is the point of view that fills and affects them. The point of view can turn three walls and a door into a madhouse. It can convert them into an ivory tower. To Lennox they were merely revolting.

That morning he had laughed. His arrest amused him. He laughed at it, laughed at the police. They took no offence. Instead they took the cigars that he offered and a few accessories which they grabbed. It is a way the police have. Still Lennox laughed. He knew of course that at Headquarters he would be at once released, the entire incident properly regretted. When he found himself not only elaborately wrong but in court, laughter ceased. Anger replaced it. He had been first amused, then surprised, afterwards exasperated, emotions that finally addled into rage, not at others but at himself, which was rather decent. In any of the defeats of life, the simple blame others; the wise blame themselves; the evolved blame nobody. Lennox had not reached that high plane then but in directing his anger at himself he showed the advantages of civilisation which the war has put in such admirable relief.

Now, on that cot, in that cell, ragingly he retraced his steps. He saw himself loving Margaret Austen as though he were to love her forever. A hero can do no more. He saw her loving him with a love so light that a breath had blown it away. A nymph in the brake could do no worse. Yet whether on her part it were perversity or mere shallowness, the result was the same. It had landed him in jail. For that he acquitted her completely. What he could not forgive was his own stupidity in persisting in loving her after she had turned away.

The night before, while, at the opera, the *Terra Addio* was being sung, he had been writing her one of the endless letters that only those vomiting in an attack of indignation morbus ever produce. In the relief of getting it in black and white, the nausea abated. Then judging it all very idle, he tore the letter in two. It was a gesture made before relapsing into a silence which he had intended should be eternal. At the very moment when Paliser was being run through the gizzards, he, turning a page of life, had scrawled on it Hic jacet.

Now, on that cot, Paliser recurring, he thought of him with so little animosity that he judged his spectacular death inadequate. But who, he wondered, had staged it? Not Cassy. Cassy took things with too high a hand and reasonably perhaps, since she took them from where her temperament had placed her. Then, without further effort at the riddle, his thoughts drifted back to that afternoon when, from his rooms, the sunlight had followed her out like a dog.

He had been looking at the floor, but without seeing it. Then at once, without seeing it either, he saw something else, something which for a long time must have been there, something that had been acting on him and in him without his knowledge. It was the key to another prison, the key to the prison that life often is and which, in the great defeats, every man who is a man finds at his feet and usually without looking for it either.

"But I love her!" he suddenly exclaimed.

There is a magic in those words. No sooner were they uttered than his mind became a rendezvous of apparitions. He saw Cassy as he had seen her first, as he had seen her last, as he had seen her through all the changes and mutations of their acquaintance, saw her eyes lifted to his, saw her face turned from him.

The crystallisation which, operating in the myriad cells of the brain, creates our tastes, our temptations, our desires; creates them unknown to us, creates them even against our will, and which without his will or knowledge, had, like a chemical precipitate, been acting on him, then was complete.

"I love her!" he repeated.

The dirty cot, the dirty cell, the dirty floor, a point of view was transforming. At the moment they ceased to be revolting. Then immediately another view restored their charm.

"She won't have me!"

The dirty cell reshaped itself and he thought of life, a blind fate treacherous always.

"Good Lord, how I envy you!"

Lennox turned. Wriggling through the bars a hand which a keeper checked, stood Jones.

"When Cervantes enjoyed the advantages that you possess, the walls parted and through them cavalcaded the strumpet whose name is Fame. In circumstances equally inspiring Bunyan entertained that hussy. Verlaine too. From a dungeon she lifted him to Parnassus, lifted him to the top. If I only had their luck—and yours! It is too good for you. You don't appreciate it. Besides you will be out to-morrow."

"I ought not to be here at all," Lennox indignantly retorted.

"No, you are most undeserving. Mais écoute. C'est le père de la petite qui a fait le coup. Il me l'a avoué, ensuite il a claqué et depuis j'ai vu ton avocat. C'est une brute mais——"

"Can that," put in the keeper, a huge creature with a cauliflower face, dingy and gnarled. "You guys got to cough English."

Ingratiatingly Jones turned to him. "I mistook you for a distinguished foreigner. Dear me, my life is too full of pleasure!"

He turned to Lennox. "That's it. You are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Now that I have envied you insufficiently I'll go too. While I am about it I'll go to Park Avenue. Any message?"

"None."

"Make it briefer. Besides, look here. I'll wager a wilderness of pippins that Park Avenue was not and never thought of being engaged to what's his name.

I'll wager because it is not in the picture. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you."

"You are very gifted. Nothing wrong with your tongue, though, is there?"

"Nothing whatever."

"Behold then the messenger awaiting the message."

"Very good. I'm through. Absolutely, completely, entirely. If you must be a busybody say that. I'm through."

But that was not Jones' idea of the game and he out with it. "I'll do nothing of the kind."

"Won't you?" Lennox retorted. He had remained seated. But rising then, he looked at the keeper, motioned at Jones.

"If that man asks for me again, say I'm out."

Jones laughed. "Wow-wow, old cock! I wish I could have said that but I probably shall. Meanwhile book this: Dinner to-morrow, Athenæum at eight. By-bye. Remember Cervantes. Don't forget Verlaine. Sweet dreams."

Lennox sat down, looked at the key, tried to turn it. That door too was barred.

XXXIII

THE offices of Dunwoodie, Bramwell, Strawbridge and Cohen were supplied with a rotunda in which Jones sat waiting, and Jones loved to sit and wait.

Since the musician's tenement had crumbled and the soul of the violinist had gone forth, gone to the unseen assessors who pityingly, with indulgent hands, weigh our stupid sins, since then a week had passed. During it, a paper signed by the dead had been admitted by the living, a prisoner had been discharged and for no other imaginable reason than because he had killed nobody, Lennox became a hero.

New York is very forgetful. Lennox sank back into the blank anonymity to which humanity in the aggregate is eternally condemned and from which, at a bound, he had leaped. The papers were to tell of him again, but casually, without scareheads, among the yesterdays and aviators in France. That though was later.

Meanwhile an enigma remained. Very heroically a young man had done nothing. Hurrah and good-bye! The calciums of curiosity turned on an obscure fiddler who, after murdering another young man, had succeeded in bilking the chair.

But why had he killed him? That was the enigma, one which would have been exciting, if the solution had not been so prompt and so tame. At the proceedings which resulted in Lennox' discharge, it was testified that Angelo Cara had been temporarily deranged.

The testimony, expertly advanced by a novelist who was not an expert, the reporters grabbed before the court could rule it out. The grabbing was natural. The decedent's declaration had been made to Jones who, though not an alienist, was the teller of tales that have been translated into every polite language, including the Japanese, which is the politest of all. Moreover, have not the mendacious been properly subdivided into liars, damned liars and expert witnesses? To Verdun with the lot! Mr. Ten Eyck Jones was certainly not an expert, but certainly too he was somebody, he was a best-seller and in the way we live now, the testimony of the best-seller is entitled to every editorial respect. The court might rule his testimony out, city editors saluted it.

Jones' little invention did wash therefore and, in the washing, poured balm by the bucket over the father of the murdered man.

Then, gradually, like everything else, except war and the taxes, both murderer and murdered were dropped in the great dustbin of oblivion that awaits us all.

In the rotunda, meanwhile, Jones sat kicking his heels. It was in the morning, and always in the morning Jones was invisibly at work. Now, his routine upset, loathingly he kicked his heels. But Jones had ways of consoling himself that were very commonplace.

I am doing all the evil I can, he vindictively reflected, and it was with the comfort of his animosity about him that, ultimately, he was shown into an office—bright and, on this May forenoon, very airy—that gave on Broad Street.

Dunwoodie, twisting in a chair, glared at him.

"Ecce iterum Crispinus!" Jones tritely began. "What price retainers to-day?"

"I hoped to God I had seen the last of you," Dunwoodie, with elaborate, old-fashioned courtesy, replied.

Jones, disdaining to be asked, drew a chair.

Viciously Dunwoodie eyed him. "What the devil do you want?"

Jones smiled at him. "That decision."

"What decision, sir?"

"The one I cited when I brought you the paper that secured Lennox' discharge."

"Damme, sir, nothing of the kind. I would have had him discharged any way."

Jones' smile broadened. "You seem capable of anything. It is a great quality. Believe me, if I thought you lacked it, you would not now be enjoying my society."

"You flatter yourself strangely, sir. If you have nothing to say, don't keep on saying it."

"On the contrary, I am here to listen to you," Jones agreeably put in. "I want your views on that case, 'The Matter of Ziegler.'"

"Hum! Ha! Got yourself in a mess. Yaas. I remember. Been served yet? Give me the facts."

One after another, Jones produced them.

During their recital, Dunwoodie twirled his thumbs. At their conclusion, he expressed himself with entire freedom. After which, he saw Jones to the door, an act which he performed only when he felt particularly uncivil. At the moment the old bulldog's lip was lifted. But not at Jones.

Broad Street was very bright that day. Its brilliance did not extend to the market. Values were departing. The slump was on. Speculators, investors, the long and the shorts, bank-messengers, broker's-clerks, jostled Jones, who went around the corner, where a cavern gaped and swallowed him.

Crashingly the express carried him uptown. He did not know but that he might have lingered. There is always room at the top, though perhaps it is unwise to buy there. At the bottom, there is room too, much more. It is very gloomy, but it is the one safe place. Jones did not think that the market had got there yet. None the less it was inviting. On the other hand, he did think he might eat something. There was a restaurant that he wot of where, the week before, he had had a horrible bite. The restaurant was nauseating, but convenient. To that dual attraction he succumbed.

At table there, he meditated on the inscrutable possibilities of life which, he decided, is full of changes, particularly in the subway; whereupon a tale in Perrault's best manner occurred to him.

A waiter, loutish and yet infinitely dreary, intervened. Jones paid and went out on the upper reaches of Broadway. The fairy-tale that he had evoked accompanied him. It was charmful as only a fairy-tale can be. But the end, while happy, was hazy. He did not at all know whether it would do.

Abruptly he awoke.

"Will you come in?" Cassy was saying.

She had her every-day manner, her every-day clothes, her usual hat. Jones, noting these details, inwardly commended them. But at once, another detail was apparent. The entrance to the room where the *Bella figlia* had been succeeded by a dirge, was blocked. There was a table in it.

Cassy motioned. "I was trying to get it out when it got itself wedged there. Will you crawl under it, as I have to, or would you prefer to use it as a divan?"

"Where your ladyship crawleth, I will crawl," Jones gravely replied. "I just love going on all fours."

As he spoke he went under. With a sad little smile she followed.

"I know I ought to be in mourning," she told him as he brushed his knees.

She hesitated and sat down. She did not say that she lacked the money to buy the suits and trappings. She did not want to say that she had sold the table, which was the last relic of her early home, nor yet that she had been trying to get it out, in order to prevent the Jew purchaser from again coming in. Instead, she fingered her smock.

"I have been looking for an engagement and they don't want you in black."

Jones took a chair. "War has made mourning an anachronism in Europe. If it lasts long enough, it will do the same here and do the same with art. But you are very brave." He looked about. "I understood your father had a Cremona."

"The poor dear thought so, but a dealer to whom I took it said it was a Tyrolean copy."

Jones put down his hat. "The brutes always say something of the kind. What did it look like?"

Cassy glanced at him. "A flute, of course. What else would a violin look like?"

"You are quite right. I meant the colour."

"Oh, the colour! Madeira with a sheen in it."

"Yes!" Jones exclaimed. "That is the exact and precise description of the Amati varnish, of which the secret is lost. I hope you did not let the brute have it."

Cassy did not want to tell him that either. But when you are very forlorn it is hard to keep everything in.

"I needed a little for the funeral and he gave it to me."

"And it was worth thousands! Have you found an engagement?"

"The season is ending. Then too, either I have lost confidence or I am not up to it, not yet at least."

"I can understand that."

Cassy gestured. "It is not this empty room, it is the doors that slam. We know we should hasten to love those whom we do love, lest they leave us forever before we have loved them enough. But do we? We think we have time and to spare. I know I thought so. I was careless, forgetful, selfish. That is one of the doors. I can't close it."

"Time will."

"Perhaps. Meanwhile I am told I should change my name. At first, I felt very bitterly toward you for what you did here. It seemed inhuman of you. Since then I have realised that you could not have done otherwise. It saved Mr. Lennox. I would have done that."

"I am sure of it."

"But I won't change my name. I won't put such an affront on the poor dear who thought—yet there! I shall never know what he thought, but who, however wrongly, did it because of me. If only I had not told him! I ought never to have said a word. Never! That door slams the loudest. It wakes me. It is slamming all the time."

"That too shall pass."

Cassy doubted it. The door and the noise of it hurt. Her eyes filled. Yet, too sensitive to weep at anybody, even at an inkbeast, she stood up, went to the window and, while reabsorbing her tears, looked, or affected to look, at a lean stripe of blue sky.

Meditatively Jones considered her. "Fine day for a walk."

It was as though he had offered her a handkerchief. Tearful no longer, but annoyed, she turned and sat down.

"You seem very original."

"It is absentmindedness, I think. I meant to ask, are you ever down near the Stock Exchange?"

"That is where Mr. Lennox goes, isn't it?"

"There are others that frequent the neighbourhood. Among them is a deacon named Dunwoodie."

"Isn't he the lawyer who acted for Mr. Lennox?"

"Now you mention it, I believe he is. Anyway, I wonder if you would care to have him act for you?"

Cassy crossed her hands. "I don't understand you."

"For a moment or two, he didn't either. Then he said he would like to see you. That was an hour ago. I have just come from his office."

"But what in the world does he want of me? Everything is over now, isn't it? Or are there more doors? Really, if there are, I don't think I can stand it. I don't think I can, Mr. Jones."

"Yes, but there are doors that don't slam, doors that are closed and locked and barred. Sometimes there is romance behind them, sometimes there are santalwood boxes crammed with rubies; sometimes there are secrets, sometimes there are landscapes of beckoning palms. One never quite knows what there is behind closed doors. He may open one or two for you. Wouldn't it interest you to let him try?"

Cassy's eyelids had been a trifle tremulous, in her under-lip there had been also a little uncertainty. But at the vistas which the novelist dangled at her, she succeeded in looking, as she could look, immeasurably remote.

"That sort of thing is chorus-girl!"

Blankly Jones stared. "What sort of thing?"

"Why, you want me to bring an action. I will do nothing of the kind. Even if he were living, I would rather be dead. Besides, it was all my fault. I ought to have known better."

"Better than what?" enquired the novelist, who now had got his bearings.

"Mr. Jones, I told you all about it."

"Forgive me, if I seem to contradict you. You did not tell all."

Cassy stiffened.

"How could you?" Jones continued. "Details are so tiresome. To-day when I was talking to Dunwoodie, I advanced a few. Dunwoodie is a very ordinary person. Details bore you, they bore me. He dotes on them. By the way, you said something about changing your name. I wish you would. Couldn't you take mine?"

"You are ridiculous."

"As you like. Any one else would call me mercenary."

He's crazy, Cassy uncomfortably reflected. What shall I do?

Modestly the novelist motioned. "Ten Eyck Jones now! It doesn't rhyme with Victor Hugo or even with Andrew Carnegie, but it has a lilt. It might be worse."

"What are you talking about?" Cassy, with increasing discomfort, put in.

"There is a little thing that turns men into flint and women into putty. That's what I am talking about. I am talking money."

"Thank you. The subject does not interest me."

"Ah, but you are evolved! Would that the butcher were! We all have to consider his incapacities and money helps us. I have an idea that your dear departed may have left you a trifle."

"Really, Mr. Jones, you are talking nonsense."

"It is a specialty of mine."

"Besides, it is impossible."

"Impossible is a word that intelligent young women never employ."

"Very good. Admitting the possibility, I won't take it."

"It might be paid into your bank."

"I haven't any bank."

"One could be found for you."

"I would tell them not to accept it."

"The bank that won't accept money does not exist."

Cassy flushed. "I rather liked you. Couldn't you be less hateful?"

"You are trying to pick a quarrel with me."

"Nothing of the kind."

"Then will you let me take you to Dunwoodie?"

"Certainly not."

"Then will you go alone?"

"But why? Why should I? What does this man with an absurd name want of me?"

Jones pulled at a cuff. "Well, look at it from this angle. Before you discovered that your marriage was a sham, you were prepared to assume a few obligations and some of them may still subsist. The man with the absurd name can tell you what they are. Surely you are not a slacker. This is war-time."

With that abandonment which is so gracious in a woman, Cassy half raised a hand. "My front line is wavering."

Jones reached for his hat. "Over the top then!"

Under the table they crawled.

XXXIV

"YOUR very obedient servant, madam."

With that and a fine bow, Dunwoodie greeted Cassy when Jones had succeeded in getting her into the inner and airy office. The old ruffian drew a chair.

"Do me the honour."

Cassy sat down. What a funny old man, she thought.

Jones addressing the door, remarked dreamily: "Pendente lite, I will renew my acquaintance with Swinburne's 'Espousals.' "

Dunwoodie glared. "You will find it in the library." Then he sat down, folded his hands on his waistcoat and smiled at Cassy. "Nice day."

"Very."

"Down here often?"

Cassy shook her docked hair. "No, and I don't at all know why I am here now. I do know though, and I may as well tell you at once, I have no intention of making a fuss."

Dunwoodie's smile, a smile quasi-ogrish, semi-paternal, expanded. "If our Potsdam friend only resembled you!"

For a young woman so recently and doubly bereaved, Cassy's blue smock and yellow skirt seemed to him properly subdued. Moreover, from a word that

Jones had dropped, he realised that wealth had not presided at their selection.

He twirled his thumbs. "But let me ask, what may your full name be?"

"Bianca Cara."

"Hum! Ha! Most becoming. And how young are you?"

Well, I like that! thought Cassy, who answered: "Twenty-one."

Dunwoodie crossed his legs. "You think me an impertinent old man. I don't mean to be impertinent. I take a great interest in you."

"Very good of you, I'm sure."

"Not at all. Is your grandmother living?"

"For heaven's sake! You did not know her, did you?"

"No, but I stand ready to take her place."

"You would find it difficult. She is buried in Portugal."

"The place of your grandfather then, the place of any one whom you can trust."

"But why?"

"Well, let me ask. What are your plans?"

"My plans? Mr. Jones asked me that. I have a sort of a voice and I am looking for an engagement. But the season is ending. Then too I am told I ought to change my name. I won't do it."

"Hum! Ha! But it appears that you have."

He's crazy too, thought Cassy, who said: "I don't know what you are talking about."

Dunwoodie extracted his towel "Why, my dear young lady, you are Mrs. Paliser."

Cassy flushed. "I am nothing of the kind. I don't know how you got such an idea."

Dunwoodie, quite as though he were doing some hard thinking, folded and refolded that towel which was his handkerchief. "Yet you married Montagu Paliser, jr., did you not?"

"Not at all. That is I thought I did, but the man who performed the ceremony was a gardener."

"Dear me! Is it possible! And where was this?"

What is it to you? thought Cassy. "At Paliser Place, if you must know."

"And when did it occur?"

"Really, Mr. Dunwoodie, I can't see why you are putting me through this examination, but if it is of any benefit to you, it happened just five days before he died."

"Anybody about?"

"Oh, yes. There were two other servants who enjoyed it very much. I heard them laughing and I don't blame them. It was a rare treat. A child would have laughed at it. All my fault too. I behaved like a ninny. But my great mistake was in telling my father. I would give the world if I had not. Won't you please send for Mr. Jones? As I told you, I don't know why I am here."

Dunwoodie shook out the towel. "You must blame him then. He said you were Paliser's widow."

"Well, you see I am not."

"Yet you consented to be his wife."

"Whose? Mr. Jones'?"

"Paliser's, my dear young lady. However fictitious the ceremony, you consented to be Paliser's wife."

"What if I did? It has nothing to do with it now."

"Just a little, perhaps. Did you hear Jones say that he would renew his acquaintance with Swinburne?"

"From the way he talks, one might think he knew him by heart."

"Yaas, he is very objectionable. But you are referring to the poet. He was referring to the jurist. The jurist wrote a very fine book. Let me quote a passage from it. 'It is the present and perfect consent the which alone maketh matrimony, without either solemnisation or'—here, Dunwoodie, skipping the frank old English, substituted—'or anything else, for neither the one nor the other is the essence of matrimony, but consent only. Consensus non concubitus facit matrimoniam.' Hum! Ha! In other words, whether marriage is or is not contracted in facie ecclesiæ, it is consent alone that constitutes its validity. You understand Latin?"

Cassy laughed. "I dream in it."

Dunwoodie laughed too. "Pleasant dreams to you always. But what I have quoted was the common law, and so remained until altered by the Revised Statutes, with which no doubt you are equally familiar."

Cassy smoothed her frock. "I was brought up on them."

"I don't need to tell you then that when adopted here they provided that marriage should be a civil contract. In so providing, they merely reaffirmed the existing common law. Subsequently, the law was changed. The legislature enacted that a marriage must be solemnised by certain persons—ecclesiastic, judicial or municipal—or else, that it should be entered into by written contract, which contract was to be filed in the office of the town clerk. Coincidentally the legislature prohibited any marriage contracted otherwise than in the manner then prescribed."

That morning Cassy had been to an agent, a saponacious person with a fabulous nose. At the moment the nose was before her. She was wondering whether it would scent out for her an engagement.

"However," Dunwoodie, twisting the edge of his towel, continued, "various amendments were afterward adopted and certain sections repealed. Among the latter was the one containing the prohibition which I have cited. In my opinion, it was not the intention of the legislature to repeal it. Yet, however that may be, repealed it was. Since then, or, more exactly, a few weeks ago, the enactments regarding the manner in which marriage must be solemnised were held to be not mandatory but directory, the result being that the law originally prevailing has now come again into operation, common-law marriages are as valid as before and——"

Here Dunwoodie flaunted the towel.

"And you are Mrs. Paliser."

Of the entire exposition, Cassy heard but that. It ousted the agent and his fabulous nose. She bristled.

"I can't be. I don't want to be. You don't seem to see that the clergyman was not a clergyman at all. He was one of the help there. I thought I told you. Why, there was not even a license! That man said he had one. It was only another of the whimsicalities that took me in."

Dunwoodie repocketing the towel, showed his yellow teeth. "A young gentlewoman who dreams in Latin, and who was brought up on the Revised Statutes, must be familiar with Byron. 'Men were deceivers ever.' Not long ago, a Lovelace whose history is given in the New York Reports conducted himself in a manner that would be precisely analogous to that of your late husband, were it not that, instead of dying, he did what was less judicious, he married again—and was sent up for bigamy. He too had omitted to secure a license. He also entertained a lady with a fancy-ball. None the less, the Supreme Court decided that he had legally tied the matrimonial noose about him and that decision the Court of Appeals affirmed."

Cassy shook her pretty self. "Well, even so, I don't see what difference it makes, now at any rate. He is dead and that is the end of it."

"Hum! Not entirely. As widow you are entitled to a share in such property as your late husband possessed. How much, or how little, he did possess I cannot say. But I assume that such share of it as may accrue, will be—ha!—adequate for you."

"But he hadn't anything. He told me so."

"He didn't always tell you the truth though, did he? In any event it is probable that he left enough to provide for your maintenance."

Cassy threw up her hands. "Never in the world."

Dunwoodie again ran his eyes over the severity of her costume. "You think it would be inadequate?"

But Cassy was angry. "I don't think anything about it. Whether it would or would not be adequate, does not make the slightest difference. I won't take it."

"Ha! And why not?"

Cassy fumed. "Why not? But isn't it evident? That man had no intention of marrying me, no intention whatever of leaving me a cent."

"As it happens, he did both."

Cassy clenched her small fist. "No matter. He did not intend to and don't you see if I were to accept a ha'penny of his wretched money, I would be benefiting by a crime for which may God forgive my poor, dear father."

There was a point which the legislature had not considered, which not one of all the New York Reports construed, a point not of law but of conscience, a point for a tribunal other than that which sits in banco. It floored Dunwoodie.

Damnation, she's splendid, he decided as, mentally, he picked himself up. But it would never do to say so and he turned on her his famous look.

"Madam, once your marriage is established, the money becomes rightfully and legally yours, unless——"

With that look he was frowning at this handsome girl who took law and order with such a high hand. But behind the frown was a desire, which he restrained, to hug her.

Frowning still he looked from Cassy to the door and there at a boy, who was poking through it a nose on which freckles were strewn thick as bran.

"Mr. Rymple, sir, says he has an appointment."

The old ruffian, rising, turned to Cassy. "One moment, if you please."

The door, caught in a draught, slammed after him, though less violently than other doors that were slamming still. Would they never stop? Cassy wondered. Would they slam forever? Were there no rooms in life where she might enter and find the silence that is peace? Surely, some time, somewhere that silence might be hers.

She turned. Jones, looking extremely disagreeable, was walking in.

Cassy, closing her ears to those doors, exclaimed at him. "Here's a pretty how d'ye do. Mr. Dunwoodie says I am Mrs. Paliser."

"That afternoon, when you sent your love to my cat, I could have told you that. In fact I did."

From Jones' air and manner you would have said that he was willing and able to bite a ten-penny nail.

Cassy did not notice. "It appears, too, that I am entitled to some of his wretched money."

"It is unfortunate I did not know that also."

"I believe you did. But I sha'n't take it."

Jones drew a chair. Hatefully he looked her up and down.

"You are quite right. Sixty years ago there was but one millionaire in the country. The plutocrat had not appeared in the street, he had not even appeared in the dictionary. The breed was unknown. To-day there are herds of such creatures. I was reading the statistics recently and they depressed me beyond words. It is always depressing to know how much money other people have. You are quite right not to suffer poor devils to be depressed by you."

Mrs. Yallum! thought Cassy, who said as much; "I don't know what you are talking about."

"You are very intelligent. I am talking small change."

Cassy gave a shrug. "Mr. Dunwoodie said I would have enough to live on. I can do as well as that myself, thank you."

"No doubt," Jones snarled. "I am even sure you could do worse. It is extraordinary how much one can accomplish in refusing a dollar or two that might save another man's life. To hell with everybody! That is the noble attitude. I admire your spirit. A handful of bank-notes are crying at you: 'I'm yours, take me, give me to the wounded, to the starving!'

Not a bit of it. The Viscountess of Casa-Evora is too proud. That's superb."

Cassy turned on him. "See here, young man——"

"Don't you young man me," Jones irritably cut in. "In the rotunda out there, Dunwoodie gave me a foretaste of your swank and I can tell you I relished it. You won't look at a penny of this money because, if you did, you would be benefiting by an act committed by your father, who, as sure as you live, was impelled by the powers invisible to rid the earth of Paliser and to rid it of him for no other reason than that this money might serve a world in flames. Refused by you it will only revert to an old rounder who never did a good deed in his life; whereas, instead, it could call down blessings on your father's grave. But no, perish the thought! All that is leather and prunella to a young woman who regards herself as the arbiter of destiny. By God, you are prodigious!"

"I think you are horrid."

"So are you. You are the heiress to millions and millions. No wonder you put on airs."

Occasionally, to exceptional beings, a hand issuing from nowhere offers a cup brimming with madness, filled to the top with follies and dreams.

At that cup Cassy stared. It was unreal. If she tried to touch it, it would vanish.

"It is impossible!" she cried.

Jones looked about. "Where is my harp?"

Cassy did not know, she could not tell him. She had not even heard. A crater in the Wall Street sky had opened and from it, in an enchanted shower, fell sequins, opals, perfumes and stars.

But Jones must have found his harp. To that shower he was strumming an accompaniment.

"In to-day's paper there is a Red Cross appeal which says that what we give is gone. It is incredible, but educated people believe it. The ignorance of educated people is affecting. By reason of their education, which now and then includes mythology, they believe that happiness is the greatest of all the gifts that the gods can bestow. Being mortal, they try to obtain it. Being ignorant, they fail. Ignorance confounds pleasure with happiness. Pleasure comes from without, happiness from within. People may be very gay and profoundly miserable, really rich and terribly poor. In either case their condition is due to the fact that the happiness which they sought, they sought for themselves. Their error would be stupid were it not pathetic. In seeking happiness for themselves they fail to find it, but when they succeed in securing it for others, they find that on them also it has been bestowed. The money we give is not gone. It comes back to us. It returns in happiness and all the happiness that the richest, the poorest, the wisest, the stupidest can ever possess, is precisely that happiness which they have given away."

Where now where those doors? Cassy, the cascade of flowers and stars about her, looked at the harper. In listening to him, the doors had ceased to slam. About them there was peace. But her eyes had filled.

Jones was still at it.

"The greatest happiness is the cessation of pain. That pagan aphorism the Red Cross might put on its banners. Spiritually it is defective, but practically it is sound and some relief the Red Cross supplies. Give to it. You can put your money to no fairer use. It will hallow the grave where your father lies."

From beyond, from the adjacent Curb, came the shouts of brokers.

Jones, abandoning his harp, looked over at the girl. "What are you crying about?"

"I am not crying," spluttered Cassy, who was blubbering like a baby. "I never cry. It is disgusting of you to say so."

"You are crying."

"I am not crying," Cassy, indignantly sniffing and sobbing, snapped at him. Fiercely she rubbed her eyes. "It is none of your business, anyhow." Pausing, she choked, recovered and blearily added: "And, anyway, if the money is mine, really mine, honestly mine, I will give it away, all of it, every p—penny."

"No, no, not all of it," Jones hastily threw in, for now the door was opening and Dunwoodie appeared. "Keep a pear for your thirst, put a little million aside."

He turned to the lawyer. "Mrs. Paliser accepts her responsibilities."

"Hum! Ha!" The great man sat down and looked at Cassy. He looked many things but he said very few. "My dear young lady, familiar as you are with Latin, with law and with literature, who am I to remind you that chickens should first be hatched? Your rights may be contested. The Paliser Case, as it will be called, may——"

"The Paliser Case!" interjected Jones, who could see the headline from where he sat. "Shade of Blackstone! It will be famous! It will be filmed! The eminent jurist here will be screened and you, too, my lady."

Balefully Dunwoodie shot a glance at the inkbeast and another at Cassy.

"It may last some time. I have no doubt of the result. None whatever. But in spite of your legal knowledge I suggest that you have associate counsel. Now, permit me to ask, would you care to retain me or would you prefer some one else?"

Cassy, who had dried her eyes, looked at him and it was remarkable how pretty she looked.

"Why, no, Mr. Dunwoodie, I would much rather have you, only——" Uncertainly she paused.

The eminent jurist took it up. "Only what?"

"Well, all I know about law is that it is very expensive and I have nothing except my grandfather's portrait."

Dunwoodie touched a button. "Ha! One moment."

A thin young man, with a pasty face and a slight stoop, opened the door.

The old ruffian raised a stubby finger. "Purdy, a cheque for a thousand dollars, to the order of Bianca Paliser, is to be mailed to this lady to-night."

"But, Mr. Dunwoodie!" Cassy exclaimed.

"You must allow me to be your banker," he told her, and turned again to the clerk. "Get Mr. Jeroloman. Say, with my compliments, I shall be obliged if he will look in here. And, Purdy, see to it that that cheque is attended to. Mrs. Paliser will give you her address."

"But, Mr. Dunwoodie!" Cassy exclaimed again, as the sallow youth went out.

To distract her attention, instantly Jones improvised a limerick. "There was a young man named Purdy, who was not what you'd call very sturdy. To be more of a sport, he drank gin by the quart, and danced on a hurdy-gurdy."

"You're insane," announced Cassy, who was a trifle demented herself.

Dunwoodie extracted his towel. "Jeroloman is the attorney for the other side. He will want to meet Mrs. Paliser, but that honour will not be his to-day."

Cassy stood up. "I should hope not. He would be the last camel on the straw—I mean the last straw on the camel."

Dunwoodie, rising also, gave her his fine bow and to Jones a hand.

Then as the two made for the door, from over her shoulder she smiled back at him.

"My grandmother could not have been nicer."

"What do you mean by that?" Jones absently inquired.

But, in the rotunda now, Mr. Purdy was asking her address. If he had dared he would have followed her there. Fortune favouring, he would have followed her to the ends of the earth. It was what one of our allies calls the thunderbolt. Never before had he beheld such a face. Earnestly he prayed that he might behold it again. Allah is great. The prayer was granted.

In the cañon below, Jones, as he piloted her to the subway, pulled at his gloves.

"If I had the ability, I would write an opera, call it 'Danaë' and offer you the title-rôle."

Cassy, her thoughts on her grandmother, repeated it. "Danaë?"

"Yes, the lady disconnected by marriage with Jupiter who tubbed her in gold—gold ink, I suppose. But as I am not a composer I shall put you between the sheets—of a novel I mean. Fiction has its consolations."

But now, leaving the cañon, they entered a cavern which a tunnel fluted. There Cassy looked up at the inkbeast. "How is Mr. Lennox? Do you see him?"

"I find it very difficult not to. Unattached people are sticky as flies. When Lennox was engaged, he was invisible. Now he is all over the place."

From the tunnel a train erupted. It came with the belch of a monstrous beetle, red-eyed and menacing, hastening terribly to some horrible task.

Jones, shoving the girl into its bowels, added: "I was happier when he was jugged."

A corner beckoned. There, as the beetle resumed its flight, the novelist spread his wings.

"I would have wagered a red pippin that you couldn't say Jack Robinson before he and that young woman were convoluting joyously. I even planned to be best man. Saw my tailor about it. Whether it were on that account or not the Lords of Karma only know, but he told Miss Austen to go to hell."

Cassy started. From before her everything was receding.

Jones noting the movement, interpreted it naturally and therefore stupidly. He apologised.

"Forgive me. I picture you as Our Lady of the Immaculate Conversation. Forgive me, then. Besides, what Lennox did say, he said with less elegance. He said: 'I'm through.' Yes and asked me to repeat it to her. I studiously omitted to, but as Proteus—Mr. Blount in private life—somewhere expressed it, 'Hell has no more fixed or absolute decree.'"

Because of the crashing beetle Jones had to shout it. He shouted it in Cassy's ear. It was a lovely ear and Jones was aware of it. But only professionally. Since that night in Naples when, by way of keepsake, he got a dagger in his back, he had entertained the belief that a novelist should have everything, even to sex, in his brain. Such theories are very safe. Jones' admirations were not therefore carnal. To Balzac, a pretty woman was a plot. Cassy was a plot to Jones, who continued to shout.

"If Lennox and Margaret Austen moved and had their being in a novel of mine, the wedding-bells would now be ringing at a cradle in the last chapter. Commercially it would be my duty to supply that happy and always unexpected touch. I even made a bet about it, which shows how iniquitous gambling is. What's more, it shows that I must have an unsuspected talent for picture-plays. As it was in heaven, so it is now in the movies. It is there that marriages are made. But forgive me again. I am talking shop."

The renewed apology was needless. Though Jones shouted, Cassy did not hear. It was not the clattering beetle that interfered. To that also Cassy was deaf. She heard nothing. The echo of noisy millions had gone. The slamming doors were silent. But her face was pale as running water when, the beetle at last abandoned, she thanked Jones for seeing her all the way.

All the way to where? God, if she only knew!

XXXV

LATER that day, Jeroloman, the attorney for the other side, who at the time had no idea that there was another side, or any side at all, entered the rotunda and asked for Dunwoodie.

In asking, he removed his hat, glanced at its glisten, put it on again. The hat was silk. It topped iron grey hair, steel-blue eyes, a turn-under nose, a thin-lipped mouth, a pointed chin, a stand-up collar, a dark neckcloth, a morning coat, grey gloves, grey trousers, drab spats and patent-leather boots. These attributes gave him an air that was intensely respectable, equally tiresome. One pitied his wife.

"This way, sir."

In the inner and airy office, Dunwoodie nodded, motioned at a chair.

"Ha! Very good of you to trouble."

Jeroloman, seating himself, again removed his hat. Before he could dispose of it, Dunwoodie was at him.

"Young Paliser's estate. In round figures what does it amount to?"

Jeroloman, selecting a safe place on the table, put the hat on it and answered, not sparringly, there was nothing to spar about, but with civil indifference: "Interested professionally?"

"His widow is my client."

Jeroloman's eyes fastened themselves on Dunwoodie, who he knew was incapable of anything that savoured, however remotely, of shysterism. But it was a year and a day since he had been closeted with him. In the interim, time had told. Diverting those eyes, he displayed a smile that was chill and dental.

"Well, well! We all make mistakes. There is no such person." He paused, awaiting the possible protest. None came and he added: "The morning after the murder, his father told me that the young man contemplated marriage with a lady who had his entire approval. Unfortunately——"

"Yaas," Dunwoodie broke in. "Unfortunately, as you say. The morning after was the 26th. On the 21st, a gardener, who pretended to be a clergyman, officiated at his marriage to my client."

Dryly but involuntarily Jeroloman laughed. Dunwoodie was getting on, getting old. In his day he had been remarkably able. That day had gone.

"Well, well! Even admitting that such a thing could have happened, it must have been only by way of a lark."

Dunwoodie whipped out his towel. "You don't say so!"

Carelessly Jeroloman surveyed him. He was certainly senile, yet, because of his laurels, entitled to all the honours of war.

"Look here, Mr. Dunwoodie. You are not by any chance serious, are you?"

"Oh, I'm looking. While I was about it, I looked into the case. Per verba de præsenti, my client consented to be young Paliser's wife. Now she is his widow."

Jeroloman weighed it. The weighing took but an instant. Dunwoodie was living in the past, but there was no use in beating about the bush and he said as much.

"You are thinking of the common law, sir."

Absently Dunwoodie creased his towel. "Now you mention it, I believe I am."

Jeroloman glanced at his watch. It was getting late. His residence was five miles away. He was to dress, dine early and take his wife to the theatre. He would have to hurry and he reached for his hat.

"The common law was abrogated long ago."

Dunwoodie rumpled the towel. "Why, so it was!"

Jeroloman took the hat and with a gloved finger rubbed at the brim. "Even otherwise, the term common-law wife is not legally recognised. The law looks with no favour on the connection indicated by it. The term is synonymous for a woman who, having lived illicitly with a man, seeks to assume the relationship of wife after his death and thereby share in the proceeds of his property."

From under beetling brows, Dunwoodie looked at him. "Thanks for the lecture, Jeroloman. My client has no such desire. In this office, an hour ago, she refused them."

Jeroloman stood up. "Very sensible of her, I'm sure." He twirled the hat. "Who is she?"

"I thought I told you. She is Mrs. Paliser."

Jeroloman waved that hat. "Well, well! I thought I told you. As it is, if you will take the trouble to look at the laws of 1901, you will find that common-law marriages are inhibited."

"Hum! Ha! And if you will trouble to look at the Laws of 1907, you will find they are inhibited no longer."

Jeroloman stared. "I have yet to learn of it."

Dunwoodie repocketed his towel. "Is it possible? Then when the opportunity occurs you might inform yourself. At the same time let me recommend the Court of Appeals for March. You may find there additional instruction. But I see you are going. Don't let me detain you."

Jeroloman sat down. "What case are you referring to?"

"The Matter of Ziegler."

Uncertainly Jeroloman's steel-blue eyes shifted. "It seems to me I read the syllabus."

"Then your powers of concealment are admirable."

"But just what does it hold?"

"Can it be that you don't remember? Well, well! —to borrow your own agreeable mode of expression —it holds that common-law marriages that were valid before and until the enactments which you were good enough to cite, were again made valid by their appeal in Chapter 742 of the Laws of 1907."

"But," Jeroloman began and paused. "But——" He paused again.

Comfortably Dunwoodie helped him. "Yes?"

"You say that marriages valid before and until the Laws of 1901 are, by virtue of a repeal, now valid again?"

"That is what I say, Jeroloman. Merely that and nothing more. In addition to the Ziegler case, let me commend to you 'The Raven.'"

"Let's get down to facts, sir. From your account of it, this alleged marriage never could have been valid."

Dunwoodie wiped his mouth. "Dear me! I had no idea that my account of it could lead to such interesting views. You do surprise me."

"Mr. Dunwoodie, you said the ceremony was performed by a gardener who pretended to be a clergyman. Those were your very words."

"Yaas. Let the cat out of the bag, didn't I?"

Archly but chillily Jeroloman smiled. "Well, no, I would not care to put it in that way, but your office-boy must know that false representations void it."

"Good Lord!" Dunwoodie exclaimed. It was as though he had been hit in the stomach.

Jeroloman, who was eyeing him, gave a little nod that was tantamount to saying, "Take that!"

But Dunwoodie was recovering. He sat back, looked admiringly at Jeroloman, clasped his hands and twirled his thumbs.

Jeroloman, annoyed at the attitude and in haste to be going, pursed his thin lips. "Well, sir?"

With an affability that was as unusual as it was suspicious, Dunwoodie smiled at him. "Your objection is well taken. Not an hour ago, in that chair in which you are sitting, this lady, my client, who not once in her sweet life has opened the Revised Statutes, and who, to save it, could not tell the difference between them and the Code, well, sir, she entered that same objection."

"I don't see——"

"Nor did she, God bless her! And I fear I wearied her with my reasons for not sustaining it. But I did not tell her, what I may confide in you, that in Hays versus The People—25 New York—it is held immaterial whether a person who pretended to solemnise a marriage contract, was or was not a clergyman, or whether either party to the contract was deceived by false representations of this character. Hum! Ha!"

Jeroloman pulled at his long chin. In so doing he rubbed his hat the wrong way. He did not notice. That he was to dress, dine early, take his wife to the theatre, that it was getting late and that his residence was five miles away, all these things were forgotten. What he saw were abominations that his client would abhor—the suit, the notoriety, the exposure, the whole dirty business dumped before the public's greedy and shining eyes.

"Who is she?" he suddenly asked.

"Who was she?" Dunwoodie corrected. "Miss Cara."

Jeroloman started and dropped his hat. "Not——?"

Dunwoodie nodded. "His daughter."

Jeroloman, bending over, recovered his hat. Before it, a picture floated. It represented an assassin's child gutting the estate of a son whom the father had murdered. It was a bit too cubist. Somewhere he had seen another picture of that school. It showed a young woman falling downstairs. He did not know but that he might reproduce it. At least he could try. Meanwhile it was just as well to take the model's measure and again his eyes fastened on Dunwoodie.

"What do you suggest?"

Dunwoodie, loosening his clasped hands, beat with the fingers a tattoo on his waistcoat.

"Let me see. There is 'The Raven,' the first primer, the multiplication table. Is it for your enlightenment that you ask?"

Jeroloman moistened his lips. Precise, careful, capable, intensely respectable, none the less he could have struck him. A moment only. From the sleeve of his coat he flicked, or affected to flick, a speck.

"Yes, thank you, for my enlightenment. You have not told me what your client wants."

"What a woman wants is usually beyond masculine comprehension."

Methodically Jeroloman dusted his hat. "You might enquire. We, none of us, favour litigation. In the interests of my client I always try to avoid it and, while at present I have no authority, yet—— Well, well! Between ourselves, how would a ponderable amount, four or five thousand, how would that do?"

Blandly Dunwoodie looked at this man, who was trying to take Cassy's measure.

"For what?"

"To settle it."

That bland air, where was it? In its place was the look which occasionally the ruffian turned on the Bench.

"Hum! Ha! Then for your further enlightenment let me inform you that my client will settle it for what she is legally entitled to, not one ponderable dollar more, not one ponderable copper less."

Mentally, from before that look, Jeroloman was retreating. Mentally as well, already he had reversed himself. He had judged Dunwoodie old, back-number, living in the past. Instead of which the fossil was what he always had been—just one too many. Though not perhaps for him. Not for Randolph F. Jeroloman. Not yet, at any rate. The points advanced were new, undigested, perhaps inexact, filled with discoverable flaws. Though, even so, how M. P. would view them was another kettle of fish. But that was as might be. He put on his hat and stood up.

"Very good. I will give the matter my attention."

"Do," Dunwoodie, with that same look, retorted, "And meanwhile I will apply for letters of administration. Hum! Ha! My compliments to your good lady."

He turned in his chair. Attention, indeed! He knew what that meant. The matter would be submitted to M. P. The old devil had not a leg to stand on, he lacked even a crutch, and in that impotent, dismembered and helpless condition he would be thrown out of court. A ponderable amount! Hum!

For a moment he considered the case. But it may be that already it had been heard and adjudged. Long since, perhaps, at some court of last resort, the Paliser Case had been decided.

XXXVI

ON the morrow, Jeroloman waited on his client, who received him in the library, an agreeable room in which there was nothing literary, but which succeeded at once in becoming extremely unpleasant.

M. P. was in tweeds. When his late lamented departed this life, he wore crêpe on his hat for ninety days. It was a tribute that he paid, not to the lady's virtues, which were notoriously absent; nor to any love of her, for he had disliked her exceedingly; nor yet because it was conventional, he hated conventionality; but, by Gad, sir, because it bucks the women up! All that was long ago. Since then he had become less fastidious. At his son's funeral he appeared in black.

Now, on this day, dressed in tweeds, he greeted Jeroloman with his usual cordiality.

"I hope to God you are not going to bother me about anything?"

The wicked old man, who had faced wicked facts before, faced a few of them then. The stench of the main fact had been passing from him, deodorised by the fumigating belief that his son had been killed by a lunatic. Now here it was again, more mephitic than ever, and for the whiffs of it with which Jeroloman was spraying him, he hated the man.

"Whom has she?"

"Dunwoodie."

He reviewed the bar. There was Bancroft, whose name was always in the papers and to whom clients flocked. There was Gwathmay, whom the papers ignored and whom only lawyers consulted. He might have either or both, the rest of the crew as well, and in spite of them all, unless he permitted himself to be done, the publicity would be just as resounding.

In the old nights, when social New York was a small and early, threats had amused him. "I have my hours for being blackmailed, this is not one of them," he had lightly remarked at a delightful gang. "Do your damnedest."

They took him at his word and so completely that the small and early saw him no more. What was that to him? There were other pastures, less scrumptious perhaps, but also far less fatiguing. He had not cared, not a rap. Behind him the yard of brass yodled in a manner quite as lordly as before. His high-steppers lost none of their sheen; his yacht retained all its effulgence; so, too, did the glare of his coin. No, he had not cared. But that was long ago, so long that it might have happened in an anterior existence. He had not cared then. Age is instructive. He had learned to since. Moreover, in testimony of his change of heart, a miracle had been vouchsafed. The affair at the Opera, attributed to a lunatic, had been buried safely, like his son, the scandal tossed in for shroud. How freely he had breathed since then! The little green bottle of menthe he had barely touched. He might live to see everything forgiven or, what is quite as satisfactory, forgotten. And now! Columns and columns, endlessly, day in, day out; the Paliser Case dragged from one court to another, the stench of it exceeded only by that of the Huns! But, by comparison, blackmail, however bitter, was sweet. When one may choose between honey and gall, decision is swift.

"What'll she take?"

Jeroloman, who had left his hat on the malachite bench in the hall, smoothed his gloves. He was about to reply. Before he could, his client shook a fist at him.

"The slut hasn't a cent. Came to the Place with a bundle, damn her. A suit like this costs something. Where's she going to get it? What'll she take?"

Jeroloman looked up from his gloves. "I don't know."

"Then find out."

"I offered Dunwoodie a ponderable amount."

"Well?"

"He refused it."

"Double it, then, triple it."

"Mr. Paliser, I'm sorry, but it won't do."

"Damnation, why not?"

"It is all or nothing with him and maybe nothing in the end. I told him so. I told him that the courts view with no favour a woman who, having lived illicitly with a man, claims, on his demise, to be his widow. Such a claim is but the declaration of a woman entered after the death of her alleged husband and, as such, is inadmissable under Section 829 of the Code. I have posted myself very thoroughly in the matter, though I find it has been held——"

"Damn what has been held. It's all or nothing, is it?"

Jeroloman pulled at his long chin.

All, the wicked old man reflected. All! All would be ten million and ten million was less than a tenth of his wealth—ten million for which he had no earthly need, which it would fatigue him to spend, burden him to hoard, disgrace him to fight for, and which, normally, would go to a brat whom he had never seen and whom, as next in line, he hated.

Already he had decided. Though, it may be that on planes of which he knew nothing, long since it had been decided for him.

None the less it hurt. It hurt horribly. From a pocket, he drew a little bottle.

"Settle it then."

"On what basis?"

"All and be damned to her."

But now the menthe that he had raised to his lips was trickling from the bottle, staining his tweeds. He hiccoughed, gasped, motioned.

"And good-day to you."

Below, on the malachite bench, a silk hat was waiting. When that hat again appeared in Dunwoodie's office, the Paliser Case was over. It had ended before it began.

XXXVII

CASSY sat in the kitchen. Before her were a cheque and a letter. The letter was from the theatre-man. The cheque was Dunwoodie's. The cheque begged to be cashed, the letter begged her to call.

During the night she had gone looking along an avenue where there were houses with candid windows from which faces peered and smiled. But it was not for these that she was looking and she awoke in a tempest of farewells.

Now, across the court, in the kitchen opposite, were two inoffensive beings. On that evening when her father had made her cry, they had seemed unreal. On this forenoon their baseless appearance persisted. But their unreality was not confined to them. Their kitchen, the court, the building shared it. They were all unreal, everything was, except one thing only, which perhaps was more unreal than all things else.

She looked at the letter and from it at the cheque. The day before, on returning from the shower of millions that had caught and drenched her in Broad Street, she was not entirely dry. The glisten of the golden rain hung all about her. None the less on reaching the walk-up she forgot it. There were other matters, more important, that she had in mind. But only a philosopher could be drenched as she had been and remain unaffected. The bath is too voluptuous for the normal heart. On its waters float argosies crimson-hulled, purple-rigged, freighted with dreams come true. You have but a gesture to make. Those dreams are spaniels crouching at your feet. At a bath not dissimilar but financially far shallower, Monte Cristo cried: "The world is mine!" It was very amusing of him. But though, since then, values have varied, a bagatelle of ten millions is deep enough for any girl, sufficiently deep at least for its depths to hold strange things.

At those things, strange indeed and yet not unfamiliar, Cassy beckoned. In their embrace she saw herself, as Jones had pictured her, going about, giving money away, strewing it full-handed, changing sobs into smiles. The picture lacked novelty. Often she had dreamed it. Only recently, on the afternoon just before the clock struck twelve, just before the gardener lit his pipe and the mask had fallen, only then, and, relatively, that was but yesterday, she had promenaded in it. It was a dream she had dreamed when a child, that had haunted her girlhood, that had abided since then. It was the dream of a dream she had dreamed without daring to believe in its truth. Now, from the core of the web that is spun by the spiderous fates, out it had sprung. There, before her eyes, within her grasp was that miracle, a rainbow solidified, vapour made tangible, a dream no longer a dream but a palette and a palette that you could toss in the air, put in the bank, secrete or squander, a palette with which you could paint the hours and make them twist to jewelled harps. No more walk-up! Good-bye, kitchy! Harlem, addio! The gentleman with the fabulous nose could whistle. Vaudeville, indeed! She could buy the shop, buy a dozen of them, tear them down, build them up, throw them into one and sing there, sing what she liked, when she liked, as she liked. Yes, but for whom? God of gods, for whom?

A local newspaper bears—or bore—a sage device: La nuit porte conseil. That night, on her white bed, in her black room, Cassy sought it. But the counsel that night brings is not delivered while you toss about. Night waits until you sleep. Then, to the subjective self that never sleeps, the message is delivered. It may be fallible, often it is and, in our scheme of things, what is there that is not? Yet in any dilemma bad advice may be better than none. Then, without transition, the black room changed into an avenue where faces peered and smiled. It was not though for these that she was looking, but for her way. It must have been very narrow. Though she looked and looked she could not find it. Yet it was near, perhaps just around the corner. But in some manner, she could not reach it. Sleep sank her deeper. When she awoke, there it was.

Now as she sat in the kitchen, before which, in the kitchen opposite, bundles of baseless appearances came and went, she began counting her wealth on her fingers. Youth! Up went her thumb. Health! The forefinger. Lungs! The second finger. Not being a fright! The fourth. How rich she was! But was there not something else? Oh, yes! Sadly she smiled. A clear conscience! She had forgotten that and that came first. Youth, health, lungs, looks, these were gamblers' tokens in the great roulette of life. In the hazards of chance at any moment she might lose one or all, as eventually she must lose them and remain no poorer than before. But her first asset which she had counted last, that was her fortune, the estate she held by virtue of a trust so guardedly created that if she lost one mite, the whole treasure was withdrawn.

On the washtub—covered admirably with linoleum —at which she sat, were the cheque for a thousand dollars and the bid from the vaudeville man. The bid, she knew, meant money. But the cheque would beggar her.

She drew breath and sat back. From above a filter of sunlight fell and told her it was noon. Across the court the bundles of baseless appearances transformed themselves into a real woman, an actual child. The kitchen in which they moved, the house in which they dwelled were no longer the perceptions of a perceiver. They also were real. So, too, was life.

An hour and Mr. Purdy's pasty face turned feebly red. He stammered it.

No, unfortunately, Mr. Dunwoodie was out. Would Mrs. Paliser wait? In Mr. Dunwoodie's private office? And the 'Herald' perhaps or the 'Times'—or —or——

Everything there, Broad Street to boot, the Stock Exchange included, Mr. Purdy was ready and anxious to offer.

No, Mrs. Paliser would not wait—and mentally she thanked her stars for it. But would Mr. Purdy do something for her?

Would he! The brave spirit of Talleyrand must have animated that sickly young man. If what Mrs. Paliser desired were possible it would be done: if impossible, it was done already.

Cassy gave him the rare seduction of her smile. She also was entertaining an emotion or two. She had not at all known where she would find the strength to confront and confute a grandmotherly old ruffian. But luck was with her. He was out.

So very good of Mr. Purdy then and would he please give Mr. Dunwoodie this cheque and say she's sorry she can't accept it or the other money either? She had said she would, but, really, it was not intended for her. Supposing she took it. She would feel like a thief in a fog. Exactly that. A thief in a fog. No, she couldn't. Couldn't and wouldn't. Just as grateful though to Mr. Dunwoodie. Her regrets to him and a thousand thanks.

"And good-day, Mr. Purdy. I thank you also."

Mr. Purdy, flushing feebly, saw her to the door, saw her to the hall without. There, while he waited with her for a descending lift, a silk hat that had just come from a malachite bench, alighted from an ascending one. Immediately the other lift took her.

"Who was that?" the hat's owner alertly asked.

Mr. Purdy rubbed his perspiring hands. "Mrs. Paliser."

Jeroloman wheeled like a rat. He looked at the cage. It had vanished. He looked at the other. Above it a moving finger pointed upward. Cold-blooded, meticulously precise, intensely respectable, none the less, for one delirious second, madness seized him. He wished to God he could hurry down, overtake the impostor, lure her into his own office, frighten her out of such wits as she possessed and buy her off for tuppence. Instantly Respectability had him by the collar. He could not. Precision gave him a kick. Wouldn't stand if he did.

Deeply he swore. The millions were gone. Hands down, without a struggle, the Paliser estate was rooked. No fault of his though, and mechanically he adjusted that hat. Damn her!

In the street below, superbly, with sidereal indifference, the sun shone down on the imbecile activities of man. The storm of the day before that had drenched Cassy so abundantly, had been blown afar, blown from her forever. The sky in which a volcano had formed was remote and empty.

"Ouf!" Cassy muttered in relief and muttered, too: "Now for the agent!"

She had reached the corner. Just beyond was the subway. It would land her within two squares of the man's greasy office. Now, though, suddenly, she felt a gnawing. A sandwich would taste good. Two sandwiches would taste better. Then, quite as suddenly, that vision, the street with it, everything, except one thing only, vanished.

Blocking the way stood Lennox.

"Where to in such a hurry?"

Easily she smiled and told him. "I'm going to buy a rhinoceros." But for all the easiness of it her tongue nearly tripped. "And what are you doing?"

"I? Oh! Cleaning up."

Wall Street is not a Japanese tea-garden. It lacks the klop-klop of fountains. Yet, even in its metallic roar there may—for exceptional beings—be peace there. Not for Cassy, though. She could have screamed.

A moment only. Lennox turned and both moved on.

"Let's get out of this."

Cassy looked up at him. "You forget my little errand."

"Ah, yes! The rhinoceros. Couldn't you ask me to meet him?"

"I shall be giving dinner-parties for him every evening. Would you care to come?"

They had reached cavernous steps down which Cassy was going.

Lennox raised his hat. "I will come to-night."

Through the metallic roar, the four words dropped and hummed.

XXXVIII

"IT is going to be splendid. There will be candles!"—a young person, dead since but still living, exclaimed of her poet's fête. The fête, however lavish, and which you will find reported by Murger, was not held in a kitchen. The poet's garret did not contain a kitchen. That was Paris.

Hereabouts, nowadays, walk-ups are more ornate. Cassy's dinner that night was served on rich linoleum and not out of snobbishness either but because the table had gone from the living-room and though the piano remained one could not very well dine on that, or, for that matter, on the sofa. There are details into which a hostess never enters. Cassy—in black chiffon—did not offer any and Lennox—in evening clothes—did not ask. He had never dined in a kitchen before and, so far as the present historian knows not to the contrary, he did not dine in one again. But he enjoyed the experience. There was cold chicken, a salad, youth, youth's wine and running laughter. For dessert, a remark.

The rich linoleum then had been abandoned for the other room where Cassy sat on the sofa and Lennox on the one surviving chair. Beyond was the piano. Additionally, in some neighbourly flat, a phonograph performed.

Among these luxuries sweets were served. A question preceded them.

"Do you remember the afternoon you were in my rooms?"

Yes, Cassy remembered it.

Then came the remark. "That afternoon I laughed. Until to-night—except once—I haven't laughed since then."

Very good dessert, with more to follow.

"When you went, the sunlight went with you. It went out at your heels like a dog. I was thinking about it recently. I don't seem to have seen the sunlight again, until it played about your rhinoceros."

There are sweets that are bitter. Cassy took one.

"Mr. Jones told me. It does seem such a pity, such a great pity. I saw her once and I could see she was not merely good to look at but really good, good through and through."

"May I smoke?" Lennox asked.

Had he wished he could have stood on his head. Cassy nodded at him. He got out a cigar.

"Miss Austen is all you say. She is a saint. A man doesn't want a saint. A man wants flesh and blood."

Cassy took another bitter-sweet. "She's that. Any one would know it."

Lennox bit at the cigar. "Too good for me, though. So good that she threw me over."

Cassy put a finger through it. "She did not understand. Any girl might have done the same."

Sombrely Lennox considered her. "Would you? You say she did not understand. I know well enough she did not. But if you cared for a man, would you throw him over because of a charge which you could not be sure was true and without giving him a chance to disprove it? Would you?"

He could stand on his head, yes, but it was unfair to grill her. She flushed.

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"How, you don't see?"

"Isn't it obvious? Miss Austen and I move in different worlds. On any subject our views might differ and I don't mean at all but that hers would be superior."

"There can be but one view of what's square."

"I am sure she meant to be."

Unconcernedly, Lennox smiled. The smile lit his face. From sombre it became radiant.

"That's all very well. The point is what you would think. Would you think it square to throw a man over as she threw me?"

Cassy showed her teeth. "If I didn't care for him, certainly I would."

"But if you did?"

That was too much. Cassy exclaimed at it. "If! If! How can I tell? I don't know. I lack experience."

"But not heart."

He was right about that, worse luck. How it beat, too! It would kill her though to have him suspect it.

"I do wish you would tell me," he added.

Cassy, casting about, felt like an imbecile and said brilliantly: "Haven't you a match? Shall I fetch one?"

Lennox extracted a little case. "Thanks. It's an answer I'd like."

It was enough to drive you mad and again casting about, but not getting it, she hedged.

"It will have to be in the abstract, then."

"Very good. Let's have it in the abstract."

Yet even in the abstract! However, with an uplift of the chin that gave her, she felt, an air of discussing a matter in which she had no concern at all, she plunged.

"One never knows, don't you know, but it seems to me that if by any chance I did care for a man—not that it is in the least presumable that I ever shall—but if I did, why, then, no. He couldn't get rid of me, not unless he tried very hard, but if he didn't, then no matter what I heard, no matter how true it might be, I would cling to his coat-tails, that is, if he wore them, and if, also, he cared for a ninny like me."

Cassy paused, shook her docked hair and solemnly resumed: "Which, of course, he couldn't."

"I knew you would say that."

"Say what?" Previously flushed, she reddened. But there is a God. The room had grown dim.

"That you wouldn't cut and run."

She could have slapped him. "Then why did you ask me?"

Lennox blew a ring of smoke.

"To have you see it as I do. To have you see that at the first flurry Miss Austen ran to cover. I am quite sure I could show her that she ran too quick, but I am equally sure it is a blessing that she did run. It is not ambitious of a man to want a girl who will stand her ground. Sooner or later some other flurry would have knocked the ground from under and then it might have been awkward. This one let me out."

He stood up, opened the window, dropped the cigar from it. The cigar might have been Margaret Austen.

"What are your plans?" he asked and sat again.

Ah, how much safer that was! Cassy grabbed at it.

"You are the third person to ask me. First, Mr. Jones. Then—then——" But she did not want to mention Dunwoodie or anything about the great cascade of gorgeous follies and she jumped them both. "Then an agent. He asked me yesterday and to-day he had a contract for me and a cheque in advance. He is a very horrid little man but so decent!"

"When does it begin?"

"The engagement? Next week. What plans have you?"

"A few that have been made for me. Presently we sail."

"For France?"

"For France."

It was cooler now, at least her face was, and she got up and switched the light.

"I wish I might go, too," she told him. "But I lack the training to be nurse and the means to be vivandière—canteener, I think they call it." She hesitated and added. "Shall I see you before you go?"

But now from the phonograph in the neighbourly flat, the *Non te scordar* drifted, sung nobly by some fat tenor who probably loathed it.

Lennox, who had risen with her, asked: "May I come to-morrow?"

The aria enveloped them and for a moment Cassy trilled in.

"Perhaps to-morrow you will sing for me," he continued.

"Yes, I'll sing."

Later, in the black room on the white bed, the fat tenor's tuneful prayer floated just above her. Cassy repeated the words and told herself she was silly. She may have been, but also she was tired. She knew it and for a moment wondered why. Painted hours dancing to jewelled harps are not to be sneezed at. But when they are not yours, when you have really no right to them, it is not fatiguing to say so. A gesture does not fatigue. It is certainly taxing to go to a greasy office, sign your name and receive a cheque.

Taxing but endurable. It is not that that does you up. It is argument that tires you, particularly when there is no need for any and you are forced to turn yourself inside out. How fortunate it was, though, that the room had been dark! In the balm of that, sleep took her.

The next day she had many things to do and succeeded in botching most of them. I have no mind for anything, she decided. What is the matter with me? But, at least, when at last she opened the door for him, there was nothing amiss with her appearance.

In the room where the piano was, she sat down on the bench and smiled up at him. "Shall I sing now?"

Lennox put his hat on the sofa. "If you don't mind my talking to you."

"Very good, we will have a duo."

Over the keys her fingers moved, sketching a melody, passing from it into another.

Beside the bench Lennox had drawn the only chair. He looked about, then at her.

"I remember so well the first time I came here."

Her lips tightened, but, suppressing the smile, she turned to him and said and so patiently:

"Is it a song without words you want, or words without song?"

Lennox leaned toward her. It was then or, it might be, never.

"It is you I want."

Cassy turned from him. Her fingers, prompted by a note, had gone from it into Gounod.

"Will you marry me?"

"Certainly not."

It was as though he had asked her to go skating. To mark the absurdity of it her voice mounted.

"Le printemps chasse les hivers——"

The words are imbecile but the air, which is charming, seemed to occupy her wholly.

"Et sourit dans les arbres verts——"

"I know you don't care for me but couldn't you try?"

"Eh?" Cassy stayed her fingers, reached for a score on the top of the upright. "I thought you wanted me to sing."

"I want to know whether you can't ever care for me."

It sang about her like a flute. Something else was singing, not the bird in her throat, for she had hushed it, but a bird in her heart. It had been singing ever since he had entered the room. It had been singing with her the duo of which lightly she had spoken. But it was singing too loud.

Hastily she replaced the score, pulled at another, shoved it back.

"Won't you tell me?" Lennox was asking.

It will burst, she thought. Sidling from the bench, she went to the sofa, looked at it as though she had never seen it before, and sat down.

"Won't you?" he repeated.

She glanced over at him. Apparently now she was calm as you please.

"People marry out of optimism, or at any rate I did. I have had my lesson, thank you."

Lennox stood up. "You have suffered——"

"I read somewhere," she cut in, "that we have to suffer terribly before we learn not to suffer at all." Pausing, she added: "I suppose then we are dead."

She was getting away from it and he rounded on her.

"See here! We have both been in hell, but that's over. Even otherwise, hell would not be hell to me if I were in it with you."

Thump! Thump! It was worse than ever. None the less she looked cool as a cucumber.

"The prospect is not very tempting. Besides, even if it were——" Again she paused, but this time without getting on with it.

He came toward her. "Even if it were what?"

"Temptation has its dangers. It may lead to captivity."

"And you fear that?"

"For you, yes."

"For me!" he exclaimed.

How it thumped! It thumped so that it hurt, yet spartanly she contrived to smile.

"You or any one. I was speaking generally. Then, too, you know, hell may not be all your fancy pictures it."

He floundered in it. "What do you mean?"

"In no time you might get sick to death of me."

"Never!"

The denial exploded with such violence that the walls fell. Or at least so it seemed to Cassy. It seemed to her that the room had become a tent of fulgurant colours. They were blinding. She could not look at them. How delicious it all was, though! In spite of which, she sighed.

"Well, there is no telling. Some day I may go and take a look there."

With mounting astonishment he repeated it. "Some day! But, if you ever will, why not now?"

Her eyes then were on him. "To find out."

"Find out what?"

"How you felt about it."

"But how could you, if you don't care for me?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you told me so."

Innocently, with an air of wonder, she took it up. "Did I? I don't think so. I am sure I did not. I am convinced that I would not have volunteered it and I am certain you did not ask."

"I asked you a moment ago."

If I don't make it stop, she thought, it will jump out. What shall I do?

"And I ask you again," he gravely continued.

It was in her throat. Try as she might she could not choke it back. Out it came.

"I have never cared for any one else."

Lennox stared. It was incredible. Like many another it was incredible to him that he should have sought afar for what was at his side.

But not having finished, she resumed. "And I never shall."

To that there could be but one reply. It was rough enough. Cassy did not mind, but she freed herself, undulantly, as a woman can.

Unrebuffably Lennox renewed it. "Let's be married at once."

Cassy smoothed her rumpled hair. "No." The monosyllable fell like a stone.

Lennox kicked it. "In God's name, why not?"

Cassy turned away. It was the hardest of all. Beside it, what was the gesture of the day before?

"Because. Just because."

"Because why?"

"Because I could not live to see you regret it."

"But why should I? I never shall." His hands on her shoulders, violently his eyes probed her own.

She thought him so dear, but she said: "I have not cared for any one else. You have. The growth of love is slow. You cannot love me now as I love you."

He wanted to shake her and nearly did. "But when you find I do?"

"Ah, when that day comes, I will."

"And meanwhile?"

She just plucked at his sleeve. Nothing could have been more yielding. It was yielding as water, and yielding still, her eyes fell.

"For your sake only. Later—if—if——"

Any great astonishment is dumb and, at the moment, a whirlwind tossed his thoughts. In the swirling gale were sudden pictures; the girl's fair arms, the delight of her lips, his own desire. Tumultuously they passed. Before him flew the hazards of life, of death, and, curling there, the iniquity of leaving her afterward, as leave her he must, alone to face them. The counterblast steadied him. Astonishment may be dumb, love is clairvoyant.

"For your own sake, no. The war cannot last forever and if I return, then—then——"

Shortly, among the Victorian horrors of his gloomy rooms, she came to see him off.

Mrs. Austen, who heard of everything, heard of that. "I always knew it!" she exclaimed. The dear woman had known nothing of the kind and her perspicacity amazed her.

But this has nothing to do with the Paliser Case which ended before it began.

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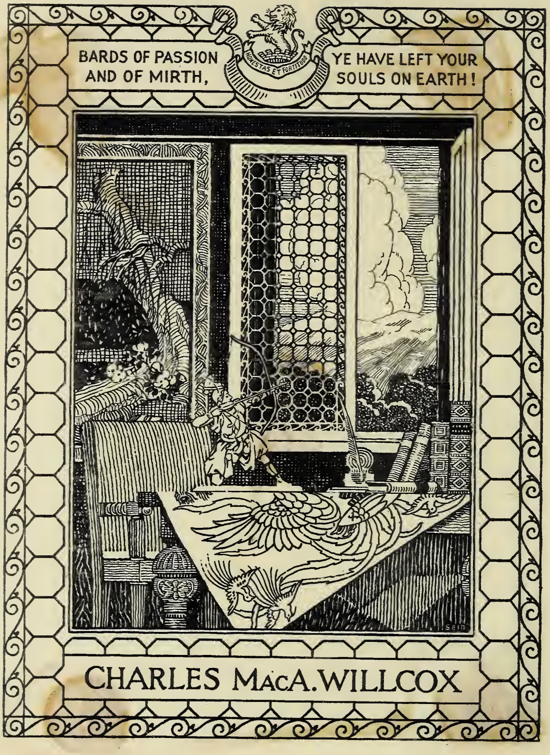
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By EDGAR SALTUS

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PARNASSIANS PERSONALLY ENCOUNTERED

In Paris there was a street that extended on from the Arc toward Passy. I have forgotten the name, and it is too much bother to look it up. For convenience, let me call it the Avenue Chose. Midway there are — or were — half a dozen apricot houses of the type known as English basement. At one of those houses an emperor used to look in on an effulgence. The emperor was Pedro of Alcantara and Brazil. The effulgence was Victor Hugo. Dom Pedro, very decent as emperors went, was a scholar and a gentleman. Victor Hugo radiated the glare of genius at its apogee. Already I had been sunstruck by him. Gautier said that when admitted to the presence he nearly fainted. That I should enter there I no more dared to dream than of genuflecting to the Dalai Lama. But the possibilities of life, and particularly of youth, are inscrutable. A potent nonentity viséd my passport to the realm of light. Whether I prostrated myself before the august being I have forgotten. Probably I did not. But I remember rehearsing beforehand the Byzantine formula: "May I speak and live?" Very unnecessarily, too. The being was human and even commonplace. From a great chair that resembled a shrine and in which he looked precisely like an old idol, he deigned to ask about my état d'âme. "Very shaky," I might have replied, and afterward regretted that I had not. But the audience was at an end, and I descended the heights with, I am sure, rays about my brow.

Presently the municipality took the Avenue Chose back to the font and rebaptised it Avenue Victor Hugo. At the first rumor of it angered hierophants hastened to the Master. "But this is ridiculous! The city itself ought to be re-named. Paris should be Hugoville!"

Serene and vatic the Master gestured: "Ca viendra" — That will come.

The modesty of the elect is a lesson to us all. Yet even that modesty was exceeded. At the Master's funeral, at which all Paris assisted, all the world too, a funeral that extended from one end of Hugoville to the other, the body of the being was, by his own direction, borne in a beggar's hearse. It was said that in that antithesis apotheosis had been staged.

Well, why not? Augier called the rites a coronation. The term seems a bit heavy. Apotheosis is perhaps more exact, though not to critics. Literary people do not care for Hugo. But to the simple, there are guitars in his verse, there are sequins, opals, rainbows, joy — joy that there can be verse like his!

In the procession, I encountered Stuart Merrill, a very youthful poet, engagingly pyrrhonian — on heavy subjects he expressed light views — whose own funeral occurred at Versailles during the scarlet August when Germany's jehad began.

Born with a gold pen in his mouth, his verse, always in French, might have led him into the Académie had he not been an American, or more exactly, a New Yorker. Through his indulgence, I subsequently obtained the unmerited privilege of exchanging the time of day with Leconte de Lisle.

On earth, Leconte de Lisle was pontiff of a flock of poets of whom quotable singers were Sully Prudhomme and François Coppée. The verse of Sully Prudhomme seemed to me calm and empty; the verse of François Coppée calm and inane. But the verse of Leconte de Lisle, calm also, marmorean for that matter, I read on my knees. Yet some of it educated France detested. For the purposes of the baccalauréat, some of it had to be put in Latin. In Latin! It is said that the devas converse in colors. It is in their tongue only that the *Poéms Antiques* could adequately be put.

It was those poems that I read on my knees. When by the grace of the gods and Stuart Merrill I was permitted to behold and even to address the Olympian, I said as much, and added: "You are a church, you have your worshipers."

The high muse wears a radiant peplum. Praise or blame cannot reach the souls she haunts. Leconte de Lisle, who had the apostolic appearance of a head-waiter and who, in private life, was a public librarian, listened, or appeared to listen, with an indifference that was boreal.

This attitude, I understood, was habitual. I understood also that, by some, it was attributed to pride and objected to accordingly. But, as you may have noticed, people who object to pride never have anything to be proud of.

It was in a beer-hall that he was good enough to receive me. The accessories were not perhaps very dignified. Yet if, as one may suppose, a poet's superiority consists in the quality of his relations with the infinite, the qualities displayed in the *Poéms Antiques* are sufficient to have made him refulgent in a sewer.

On saluting him, I thought of Joaquin Miller whose pleasant ghost dwells now, I like to think, in some wigwam on the Parnassian slopes. At school I had been vilely fatigued by bores that have survived only because Death has ignored them, and there the *Songs of the Sierras* were myrrh and cassia to my adolescent heart. Their note, occasionally a bit Byronic, but otherwise new, seemed to me splendid, and the legend of the minstrel, fighting Indians and the prairie fire while finding and fashioning his numbers, superb. The idea of meeting the poet-scout never entered my head. Unexpectedly that honor was mine. At the New York Hotel — a Broadway inn long since demolished — an acquaintance presented me. Immediately I recited a verse from the *Songs* and ventured to tell him that it was the finest thing in the English language. He was good enough to agree with me.

Subsequently, in Paris, I said the same thing to Owen Meredith, but in New York, meanwhile, I had omitted to say it to a florid troubadour with an anxious manner who, for better commerce with the muse, maintained a separate and private establishment in Tompkins Square. Why Tompkins Square I cannot say. I do not even know where it is. For which reason I once wrote a story about it and, on the proceeds, thought of going there in a cab. Each mortal has his Carassonne. But there each day the troubadour went. In silence he came and in silence departed, until the neighbors, thinking him a counterfeiter, called the police — to whom ragingly he unmasked himself. "I am Edgar Fawcett, author of 'Et cetera and Soforth'."

Pausing, he fumed. It takes a poet to concoct a horrible revenge. Then at once he had it, and threateningly he resumed: "I will read you my last poem." He turned for that weapon. He turned again. Terrified, the police had fled.

Later, in Paris, I was witless enough to repeat to Owen Meredith the unoriginal remark that I had made to Joaquin Miller. Previously viceroy of India — the proper post for a poet — he was then ambassador to France.

He had been appointed viceroy by Disraeli, for a reason very honorable and equally rare. Bulwer Lytton — Owen Meredith's father — was of some slight service to Disraeli before the latter had time to become prime minister and when he lived in a state of siege, barricaded from bailiffs and duns. It was in gratitude for the service that the post was given to Bulwer's son. He was said to be unsuited for it, but that is nonsense. A poet who cannot be viceroy has mistaken his vocation, and Owen Meredith had not mistaken his. He was a poet, minor certainly, and, it may be too, a poet for minors, but the wings of the muse were about him. They fanned his verse into flames, thin, perhaps, but clear.

It is a long time ago that I had the honor of meeting him and, on the encephalic film that I retain, his picture has become a blur. In the blur is a face less Parnassian than pleasant, a jovial face framed in abundant hair. Beneath is a Victorian adornment, a watch-chain circling the neck and swinging glitteringly and voluminously down to a pocket on an ample waist. The waist evokes the hero of gastronomy that the bard of "books" and "cooks" had become.

We had been having dinner with an English woman in whose Florentine villa Mrs. Oscar Wilde afterward went to die. In the course of the dinner she gave the poet a novel and asked him to translate the epigraph, which was in Greek.

He looked at it and said: "My eyes are not what they were, give it to our young friend."

But the passage that stumped him stumped me and I said: "It is not fit to be translated."

"Arcades ambo — Rogues both of us," he laughed and exclaimed. Then it was, and merely for the diversion, that I recited a verse of his and added that witless remark.

Afterward I mentioned the incident

to Fawcett who looked extremely uncomfortable. For a moment I did not understand, then, almost at once, I did. I had omitted to say the same thing to him. The omission repaired, he thanked me with that gravity which, even in serious matters, he usually displayed.

Usually, but not always. The sight of a rejected manuscript was supersufficient to make him turn his apartment into a bestiarium of words that roared. "I will not wear that coat," I once, through closed doors, heard him shout at his servant. "I tell you I will not wear that coat!" He paused, possibly for breath, then in the tone of an assassin hissed: "Very good, I will wear it; and if I catch cold it will be your fault." At that, the doors were thrown open and the portrait, on foot, of an English beefeater appeared. "And how," I soothingly inquired, "is the

Master?" "I am starving!" he flung at me. "So-and-So has returned my poem. Were the varlet here, I would take my battle-axe and I would kill him."

All of which was purely poetry. Fawcett had no battle-axe. Even otherwise, he would not have harmed a fly. Moreover, the next day or the day after I met him on Fifth Avenue. He was arm and arm with that varlet. I knew what happened. He had written something that pleased him. Fawcett kept an account book, alphabetically arranged. If you offended him, in it you went with bad marks after you. If he wrote anything that he particularly liked, he rose from the table, bowed to himself in the mirror, and granted a general amnesty. The varlet had profited by some such remission.

"Non omnis moriar" — I shall not

wholly die — he remarked to that mirror and to me and so remarked not because he habitually talked in Latin, but because like Horace, who said it before or behind him, he believed his verse would live. In that, I think he erred, and I think too it is a confounded shame. He was a real poet. But sensitive! Some sheet or other pitched into a book of his, and any criticism not written with the hat off gave him an attack of indignation morbus. Then and there he wrote and told the editor what he thought of him. To argue with a newspaper is like talking metaphysics to a bull. The first thing you know you get a horn in the midriff. That letter of his, published in full, was headlined: *The Worm Turns.* The amount of poison that a minim of printer's ink can contain for the unphilosophic, merits an essay. Fawcett took to his bed.

A contemporary was Frank Saltus. Cabanel painted his portrait. It shows a young man with a face smeared with cold cream — not the young man's cold cream but the cream of the pastry-cook that Cabanel was. Fawcett could scribble a song, as poet should, in no time. But what he scribbled he rewrote, wrote again. It should have saved him. On one occasion, in less than an hour, Frank Saltus scribbled a ballad to Patti in four languages and put it to music. His facility was frightful and, as he never revised, it was fatal.

Like Fawcett, he too missed it. He missed it because he had perhaps a fibre too many, as Fawcett missed it because, it may be, he had a fibre too few. To contemporary critics both were minor violins in the great orchestra of letters. But at least they were in the orchestra. That they are not there now must be quite immaterial to them. Yet, everything being possible, when they return here one or the other may hold the baton.

Meanwhile there were relaxations. Fawcett, after the manner of poets, rather fancied himself, and Frank Saltus used to write him letters that purported to come from passionate young heiresses feverishly in love with the bard. These letters, to my great delight, he always read to us — like a gentleman, though, in strictest confidence — yet with an air, dear me! of what complacent satisfaction! Though he may know now that the bacchantes were myths, he did not then. To the day of his death he believed in them. To the day of his death he used to say, "I too have dwelled in Arcady." Now probably he knows. In his rocking-chair on Parnassus probably too he forgives. He had a big head but always a bigger heart.

Subsequently, in Paris, a revolution occurred. Against Hugo's deluge of splendors and the marmorean calm of Leconte de Lisle, the Symbolistes revolted. Symbolism in literature is what bolshevism has become in life, a form of hydrophobia. In bolshevism you have a vested right to bite and rob. The symbolists bit, but they did not rob, not ideas at least, which is a pity, for they had none of their own. The deficit is symptomatic. Revolutions are caused not by ideas but by appetites. The symbolists, hungry for chaos, substituted delirium for calm and incoherence for clarity. They are gone, but while they were here they were rabid as the Reds. In the Terror, Verlaine took part.

Afterwards I had the signal honor of meeting the poet who at the time had recently been discharged from prison, from a prison rather where he had been put, as he was put in other prisons, for a beautiful error. He currently mistook the time of day for the Renaissance, that epoch when artists were above the law. In those days Charles V stooped and restored a brush which Titian had dropped, remarking as he did so that only by an emperor can an artist be properly served. He was quite right. As it happens, there are no more emperors, but then there are no more Titians, which is not a comfortable adjustment, though, praise God, we still have Verlaine, or at least his verse, reams of which he wrote in jail where he had the leisure and the opportunity to admire everything except the façade.

On that point, perhaps humorous, he left a book: *Mes prisons*. In addition, he talked about them. He talked about "his" prisons and "his" charity hospitals unaffectedly, without snobbishness, as a landed proprietor may speak of his estates. One of Verlaine's estates I visited. It was an enclosure, at the back of a shop, in a blind alley, where he had a cot that stood not on the floor, there was no floor, but on the earth. From that tower of ivory he wrote to a friend asking the loan of ninety centimes, which he faithfully promised to repay in two months. Yet which — the unforeseen intervening — he was unable to return so soon.

It was not there, but at the Café François Premier, on the left bank, that I had the extraordinary good fortune of being addressed by him. Very shabby, rather dirty, a trifle drunk, he talked delightfully. He talked as only great poets and some madmen can talk. He talked of things beautiful or merely horrible that never happen, that never could happen, but which were real to him. "Cheat yourself and dream," said Epictetus. It was his method, and the proper one for a glory of France who had not where to lay his head.

In the erudite pandemonium that occultism is, Swinburne is said to have been Catullus and Tennyson, Ovid. If that be true, Verlaine may have been Alcæus, but with something added, something indescribably and delicately unique, something that brought him voices that no other poet has heard, voices which came to him in jail, where he had been put, not as Villon was for

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highwayry but, much more innocently, for having shot a brother bard.

On the heights where his repentant spirit roamed, Mallarmé tried to follow. The throne-rooms of the ideal are spacious but the thrones are few. Only the elect may mount to where they glow. Mallarmé fell over backward into the incomprehensibleness of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, a poem that afterward fell deeper, into the gymnastics of a ballet.

I met Mallarmé at a dinner where he sat next to a gorgeous young American, then known as Madame de Chimay, who wore a string of emeralds as big and as naked as eggs, and who, only a little later, executed a fugue with a fiddler. In so doing she set a fashion that Elvire of Spain and Louise of Belgium immediately adopted, and with which Louise of Saxony caught up later on. It was said that they were all insane, but as not one of them ran off with a poet, the diagnosis was perhaps incorrect.

Meanwhile Mallarmé was talking English to this young person. In talking he asked to be appointed shepherd of her smiles. The conceit, very pretty by the way, he afterward put in the last line of a sonnet, the only coherent line that he or any other symbolard ever wrote.

George Moore somewhere said that Mallarmé looked like a refined peasant. To me he rather suggested a scholarly school-teacher. It is small matter. The man now is a ghost. His absurd verse is ghostlier. Other Parnassians whom I have met are ghosts as well. From among them, I ask leave to resummon one and evoke another.

Before Stuart Merrill definitely deserted Fifth Avenue, he gave a dinner at which George Pellew and several others, your servant included, were present. In the course of it the post-mortem swam up. The usual stupidity that there is nothing in it was not advanced. My fellow guests were too modern. One of them quoted a strophe from the *Gita*: "Never the spirit was born, the spirit shall cease to be never." The Hindu lay is perhaps recondite. The Song of the harper going out from Amenti is perhaps even more so. Another man quoted from it: "Life is death in a land of darkness, death is life in a land of light." Then, unobstrusively I hope, but incorrectly I fear, I repeated what Hafiz said of ghostland: "A breath, a wind, a sound, a voice, a tinkle of the camel-bell."

At that, Pellew, who was a poet,

promised that if he were alive when he was dead, he would come back and say so. The promise seemed a poetic draft on an equally poetic future. But it may be that there is no future. It may be that there is merely a continuous present in which events unroll. Pellew died that night. When going home, he slipped, fell, and broke his skull. Presently he kept his promise. At the time William James was confusing the sceptical, and even the credulous, with the clairaudience of Mrs. Piper. Pellew spoke through that medium. I am not making this up. It is all down in the reports concerning her.

Obviously, as ghosts go, Pellew is very much alive, which is more than I can say of his verse. Yet, in point of time, he belonged to the Victorian era, during which, in this country, in England, and in France, there was a constant cascade of real song. Today there is no more verse like that. There are no poets now such as those that have gone. In the youth of centuries that is usually the case. Probably, in a generation or two, bards will bloom afresh. Then they too shall pass, and a hundred years hence it will be said that there is no more verse like theirs. But, in default of poets there are their ghosts and, when these are laid, always there will be other poets.

The truth about TRISTREM VARICK

Edgar Saltus

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TRISTREM VARICK

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New York, 15th February, 1888

THE TRUTH ABOUT
TRISTREM VARICK.

I.

It is just as well to say at the onset that the tragedy in which Tristrem Varick was the central figure has not been rightly understood. The world in which he lived, as well as the newspaper public, have had but one theory between them to account for it, and that theory is that Tristrem Varick was insane. Tristrem Varick was not insane. He had, perhaps, a fibre more or a fibre less than the ordinary run of men; that something, in fact, which is the prime factor of individuality and differentiates the possessor from the herd; but to call him insane is nonsense. If he were, it is a pity that there are not more lunatics like him.

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It may be that the course of conduct

which he pursued in regard to his father's estate served as basis to the theory alluded to. At the time being, it created quite a little stir; it was looked upon as a piece of old-world folly, an eccentricity worthy of the red-heeled days of seigneurial France, and, as such, altogether out of place in a money-getting age like our own. But it was not until after the tragedy that his behavior in that particular was brought up in evidence against him.

The facts in the case were these: Tristrem's father, Erastus Varick, was a man of large wealth, who, when well on in the forties, married a girl young enough to be his daughter. The lady in question was the only child of a neighbor, Mr. Dirck Van Norden by name, and very pretty is she said to have been. Before the wedding Erastus Varick had his house, which was situated in Waverley Place, refurbished from cellar to garret; he had the parlor—there were parlors in those days—fitted up in white and gold, in the style known as that of the First Empire. The old Dutch furniture, black with age and hair-cloth, was banished. The walls were plastered with a lime cement of peculiar brilliance. The floors of the bedrooms were carpeted with rugs that extended under the beds, a novelty in New York, and the bedsteads themselves, which were vast enough to make coffins for ten people, were curtained with chintz patterns manufactured in Manchester to frighten children. In brief, Erastus Varick succeeded in making the house even less attractive than before, and altogether acted like a man in love.

After three years of marriage, Tristrem was born and Mrs. Varick died. The boy had the best of care and everything that money could procure. He was given that liberal education which usually unfits the recipient for making so much as his bread and butter, and at school, at college, and when he went abroad his supply of funds was of the amplest description. Shortly after his return from foreign lands Erastus Varick was gathered to his fathers. By his will he bequeathed to Tristrem a Panama hat and a bundle of letters. The rest and residue of his property he devised to the St. Nicholas Hospital. The value of that property amounted to seven million dollars.

Now Dirck Van Norden had not yet moved from the neighborhood to a better place. Tristrem was his only grandson, and when he learned of the tenor of the will, he shook his fist at himself in the looking-glass and swore, in a bountiful old-fashioned manner which was peculiar to him, that his grandson should not be divested of his rights. He set the lawyers to work, and the lawyers were not long in discovering a flaw which, through a wise provision of the legislature, rendered the will null and void. The Hospital made a bold fight. It was shown beyond peradventure that from the time of Tristrem's birth the intention of the testator—and the intention of a testator is what the court most considers—had been to leave his property to a charitable institution. It was proved that he had made other wills of a similar character, and that he had successively destroyed them as his mind changed in regard to minor details and distributions of the trust. But the wise law was there, and there too were the wise lawyers. The decision was made in accordance with the statute, and the estate reverted to Tristrem, who then succeeded in surprising New York. Of his own free will he made over the entire property to the account of the Hospital to which it had been originally devised, and it was in connection with that transfer that he was taxed with old-world folly. But the matter was misunderstood and afterward forgotten, and only raked up again when the press of two continents busied itself with his name. At that time he was in his twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth year.

He was slender, of medium height, blue of eye, and clear-featured. His hair, which was light in color, he wore brushed upward and back from the forehead. When he walked, it was with a slight stoop, which was the more noticeable in that, being near-sighted, he had a way of holding his chin out and raising his eyebrows as though he were peering at something which he could not quite discern. In his face there was a charm that grew and delighted and fastened on the beholder. At the age of twenty-six he would have been recognized by anyone who had known him as a boy. He had expanded, of course, and a stoop and dimness of vision had come with years; but in his face was the same unmistakable, almost childish, expression of sweet good-will.

His school-days were passed at Concord. When he first appeared there he looked so much like a pretty girl, in his manner was such gentleness, and his nature was found to be so vibrant and sensitive, that his baptismal name was promptly shortened into Trissy. But by the time he reached the fourth form it was lengthened back again to its rightful shape. This change was the result of an evolution of opinion. One day while some companions, with whom he happened to be loitering, scurried behind a fence, he stopped a runaway horse, clinging to the bridle though his arm had been dislocated in the earliest effort. Another time, when a comrade had been visited, unjustly it appeared, with some terrible punishment—five hundred lines, perhaps, or something equally direful—Tristrem made straight for the master, and argued with him to such effect that the punishment was remitted. And again, when a tutor asked how it was that there was no W in the French language, Tristrem answered, "Because of Waterloo."

Boys are generous in their enthusiasms; they like bravery, they are not deaf to wit, but perhaps of all other things they admire justice most. And Tristrem seemed to exhale it. It is said that everyone has a particular talent for some one thing, whether for good or evil, and the particular talent which was accorded to Tristrem Varick was that of appreciation. He was a born umpire. In disputes his school-fellows turned to him naturally, and accepted his verdict without question. When he reached the altitudes which the Upper School offers, no other boy at St. Paul's was better liked than he. At that time the form of which he was a member — and in which, parenthetically, he ranked rather low — was strengthened by a new-comer, a turbulent, precocious boy who had been expelled from two other schools, and with whom, so ran the gossip, it would go hard were he expelled again. His name was Royal Weldon, and on his watch, and on a seal ring which he wore on his little finger, he displayed an elaborate coat-of-arms under which for legend were the words, *Well done, Weldon*, words which it was reported an

English king had bawled in battle, ennobling as he did so the earliest Weldon known to fame.

Between the two lads, and despite the dissimilarity of their natures, or perhaps precisely on that account, there sprang up a warm friendship which propinquity cemented, for chance or the master had given them a room in common. At first, Tristrem fairly blinked at Weldon's precocity, and Weldon, who was accustomed to be admired, took to Tristrem not unkindly on that account. But after a time Tristrem ceased to blink and began to lecture, not priggishly at all, but in a persuasive manner that was hard to resist. For Weldon was prone to get into difficulties, and equally prone to make the difficulties worse than they need have been. When cross-questioned he would decline to answer; it was a trick he had. Now Tristrem never got into difficulties, except with Latin prosody or a Greek root, and he was frank to a fault.

It so happened that one day the head-master summoned Tristrem to him. "My dear," he said, "Royal is not acting quite as he should, is he?" To this Tristrem made no reply. "He is a motherless boy," the master continued, "a poor motherless boy. I wish, Tristrem, that you would use your influence with him. I see but one course open to me, unless he does better—" Tristrem was a motherless boy himself, but he answered bravely that he would do what he could. That evening, as he was battling with the platitudes of that Augustan bore who is called the Bard of Mantua, presumably because he was born in Andes—Weldon came in, smelling of tobacco and drink. It was evident that he had been to town.

Tristrem looked up from his task, and as he looked he heard the step of a tutor in the hall. He knew, if the tutor had speech with Weldon, that on the morrow Weldon would leave the school. In a second he had seated him before the open dictionary, and in another second he was kneeling at his own bedside. Hardly had he bowed his head when there came a rap at the door, the tutor entered, saw the kneeling figure, apologized in a whisper, and withdrew.

When Tristrem stood up again, Weldon was sobered and very pale. "Tristrem—"

he began, but Tristrem interrupted him. "There, don't say anything, and don't do it again. To-morrow you had better talk it over with the doctor."

Weldon declined to talk it over with anyone, but after that he behaved himself with something approaching propriety. Two years later, in company with his friend, he entered Harvard, from which institution he was subsequently dropped.

Tristrem meanwhile struggled through the allotted four years. He was not brilliant in his studies, the memorizing of abstruse questions and recondite problems was not to his liking. He preferred modern tongues to dead languages, an intricate fugue was more to his taste than the simplest equation, and to his shame it must be noted that he read Petrarch at night. But, though the curriculum was not entirely to his fancy, he was conscientious and did his best. There are answers that he gave in class that are quoted still, tangential flights that startled the listeners into new conceptions of threadbare themes, totally different from the usual cut and dried response that is learned by rote. And at times he would display an ignorance, a stupidity even, that was fathomless in its abysses.

After graduation, he went abroad. England seemed to him like a rose in bloom, but when autumn came and with it a succession of fogs, each more depressing than the last, he fled to Italy, and wandered among her ghosts and treasuries, and then drifted up again through Germany, to Paris, where he gave his mornings to the Sorbonne and his evenings to orchestra-stalls.

II.

It was after an absence of nearly five years that Tristrem Varick returned to the States. He had wearied of foreign lands, and for some time previous he had thought of New York in such wise that it had grown in his mind, and in the growing it had assumed a variety of attractive attributes. He was, therefore, much pleased at the prospect of renewing his acquaintance with Fifth Avenue, and during the homeward journey he pictured to himself the advantages which his native city possessed over any other which he had visited.

He had not, however, been many hours on shore before he found that Fifth Avenue had shrunk. In some unaccountable way the streets had lost their charm, the city seemed provincial. He was perplexed at the discovery that the uniform if depthless civility of older civilizations was rarely observable; he was chagrined to find that the *minutiæ* which, abroad, he had accepted as a matter of course, the thousand trifles which amount, after all, to nothing particularly indispensable, but which serve to make mere existence pleasant, were, when not overlooked, inhibited by statute or custom.

In the course of a week he was surprised into reflecting that, while no other country was more naturally and bountifully favored than his own, there was yet no other where the art of living was as vexatiously misunderstood.

Of these impressions he said nothing. His father asked him no questions, nor did he manifest a desire for any larger sociological information than that which he already possessed. His grandfather was too irascible for anyone to venture with in safety through the shallows of European refinements, and of other relatives Tristrem could not boast. Few of his former friends were at once discoverable, and of those that he encountered some had fallen into the rut and routine of business life, some had married and sent in their resignations to everything but the Humdrum, and some passed their days in an effort to catch a train.

For the moment, therefore, there was no one to whom Tristrem could confide his earliest impressions, and in a month's time the force of these impressions waned; the difference between New York and Paris lost much of its accent, and in its place came a growing admiration for the pluck and power of the nation, an expanding enthusiasm for the stretch and splendor of the land.

During the month that followed, an incident occurred which riveted his patriotism forever. First among the friends and acquaintances whom Tristrem sought on his return was Royal Weldon. Outwardly the handsome, turbulent boy had developed into an admirable specimen of manhood, he had become one on whom the feminine eye likes to linger, and in whose companionship men feel themselves refreshed. His face was beardless and unmustached, and into it had come that strength which the old prints give to Karl Martel. In the ample jaw and straight lips was a message which a physiognomist would interpret as a promise of successful enterprise, whether of good or evil. It was a face which a Crusader might have possessed, or a pirate of the Spanish main. In a word, he looked like a man who might be a hero to his valet.

Yet, despite this adventurous type of countenance, Weldon's mode of life was seemingly conventional. Shortly after the removal from Harvard, his father was mangled in a railway accident and left the planet and little behind him save debts and dislike. Promptly thereupon Royal Weldon set out to conquer the Stock Exchange. For three years he grit his teeth, and earned fifteen dollars a week. At the end of that period he had succeeded in two things. He had captured the confidence of a prominent financier, and the affection of the financier's daughter. In another twelvemonth he was partner of the one, husband of the other, and the taxpayer of a house in Gramercy Park.

Of these vicissitudes Tristrem had been

necessarily informed. During the penury of his friend he had aided him to a not inconsiderable extent; though afar, he had followed his career with affectionate interest, and the day before Weldon's wedding he had caused Tiffany to send the bride a service of silver which was mentioned by the reporters as "elegant" and "chaste." On returning to New York, Tristrem naturally found the door of the house in Gramercy Park wide open, and it came about that it was in that house that his wavering patriotism was riveted.

This event, after the fashion of extraordinary occurrences, happened in a commonplace manner. One Sunday evening he was bidden there to dine. He had broken bread in the house many times before, but the bread-breaking had been informal. On this particular occasion, however, other guests had been invited, and Tristrem was given to understand that he would meet some agreeable people.

When he entered the drawing-room, he discovered that of the guests of the evening he was the first to arrive. Even Weldon was not visible; but Mrs. Weldon was, and, as Tristrem entered, she rose from a straight-backed chair in which she had been seated, and greeted him with a smile which she had copied from a chromo.

Mrs. Weldon was exceedingly pretty. She was probably twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and her intellect was that of a girl of twelve. Her manner was arch and noticeably affected. She had an enervating way of asking unnecessary questions, and of laughing as though it hurt her. On the subject of dress she was very voluble; in brief, she was prettiness and insipidity personified—the sort of woman that ought to be gagged and kept in bed with a doll.

She gave Tristrem a little hand gloved with *Suède*, and asked him had he been at church that morning. Tristrem found a seat, and replied that he had not. "But don't you like to go?" she inquired, emphasizing each word of the question, and ending up with her irritating laugh.

"He does," came a voice from the door, and Weldon entered. "He does, but he can resist the temptation." Then there was more conversation of the before-dinner kind, and during its progress the door opened again, and a young girl crossed the room.

She was dressed in a gown of canary, draped with madeira and fluttered with lace. Her arms and neck were bare, and unjewelled. Her hair was Cimmerian, the black of basalt that knows no shade more dark, and it was arranged in such wise that it fell on either side of the forehead, circling a little space above the ear, and then wound into a coil on the neck. This arrangement was not modish, but it was becoming—the only arrangement, in fact, that would have befitted her features, which resembled those of the Cleopatra unearthed by Lieutenant Gorringe. Her eyes were not oval, but round, and they were amber as those of leopards, the yellow of living gold. The corners of her mouth drooped a little, and the mouth itself was rather large than small. When she laughed one could see her tongue ; it was like an inner cut of water-melon, and sometimes, when she was silent, the point of it caressed her under lip. Her skin was of that quality which artificial light makes radiant, and yet of which the real delicacy is only apparent by day. She just lacked being tall, and in her face and about her bare arms and neck was the perfume of health. She moved indolently, with a grace of her own. She was not yet twenty, a festival of beauty in the festival of life.

At the rustle of her dress Tristrem had arisen. As the girl crossed the room he bethought him of a garden of lilies; though why, for the life of him, he could not have explained. He heard his name mentioned, and saw the girl incline her head, but he made little, if any, acknowledgment; he stood quite still, looking at her and through her, and over her and beyond. For some moments he neither moved nor spoke. He was unconscious even that other guests had come.

He gave his hand absently to a popular novelist, Mr. A. B. Fenwick Chisholm-Jones by name, more familiarly known as Alphabet, whom Weldon brought to him, and kept his eyes on the yellow bodice. A fair young woman in pink had taken a position near to where he stood, and was complaining to someone that she had been obliged to give up cigarettes. And when the someone asked whether the abandonment of that pleasure was due to parental interference, the young woman laughed shortly, and explained that she was in training for a tennis tournament. Meanwhile the little group in which Tristrem stood was re-enforced by a new-comer, who attempted to condole with the novelist on the subject of an excoriating attack that one of the critics had recently made on his books, and suggested that he ought to do something about it. But of condolence or advice Mr. Jones would have none.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "if the beggar doesn't like what I write let him try and do better. I don't care what any of them say. My books sell, and that's the *hauptsache.* Besides, what's the use in arguing with a newspaper? It's like talking metaphysics to a bull; the first you know, you get a horn in your navel." And while the novelist was expressing his disdain of all adverse criticism, and quoting Emerson to the effect that the average reviewer had the eyes of a bug and the heart of a cat, Tristrem discovered Mrs. Weldon's arm in his own, and presently found himself seated next to her at table.

At the extreme end, to the right of the host, was the girl with the amber eyes. The novelist was at her side. Evidently he had said something amusing, for they were both laughing; he with the complacency of one who has said a good thing, and she with the appreciation of one accustomed to wit. But Tristrem was not permitted to watch her undisturbed. Mrs. Weldon had a right to his attention, and she exercised that right with the pertinacity of a fly that has to be killed to be got rid of. "What do you think of Miss Finch?" she asked, with her stealthy giggle.

"Her name isn't Finch," Tristrem answered, indignantly.

"Yes it is, too—Flossy Finch, her name is; as if I oughtn't to know! Why, we were at Mrs. Garret and Mlle. de l'Entresol's school together for years and years. What makes you say her name isn't Finch? I had you here on purpose to meet her. Did you ever see such hair? There's only one girl in New York——"

"It *is* black," Tristrem assented.

"Black! Why, you must be crazy; it's orange, and that dress of hers——"

Tristrem looked down the table and saw a young lady whom he had not noticed before. Her hair, as Mrs. Weldon had said, was indeed the color of orange, though of an orange not over-ripe. "I thought you meant that girl next to Royal," he said.

"That! Oh! that's Miss Raritan."

Mrs. Weldon's voice had changed. Evidently Miss Raritan did not arouse in her the same enthusiasm as did Miss Finch. For a moment her lips lost their chromo smile, but presently it returned again, and she piped away anew on the subject of the charms of Flossy Finch, and after an interlude, of which Tristrem heard not one word, she turned and cross-questioned the man on her left.

The conversation had become very animated. From Royal's end of the table came intermittent shrieks of laughter. The novelist was evidently in his finest form. "Do you mean to tell me," Miss Finch asked him across the table, "do you mean to say that you don't believe in platonic affection?"

"I never uttered such a heresy in my life," the novelist replied. "Of course I believe in it; I believe in it thoroughly—between husband and wife."

At this everyone laughed again, except Tristrem, who had not heard, and Mrs. Weldon, who had not understood. The latter, however, felt that Miss Finch was distinguishing herself, and she turned to Tristrem anew.

"I want you to make yourself very agreeable to her," she said. "She is just the girl for you. Don't you think so? Now promise that you will talk to her after dinner."

"Talk metaphysics to a bull, and the first thing you know—the first thing you know—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Weldon, I didn't mean to say that—I don't know how the stupid phrase got in my head or why I said it." He hesitated a moment, and seemed to think. "H'm," he went on, "I am a trifle tired, I fancy."

Mrs. Weldon looked suspiciously at the glasses at his side, but apparently they had not been so much as tasted; they were full to the rim. She turned again to the guest at her left. The dinner was almost done. She asked a few more questions, and then presently, in a general lull, she gave a glance about her. At that signal the women-folk rose in a body, the men rising also, to let them pass.

Tristrem had risen mechanically with the others, and when the ultimate flounce had disappeared he sat down again and busied himself with a cup of coffee. The other men had drawn their chairs together near him, and over the liqueurs were discussing topics of masculine interest and flavor. Tristrem was about to make some effort to join in the conversation, when from beyond there came the running scale that is the prelude to the cabaletta, *Non più mesta*, from Cenerentola. Then, abruptly, a voice rang out as though it vibrated through labyrinths of gold—a voice that charged the air with resonant accords—a voice prodigious and dominating, grave and fluid; a voice that descended into the caverns of sound, soared to the uttermost heights, scattering notes like showers of stars, evoking visions of flesh and dazzling steel, and in its precipitate flights and vertiginous descents disclosing landscapes riotous with flowers, rich with perfume, sentient with beauty, articulate with love; a voice voluptuous as an organ and languorous as the consonance of citherns and guitars.

Tristrem, as one led in leash, moved from the table and passed into the outer room. Miss Raritan was at the piano. Beyond, a group of women sat hushed and mute ; and still the resilient waves of song continued. One by one the men issued noiselessly from the inner room. And then, soon, the voice sank and died away like a chorus entering a crypt.

Miss Raritan rose from the piano. As she did so, Weldon, as it becomes a host, hastened to her. There was a confused hum, a murmur of applause, and above it rose a discreet and prolonged *brava* that must have come from the novelist. Weldon, seemingly, was urging her to sing again. The women had taken up anew some broken thread of gossip, but the men were at the piano, insisting too. Presently Miss Raritan resumed her seat, and the men moved back. Her fingers rippled over the keys like rain. She stayed them a second, and then, in a voice so low that it seemed hardly human, and yet so insistent that it would have filled a cathedral and scaled the dome, she began a ballad that breathed of Provence :

> "O Magali, ma bien aimée,
> Fuyons tous deux sous la ramée
> Au fond du bois silencieux. . . ."

When she had finished, Tristrem started. The earliest notes had sent the blood pulsing through his veins, thrilling him from finger-tips to the end of the spine, and then a lethargy enveloped him and he ceased to hear, and it was not until Miss Raritan stood up again from the piano that he was conscious that he had not been listening. He had sat near the entrance to the dining-room, and when the applause began afresh he passed out into the hall, found his coat and hat, and left the house.

As he walked down Irving Place he fell to wondering who it was that he had heard complain of being obliged to give up cigarettes, not on account of parental interference but because of a tournament. Yet, after all, what matter did it make? Certainly, he told himself, the Weldons seemed to live very well. Royal must be making money. Mrs. Weldon—Nanny, as Royal called her—

was a nice little thing, somewhat—h'm, somewhat—well, not quite up to Royal. She looked like that girl in Munich, the girl that lived over the way, only Mrs. Weldon was prettier and dressed better, much better. Du hast die schönsten Augen. Munich wasn't a bad place, but what a hole Innsprück was. There was that Victoria Cross fellow; whatever became of him? He drank like a fish; it must have caught him by this time. H'm, he *would* give me the address of his shoemaker. I ought to have taken more from that man in Paris. Odd that the Cenerentola was the last thing I should have heard there. The buffo was good, so was the contralto. *She* sings much better. What a voice! what a voice! Now, which was the more perfect, the voice or the girl? Let me see, which is the better fulfilled, the odor of the lily or the lily itself? Tulips I never cared for. . . . That is it, then. I wonder, though——

Tristrem had reached the house in Waverley Place. He let himself in with a latchkey, and went to his room. There he sat a while, companioned only by his thoughts. Before he fell asleep, his patriotism was riveted. A land that could produce such a specimen of girlhood outvalued Europe, Asia, and Africa combined—aye, a thousand times—and topped and exceeded creation.

III.

Among the effects and symptoms of love, there is an involuntary action of the mind which, since the days of Stendhal, has been known as crystallization. When a man becomes interested in a woman, when he pictures her not as she really is, but as she seems to him—as she ought to be, in fact—he experiences, first, admiration; second, desire; third, hope; and, behold, love or its counterfeit is born.

This crystallization affects the individual according to his nature. If that nature be inexperienced, unworn—in a word, if it be virginal, its earliest effects are those of a malady. On the other hand, if the nature on which it operates has received the baptism of fire, its effect is that of a tonic. To the one it is a fever, to the other a bugle-call. In the first instance, admiration is pursued by self-depreciation, desire is pinioned before conventional obstacles, and hope falters beneath a weight of doubt. In the second, admiration, desire, and hope are fused into one sentiment, the charm of the chase, the delight of the prospective quarry. As an example, there is Werther, and there is also Don Juan.

Now Tristrem Varick had never known a mother, sisters he had none, the feminine had been absent from his life, but in his nature there was an untarnishable refinement. During his student-days at Harvard, and throughout his residence abroad, there had been nothing of that which the French have agreed to denominate as *bonnes fortunes.* Such things may have been in his path, waiting only to be gathered, but, in that case, certain it is that he had passed them by unheeded. To use the figurative phrase, he was incapable of stretching his hand to any woman who had not the power of awakening a lasting affection ; and during his wanderings, and despite, too, the example and easy morals of his comrades, no such woman having crossed his horizon, he had been innocent of even the most fugitive liaison. Nevertheless, the morning after the dinner in Gramercy Park, crystallization had done its work. He awoke with the surprise and wonder of an inexperienced sensation; he awoke with the consciousness of being in love, wholly, turbulently, absurdly in love with a girl to whom he had not addressed a single word.

The general opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, there are, after all, very few people who know what love really is. And among those that know, fewer there are that tell. A lexicographer, deservedly forgotten, has defined it as an exchange of fancies, the contact of two epiderms. Another, wiser if less epigrammatic, announced it as a something that no one knew what, coming no one knew whence, and ending no one knew how. But in whatever fashion it may be described, one thing is certain, it has been largely overrated.

In the case of Tristrem Varick it appeared in its most perfect form. The superlative is used advisedly. Love has a hundred aspects, a thousand toilets. It may come at first sight, in which event, if it be enduring, it is, as Balzac has put it, a resultant of that prescience which is known as second sight.

Or, it may come of the gradual fusion of two natures. It may come of propinquity, of curiosity, of sympathy, of hatred. It may come of the tremors of adolescence, the mutual attraction of one sex for the other ; and, again, it may come of natural selection, of the discernment which leads a man through mazes of women to one in particular, to the woman who to him is the one woman in the world and manacles him at her feet. If Tristrem Varick had not met Miss Raritan, it is more than probable that he never would have known the meaning of the word.

When the first surprise at the discovery waned, delight took its place. He saw her amber eyes, he recalled as she had crossed the room the indolent undulation of her hips, he breathed the atmosphere of health which she exhaled, and in his ears her voice still rang. The *Non più mesta* of her song seemed almost a promise, and the *O Magali* an invitation. He recalled the movement of her lips, and fell to wondering what her name might be. At first he fancied that it might be Stella ; but that, for some occult reason which only a lover would understand, he abandoned for Thyra, a name which pleasured him awhile and which he repeated aloud until it became sonorous as were it set in titles. But presently some defect presented itself, it sounded less apt, more suited to a blue-eyed daughter of a viking than to one so *brune* as she. Decidedly, Thyra did not suit her. And yet her name might be something utterly commonplace, such as Fanny, for instance, or Agnes, or Gertrude. But that was a possibility which he declined to entertain. When a girl is baptized, the mother, in choosing the name, should, he told himself, think of the lover who will one day pronounce it. And what had her mother chosen? It would be forethought indeed if she had selected Undine or even Iseult; but what mother was ever clairvoyant enough for that?

He thought this over awhile and was about to give the query up, when suddenly, without an effort on his part, he was visited by a name that announced her as the perfume announces the rose, a name that pictured and painted her, a name that suited her as did her gown of canary, a name that crowned her beauty and explained the melancholy of her lips. "It is Madeleine," he said, "it can be nothing else."

And into the syllables he threw the waving inflection of the French.

"It is Madeleine," he continued, "and when I see her I will tell in what way I divined it."

The possibility that she might be indifferent to such homage did not, for the moment, occur to him. He was loitering in the enchanted gardens of the imagination, which have been visited by us all. It was the improbable that fluttered his pulse.

Hitherto the life of Tristrem Varick had been that of a dilettante. There had been no reason why he should work. His education had unfitted him for labor, and his tastes, if artistic, were not sufficiently pronounced to act as incentives. He handled the brush well enough to know that he could never be a painter; he had a natural understanding of music, its value was clear to him, yet its composition was barred. The one talent that he possessed—a talent that grows rarer with the days—was that of appreciation, he could admire the masterpieces of others, but creation was not his. A few centuries ago he would have made an admirable knight-errant. In a material age like our own, his *raison d'être* was not obvious. In a word, he was just such an one as his father had intended he should be, one whose normal condition was that of chronic pluperfect subjunctive, and who, if thrown on his own resources, would be helpless indeed.

In some dim way he had been conscious of this before, and hitherto he had accepted it, as he had accepted his father's attitude, as one accepts the inevitable, and put it aside again as something against which, like death, or like life, it is useless to rebel. After all, there was nothing particularly dreadful about it. An inability to be Somebody was not a matter of which the District Attorney is obliged to take cognizance. At least he need do no harm, and he would have wealth enough to do much good. It was in thoughts like these that hitherto he had found consolation. But on this particular morning he looked for them anew, and the search was fruitless. Not one of the old consolations disclosed the slightest worth. He stood before himself naked in his nothingness. The true knowledge of his incompetence had never come home to him before—but now it closed round him in serried arguments, and in the closing shut out all hope of her. Who was he, indeed, to pretend to such a girl ?

To win her, he told himself, one must needs be a conqueror, one who has coped with dangers and could flaunt new triumphs as his lady's due. Some soldier bearing a marshal's baton back from war, some hero that had liberated an empire or stolen a republic for himself, some prince of literature or satrap of song, someone, in fact, who, booted and spurred, had entered the Temple of Fame, and claimed the dome as his. But he! What had he to offer? His name, however historical and respected, was an accident of birth. Of the wealth which he would one day possess he had not earned a groat. And, were it lost, the quadrature of the circle would not be more difficult than its restoration. And yet, and yet—though any man she could meet might be better and wiser and stronger than he, not one would care for her more. At least there was something in that, a tangible value, if ever there were one. There was every reason why she should turn her back, and that one reason, and that one only, why she should not. But that one reason, he told himself, was a force in itself. The resuscitation of hope was so sudden that the blood mounted to his temples and pulsated through his veins.

He left the bed in which his meditations had been passed. "They say everything comes to him who waits," he muttered, and then proceeded to dress. He took a tub and got himself, absent-mindedly, into a morning suit. "I don't believe it," he exclaimed, at last, "the world belongs to the impatient, and I am impatient of her."

Tristrem was in no sense a diplomatist. In his ways there was a candor that was as unusual as it is delightful; yet such is the power of love that, in its first assault, the victim is transformed. The miser turns prodigal, the coward brave, the genius becomes a simpleton, and in the simpleton there awakes a Machiavelli. Tristrem passed a forenoon in trying to unravel as cruel a problem as has ever been given a lover to solve—how, in a city like New

York, to meet a girl of whom he knew absolutely nothing, and who was probably unaware of his own existence. He might have waited, it is true—chance holds many an odd trick—but he had decided to be impatient, and in his impatience he went to Gramercy Park and drank tea there, not once, but four afternoons in succession, an excess of civility which surprised Mrs. Weldon not a little.

That he should make an early visit of digestion was quite in the order of things, but when that visit was repeated again and again, Mrs. Weldon, with a commingling of complacency and alarm, told herself that, in her quality of married woman, such persistence should be discouraged. But the opportunity for such discouragement did not present itself, or rather, when it did the need of discouragement had passed. Tristrem drank tea with her several times, and then disappeared abruptly. "He must have known it was hopeless," she reflected, when a week went by unmarked by further enterprise on his part. And then, the intended discouragement notwithstanding, she felt vaguely vexed.

In the tea-drinking Tristrem's object, if not apparent to Mrs. Weldon, was perfectly clear to himself. He desired to learn something of Miss Raritan, and he knew, if the tea-drinking was continued with sufficient endurance, not only would he acquire, from a talkative lady like his hostess, information of the amplest kind, which after all was secondary, but that in the course of a week the girl herself must put in an appearance. A dinner call, if not obligatory to him, was obligatory to her, and on that obligation he counted.

To those who agree to be bound by what the Western press calls etiquette, there is nothing more inexorable than a social debt. A woman may contest her mantua-maker's bill with impunity, her antenuptial promises may go to protest and she remain unestopped; but let her leave a dinner-call overdue and unpaid, then is she shameless indeed. In this code Tristrem was necessarily learned. On returning to Fifth Avenue he had marvelled somewhat at noting that laws which applied to one sex did not always extend to the other, that civility was not exacted of men, that politeness was relegated to the tape-counter and out of place in a drawing-room ; in a word, that it was not good form to be courteous, and not ill-bred to be rude.

While the tea-drinking was in progress he managed without much difficulty to get Mrs. Weldon on the desired topic. There were spacious digressions in her information and abrupt excursions into irrelevant matter, and there were also interruptions by other visitors, and the consequent and tedious exchange of platitude and small-talk. But after the fourth visit Tristrem found himself in possession of a store of knowledge, the sum and substance of which amounted to this : Miss Raritan lived with her mother in the shady part of the Thirties, near Madison Avenue. Her father was dead. It had been rumored, but with what truth Mrs. Weldon was not prepared to affirm, that the girl had some intention of appearing on the lyric stage, which, if she carried out, would of course be the end of her socially. She had been very much run after on account of her voice, and at the Wainwarings the President had said that he had never heard anything like it, and asked her to come to Washington and be present at one of the diplomatic dinners. Personally Mrs. Weldon knew her very slightly, but she intimated that, inasmuch as the government had once sent Raritan *père* abroad as minister—in order probably to be rid of him—his daughter was inclined to look down on those whose fathers held less exalted positions—on Mrs. Weldon herself, for example.

It was with this little store of information that Tristrem left her on the Thursday succeeding the dinner. It was meagre indeed, and yet ample enough to afford him food for reflection. During the gleaning many people had come and gone, but of Miss Raritan he had as yet seen nothing. The next afternoon, however, as he was about to ascend Mrs. Weldon's stoop for the fifth time in five days, the door opened and the girl on whom his thoughts were centred was before him.

Throughout the week he had lived in the expectation of meeting her, it was the one thing that had brought zest to the day and dreams to the night; there was even a little speech which he had rehearsed, but for the moment he was dumb. He plucked absently at his cuff, to the palms of his hands there came a sudden moisture. In the vestibule above, a servant stood waiting for Miss Raritan to reach the pavement before closing the door, and abruptly, from a barrel-organ at the corner, a waltz was thrown out in jolts.

The girl descended the steps before Tristrem was able to master his emotion.

"Miss Raritan," he began, hastily, "I don't suppose you remember me. I am Mr. Varick. I heard you sing the other night. I have come here every day since in the hope of——; you see, I wanted to ask if I might not have the privilege of hearing you sing again?"

"If you consider it a privilege, certainly. On Sunday evening, though, I thought you seemed rather bored." She made this answer very graciously, with her head held like a bird's, a trifle to one side.

Tristrem gazed at her in a manner that would have mollified a tigress. "I was not bored. I had never heard anyone sing before."

"Yet your friend, Mr. Weldon, tells me that you are very fond of music."

"That is exactly what I mean."

At this speech of his she looked at him, musingly. "I wish I deserved that," she said.

Tristrem began again with new courage. "It is like anything else, I fancy. I doubt if anyone, ignorant of difficulties overcome, ever appreciates a masterpiece. A sonnet, if perfect, is only perfect to a sonneteer. The gallery may applaud a drama, it is the playwright who judges it at its worth. It is the sculptor that appreciates a Canova——"

They had reached the corner where the barrel-organ was in ambush. A woman dragging a child with Italy and dirt in its face followed them, her hand outstretched. Tristrem had an artful way of being rid of a beggar, and after the fumble of a moment he gave her some coin.

——"And the artist who appreciates rags," added Miss Raritan.

"Perhaps. I am not fond of rags myself, but I have often caught myself envying the simplicity which they sometimes conceal. That woman, now, she may be as pleased with my little gift as I am to be walking with you."

"I thought it was my voice you liked," Miss Raritan answered, demurely.

Tristrem experienced a mental start. A suspicion entered his mind which he chased indignantly. There was about the girl an aroma that was incompatible with coquetry.

"You would not, I am sure, have me think of you in the *vox et præterea nihil* style," he replied. "To be candid, I thought that very matter over the other night." He hesitated, as though waiting for some question, but she did not so much as look at him, and he continued unassisted. "I thought of a flower and its perfume, I wondered which was the more admirable, and—and—I decided that I did not care for tulips."

"But that you did care for me, I suppose?"

"Yes, I decided that."

Miss Raritan threw back her head with a movement indicative of impatience.

"I didn't mean to tell you," he added—"that is, not yet."

They had crossed Broadway and were entering Fifth Avenue. There the stream of carriages kept them a moment on the curb.

"I hope," Tristrem began again, "I hope you are not vexed."

"Vexed at what? No, I am not vexed. I am tired; every other man I meet—There, we can cross now. Besides, I am married. Don't get run over. I am going in that shop."

"You are *not* married!"

"Yes, I am; if I were a Harvard graduate I would say to Euterpe. As it is, Scales is more definite." She had led him to the door of a milliner, a portal which Tristrem knew was closed to him. "If you care to come and see me," she added, by way of *congé*, "my husband will probably be at home." And with that she opened the door and passed into the shop.

"I can imagine a husband," thought Tristrem, with a glimmer of that spirit of belated repartee which Thackeray called cab-wit, the brilliancy which comes to us when we are going home, "I can imagine a husband whose greatest merit is his wife."

IV.

The fact that few days elapsed before Tristrem Varick availed himself of Miss Raritan's invitation, and that thereafter he continued to avail himself of it with frequence and constancy, should surprise no one. During the earliest of these visits he met Miss Raritan's mother, and was unaccountably annoyed when he heard that lady address her daughter as Viola. He had been so sure that her baptismal name was Madeleine that the one by which he found she was called sounded false as an alias, and continued so to sound until he accustomed himself to the syllables and ended by preferring it to the Madeleine of his fancy. This, however, by the way. Mrs. Raritan was a woman who, in her youth, must have been very beautiful, and traces of that beauty she still preserved. When she spoke her voice endeared her to you, and in her manner there was that something which made you feel that she might be calumniated, as good women often are, but yet that she could never be the subject of gossip. She did not seem resolute, but she did seem warm of heart, and Tristrem felt at ease with her at once.

Of her he saw at first but little. In a city like New York it is difficult for anyone to become suddenly intimate in a household, however cordial and well-intentioned that household may be. And during those hours of the winter days when Miss Raritan was at home it was seldom that her mother was visible. But it was not long before Tristrem became an occasional guest at dinner, and it was in the process of breaking bread that a semblance of intimacy was established. And at last, when winter had gone and the green afternoons opposed the dusk, Tristrem now and then would drop in of an evening, and in the absence of Miss Raritan pass an hour with her mother. Truly she was not the rose, but did she not dwell at her side?

Meanwhile, Miss Raritan's attitude differed but little from the one which she had first adopted. She treated Tristrem with exasperating familiarity, and kept him at arm's length. She declined to see him when the seeing would have been easy, and summoned him when the summons was least to be expected. He was useful to her as a piece of furniture, and she utilized him as such. In the matter of flowers and theatres he was a convenience. And at routs and assemblies the attention of an heir apparent to seven million was a homage and a tribute which Miss Raritan saw no reason to forego.

In this Tristrem had no one but himself to blame. He had been, and was, almost canine in his demeanor to her. She saw it, knew it, felt it, and treated him accordingly. And he, with the cowardice of love, made little effort at revolt. Now and then he protested to Mrs. Raritan, to whom he had made no secret of his admiration for her daughter, and who consoled him as best she might; but that was all. And so the winter passed and the green afternoons turned sultry, and Tristrem was not a step further advanced than on the day when he had left the girl at the milliner's. On the infrequent occasions when he had ventured to say some word of that which was nearest his heart, she had listened with tantalizing composure, and when he had paused for encouragement or rebuke, she would make a remark of such inappositeness that anyone else would have planted her there and gone. But Tristrem was none other than himself; his nature commanded and he obeyed.

It so happened that one May morning a note was brought him, in which Miss Raritan said that her mother and herself were to leave in a day or two for the country, and could he not get her something to read on the way. Tristrem passed an hour selecting, with infinite and affectionate care, a small bundle of foreign literature. In the package he found room for Balzac's "Pierrette" and the "Curé de Tours," one of Mme. Craven's stupidities, a volume of platitude in rhyme by François Coppée, a copy of De Amicis' futile wanderings in Spain—a few samples, in fact, of the *pueris virginibusque* school. And that evening, with the bundle under his arm, he sought Miss Raritan.

The girl glanced at the titles and put the books aside. "When we get in order at Narragansett," she said, "I wish you would come up."

Had she kissed him, Tristrem could not

have revelled more. "There are any number of hotels," she added, by way of douche.

"Certainly, if you wish it, but—but——"

"Well, but what?"

"I don't know. You see—well, it's this way: You know that I love you, and you know also that you care for me as for the snows of yester-year. There is no reason why you should do otherwise. I don't mean to complain. If I am unable to make you care, the fault is mine. I did think—h'm—no matter. What I wanted to say is this: there is no reason why you should care, and yet——. See here; take two slips of paper, write on one, I will marry you, and, on the other, Put a bullet through your head, and let me draw. I would take the chance so gladly. But that chance, of course, you will not give. Why should you, after all? Why should I give everything I own to the first beggar I meet? But why should you have any other feeling for me than that which you have? And yet, sometimes I think you don't understand. Any man you meet could be more attractive than I, and very easy he would find it to be so; but no one could care for you more—no one——"

Miss Raritan was sitting opposite to him, her feet crossed, her head thrown back, her eyes fixed on the ceiling. One arm lay along the back of the lounge which she occupied, the other was pendant at her side. And while he still addressed her, she arose with the indolence of a panther, crossed the room, picked up a miniature from a table, eyed it as though she had never seen it before and did not particularly care to see it again, and then, seating herself at the piano, she attacked the *Il segreto per esser felice*, the brindisi from "Lucrezia Borgia."

In the wonder of her voice Tristrem forgot the discourtesy of the action. He listened devoutly. And, as he listened, each note was an electric shock. *Il segreto per esser felice*, indeed! The secret of happiness was one which she alone of all others in the world could impart. And, as the measures of the song rose and fell, they brought him a transient exhilaration like to that which comes of champagne, dowering him with factitious force wherewith to strive anew. And so it happened that, when the ultimate note had rung out and the girl's fingers loitered on the keys, he went over to her with a face so eloquent that she needed but a glance at it to know what he was seeking to say.

With a gesture coercive as a bit, she lifted one hand from the keys and stayed his lips. Then, she stood up and faced him. "Tristrem," she began, "when I first saw you I told you that I was married to my art. And in an art such as mine there is no divorce. It may be that I shall go on the stage. After all, why should I not? Is society so alluring that I should sacrifice for it that which is to me infinitely preferable? If I have not done so already it is because of my mother. But should I decide to do so, there are years of study before me yet. In which case I could not marry, that is self-evident, not only because I would not marry a man who would suffer me to sing in public—don't interrupt—but also because—well, you told me that you understood the possibilities of the human voice, and you must know what the result would be. But even independent of that, you said a moment ago that I did not love you. Well, I don't. I don't love you. Tristrem, listen to me. I don't love you as you would have me. I wish I did. But I like you. I like you as I can like few other men. Tristrem, except my mother, I have not a friend in the world. Women never care for me, and men—well, save in the case of yourself, when their friendship has been worth the having, it belonged to someone else. Give me yours."

"It will be hard, very hard."

Miss Raritan moved from where she had been standing and glanced at the clock. "You must go now," she said, "but promise that you will try."

She held her hand to him, and Tristrem raised it to his lips and kissed the wrist. "You might as well ask me to increase my stature," he answered. And presently he dropped the hand which he held and left the house.

It was a perfect night. The moon hung like a yellow feather in the sky, and in the air was a balm that might have come from fields of tamaris and of thyme. The street itself was quiet, and as Tristrem walked on, something of the enchantment of the hour fell upon him. On leaving Miss Raritan, he had been irritated at himself. It seemed to him that when with her he was at his worst; that he stood before her dumb for love, awkward, embarrassed, and ineffectual of speech. It seemed to him that he lacked the tact of other men, and that, could she see him as he really was when unemotionalized by her presence, if the eloquence which came to him in solitude would visit him once at her side, if he could plead to her with the fervor with which he addressed the walls, full surely her answer would be other. She would make no proffer then of friendship, or if she did, it would be of that friendship which is born of love, and is better than love itself. But as he walked on the enchantment of the night encircled him. He declined to accept her reply; he told himself that in his eagerness he had been abrupt; that a girl who was worth the winning was slow of capture; that he had expected months to give him what only years could afford, and that Time, in which all things unroll, might yet hold this gift for him. He resolved to put his impatience aside like an unbecoming coat. He would pretend to be but a friend. As a friend he would be privileged to see her, and then, some day the force and persistence of his affection would do the rest. He smiled at his own cunning. It was puerile as a jack-straw, but it seemed shrewdness itself to him. Yes, that was the way. He had done wrong; he had unmasked his batteries too soon. And such batteries! But no matter, of his patience he was now assured. On the morrow he would go to her and begin the campaign anew.

He had reached the corner and was on the point of turning down the avenue, when a hansom rattled up and wheeled so suddenly into the street through which he had come, that he stepped back a little to let it pass. As he did so he looked in at the fare. The cab was beyond him in a second, but in the momentary glimpse which he caught of the occupant, he recognized Royal Weldon. And as he continued his way, he wondered where Royal Weldon could be going.

The following evening he went to dine at the Athenæum Club. The house in Waverley Place affected him as might an empty bier in a tomb. The bread that he broke there choked him. His father was as congenial as a spectre. He only appeared when dinner was announced, and after he had seated himself at the table he asked grace of God in a low, determined fashion, and that was the end of the conversation. Tristrem remembered that in the infrequent vacations of his school and college days, that was the way it always had been, and being tolerably convinced that that was the way it always would be, he preferred, when not expected elsewhere, to dine at the club.

On entering the Athenæum on this particular evening, he put his hat and coat in the vestiary and was about to order dinner, when he was accosted by Alphabet Jones.

"I say, Varick," the novelist exclaimed—(during the winter they had seen much of each other), "do you know who was the originator of the cloak-room? Of course you don't—I'll tell you; who do you suppose now? Give it up? Mrs. Potiphar! How's that? Good enough for Theodore Hook, eh? Let's dine together, and I'll tell you some more."

"Let's dine together" was a formula which Mr. Jones had adopted. Literally, it meant, I'll order and you pay. Tristrem was aware in what light the invitation should be viewed, he had heard it before; but, though the novelist was of the genus *spongia*, he was seldom tiresome, often entertaining, and moreover, Tristrem was one who would rather pay than not. As there were few of that category in the club, Mr. Jones made a special prey of him, and on this particular evening, when the ordering had been done and the dinner announced, he led him in triumph to the lift.

As they were about to step in, Weldon stepped out. He seemed hurried and would have passed on with a nod, but Tristrem caught him by the arm. Of late he had seen little of him, and it had seemed to Tristrem that the fault, if fault there were, must be his own.

"I caught a glimpse of you last night, didn't I, Royal?" he asked.

Weldon raised his eyebrows for all response. Evidently he was not in a conversational mood. But at once an idea seemed to strike him. "I dare say," he answered, "I roam about now and then like anyone else. By the way, where are you going to-night? Why not look in on my wife? She says you neglect her."

"I would like it, Royal, but the fact is I am going to make a call."

"In Thirty-ninth Street?"

Tristrem looked at him much as a yokel at a fair might look at a wizard. He was so astonished at Weldon's prescience that he merely nodded.

"You can save yourself the trouble then—I happened to meet Miss Raritan this afternoon. She is dining at the Wainwarings. Look in at Gramercy Park." And with that he turned on his heel and disappeared into the smoking-room.

"Didn't I hear Weldon mention Miss Raritan?" Jones asked, when he and Tristrem had finished the roast. "There's a girl I'd like to put in a book. She has hell in her eyes and heaven in her voice. What a heroine she would make!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically; and then in a complete change of key, in a tone that was pregnant with suggestion, he added, "and what a wife!"

"I don't understand you," said Tristrem, in a manner which, for him, was defiant.

Whether or not Jones was a good sailer is a matter of small moment. In any event he tacked at once.

"Bah! I am speaking in the first person. I don't believe in matrimony myself, I am too poor. And besides, I never heard of but one happy marriage, and that was between a blind man and a deaf-mute. Though even then it must have been difficult to know what the woman thought. Now, in regard to Miss Raritan, half the men in the city are after her, *pour le bon motif*, *s'entend;* but when a girl has had the *dessus du panier* at her feet, no fellow can afford to ask her to take a promenade with him down the aisle of Grace Church, unless he has the Chemical Bank in one pocket and the United States Trust Company in the other. *Et avec ça!*" And Jones waved his head as though not over-sure that the coffers of those institutions would suffice.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," Tristrem indignantly interjected.

"Isn't that odd now?" was Jones' sarcastic reply. "Dr. Holmes says that no fellow can be a thorough-going swell unless he has three generations in oil. And mind you, daguerreotypes won't do. There are any number of your ancestors strung along the walls of the Historical Society, and how many more you may have in that crypt of yours in Waverley Place, heaven only knows. Imprimis, if you accept Dr. Holmes as an authority, you are a thorough-going swell. In the second place, you look like a Greek shepherd. Third, you are the biggest catch in polite society. Certainly it's odd that with such possibilities you should see no reason for not marrying a girl who will want higher-stepping horses than Elisha's, and who, while there is a bandit of a dressmaker in Paris, will decline to imitate the lilies of the field. Certainly——"

"I never said anything about it, I never said anything about marrying or not marrying——"

"Oh, didn't you? I thought you did." And Jones leaned back in his chair and summoned a waiter with an upward movement of the chin. "Bring another pint of this, will you."

"I think I won't take anything more," said Tristrem, rising from the table as he spoke. "It's hot in here. I may see you down-stairs." And with that he left the room.

Mr. Alphabet Jones looked after him a second and nodded sagaciously to himself. "Another man overboard," he muttered, as he toyed with his empty glass. *"Ah! jeunesse, jeunesse!"*

V.

Tristrem descended the stair and hesitated a moment at the door of the smoking-room. Near-by, at a small table, two men were drinking brandy. He caught a fragment of their speech: it was about a woman. Beyond, another group was listening to that story of the eternal feminine which is everlastingly the same. Within, the air was lifeless and heavy with the odor of cigars, but in the hall there came through the wide portals of the entrance the irresistible breath of a night in May.

Tristrem turned and presently sauntered aimlessly out of the club and up the avenue. Before him, a man was loitering with a girl; his arm was in hers, and he was whispering in her ear. A cab passed, bearing a couple that sat waist-encircled devouring each other with insatiate eyes. And at Twenty-third Street, a few shop-girls, young and very pretty, that were laughing conspicuously together, were joined by some clerks, with whom they paired off and disappeared. At the corner, through the intersecting thoroughfares came couple after couple, silent for the most part, as though oppressed by the invitations of the night. Beyond, in the shadows of the Square, the benches were filled with youths and maidens, who sat hand-in-hand, oblivious to the crowd that circled in indolent coils about them. The moon had not yet risen, but a leash of stars that night had loosed glowed and trembled with desire. The air was sentient with murmurs, redolent with promise. The avenues and the adjacent streets seemed to have forgotten their toil and to swoon unhushed in the bewitchments of a dream of love.

Tristrem found himself straying through its mazes and convolutions. Whichever way he turned there was some monition of its presence. From a street-car which had stayed his passage he saw the conductor blow a kiss to a hurrying form, and through an open window of Delmonico's he saw a girl with summer in her eyes reach across the table at which she sat and give her companion's hand an abrupt yet deliberate caress.

Tristrem continued his way, oppressed. He was beset by an insidious duscholia. He felt as one does who witnesses a festival in which there is no part for him. The town reeked with love as a brewery reeks with beer. The stars, the air, the very pavements told of it. It was omnipresent, and yet there was none for him.

He tried to put it from him and think of other things. Of Jones, for instance. Why had he spoken of Viola? And then, in the flight of fancies which surged through his mind, there was one that he stayed and detained. It was that he must see her again before she left town. He looked at his watch: it lacked twenty minutes to ten, and on the impulse of the moment he hailed a passing 'bus. It was inexplicable to him that the night before she should have let him go without a word as to her movements. It seemed to be understood that he was to come again to wish her a pleasant journey. And when was he to come if not that very evening? Surely at the time she had forgotten this engagement with the Wainwarings, and some note had been left for him at the door. And if no note had been left, then why should he not ask for her mother or wait till she returned? A bell rang sharply through the vehicle and aroused him from his reverie. He glanced up, and saw the driver eyeing him through the machicoulis of glass. It was the fare he wanted, and as Tristrem deposited it in the box he noticed that the familiar street was reached.

In a few moments he was at the house. On the stoop a servant was occupied with the mat.

"Is, eh, did——"

"Yes, sir," the man answered, promptly. "Miss Raritan is in the parlor."

In the surprise at the unexpected, Tristrem left his hat and coat, and pushing aside the portière, he entered the room unannounced. At first he fancied that the servant had been mistaken. Miss Raritan was not at her accustomed place, and he stood at the door-way gazing about in uncertainty.

But in an instant, echoing from the room beyond, he caught the sound of her voice; yet in the voice was a tone which he had never heard before—a tone of smothered anger that carried with it the accent of hate.

Moved by unconscious springs, he left the door-way and looked into the adjoining room. A man whom at first he did not recognize was standing by a lounge from which he had presumably arisen. And before him, with both her small hands clinched and pendent, and in her exquisite face an expression of relentless indignation, stood Miss Raritan. Another might have thought them rehearsing a tableau for some theatricals of the melodramatic order, but not Tristrem. He felt vaguely alarmed: there came to him that premonition without which no misfortune ever occurs; and suddenly the alarm changed to bewilderment. The man had turned: it was Royal Weldon. Tristrem could not credit his senses. He raised his hand to his head: it did not seem possible that a felon could have told a more wanton lie than he had been told but little over an hour before; and yet the teller of that lie was his nearest friend. And still he did not understand ; surely there was some mistake. He would have spoken, but Weldon crossed the room to where he stood, and with set teeth and contracted muscles fronted him a second's space, and into his eyes he looked a defiance that was the more hideous in that it was mute. Then, with a gesture that almost tore the portière from its rings, he passed out into the hall and let the curtain fall behind him.

As he passed on Tristrem turned with the obedience of a subject under the influence of a mesmerist ; and when the curtain fell again he started as subjects do when they awake from their trance.

The fairest, truest, and best may be stricken in the flush of health ; yet after the grave has opened and closed again does not memory still subsist, and to the mourner may not the old dreams return ? However acute the grief may be, is it not often better to know that affection is safe in the keeping of the dead than to feel it at the mercy of the living ? We may prate as we will, but there are many things less endurable than the funeral of the best-beloved. Death is by no means the worst that can come.

Whoso discovers that affection reposed has been given to an illusory representation; to one not as he is, but as fancy pictured him; to a trickster that has cheated the heart—in fact, to a phantom that has no real existence outside of the imagination, must experience a sinking more sickening than any corpse can convey. At the moment, the crack of doom that is to herald an eternal silence cannot more appal.

Tristrem still stood gazing at the portière through which Weldon had disappeared. He heard the front door close, and the sound of feet on the pavement. And presently he was back at St. Paul's, hurrying from the Upper School to intercede with the master. It was bitterly cold that morning, but in the afternoon the weather had moderated, and they had both gone to skate. And then the day he first came. He remembered his good looks, his patronizing, precocious ways; everything, even to the shirt he wore—blue, striped with white—and the watch with the crest and the motto *Well done, Weldon.* No, it was ill done, Weldon, and the lie was ignoble. And why had he told it? Their friendship, seemingly, had been so stanch, so unmarred by disagreement, that this lie was as a dash of blood on a white wall—an ineffaceable stain.

If there are years that count double, there are moments in which the hour-glass is transfixed. The entire scene, from Tristrem's entrance to Weldon's departure, was compassed in less than a minute, yet during that fragment of time there had been enacted a drama in epitome—a drama humdrum and ordinary indeed, but in which Tristrem found himself bidding farewell to one whom he had never known.

He was broken in spirit, overwhelmed by the suddenness of the disaster, and presently, as though in search of sympathy, he turned to Miss Raritan. The girl had thrown herself in a chair, and sat, her face hidden in her hands. As Tristrem approached her she looked up. Her cheeks were blanched.

"He told me you were at the Wainwaring's," Tristrem began. "I don't see," he added, after a moment—"I don't understand why he should have done so. He knew you were here, yet he said——"

"Did you hear what he said to me?"

Tristrem for all response shook his head wonderingly.

The girl's cheeks from white had turned to flame.

"He has not been to you the friend you think," she said, and raising her arm to her face, she made a gesture as though to brush from her some distasteful thing.

"But what has he done? What did he say?"

"Don't ask me. Don't mention him to me." She buried her face again in her hands and was silent.

Tristrem turned uneasily and walked into the other room, and then back again to where she sat; but still she hid her face and was silent. And Tristrem left her and continued his walk, this time to the dining-room and then back to the parlor which he had first entered. And after a while Miss Raritan stood up from her seat, and as though impelled by the nervousness of her companion, she, too, began to pace the rooms, but in the contrary direction to that which Tristrem had chosen. At last she stopped, and when Tristrem approached her she beckoned him to her side.

"What did you say to me last night?" she asked.

"What did I say? I said—you asked me—I said it would be difficult."

"Do you think so still?"

"Always."

"Tristrem, I will be your wife."

A Cimmerian led out of darkness into sudden light could not marvel more at multicolored vistas than did Tristrem, at this promise. Truly they are most hopeless who have hoped the most. And Tristrem, as he paced the rooms, had told himself it was done. His hopes had scattered before him like last year's leaves. He had groped in shadows and had been conscious only of a blind alley, with a dead wall, somewhere, near at hand. But now, abruptly, the shadows had gone, the blind alley had changed into a radiant avenue, the dead wall had parted like a curtain, and beyond was a new horizon, gold-barred and blue, and landscapes of asphodels and beckoning palms. He was as one who, overtaken by sleep on the banks of the Styx, awakes in Arcadia.

His face was so eloquent with the bewitchments through which he roamed that, for the first time that evening, Miss Raritan smiled. She raised a finger warningly.

"Now, Tristrem, if you say anything ridiculous I will take it back."

But the warning was needless. Tristrem caught the finger, and kissed her hand with old-fashioned grace.

"Viola," he said, at last, "I thank you. I do not know what I can do to show how I appreciate this gift of gifts. But yet, if it is anything, if it can bring any happiness to a girl to know that she fills a heart to fulfilment itself, that she dwells in thought as the substance of thought, that she animates each fibre of another's being, that she enriches a life with living springs, and feels that it will be never otherwise, then you will be happy, for so you will always be to me."

The speech, if pardonably incoherent, was not awkwardly made, and it was delivered with a seriousness that befitted the occasion. In a tone as serious as his own, she answered:

"I will be true to you, Tristrem." That was all. But she looked in his face as she spoke.

They had been standing, but now they found seats near to each other. Tristrem would not release her hand, and she let it lie unrebellious in his own. And in this fashion they sat and mapped the chartless future. Had Tristrem been allowed his way the marriage would have been an immediate one. But to this, of course, Miss Raritan would not listen.

"Not before November," she said, with becoming decision.

"Why, that is five months off!"

"And months are short, and then——"

"But, Viola, think! Five months! It is a kalpa of time. And besides," he added, with the cogent egotism of an accepted lover, "what shall I do with myself in the meantime?"

"If you are good you may come to the Pier, and there we will talk edelweiss and myosotis, as all engaged people do." She said this so prettily that the sarcasm, if sarcasm there were, was lost.

To this programme Tristrem was obliged to subscribe.

"Well, then, afterward we will go abroad."

"Don't you like this country?" the girl asked, all the stars and stripes fluttering in her voice, and in a tone which one might use in reciting, "Breathes there the man, with soul so dead?"

"I think," he answered, apologetically, "that I do like this country. It is a great country. But New York is not a great city, at least not to my thinking. Collectively it is great, I admit, but individually not, and that is to me the precise difference between it and Paris. Collectively the French amount to little, individually it is otherwise."

"But you told me once that Paris was tiresome."

"I was not there with you. And should it become so when we are there together, we have the whole world to choose from. In Germany we can have the middle ages over again. In London we can get the flush of the nineteenth century. There is all of Italy, from the lakes to Naples. We can take a doge's palace in Venice, or a Cæsar's villa on the Baia. With a dahabieh we could float down into the dawn of history. You would look well in a dahabieh, Viola."

"As Aida?"

"Better. And that reminds me, Viola; tell me, you will give up all thought of the stage, will you not?"

"How foolish you are. Fancy Mrs. Tristrem Varick before the footlights. There are careers open to a girl that the acceptance of another's name must close. And the stage is one of them. I should have adopted it long ago, had it not been for mother. She seems to think that a Raritan—but there, you know what mothers are. Now, of course, I shall give it up. Besides, Italian opera is out of fashion. And even if it were otherwise, have I not now a lord, a master, whom I must obey?"

Her eyes looked anything but obedience, yet her voice was melodious with caresses.

And so they sat and talked and made their plans, until it was long past the conventional hour, and Tristrem felt that he should go. He had been afloat in unnavigated seas of happiness, but still in his heart he felt the burn of a red, round wound. The lie that Weldon had told smarted still, yet with serener spirit he thought there might be some unexplained excuse.

"Tell me," he asked, as he was about to leave, "what was it Weldon said?"

Miss Raritan looked at him, and hesitated before she spoke. Then catching his face in her two hands she drew it to her own.

"He said you were a goose," she whispered, and touched her lips to his.

With this answer Tristrem was fain to be content. And presently, when he left the house, he reeled as though he had drunk beaker after flagon of the headiest wine.

VI.

After a ten-mile pull on the river, a shandygaff of Bass and champagne is comforting to the oarsman. It is accounted pleasant to pay a patient creditor an outlawed debt. But a poet has held that the most pleasurable thing imaginable is to awake on a summer morning with the consciousness of being in love. Even in winter the sensation ought not to be disagreeable; yet when to the consciousness of being in love is added the belief that the love is returned, then the bleakest day of all the year must seem like a rose of June.

Tristrem passed the night in dreams that told of Her. He strayed through imperishable beauties, through dawns surrounded by candors of hope. The breath of brooks caressed him, he was enveloped in the sorceries of a sempiternal spring. The winds, articulate with song, choired to the skies ululations and messages of praise. Each vista held a promise. The horizon was a prayer fulfilled. He saw grief collapse and joy enthroned. From bird and blossom he caught the incommunicable words of love. And when from some new witchery he at last awoke, he smiled—the real was fairer than the dream.

For some time he loitered in the gardens which his fancy disclosed, spectacular-wise, for his own delight, until at last he bethought him of the new duties of his position and of the accompanying necessity of making those duties known to those to whom he was related. Then, after a breakfast of sliced oranges and coffee, he rang for the servant and told him to ask his father whether he could spare a moment that morning. In a few minutes the servant returned. "Mr. Varick will be happy to see you, sir," he said.

"What did he say?" Tristrem asked; "what were his exact words?"

"Well, sir, I said as how you presented your compliments, and could you see him, and he didn't say nothing; he was feeding the burd. But I could tell, sir; when Mr. Varick doesn't like a thing, he looks at you, and if he does, he doesn't."

"And he didn't look at you?"

"No, sir, he didn't turn his 'ead."

"H'm," said Tristrem to himself, as he descended the stairs, "I wonder, when I tell him, whether he will look at me." And the memory of his father's stare cast a shadow on his buoyant spirits.

On entering the room in which Mr. Varick passed his mornings, Tristrem found that gentleman seated at a table. In one hand he held a bronze-colored magazine, and in the other a silver knife. In the window was a gilt cage in which a bird was singing, and on the table was a profusion of roses—the room itself was vast and chill. One wall was lined, the entire length, with well-filled book-shelves. In a corner was a square pile of volumes, bound in pale sheep, which a lawyer would have recognized as belonging to the pleasant literature of his profession. And over the book-shelves was a row of Varicks, standing in the upright idleness which is peculiar to portraits in oil. It was many years since Tristrem had entered this room; yet now, save for the scent of flowers and the bird-cage, it was practically unchanged.

"Father," he began at once, "I would not have ventured to disturb you if—if—that is, unless I had something important to say." He was looking at his father, but his father was not looking at him. "It is this," he continued, irritated in spite of himself by the complete disinterestedness of one whose son he was; "I am engaged to be married."

At this announcement Mr. Varick fluttered the paper-knife, but said nothing.

"The young lady is Miss Raritan," he added, and then paused, amazed at the expression of his father's face. It was as though unseen hands were torturing it at will. The mouth, cheeks, and eyelids quivered and twitched, and then abruptly Mr. Varick raised the bronze-colored magazine, held it before his tormented features, and when he lowered it again his expression was as apathetic as before.

"You are ill!" Tristrem exclaimed, advancing to him.

But Mr. Varick shook his head, and motioned him back. "It is nothing," he answered. "Let me see, you were saying——?"

"I am engaged to Miss Raritan."

"The daughter of——"

"Her father was Roanoke Raritan. He was minister somewhere—to England or to France, I believe."

While Tristrem was giving this information Mr. Varick went to the window. He looked at the occupant of the gilt cage, and ran a thumb through the wires. The bird ruffled its feathers, cocked its head, and edged gingerly along the perch, reproving the intrusive finger with the scorn and glitter of two eyes of bead. But the anger of the canary was brief. In a moment Mr. Varick left the cage, and turned again to his son.

"Nothing you could do," he said, "would please me better."

"Thank you," Tristrem answered, "I——"

"Are you to be married at once?"

"Not before November, sir."

"I wish it were sooner. I do not approve of protracted engagements. But, of course, you know your own business best. If I remember rightly, the father of this young lady did not leave much of a fortune, did he?"

"Nothing to speak of, I believe."

"You have my best wishes. The match is very suitable, very suitable. I wish you would say as much, with my compliments, to the young lady's mother. I would do so myself, but, as you know, I am something of an invalid. You might add that, too—and —er—I don't mean to advise you, but I would endeavor to hasten the ceremony. In such matters, it is usual for the young lady to be coy, but it is for the man to be pressing and resolute. I only regret that her father could not know of it. In regard to money, your allowance will have to be increased—well, I will attend to that. There is nothing else, is there? Oh, do me the favor not to omit to say that I am much pleased. I knew Miss Raritan's father." Mr. Varick looked up at the ceiling, and put his hand to his mouth. It was difficult to say whether he was concealing a smile or a yawn. "He would be pleased, I know." And with that Mr. Varick resumed his former position, and took up again the magazine.

"It is very good of you," Tristrem began; "I didn't know, of course—you see, I knew that if you saw the young lady—but what am I calling her a young lady for?" he asked, in an aside, of himself—"Miss Raritan, I mean," he continued aloud, "you would think me fortunate as a king's cousin." He paused. "I am sure," he reflected, "I don't know what I am talking about. What I say is sheer imbecility. However," he continued, again, "I want to thank you. You have seen so little of me that I did not expect you would be particularly interested, I—I——"

He hesitated again, and then ceased speaking. He had been looking at his father, and something in his father's stare fascinated and disturbed his train of thought. For the moment he was puzzled. From his childhood he had felt that his father disliked him, though the reason of that dislike he had never understood. It was one of those things that you get so accustomed to that it is accepted, like baldness, as a matter of course, as a thing which had to be and could not be otherwise. To his grandfather, who was at once the most irascible and gentlest of men, and whom he had loved instinctively, from the first, with the unreasoning faith that children have—to him he had, in earlier days, spoken more than once of the singularity of his father's attitude. The old gentleman, however, had no explanation to give. Or, if he had one, he preferred to keep it to himself. But he petted the boy outrageously, with some idea of making up for it all, and of showing that he at least had love enough for two.

And now, as Tristrem gazed in his father's face, he seemed to decipher something that was not dislike—rather the contented look of one who learns of an enemy's disgrace, a compound of malice and of glee.

"That was all I had to say," Tristrem added, with his winning smile, as though apologizing for the lameness of the conclusion. And thereupon he left the room and went out to consult a jeweller and bear the tidings to other ears.

For some time he was absurdly happy. His grandfather received the announcement of the coming marriage with proper enthusiasm. He laughed sagaciously at Tristrem's glowing descriptions of the bride that was to be, and was for going to call on the mother and daughter at once, and was only prevented on learning that they had both left town.

"But I must write," he said, and write he did, two elaborate letters, couched in that phraseology at once recondite and simple which made our ancestors the delightful correspondents that they were. The letters were old-fashioned indeed. Some of the sentences were enlivened with the eccentricities of orthography which were in vogue in the days of the *Spectator.* The handwriting was infamous, and the signature on each was adorned with an enormous flourish. They were not models for a Perfect Letter Writer, but they were heartfelt and honest, and they served their purpose very well.

"And, Tristrem," the old gentleman said, when the addresses had been dried with a shower of sand and the letters despatched, "you must take her this, with my love. I gave it to your mother on her wedding day, and now it should go to her." From a little red case he took a diamond brooch, set in silver, which he polished reflectively on his sleeve. "She was very sweet, Tristrem, your mother was—a good girl, and a pretty one. Did I ever tell you about the time——"

And the old gentleman ran on with some anecdote of the dear dead days in which his heart was tombed. Tristrem listened with the interest of those that love. He had heard the story, and many others of a similar tenor, again and again, but, somehow, he never heard them too often. There was nothing wearisome to him in such chronicles; and as he sat listening, and now and then prompting with some forgotten detail, anyone who had happened on the scene would have accounted it pleasant to watch the young fellow and the old man talking together over the youth of her who had been mother to one and daughter to the other.

"See!" said Tristrem at last, when his grandfather had given the brooch into his keeping. "See! I have something for her too." And with that he displayed a ruby, unset, that was like a clot of blood. "I shall have it put in a ring," he explained, "but this might do for a bonnet-pin;" and then he produced a green stone, white-filmed, that had a heart of oscillating flame.

Mr. Van Norden had taken the ruby in his hand and held it off at arm's length, and then between two fingers, to the light, that he might the better judge of its beauty. But at the mention of the bonnet-pin he turned to look :

"Surely, Tristrem, you would not give her that ; it's an opal."

"And what if it is ?"

"But it is not lucky."

Tristrem smiled blithely, with the bravery that comes of nineteenth-century culture.

"It's a pearl with a soul," he answered, "that's what it is. And if Viola doesn't like it I'll send it to you."

"God forbid," Mr. Van Norden replied ; "if anyone sent me an opal I would swear so hard that if the devil heard me he'd go in a corner and cross himself."

At this threat Tristrem burst out laughing, and the old gentleman, amused in spite of himself at the fantasy of his own speech, burst out laughing too.

Then there was more chat, and more reminiscences, and much planning as to how

Tristrem should best assume the rank and appanages of the married state. Tristrem dined with his grandfather that evening, and when Mr. Van Norden started out to his club for a game of whist, Tristrem accompanied him as far as the club door.

When they parted, Tristrem was in such spirits that he could have run up to Central Park and back again. "Divinities of Pindar," he kept exclaiming—a phrase that he had caught somewhere—"divinities of Pindar, she is mine."

Thereafter, for several days, he lived, as all true lovers do, on air and the best tenderloins he could obtain.

VII.

One morning Tristrem found the sliced oranges companied by a note from Her. It was not long, but he read it so often that it became lengthy in spite of the writer. The cottage, it informed him, which had been taken for the summer, was becoming habitable. As yet but one of the hotels, and that the worst, was prepared for guests. In a fortnight, however, the others would begin to open their doors, and meanwhile if, in the course of the week, he cared to run up, there was a room in the cottage at his disposal.

"In the course of the week," soliloquized Tristrem; "h'm—well, this afternoon is in the course of it, and this afternoon will I go."

Pleasured by the artfulness of his own sophistry, he procured a provision of *langues dorées*, a comestible of which she was fond, found at Tiffany's the ruby and opal set in accordance with orders already given, and at two o'clock boarded the Newport express.

The train reached New London before Tristrem had so much as glanced at a volume which he held in his hand. He had little need of anything to occupy his thoughts. His mind was a scenario in which he followed the changes and convolutions of an entertainment more alluring than any that romancer or playwright could convey. He was in that mood which we all of us have experienced, in which life seems not only worth living, but a fountain of delight as well. Were ever fields more green or sky more fair? And such a promise as the future held! In his hearing was a choir of thrushes, and on his spirit had been thrown a mantle so subtle, yet of texture so insistent, that no thought not wholly pure could pierce the woof or find a vantage-ground therein. He was in that mood in which one feels an ascension of virtues, the companionship of unviolated illusions, the pomp and purple of worship, a communion with all that is best, a repulsion of all that is base—that mood in which hymns mount unsummoned from the heart.

He was far away, but the Ideal was at his side. The past was a mirror, mirroring nothing save his own preparation and the dream of the coming of her. And now she had come, fairer than the fairest vision and desire that ever visited a poet starving in a garret. To be worthy of her, even in the slightest measure, what was there that he would leave undone? And as the train brought him to his journey's end, he repeated to himself, gravely and decorously, and with the earnestness and sincerity of the untried, the grave covenants of the marriage pact.

On descending at the station he remembered, for the first time, that he had omitted to send Miss Raritan an avant-courier in the shape of a telegram. It is one of the oddities of hazard that, in turning down one street instead of turning up another, a man's existence, and not his own alone, but that of others also, may seem to be wholly changed thereby. The term *seem* is used advisedly, for, with a better understanding of the interconnection of cause and effect, chance has been outlawed by science, and in the operations of consistent laws the axiom, "Whatever will be, Is," has passed to the kindergarten. Tristrem thought of this months afterward. He remembered then, that that morning he had started out with the intention of sending a telegram from the club, but on the way there he had thought of the chocolate which Viola preferred, and, after turning into Broadway to purchase it, he had drifted into Tiffany's, and from there he had returned to Waverley Place, the message unsent and forgotten. He recalled these incidents months later, but for the moment he merely felt a vague annoyance at his own neglect.

There was a negro at the station, the driver of a coach in whose care Tristrem placed himself, and presently the coach rattled over a road that skirted the sea, and drew up at the gate of a tiny villa. On the porch Mrs. Raritan was seated, and when she recognized her visitor she came down the path, exclaiming her pleasure and welcome. It was evident at once that she had been gratified by her daughter's choice.

"But we didn't expect you," she said. "Viola told me you would not come before Saturday. I am glad you did, though; as yet there's hardly a soul in the place. Viola has gone riding. It's after seven, isn't it? She ought to be back now. Why didn't you send us word? We would have met you at the train."

They had found seats on the porch. Tristrem explained his haste, apologizing for the neglect to wire. The haste seemed pardonable to Mrs. Raritan, and the attendant absent-mindedness easily understood. And so for some moments they talked together. Tristrem delivered his father's message, and learned that Mr. Van Norden's letters had been received. Some word was even said of the possibility of a September wedding. And then a little plot was concocted. Dinner would be served almost immediately, so soon, in fact, as Viola returned. Meanwhile, Tristrem would go to his room, Mrs. Raritan would say nothing of his arrival, but, when dinner was announced, a servant would come to his door, and then he was to appear and give Viola the treat and pleasure of a genuine surprise.

This plan was acted on at once. Tristrem was shown to the room which he was to occupy, and proceeded to get his things in order. From his shirt-box, which, with his valise, had already been brought upstairs, he took the ring, the brooch, the pin, and placed them on the mantel. Then he found other garments, and began to dress. In five minutes he was in readiness, but as yet he heard nothing indicative of Viola's return. He went to the window and looked out. Above the trees, in an adjacent property, there loomed a tower. The window was at the back of the house; he could not see the ocean, but he heard its resilient sibilants, and from the garden came the hum of insects. It had grown quite dark, but still there was no sign of Viola's return.

He took up the volume which he had brought with him in the cars. It was the *Rime Nuove* of Carducci, and with the fancies of that concettist of modern Rome he stayed his impatience for a while. There was one octave that had appealed to him before. He read it twice, and was about to endeavor to repeat the lines from memory, when through the open window he heard the clatter of horses' hoofs, the roll of wheels; it was evident that some conveyance had stopped at the gate of the villa. Then came the sound of hurrying feet, a murmur of voices, and abruptly the night was cut with the anguish of a woman's cry.

Tristrem rushed from the room and down the stairs. Through the open door beyond a trembling star was visible, and in the road a group of undistinguished forms.

"She's only fainted," someone was saying; "she was right enough a minute ago."

Before the sentence was completed, Tristrem was at the gate. Hatless, with one hand ungloved and the other clutching a broken whip, the habit rent from hem to girdle, dust-covered and dishevelled, the eyes closed, and in the face the pallor and contraction of mortal pain, Viola Raritan lay, waist-supported, in her mother's arms.

"Help me with her to the house," the mother moaned. Then noticing Tristrem at her side, "She's been thrown," she added; "I knew she would be—I knew it——"

And as Tristrem reached to aid her with the burden, the girl's eyes opened, "It's nothing." She raised her ungloved hand, "I—" and swooned again.

They bore her into a little sitting-room, and laid her down. Mrs. Raritan followed, distraught with fright. In her helplessness, words came from her unsequenced and obscure. But soon she seemed to feel the need of action. One servant she despatched for a physician, from another a restorative was obtained. And Tristrem, meanwhile, knelt at the girl's side, beating her hand with his. It had been scratched, he noticed, as by a briar, and under the nails were stains such as might come from plucking berries that are red.

As he tried to take from her the whip, that he might rub the hand that held it too, the girl recovered consciousness again. The swoon had lasted but a moment or so, yet to him who watched it had been unmeasured time. She drew away the hand he held, and raising herself she looked at him ; to her lips there came a tremulousness and her eyes filled.

"My darling," Mrs. Raritan sobbed, "are you hurt ? Tell me. How did it happen ? Did the horse run away with you. Oh, Viola, I knew there would be an accident. Where are you hurt ? Did the horse drag you ?"

The girl turned to her mother almost wonderingly. It seemed to Tristrem that she was not yet wholly herself.

"Yes," she answered ; "no, I mean—no, he didn't, it was an accident, he shied. *Do* get me upstairs." And with that her head fell again on the cushion.

Tristrem sought to raise her, but she motioned him back and caught her mother's hand, and rising with its assistance she let the arm circle her waist, and thus supported she suffered herself to be led away.

Tristrem followed them to the hall. On the porch a man loitered, hat in hand ; as

Tristrem approached he rubbed the brim reflectively.

"I saw the horse as good as an hour ago," he said, "I was going to Caswell's." And with this information he crooked his arm and made a backward gesture. "It's down yonder on the way to the Point," he explained. "As I passed Hazard's I looked in the cross-road—I call it a road, but after you get on a bit it's nothing more than a cow-path, all bushes and suchlike. But just up the road I see'd the horse. He was nibbling grass as quiet as you please. I didn't pay no attention, I thought he was tied. Well, when I was coming back I looked again; he wasn't there, but just as I got to the turn I heard somebody holloaing, and I stopped. A man ran up and says to me, 'There's a lady hurt herself, can't you give her a lift?' 'Where?' says I. 'Down there,' he says, 'back of Hazard's; she's been thrown.' So I turned round, and sure enough there she was, by the fence, sort of dazed like. I says, 'Are you hurt, miss?' and she says, 'No,' but could I bring her here, and then I see'd that her dress was torn. She got in, and I asked her where her hat was, and she said it was back there, but it didn't make no difference, she wanted to get home. And when we were driving on here I told her as how I see'd the horse, and I asked if it wasn't one of White's, and she said, 'Yes, it was,' and I was a-going to ask where she was thrown, but she seemed sort of faint, and, sure enough, just as we got here away she went. I always says women-folk ought not to be let on horse-back, she might have broke her neck; like as not——"

"You have been very kind," Tristrem answered, "very kind, indeed."

During the entire scene he had not said a word. The spectacle of Viola fainting on the roadside, the fear that she might be maimed, the trouble at her pallor—these things had tied his tongue; and even now, as he spoke, his voice was not assured, and a hand with which he fumbled in his waistcoat trembled so that the roll of bills which he drew out fell on the porch at his feet. He stooped and picked it up.

"If Mrs. Raritan were here, she would thank you as I do," he continued. "I wish—" and he was about to make some present, but the man drew back.

"That's all right, I don't want no pay for that."

"I beg your pardon," Tristrem answered, "I know you do not. Tell me, are you married?"

The man laughed.

"Yes, I am, and I got the biggest boy you ever see. He's going on four years and he weighs a ton."

"I wish you would do me a favor. Let me make him a little present."

But even to this the man would not listen. He was reluctant to accept so much as thanks. Having done what good he could, he was anxious to go his way—the sort of man that one has to visit the seashore to find, and who, when found, is as refreshing as the breeze.

As he left the porch, he looked back. "Here's the doctor," he said, and passed on into the night.

While the physician visited the patient, Tristrem paced the sitting-room counting the minutes till he could have speech with him, himself. And when at last he heard the stairs creak, he was out in the hall, prepared to question and intercept. The physician was most reassuring. There was nothing at all the matter. By morning Miss Raritan would be up and about. She had had a shock, no doubt. She was upset, and a trifle nervous, but all she needed was a good night's rest, with a chop and a glass of claret to help her to it. If sleep were elusive, then a bromide. But that was all. If she had been seventy a tumble like that might have done for her, but at nineteen! And the doctor left the house, reflecting that were not educated people the most timorous of all, the emoluments of his profession would be slight.

Whether or not Miss Raritan found the chop and claret sufficient, or whether she partook of a bromide as well, is not a part of history. In a little while after the physician's departure a servant brought word to Tristrem that for the moment Mrs. Raritan was unable to leave her daughter, but if he would have his dinner then, Mrs. Raritan would see him later. Such was the revulsion of feeling that Tristrem, to whom, ten minutes before, the mere mention of food would have been distasteful, sat down, and ate like a wolf. The meal finished, he went out on the porch. There was no moon as yet, but the sky was brilliant with the lights of other worlds. Before him was the infinite, in the air was the scent of sea-weed, and beyond, the waves leaped up and fawned upon the bluffs. And as he stood and watched it all, the servant came to him with Mrs. Raritan's apologies. She thought it better, the maid explained, not to leave Miss Raritan just yet, and would Mr. Varick be good enough to excuse her for that evening?

"Wait a second," he answered, and went to his room. He found the jewels, and brought them down-stairs. "Take these to Miss Raritan," he said, and on a card he wrote some word of love, which he gave with the trinkets to the maid. "*La parlate d'amor*," he murmured, as the servant left to do his bidding, and then he went again to his room, and sat down at the window companioned only by the stars. From beyond, the boom and retreating wash of waves was still audible, and below in the garden he caught, now and then, the spark and glitter of a firefly gyrating in loops of gold, but the tower which he had noticed on arriving was lost in the night.

It was in that direction, he told himself, that the accident must have occurred. And what was it, after all? As yet he had not fully understood. Had the horse stumbled, or had he bolted and thrown her? If he had only been there! And as his fancy evoked the possibilities of that ride, he saw a terrified brute tearing along a deserted road, carrying the exquisite girl straight to some sudden death, and, just when the end was imminent, his own muscles hardened into steel, he had him by the bit and, though dragged by the impetus, at last he held him, and she was safe. She was in his arms, her own about his neck, and were he a knight-errant and she some gracious princess, what sweeter guerdon could he claim?

But one thing preoccupied him. In the vertiginous flight she had lost something—her whip, no, her hat—and it was incumbent on him to restore it to her. Very softly, then, that he might not disturb her, he opened the door. The house was hushed, and in a moment he was on the road. He could see the tower now; it was illuminated, and it seemed to him odd that he had not noticed the illumination before. It was that way, he knew, back of Hazard's, and he hurried along in the direction which the man had indicated. The insects had stilled their murmur, and the sky was more obscure, but the road was clear.

He hurried on, and as he hurried he heard steps behind him, hurrying too. He turned his head ; behind him was a woman running, and who, as she ran, cast a shadow that was monstrous. In the glimpse that he caught of her he saw that she was bare of foot and that her breast was uncovered. Her skirt was tattered and her hair was loose. He turned again, the face was hideous. The eyes squinted, lustreless and opaque, the nose was squat, the chin retreated, the forehead was seamed with scars, and the mouth, that stretched to the ears, was extended with laughter. As she ran she took her teeth out one by one, replacing them with either hand. And still she laughed, a silent laughter, her thin lips distorted as though she mocked the world.

Tristrem, overcome by the horror of that laughter, felt as agonized as a child pursued. There was a fence at hand, a vacant lot, and across it a light glimmered. Away he sped. In the field his foot caught in a bramble ; he fell, and could not rise, but he heard her coming and, with a great effort just as she was on him, he was up again, distancing her with ever-increasing space. The light was just beyond. He saw now it came from the tower ; there was another fence, he was over it ; the door was barred ; no, it opened ; he was safe !

In the middle of the room, circular as befits a tower, was a cradle, and in the cradle was a little boy. As Tristrem looked at him he smiled ; it was, he knew, the child of the man to whom he had spoken that evening. One hand was under the pillow, but the other, that lay on the coverlid, held Viola's hat. He bent over to examine it ; the fingers that held it were grimy and large, and, as he looked closer, he saw that it was not a child, but the man himself. Before he had an opportunity to account for the delusion he heard the gallop of feet and a thunder at the door. It was she ! He wheeled like a rat surprised. There was a lateral exit, through which he fled, and presently he found himself in a corridor that seemed endless in extension. The man evidently had left the cradle and preceded him, for Tristrem saw him putting on a great-coat some distance ahead. In his feverish fright he thought, could he but disguise himself with that, he might pass out unobserved, and he ran on to supplicate for an exchange of costume ; but when he reached the place where the man had stood he had gone, vanished through a dead wall, and down the corridor he heard her come. He could hear her bare feet patter on the stones. Oh, God, what did she wish of him ? And no escape, not one. He was in her power, immured with her forevermore. He called for help, and beat at the walls, and ever nearer she came, swifter than disease, and more appalling than death. His nails sank in his flesh, he raised a hand to stay the beating of his heart, and then at once she was upon him, felling him to the ground as a ruffian fells his mistress, her knees were on his arms, he was powerless, dumb with dread, and in his face was the fetor of her breath. Her eyes were no longer lustreless, they glittered like twin stars, and still she laughed, her naked breast heaving with the convulsions of her mirth. "I am Truth," she bawled, and laughed again. And with that Tristrem awoke, suffocating, quivering, and outwearied as though he had run a race and lost it.

He sat awhile, broken by the horror of the dream. The palms of his hands were not yet dry. But soon he bestirred himself, and went to the door; the lights had been extinguished; he closed it again, and, with the aid of some candles, he prepared for bed. He would have read a little, but he was fatigued, tired by the emotions of the day, and when at last he lay down it was an effort to rise again and put out the candle. How long he lay in darkness, a second, an hour, he could not afterward recall; it seemed to him that he had drowsed off at once, but suddenly he started, trembling from head to foot. He had heard Viola's voice soaring to its uttermost tension. "Coward," she had called. And then all was still. He listened, he even went to the door, but the house was wrapped in silence.

"Bah!" he muttered, "I am entertaining a procession of nightmares." And in a few moments he was again asleep.

VIII.

At dawn he awoke refreshed. The sun rose from the ocean like an indolent girl from a bath. Before the house was astir he was out of doors exploring the land. He strolled past the row of hotels that front the sea, and pausing a moment at the Casino, fragrant then, and free of the stench of drink that is the outcome of the later season, he wondered how it was that, given money, and possibly brains, it was necessary to make a building as awkward as was that. And then he strayed to the shore, past the tenantless bath-houses, and on through the glories of the morning to the untrodden beach beyond.

As he walked, the village faded in the haze. The tide was low and the sand firm and hard. The waves broke leisurely in films and fringes of white, gurgling an invitation to their roomy embrace. And when the hotels were lost in the distance and the solitude was murmurous with nature alone, Tristrem, captivated by the allurements of the sea, went down into the waves and clasped them to him as lovers clasp those they love.

The sun was well on its amble to the zenith before he returned to the cottage. His hostess, he found, had not yet appeared, and as breakfast seemed to be served in that pleasant fashion which necessitates nothing, not even an appetite, Tristrem drank his coffee in solitude. And as he idled over the meal he recalled the horrors of the night, and smiled. The air of the morning, the long and quiet stroll, the plunge in the sea, and the after-bath of sunlight that he had taken stretched full length on the sand, had dissipated the enervating emotions of dream and brought him in their stead a new invigoration. He was about to begin the dithyrambs of the day before, when the servant appeared, bearing a yellow envelope, and a book in which he was to put his name. He gave the receipt and opened the message, wonderingly.

"*Please come to town,*" it ran, "*your father is dying.—Robert Harris.*"

"Your father is dying," he repeated. "H'm. Robert Harris. I never knew before what the butler's first name was. But what has that to do with it? There are times when I am utterly imbecile. Your father is dying. Yes, of course, I must go at once. But it isn't possible. H'm. I remember. He looked ghastly when I saw him. I suppose—I ought to—good God, why should I attempt to feign a sorrow that I do not feel? It is his own fault. I would have— But there, what is the use?"

He bit his nail; he was perplexed at his absence of sensibility. "And yet," he mused, "in his way he has been kind to me. He has been kind; that is, if it be kindness in a father to let a son absolutely alone. After all, filial affection must be like patriotism, ingrained as an obligation, a thing to blush at if not possessed. Yet then, again, if a country acts like a step-mother to its children, if a father treats a son as a guardian might treat a ward, the ties are conventional; and on what shall affection subsist? It was he who called me into being, and, having done so, he assumed duties which he should not have shirked. It was not for him to make himself a stranger to me; it was for him to teach me to honor him so much, to love him so well that at his death my head would be bowed in prostrations of grief. I used to try to school myself to think that it was only his way; that, outwardly cold and undemonstrative, his heart was warm as another's. But—well, it may have been, it may have been. After all, if I can't grieve, I would cross the continent to spare him a moment's pain. It was he, I suppose, who told Harris to wire. Yes, I must hurry."

He called the servant to him. "Can you tell me, please, when the next train goes?" But the servant had no knowledge whereon to base a reply. She suggested, however, that information might be obtained at an inn which stood a short distance up the road. He scribbled a few lines on a card, and gave it to the woman. "Take that to Miss Raritan, please, will you?" he said, and left the house.

At the inn a very large individual sat on the stoop, coatless, a straw covering of a remoter summer far back on his head, and his feet turned in. He listened to Tristrem with surly indifference, and spat profusely. He didn't know; he reckoned the morning train had gone.

"Hay, Alf," he called out to the negro who had taken Tristrem from the station the night before, and who was then driving by, "when's the next train go?"

"'Bout ten minutes; I just took a party from Taylor's."

"Thank you," said Tristrem to the innkeeper, who spat again by way of acknowledgment. "Can you take me to the station?" he asked the negro; and on receiving an affirmative reply, he told him to stop at Mrs. Raritan's for his traps.

As Tristrem entered the gate he saw Viola's assistant of the preceding evening drive up, waving a hat.

"I got it," the man cried out, "here it is. First time it ever passed a night out of doors, I'll bet. And none the worse for it, either." He handed it over to Tristrem. "I dreamt about you last night," he added.

"That's odd," Tristrem answered, "I dreamed about you." The man laughed at this as had he never heard anything so droll. "Well, I swan!" he exclaimed, and cracked his whip with delight. His horse started. "Here," he said, "I near forgot.

Whoa, there, can't you. This goes with the hat." And he crumpled a handkerchief in his hand, and tossing it to Tristrem, he let the horse continue his way unchecked.

The hat which the man had found did not indeed look as though it had passed a night on the roadside. Save for an incidental speck or two it might have come fresh from a bandbox. Tristrem carried it into the cottage, and was placing it on the hall-table when Mrs. Raritan appeared.

"I am so sorry," she began, "Viola has told me ——"

"How is she? May I not see her?"

"She scarcely slept last night."

Tristrem looked in the lady's face. The lids of her eyes were red and swollen.

"But may I not see her? May I not, merely for a moment."

"She is sleeping now," Mrs. Raritan answered; "perhaps," she added, "it is better that you should not. The doctor has been here. He says that she should be quiet. But you will come back, will you not? Truly I sympathize with you."

Mrs. Raritan's eyes filled with tears, but to what they were due, who shall say? She seemed to Tristrem unaccountably nervous and distressed.

"There is nothing serious the matter, is there?" he asked, anxiously. And at the question, Mrs. Raritan almost choked. She shook her head, however, but Tristrem was not assured. "I *must* see her," he said, and he made as would he mount the stair.

"Mr. Varick! she is asleep. She has had a wretched night. When you are able to come back, it will be different. But if you care for her, let her be."

The protest was almost incoherent. Mrs. Raritan appeared beside herself with anxiety.

"Forgive me," said Tristrem, "I did not mean to vex you. Nor would I disturb her." He paused a second, dumbly and vaguely afflicted. "You will tell her, will you not?" he added; "tell her this, that I wanted to see her. Mrs. Raritan, my whole life is wrapped up in her." He hesitated again. "You are tired too, I can see. You were up with her last night, were you not?"

Mrs. Raritan bowed her head.

"You must forgive me," he repeated, "I did not understand. Tell me," he continued, "last night I awoke thinking that I heard her calling. Did she call?"

"Call what?"

"I thought—you see I was half, perhaps wholly asleep, but I thought I heard her voice. I was mistaken, was I not?"

"Yes, you must have been."

The negro had brought down the luggage, and stood waiting at the gate.

"You will tell her—Mrs. Raritan—I love her with all my heart and soul."

The lady's lips quivered. "She knows it, and so do I."

"You will ask her to write."

"Yes, I will do so."

Tristrem took her hand in his. "Tell her from me," he began, but words failed him, it was his face that completed the message. In a moment more he was in the coach on his way to the station.

There was a brisk drive along the sea, a curve was rounded, and the station stood in sight. And just as the turn was made Tristrem caught the shriek of a whistle.

"There she goes," the negro exclaimed, "you ought to have been spryer."

"Has the train gone?" Tristrem asked.

"Can't you see her? I knew you'd be late." The man was insolent in his familiarity, but Tristrem did not seem to notice it.

"I would have given much not to be," he said.

At this the negro became a trifle less uncivil. "Would you ree-ly like to catch that train?" he asked.

"I would indeed."

"Is it worth twenty-five dollars to you?"

Tristrem nodded.

"Well, boss, I tell you. That train stops at Peacedale, and at Wakefield she shunts off till the mail passes. Like as not the express is late. If I get you to Kingston before the Newport passes, will you give me twenty-five?"

"If I make the connection I will give you fifty."

"That's talking. You'll get there, boss. Just lay back and count your thumbs."

The negro snapped his whip, and soon Tristrem was jolted over one of the worst and fairest roads of New England, through a country for which nature has done her best, and where only the legislator is vile.

One hamlet after another was passed, and still the coach rolled on.

"We'll get there," the negro repeated from time to time, and to encourage his fare he lashed the horses to their utmost speed. Peacedale was in the distance; Wakefield was passed, and in a cloud of dust they tore through Kingston and reached the station just as the express steamed up.

"I told you I'd do it," the negro exclaimed, exultingly. "I'll get checks for your trunks."

A minute or two more, and the checks were obtained; the negro was counting a roll of bills, and in a drawing-room car Tristrem was being whirled to New York.

For several hours he sat looking out at the retreating uplands, villages, and valleys. But after a while he remembered the scantiness of his breakfast, and, summoning the porter, he obtained from him some food and drink. By this time the train had reached New Haven, and there Tristrem alighted to smoke a cigarette. He was, however, unable to finish it before the whistle warned him that he should be aboard again. The porter, who had been gratified by a tip, then told him that there was a smoking compartment in the car beyond the one in which he had sat, and, as the train moved on, Tristrem went forward in the direction indicated.

The compartment was small, with seats for two on one side, and for three, or for four at most, on the other. As Tristrem entered it he saw that the larger sofa was occupied by one man, who lay out on it, full length, his face turned to the partition. Tristrem took a seat opposite him, and lit a fresh cigarette. As he smoked he looked at the reclining form of his *vis-à-vis*. About the man's neck a silk handkerchief had been rolled, but one end had come undone and hung loosely on the cushion, and as Tristrem looked he noticed that on the neck was a wound, unhealed and fresh, a line of excoriation, that neither steel nor shot could have caused, but which might have come from a scratch. But, after all, what business was it of his? And he turned his attention again to the retreating uplands and to the villages that starred the route.

When the cigarette was done, he stood up to leave the compartment. But however quietly he had moved, he seemed to arouse his neighbor, who turned heavily, as though to change his position. As he did so, Tristrem saw that it was Royal Weldon, and that on his face was a bruise. He would have spoken, for Weldon was looking at him, but he recalled the wanton lie of the week before, and as he hesitated whether to speak or pass on, Weldon half rose. "Damn you," he said, "you are everywhere." Then he lay down, turning his face again to the wall, and Tristrem, without a word, went to the other car and found his former seat.

Two hours later he reached his home. He let himself in with a latch-key, and rang the bell. But when Harris appeared he knew at once, by the expression which the butler assumed, that he had come too late.

"When did it happen?" he asked.

"It was last evening, sir; he came in from his drive and inquired for you, sir. I said that you had gone out of town, and showed him the address you left. When I went to hannounce dinner, sir, he was sitting in his arm-chair with his hat on. I thought he was asleep. I sent for Dr. McMasters, sir, but it was no use. Dr. McMasters said it was the 'art, sir."

"You have notified my grandfather, have you not?"

"Yes, sir, I did, sir; Mr. Van Norden came in this morning, and left word as how he would like to see you when you got back, sir."

"Very good. Call Davis, and get my things from the cabman."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. I beg pardon, sir," he added, "would you wish some dinner? There's a nice fillet and a savory."

IX.

The morning after the funeral Tristrem received a letter from Mrs. Raritan, and a little later a small package by express. The letter was not long, and its transcription is unnecessary. It was to the effect that on maturer consideration Viola had decided that the engagement into which she had entered was untenable. To this decision Mrs. Raritan felt herself reluctantly obliged to concur. It was not that Mr. Varick was one whom she would be unwilling to welcome as her daughter's husband. On the contrary, he was in many respects precisely what she most desired. But Viola was young; she felt that she had a vocation to which marriage would be an obstacle, and in the circumstances Viola was the better judge. In any event, Mr. Varick was requested to consider the decision as irrevocable. Then followed a few words of sympathy and a line of condolence expressive of Mrs. Raritan's regret that the breaking of the engagement should occur at a time when Tristrem was in grievous affliction.

In the package were the jewels.

Tristrem read the letter as though he were reading some accusation of felony levelled at him in the public press. If it had been a meteor which had fallen at his feet he could not have wondered more. Indeed, it was surprise that he felt. It was not anger or indignation; they were after-comers. For the moment he was merely bewildered. It seemed to him incredible that such a thing could be. He read the letter again, and even examined the post-mark. At first he was for starting at once for Narragansett. If he could but see Viola! The excuse about a vocation was nonsense. Had he not told her that if she insisted on going on the stage, he would sit in the stalls and applaud. No, it was not that; it was because— After all, it was his own fault; if he had been unable to make himself beloved, why should the engagement continue? But had an opportunity been given him? He had not had speech with her since that evening when she had drawn his face to hers. No, it could not be that.

He bowed his head, and then Anger came and sat at his side. What had he done to Destiny that he should be to it the plaything that he was? But she; she was more voracious even than Fate. No, it was damnable. Why should she take his heart and torment it? Why, having given love, should she take it away? He was contented enough until he saw her. Why had she come to him as the one woman in the world, luring him on; yes, for she had lured him on? Why had she made him love her as he could never love again, and just when she placed her hand in his,—a mist, a phantom, a reproach? Why had she done so? Why was the engagement untenable? Untenable, indeed, why was it untenable? Why—why—why? And in the increasing exasperation of the moment, Tristrem did a thing that, with him, was unusual. He rang the bell, and bade the servant bring him drink.

It was on the afternoon of that day that he learned the tenor of his father's will. It affected him as a chill affects a man smitten with fever. He accepted it as a matter of course. It was not even the last drop; the cup was full as it stood. What was it to him that he had missed being one of the richest men in New York in comparison to the knowledge that even had he the mines of Ormuz and of Ind, the revenue would be as useless to him as the hands of the dead? Was she to be bought? Had she not taken herself away before the contents of the will were reported? He might be able to call the world his own, and it would avail him nothing.

The will left him strangely insensible, though, after all, one may wonder whether winter is severer than autumn to a flower once dead.

But if the will affected Tristrem but little, it stirred Dirck Van Norden to paroxysms of wrath. "He ought to have his ghost kicked," he said, in confidential allusion to Erastus Varick. "It's a thing that cries out to heaven. And don't you tell me, sir, that nothing can be done."

The lawyer with whom he happened to be in consultation said there were many things that could be done. Indeed, he was reassuringly fecund in resources. In the first place, the will was holographic. That, of course, mattered nothing; it only pointed a moral. Laymen should not draw up their own wills. For that matter, even professionals should be as wary of so doing as physicians are of doctoring themselves. And the lawyer instanced legal luminaries, judges whose *obiter dicta* and opinions *in banco* were cited and received with the greatest respect, and yet through whose wills, drawn up, mark you, by their own skilled hands, coaches and tandems had been driven full speed. In regard to the will of the deceased there was this to be said, it would not hold water. Chapter 360, Laws of 1860, declares that no person having a husband, wife, child, or parent, shall by his or her last will and testament, devise or bequeath to any benevolent, charitable, scientific, literary, religious, or missionary society, association, or corporation, in trust or otherwise, more than one-half part of his or her estate.

"But he devised the whole."

"Yes, so he did; but in devising it he overlooked that very wise law. My opinion in the matter is this. When, may I ask, was your grandson born?"

"He was born on the 10th of June, 1859."

"Exactly. The late Mr. Varick determined, on the birth of your grandson, that the property should go over. His reasons for so determining are immaterial. Rufus K. Taintor, the ablest man, sir, that ever sat on the bench or addressed it, drew up the will at that time in accordance with instructions received. Some years later, Taintor died of apoplexy, and he died, too, as you doubtless remember, after the delivery of that famous speech in the Besalul divorce case. Well, sir, what I make of the matter is this. The late Mr. Varick, relying on Taintor's ability, and possessing possibly some smattering of law of his own, recopied the will every time the fancy took him to make minor alterations in the general distribution of the trust. Consequently his last will and testament, having been made since the passage of the law of 1860, is nugatory and void as to one-half the bequest, and your grandson may still come in for a very pretty sum."

"He ought to have it all," said Mr. Van Norden, decidedly.

"I don't dispute that, sir, in the least—and my opinion is that he will get it. This will is dated five days previous to Mr. Varick's demise. Now, according to the law of 1848, Chapter 319, and, if I remember rightly, Section 6, no such bequest as the deceased's is valid in any will which shall not have been made and executed at least two months before the death of the testator. That, sir, I consider an extremely wise bit of legislation. The law of 1860, which I quoted, vitiates the will as to one-half the bequest; the law of 1848 does away with the will altogether. Practically speaking, your son-in-law might just as well have died intestate. Though, between ourselves, if Mr. Varick had not been ignorant of these laws, and had not, in consequence of his ignorance, made a disposition of certain private documents the contents of which are easily guessed, your grandson would have merely a *prima facie* right to have the will set aside; for, if you remember, these laws were passed only to provide for the possible interests of a surviving husband, wife, or *child.*"

He emphasized the last word, and, as his meaning grew clear to Mr. Van Norden, that gentleman got very red in the face. He rang the bell.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I shall be indebted if you will send me your account. And I shall be particularly indebted if you will send it at your very earliest convenience. Henry, get this—this—get this gentleman his hat and see him to the street."

Unfortunately for those that practise, there are a great many more lawyers in New York than one. And before the last will and testament of Erastus Varick came up for probate, Mr. Van Norden experienced slight difficulty in retaining another attorney to defend Tristrem's interests. The matter, of course, was set down for a hearing, and came up on the calendar three months later.

Of the result of that hearing the reader has been already informed, and then it was that Tristrem was taxed with old-world folly.

X.

In years gone by it had been Mr. Van Norden's custom to pass the heated term at Rockaway. But when Rockaway became a popular resort, Mr. Van Norden, like the sensible man that he was, discovered that his own house was more comfortable than a crowded hotel. This particular summer, therefore, he passed as usual in New York, and Tristrem, who had moved to his house, kept him company. June was not altogether disagreeable, but in July the city was visited by a heat at once insistent and enervating. In August it was cooler, as our Augusts are apt to be; yet the air was lifeless, and New York was not a nosegay. During these months Tristrem was as lifeless as the air. In his first need of sympathy he had gone to the irascible and kind-hearted old gentleman and told him of the breaking of the engagement, and, he might have added, of his heart, though in the telling he sought, with a lover's fealty, to palliate the grievousness of the cruelty to which he had been subjected.

"It is this way," he said; "Viola, I think, feels that she does not know me sufficiently well. After all, we have seen but little of each other, and if she accepted me, it was on the spur of the moment. Since then she has thought of it more seriously. It is for me to win her, not for her to throw herself in my arms. That is what she has thought. She may seem capricious; and what if she does? Your knowledge of women has, I am sure, made you indulgent."

"Not in the least," Mr. Van Norden answered. And then, for the time being, the subject was dropped.

It was this semi-consolatory view which Tristrem took of the matter after the effect of the first shock had lost its force. But when he received the bundle of letters, together with the Panama hat, which, through some splendid irony, had been devised to him in the only clause of the will in which his name was mentioned, it was as though a flash had rent the darkness and revealed in one quick glare an answer to the enigma in which he groped.

The letters were few in number—a dozen at most—and they were tied together with a bit of faded ribbon. They were all in the same hand, one and all contained protestations of passionate love, and each was signed in full, Roanoke Raritan. The envelope which held them was addressed to Mrs. Erastus Varick.

It was then that he saw the reason of his disinheritance, and it was then that he understood the cause of Viola's withdrawal. It was evident to him that Mrs. Raritan possessed either thorough knowledge of the facts, or else that she had some inkling of them which her feminine instinct had supplemented into evidence, and which had compelled her to forbid the banns. There were, however, certain things which he could not make clear to his mind. Why had Mrs. Raritan treated him with such consideration? She had known from the first that he loved her daughter. And after the engagement, if she wished it broken, why had she allowed Viola to invite him to the Pier?

These things were at first inexplicable to him. Afterward he fancied that it might be that Mrs. Raritan, originally uninformed, had become so only through the man whom he had believed was his father, after the announcement of the engagement had been made to him, and possibly through some communication which had only reached her after his sudden death. This explanation he was inclined to accept, and he was particularly inclined to do so on recalling the spasm which had agitated the deceased when he had come to him with the intelligence of the engagement, and the nervous excitement which Mrs. Raritan displayed on the morning when he left for town.

This explanation he accepted later—but in the horror of the situation in which he first found himself his mind declined to act. He had never known his mother, but her fame he had cherished as one cherishes that which is best and most perfect of all. And abruptly that fame was tarnished, as some fair picture might be sullied by a splash and splatter of mud. And as though that were insufficient, the letters which devastated his mother's honor brought him a hideous suspicion, and one which developed into certainty, that his father and the father of the girl whom he loved were one and the same.

It is not surprising, then, that during the summer months Tristrem was as lifeless as the air he breathed. His grandfather noticed the change—he would have been blind indeed had he not—and he urged him to leave New York. But at each remonstrance Tristrem shook his head with persistent apathy. What did it matter to him where he was? If New York, instead of being merely hot and uncomfortable, had been cholera-smitten, and the prey of pest, Tristrem's demeanor would not have altered. There are people whom calamity affects like a tonic, who rise from misfortune refreshed; there are others on whom disaster acts like a soporific, and he was one of the latter. For three months he did not open a book, the daily papers were taken from him unread, and if during that time he had lost his reason, it is probable that his insanity would have consisted in sitting always with eyes fixed, without laughing, weeping, or changing place.

But after the hearing in the Surrogate's Court there was a change of scene. The will was set aside, and the estate, of which Tristrem had taken absolutely no thought whatever, reverted to him. It was then that he made it over in its entirety to the institution to which it had been originally devised; and it was in connection with the disposal of the property, a disposal which he effected as a matter of course, and as the only right and proper thing for him to do, that he enjoyed a memorable interview with his grandfather.

He had not spoken to Mr. Van Norden about the letters, and the old gentleman, through some restraining sense of delicacy, had hesitated to question. Besides, he was confident that the estate would be Tristrem's, and thus assured, it seemed unnecessary to him to touch on a matter to which Tristrem had not alluded, and which was presumably distasteful to him. But when he learned what Tristrem had done, he looked upon the matter in a different light, and attacked him very aggressively the next day.

"I can understand perfectly," he said,

"that you should decline to hold property on what you seem to regard as a legal quibble. But I should be very much gratified to learn in what your judgment is superior to that of the Legislature, and why you should refuse that to which you had as clear and indefeasible a claim as I have to this fob on my waistcoat. I should be really very much gratified to learn——"

Tristrem looked at his grandfather very much as though he had been asked to open a wound. But he answered nothing. He got the letters and placed them in the old gentleman's hand.

Mr. Van Norden glanced at one, and then turned to Tristrem. It was evident that he was in the currents of conflicting and retroacting emotions. He made as though he would speak, yet for the time being the intensity of his feelings prevented him. He took up the letters again and eyed them, shaking his head as he did so with the anger of one enraged at the irreparable, and conscious of the futility of the wrath.

In the lives of most men and women there are moments in which they are pregnant with words. The necessity of speech is so great that until the parturition is accomplished they experience the throes of suffocation. If no listener be at hand, there are at least the walls. Mr. Van Norden was standing near to Tristrem, but that he might be the better assured of his attention, he caught him by the arm, and addressed him in abrupt, disjointed sentences, in a torrent of phrases, unconnected, as though others than himself beat their vocables from his mouth. His words were so tumultuous that they assailed the gates of speech, as spectators at the sight of flame crowd the exits of a hall, and issue, some as were they hurled from catapults, others, maimed, in disarray.

He was possessed of anger, and as sometimes happens off the stage, his anger was splendid and glorious to behold. And Tristrem, with the thirst of one who has drunk of thirst itself, caught the cascade of words, and found in them the waters and fountains of life.

"These letters—— But how is it possible? God in Heaven——! But can't you see?—the bare idea is an infamy. Your mother was as interested in Raritan as—as—— It's enough to make a mad dog blush. It was just a few months before you were born—— Bah! the imbecility of Erastus Varick would unnerve a pirate. I know he was always running there, Raritan was, but anyone with the brain of a wooden Indian would have understood—— Why, they were here—they came to me, all three of them, and because I knew her father—— And precious little thanks I got for my pains. He said he would see the girl in her grave first. He would have it that Raritan was after her for her money. It's true he hadn't a penny—but—what's that got to do with it? The mischief's done. She must have sent these letters to your mother to return to Raritan just before she married that idiot Wainwaring. Your mother was her most intimate friend—they were at school together at Pelham Priory. Raritan, I suppose, was away. Before he got back, your mother—you were born, you know, and she died. She had no chance to return them. That imbecile of a father of yours must have found the letters, and thought—— But how is such a thing possible? Good God! he ought to be dug up and cowhided. And it was for this he left you a Panama hat! And it was for this you have turned over millions to an institution for the shelter of vice! It was for this—— See here, since Christ was crucified, a greater stupidity, or one more iniquitous, has never been committed."

In the magnificence of his indignation, Mr. Van Norden stormed on until he lacked the strength to continue. But he stormed to ravished and indulgent ears. And when at last he did stop, Tristrem, who meanwhile had been silent as a mouse, went over to the arm-chair into which, in his exhaustion, he had thrown himself, and touched his shoulder.

"If he did not wish me to have the money," he said, "how could I keep it? How could I?" And before the honesty that was in his face the old man lowered his eyes to the ground. "I am gladder," Tristrem continued, "to know myself his son than to be the possessor of all New York. But when I thought that I was not his son, was that a reason why I should cease to be a gentleman. Though I lost everything else, what did it matter if I kept my self-respect ? "

He waited a moment for an answer, and then a very singular thing happened. From Dirck Van Norden's lowered eyes first one tear and then a second rolled down into the furrows of his cheek. From his throat came a sound that did not wholly resemble a sob and yet was not like to laughter, his mouth twitched, and he turned his head aside. "It's the first time since your mother died," he said at last, but what he meant by that absurd remark, who shall say ?

For some time Tristrem lingered, lost in thought. It was indeed as he had said. He was gladder to feel again that he was free to love and free to be loved in return than he would have been at holding all New York in fee. As he rose from the nightmare in which he suffocated he did not so much as pay the lost estate the compliment of a regret. It was not that which had debarred him from her, nor was it for that that she had once placed her hand in his. He was well rid of it all, since in the riddance the doors of his prison-house were unlocked. For three months his heart had been not dead but haunted, and now it was instinct with life and fluttered by the beckonings of hope. He had fronted sorrow. Pain had claimed him for its own, and in its intensity it had absorbed his tears. He had sunk to the uttermost depths of grief, and unbereft of reason, he had explored the horrors of the abyss. And now in the magic of the unforeseen he was transported to dazzling altitudes, to landscapes from which happiness, like the despot that it is, had routed sorrow and banished pain. He was like one who, overtaken by years and disease, suddenly finds his youth restored.

His plans were quickly made. He would go to Narragansett at once, and not leave until the engagement was renewed. He had even the cruelty to determine that his grandfather should come to the Pier himself, and argue with Mrs. Raritan, if argument were necessary.

"I have so much to say," he presently exclaimed, "that I don't know where to begin."

"Begin at the end," his grandfather suggested.

But Tristrem found it more convenient to begin in the middle. He led the old gentleman into the rhyme and reason of the rupture, he carried him forward and backward from old fancies to newer hopes. He explained how imperative it was that with the demolition of the obstacle which his father had erected the engagement should be at once renewed; he blamed himself for having even suggested that Viola was capricious; he mourned over the position in which she had been placed; he pictured Mrs. Raritan's relief when she learned of the error into which she had wandered; and after countless digressions wound up by commanding his grandfather to write an explanation which would serve him as a passport to renewed and uninterruptable favor.

"Certainly—certainly," Mr. Van Norden cried, with the impatience of one battling against a stream. "But even granting that your father wrote to Mrs. Raritan, which I doubt—although, to be sure, he was capable of anything—don't you see that you are in a very different position to-day than you would have been had you not—had you not——"

"You mean about the money?"

"Why, most assuredly I mean about the money," the old gentleman cried, aroused to new indignation by the wantonness of the question.

At this Tristrem, with the blithe confidence of a lover, shook his head. "You don't know Viola," he answered. "Besides, I can work. Other men do—why shouldn't I?"

"And be able to marry when you are ready for the grave. That's nonsense. Unless the young lady is a simpleton, and her mother a fit subject for Bedlam, don't tell them that you are going to work. And what would you work at, pray? No, no—that won't do. You are as fitted to go into business as I am to open a bake-shop."

"I might try stocks," said Tristrem, bravely.

"So you might, if you had the St. Nicholas money to start with. And even then you would have to lose two fortunes before you could learn how to make one. No, if you have not six or seven millions, you will, one of these days—and the later the day the better for me—you will have a few hundred thousand. It is paltry enough in comparison to the property which you threw out of the window, but, paltry or not, it's more than you deserve. Meanwhile, I will—— There, don't begin your nonsense again, sir. For the last three months you have done nothing but bother the soul out of me. Meanwhile, if you don't accept what I care to give, and accept it, what's more, with a devilish good grace, I'll—I'll disinherit you myself—begad I will. I'll leave everything I have to the St. Nicholas. It's a game that two can play at. You have set the fashion, and you can abide by it. And now I would be very much indebted if you would let me get some rest."

Therewith the fierce old gentleman looked Tristrem in the eyes, and grasping him by the shoulder, he held him to him for a second's space.

XI.

When Tristrem reached Narragansett he had himself driven to an hotel, where he removed the incidental traces of travel before venturing to present himself at the villa. It was a glorious forenoon, and as he dressed, the tonic that was blown to him through the open window affected his spirits like wine. The breeze promised victory. He had been idle and dilatory, he told himself; but he was older, the present was his, and he felt the strength to make it wholly to his use. The past would be forgotten and put aside; no, but utterly, as Nature forgets—and in the future, what things might be!

"O Magali, ma bien aimée,
Fuyons tous deux, tous de—ux——"

The old song came back to him, and as he set out for the villa he hummed it gayly to himself. The villa was but the throw of a stone from the hotel, and in a moment he would be there. He was just a little bit nervous, and he walked rapidly. As he reached the gate his excitement increased. In his breast was a tightening sensation. And then at once he stopped short. On the door of the cottage hung a sign, bearing for legend, "To Let—Furnished."

"But it is impossible," he exclaimed; "they were to be here till October."

He went up and rang the bell. The front windows were closed and barred. The porch on which he stood was chairless. He listened, and heard no sound. He tried the door—it was locked.

"But it is impossible," he kept repeating. "H'm! 'To let—furnished; for particulars apply to J. F. Brown, at the Casino.' Most certainly, I will—most certainly," and monologuing in the fashion that was peculiar to him, he went down the road again, mindful only of his own perplexity.

On reaching the Casino he found that he would have no difficulty in seeing the agent. Mr. Brown, the door-keeper told him, was "right in there," and as he gave this information he pointed to a cramped little office which stood to the left of the entrance.

"Is this Mr. Brown?" Tristrem began. "Mr. Brown, I am sorry to trouble you. Would you be good enough to tell me about Mrs. Raritan's cottage. I——"

"For next summer? Nine hundred, payable in advance."

"I didn't mean about the price. I meant —I was told that Mrs. Raritan had taken it until October——"

"So she did. You can sublet for the balance of the season."

"Thank you—yes—but Mrs. Raritan hasn't gone away, has she?"

"She went weeks ago. There's nothing the matter with the cottage, however. Drainage excellent."

"I have no doubt. But can you tell me where Mrs. Raritan went to?"

"I haven't the remotest idea. Lenox, perhaps. If you want to look at the cottage I'll give you the key."

"I should think—— Really, I must apologize for troubling you. Didn't Mrs. Raritan leave her address?"

"If she did, it wasn't with me. When do you want the cottage for?"

Tristrem had not the courage to question more. He turned despondently from Mr. Brown, and passing on through the vestibule, reached the veranda that fronts the sea. In an angle a group of violinists were strumming an inanity of Strauss with perfect independence of one another. Beyond, on the narrow piazza, and on a division of the lawn that leaned to the road, were a number of small tables close-packed with girls in bright costumes and men in loose flannels and coats of diverting hues. At the open windows of the restaurant other groups were seated, dividing their attention between the food before them and the throng without. And through the crowd a number of Alsatians pushed their way, bearing concoctions to the thirstless. The hubbub was enervating, and in the air was a stench of liquor with which the sea-breeze coped in vain.

Tristrem hesitated a second, and would have fled. He was in one of those moods in which the noise and joviality of pleasure-seekers are jarring even to the best-disposed. While he hesitated he saw a figure rising and beckoning from a table on the lawn. And as he stood, uncertain whether or no the signals were intended for him, the figure crossed the intervening space, and he recognized Alphabet Jones.

"Come and have a drink," said that engaging individual. "You're as solemn as a comedian. I give you my word, I believe you are the only sober man in the place."

"Thank you," Tristrem answered; "I believe I do not care for anything. I only came to ask—— By the way, have you been here long?"

"Off and on all summer. It's a good place for points. You got my card, didn't you? I wanted to express my sympathy at your bereavement."

"You are very kind; I——"

"But what's this I hear about you? You've bloomed out into a celebrity. Everybody is talking about you—everybody, men, women, and children, particularly the girls. When a fellow gives away a fortune like that! *Mais, tu sais, mon cher, c'est beau, c'est bien beau, ça.*" And to himself he added, "*Et bien bête.*"

Already certain members of immediate groups had become interested in the new arrival, and it seemed to Tristrem that he heard his name circulating above the jangle of the waltz.

"I am going to the hotel," he said. "I wish you would walk back with me. I haven't spoken to a soul in an age. It would be an act of charity to tell me the gossip." Tristrem, as he made this invitation, marvelled at his own duplicity. For the time being, he cared for the society of Alphabet Jones as he cared for the companionship of a bum-bailiff. Yet still he lured him from the Casino and led him up the road, in the hope that perhaps without direct questioning he might gain some knowledge of Her.

As they walked on Jones descanted in the arbitrary didactic manner which is the privilege of men of letters whose letters are not in capitals, and moralized on a variety of topics, not with any covert intention of boring Tristrem, but merely from a habit he had of rehearsing ready-made phrases and noting their effect on a particular listener. This exercise he found beneficial. In airing his views he sometimes stumbled on a good thing which he had not thought of in private. And as he talked Tristrem listened, in the hope that he might say something which would permit him to lead up to the subject that was foremost in his mind. But nothing of such a nature was touched upon, and it was not until the cottage was reached that Tristrem spoke at all.

"The Raritans have gone, I see," he remarked, nodding at the cottage as he did so.

"Yes, I see by the papers that they sailed yesterday."

"You don't mean to say they have gone to Europe. I thought—I heard they were going to Lenox."

"If they were, they changed their plans. Miss Raritan didn't seem up to the mark when she was here. In some way she reminded me of a realized ideal—the charm had departed. She used to be enigmatical in her beauty, but this summer, though the beauty was still there, it was no longer enigmatical, it was like a problem solved. After all, it's the way with our girls. A winter or two in New York would take the color out of the cheeks of a Red Indian. *Apropos de bottes*, weren't you rather smitten in that direction?"

"And you say they have gone abroad?" Tristrem repeated, utterly unimpressed by the ornateness of the novelist's remarks.

"Yes, sir; and were it not that our beastly Government declines to give me the benefit of an international copyright, I should be able to go and do likewise. It's enough to turn an author into an anarchist. Why, you would be surprised——"

Jones rambled on, but Tristrem no longer listened. The position in which he found himself was more irritating than a dream. He was dumbly exasperated. It was his own inaction that was the cause of it all. If he had but bestirred himself sooner! Instead of struggling against that which every throb of his heart convinced him was false, he had dawdled with the impossible and toyed with apostils of grief. At the first obstacle he had turned aside. Where he should have been resolute, he had been weak. He had taken mists for barriers. A child frightened at its own shadow was never more absurd than he. And Viola—it was not surprising that the color had deserted her cheeks. It was no wonder that in his imbecile silence she had gone away. It was only surprising that she had not gone before. And if she had waited, might it not be that she waited expectant of some effort from him, hoping against hope, and when he had made no sign had believed in his defeat, and left him to it. There was no blame for her. And now, if he were free again, that very liberty was due not to his own persistence, but to chance. Surely she was right to go. Yet—yet—but, after all, *it was not too late.* Wherever she had gone he could follow. He would find her, and tell her, and hold her to him.

Already he smiled in scenes forecast. The exasperation had left him. Whether he came to Narragansett or journeyed to Paris, what matter did it make? The errand was identical, and the result would be the same. How foolish of him to be annoyed because he had not found her, in garlands of orange-blossoms, waiting on a balcony to greet his coming. The very fact of her absence added new weight to the import of his message. Yes, he would return to town at once, and the next steamer would bear him to her.

And then, unconsciously, through some obscure channel of memory, he was back where he had once been, in a *Gasthof* in the Bavarian Mountains. It was not yet dusk. Through the window came a choir of birds, and he could see the tender asparagus-green of neighborly trees. He was seated at a great, bare table of oak, and as he raised from it to his lips a stone measure of beer, his eyes rested on an engraving that hung on the wall. It represented a huntsman, galloping like mad, one steadying hand on the bridle and the other stretched forward to grasp a phantom that sped on before. Under the picture, in quaint German text, was the legend, *The Chase after Happiness.* "H'm," he mused, "I don't see why I should think of that."

"That's the gist of it all," Jones was saying. "It's the fashion to rail against critics. I remember telling one of the guild the other day not to read my books—they might prejudice him in my favor; but in comparison to certain publishers the average reviewer stands as a misdemeanant does to a burglar. No, I have said it before and I say it again, until that copyright law is passed, the Government is guilty of nothing less than compounding a felony."

Of what had gone before Tristrem had not heard a single word, and these ultimate phrases which reached him were as meaningless as church-steeples. He started as one does from a nap, with that shake of the head which is peculiar to the absent-minded. He was standing, he discovered, at the entrance to the hotel at which he lodged.

"Don't you agree with me?" Jones asked. "Come and lunch at the Casino. You will get nothing here. Narragansett cookery is as iniquitous as the legislature. Besides, at this hour they give you dinner. It is tragic, on my word, it is."

"Thank you," Tristrem answered, elusively. "I have an appointment with—with a train." And with this excuse he entered the hotel, and as soon after as was practicable he returned to town.

It was, he learned, as Jones had said. Mrs. Raritan and Miss Raritan were passengers on a steamer which had sailed two days before. It was then Friday. One of the swiftest Cunarders was to sail the following morning, and it seemed not improbable to Tristrem that he might reach the other side, if not simultaneously with, at least but a few hours after the arrival of the Wednesday boat. Such preparations, therefore, as were necessary he made without delay. As incidental thereto, he went to the house in Thirty-ninth Street. There he learned, from a squat little Irishwoman who came out from the area and eyed him with unmollifiable suspicion, that, like the Narragansett cottage, the house was to let. The only address which he could obtain from her was that of a real-estate agent in the lower part of the city. Thither he posted at once. Yet even there the information which he gleaned was meagre. The house was offered for a year. During that period, the agent understood, Mrs. Raritan proposed to complete her daughter's musical education abroad; where, the agent did not know. The rental accruing from the lease of the house was to be paid over to the East and West Trust Co. Further than that he could say nothing. Thereupon Tristrem trudged hopefully to Wall Street; but the secretary of the East and West was vaguer even than the agent. He knew nothing whatever on the subject of Mrs. Raritan's whereabouts, and from his tone it was apparent that he cared less. There is, however, an emollient in courtesy which has softened greater oafs than he, and that emollient Tristrem possessed. There was in his manner a penetrating and pervasive refinement, and at the gruffness with which he was received there came to his face an expression of such perplexity that the secretary, disarmed in spite of himself, turned from his busy idleness and told Tristrem that if Mrs. Raritan had not left her address with him she must certainly have given it to the lawyer who held the power of attorney to collect the rents and profits of her estate. The name of that lawyer was Meggs, and his office was in the Mills Building.

In the Mills Building Tristrem's success was little better. Mr. Meggs, the managing clerk announced, had left town an hour before and would not return until Monday. However, if there was anything *he* could do, he was entirely at Tristrem's disposal. And then Tristrem explained his errand anew, adding that he sailed on the morrow, and that it was important for him to have Mrs. Raritan's address before he left. The clerk regretted, but he did not know it. Could not Mr. Meggs send it to him ?

" He might cable it, might he not ?" Tristrem suggested. And as this plan seemed feasible, he gave the clerk a card with a London address scrawled on it, and therewith some coin. " I should be extremely indebted if you would beg Mr. Meggs to send me the address at once," he added ; and the clerk, who had read the name on the card and knew it to be that of the claimant and renouncer of a great estate, assured him that Mr. Meggs would take great pleasure in so doing.

After that there was nothing for Tristrem to do but to return to his grandfather's house and complete his preparations. He dined with Mr. Van Norden that evening, and a very pleasant dinner it was. Together they talked of those matters and memories that were most congenial to them ; Mr. Van Norden looking steadily in the past, and Tristrem straight into the future. And at last, at midnight, when the carriage came to take Tristrem to the wharf —for the ship was to sail at so early an hour in the morning that it was deemed expedient for the passengers to sleep on board—as Tristrem took leave of his grandfather, "Bring her back soon," the old gentleman said, " bring her back as soon as you can. And, Tristrem, you must take this to her once more, with an old man's love and blessing."

Whereupon he gave Tristrem again the diamond brooch that had belonged to his daughter.

XII.

THE journey over was precisely like any other, except in this, that, the tide of travel being in the contrary direction, the number of cabin passengers was limited. Among them there was no one whom Tristrem had met before; yet, after the second day out, there were few whom his appearance and manner had not attracted and coerced into some overture to better acquaintance. Of these his attention was particularly claimed by an Englishman who sat next to him at table, and a young lady who occupied the seat opposite to his own. In the eyes of the latter was the mischievous look of a precocious boy. She was extremely pretty; blonde, fair, with a mouth that said Kiss me —what the French call a *frimousse frottée de champagne;* and her speech was marked by great vivacity. She was accompanied by an elderly person who appeared at table but once, and who during the rest of the voyage remained bundled in shawls in the ladies' cabin, where refreshments were presumably brought her.

It was rumored that this young lady was an ex-star of the Gaiety, and more recently a member of a burlesque troupe that had disbanded in the States. It was added—but then, are not ill-natured things said about everybody? You, sir, and you, madam, who happen to read this page, have never, of course, been spoken of other than with the greatest respect, but what is said of your neighbor? and what have you said yourself?

Tristrem, unaffected by the gossip of the smoking-room, to which, indeed, he lent but an inattentive ear, allowed the young lady to march him up and down the deck, and, as was his wont, permitted himself to be generally made use of. Yet if the elderly person in the ladies' cabin had exacted of him similar attentions, the attentions would have been rendered with the same prompt and diligent willingness. He was not a good listener, although he seemed one, but there was a breeziness in the young lady's conversation which helped him not a little to forget the discomforts of ocean travel. He walked with her, in consequence, mile after mile, and when she wearied of that amusement, he got her comfortably seated and, until she needed him again, passed the time in the smoking-room.

It was there that he became acquainted with the Englishman who sat next to him at table. His name, he learned, was Ledyard Yorke. He was an artist by profession, and in the course of a symposium or two Tristrem discovered that he was a very cultivated fellow besides. He seemed to be well on in the thirties, and it was evident that there were few quarters of the globe with which he was not familiar. He was enthusiastic on the subject of French literature, but the manufactures of the pupils of the Beaux Arts he professed to abominate.

"The last time I was at the Salon," he said, one evening, "there were in those interminable halls over three thousand pictures. Of these, there were barely fifty worth looking at. The others were interesting as colored lithographs on a dead wall. There was a Manet or two, a Moreau, and a dozen or more excellent landscapes, but the rest represented the apotheosis of mediocrity. The pictures which Gérôme, Cabanel, Bouguereau, and the acolytes of those pastry-cooks exposed were stupid and sterile as church doors. What is art, after all, if it be not an imitation of nature? To my thinking, the greater the illusion, the nearer does the counterfeit approach the model. And look at the nymphs and dryads which those hair-dressers present. In the first place, nymphs and dryads are as overdone as the assumption of Virgins and the loves of Leda. Besides they were not modern, but even if they were, fancy a girl who lives in the open air in her birthday costume, and who, exposed to the sun, to say nothing of the wind, still preserves the pink and white skin of a baby—and a skin, mind you, that looks as though it had been polished and pinched by a masseur; however, place a dozen of them lolling in conventional attitudes in a glade, or represent them bathing in a pond, and although the sun shines on them through the foliage, be careful not to get so much as the criss-cross of a shadow on their bodies, smear the whole thing with cold cream, label one 'Arcadia,' and the other 'Nymphs surprised,' and you have what they call in France the *faire distingué*."

There was nothing particularly new in what Mr. Yorke had to say, and if, like the majority of men whose thoughts run in a particular channel, he was apt to be dogmatic in his views, he yet possessed that saving quality, which consists in treating the subject in hand not as were it a matter of life and death, but rather as one which is as unimportant as the gout of a distant relative. And it was in the companionship of this gentleman, and that of the young lady alluded to, that Tristrem passed the six days which separated him from the Irish coast.

On the day preceding the debarcation he was in great and expectant spirits, but as the sun sank in the ocean his light-heartedness sank with it. During dinner his charming *vis-à-vis* rallied him as best she might, but he remained unresponsive, answering only when civility made it necessary for him to do so. It is just possible that the young lady may have entertained original ideas of her own on the subject of his taciturnity, but, however that may be, it so happened that before the meal was done Tristrem went up on deck, and seeking the stern of the ship, leaned over the gunwale.

So far in the distance as his eyes could reach was a trail of glistening white. On either side were impenetrable wastes of black. In his ears was the sob of water displaced, the moan of tireless discontent, and therewith the flash and shimmer of phosphorus seemed to invite and tell of realms of enchanted rest beneath. And, as Tristrem watched and listened, the sibilants of the sea gurgled in sympathy with his thoughts, accompanying and accentuating them with murmurs of its own. Its breast was bared to him, it lay at his feet, open-armed as though waiting his coming, and conjuring him to haste. "There is nothing sweeter," it seemed to say, "nothing swifter, and naught more still. I feed my lovers on lotus and Lethe. There is no fairer couch in the world than mine. A sister's kiss is not more chaste. I am better than fame, serener than hope; I am more than love, I am peace. I am unforsakable, and I never forsake."

And as the great ship sped on in fright, it almost seemed to Tristrem that the sea, like an affianced bride, was rising up to claim and take him as her own. Many months later, he thought of the sensation that he then experienced, the query that came to his mind, he knew not how or whence, whether it were not better perhaps—and then the after-shudder as he started back, wondering could it be that for the moment he was mad, and telling himself that in a few hours, a few days at most, he would be with Her. And what had the sea to do with him? Many months after he thought of it.

And as he still gazed at the tempting waters, he felt a hand touch his own, rest on, and nestle in it. He looked around; it was his charming *vis-à-vis* who had sought him out and was now looking in his face. She did not speak; her eyes had lost their mischief, but her mouth framed its message as before. Awkwardly as men do such things, Tristrem disengaged his hand. The girl made one little effort to detain it, and for a moment her lips moved; but she said nothing, and when the hand had gone from her, she turned with a toss of the head and disappeared in the night.

Soon after, Tristrem turned, too, and found his way to the smoking-room. In some way the caress which he had eluded had left a balm. He was as hopeful as before, and he smiled in silent amusement at the ups and downs of his needless fears. In a corner of the room was Yorke.

"I have been looking at the sea," he said, as he took a seat at his side; "it is captious as wine."

"You are a poet, are you not?" Yorke spoke not as though he were paying a compliment, but in the matter-of-fact fashion in which one drummer will say "Dry goods?" to another.

"No; I wish I were. I have never written."

"It's a popular prejudice to suppose that a poet must write. The greatest of all never put pen to paper. What is there left to us of Linus and Musæus? Siddartha did not write, Valmiki did not know how. The parables of the Christ were voiced, not written. Besides, the poet feels—he does not spend a year, like Mallarmé, in polishing a sonnet. De Musset is certainly the best example of the poet that France has to offer; with him you always catch the footfall of the Muse—you feel, as he felt, the inspiration. And all the more clearly in that his verses limp. He never would have had time to express himself if he had tried to sand-paper his thoughts. Don't you suppose that Murillo was a poet? Don't you suppose that Guido was? Don't you think that anyone who is in love with beauty must be? I say beauty where I might say the ideal. That is the reason I thought you a poet. You have in your face that constant preoccupation which is distinctive of those who pursue the intangible."

"I am not pursuing the intangible, though," Tristrem answered, with a little sententious nod.

"Ah, who shall say? We all do. I am pursuing it myself, though not in the sense that I attribute to you. Did you ever read Flaubert's *Tentation?* No? Well, fancy the Sphinx crouching at sunset in the encroaching sand. In the background is a riot of color, and overhead a tender blue fading into salmon and the discreetest gray. Then add to that the impression of solitude and the most absolute silence. In the foreground flutters a Chimera, a bird with a dragon's tail and the rainbow wings of a giant butterfly. The Sphinx is staring at you, and yet through and beyond, as though her eyes rested on some inaccessible horizon. Cities crumble, nations rise and subside, and still that undeviating stare! And in her face the unroutable calm of fabulous beauty. I want those eyes, I want that face. You never heard the duo which Flaubert gives, did you? It runs somewhat this way: The motionless Sphinx calls: 'Here, Chimera, rest a while.'

"The Chimera answers: 'Rest? Not I.'

"*The Sphinx.* Whither goest thou in such haste?

"*The Chimera.* I gallop in the corridors of the labyrinth. I soar to the mountain-tops. I skim the waves. I yelp at the foot of precipices. I cling to the skirt of clouds. With my training tail I sweep the shores. The hills have taken their curve from the form of my shoulders. But thou—I find thee perpetually immobile, or else with the end of thy claw drawing alphabets in the sand.

"*The Sphinx.* I am guarding my secret, I calculate and I dream.

"*The Chimera.* I—I am joyous and light of heart. I discover to man resplendent perspectives, Utopias in the skies, and distant felicities. Into his soul I pour the eternal follies, projects of happiness, plans for the future, dreams of fame, and the vows of love and virtuous resolutions. I incite to perilous journeys, to great undertakings. It is I that chiselled the marvels of architecture. It is I that hung bells on the tomb of Porsenna, and surrounded with an orchalc wall the quays of the Atlantides. I seek new perfumes, larger flowers, and pleasures unenjoyed. If anywhere I perceive a man whose mind rests in wisdom, I drop from space and strangle him.

"*The Sphinx.* All those whom the desire of God torments, I have devoured."

Yorke had repeated these snatches from the duo in French. He had repeated them well, bringing out the harmony of the words in a manner which in our harsher tongue would have been impossible. And now he felt parched, and ordered some drink of the steward.

"It is the face of that Sphinx that I want," he continued. "If I were a composer I would put the duo itself to music. I know of no prose more admirable. I have the scene on canvas, all of it, that is, except the Sphinx's face, and that, of course, is the most important. I want a face that she alone could possess. I may find it, I may not. At all events, you see that just at present I too am in pursuit of the intangible. But there, tell me of the artist who is not. It is true, you go to the Academy, and in the Cleopatras and Psyches you recognize the same Mary Jane who the day before offered herself as model to you. My Sphinx, however, was not born in Clapham. Nor does she dwell in Pimlico. But, apropos to Pimlico, I have a fancy that that little friend of yours is on her way to St. John's Wood."

"What little friend?"

"Why, the girl that sits opposite. And what's more to the point, she's in love with you. *Tous mes compliments, c'est un vrai morceau de roi.*"

At this Tristrem blushed in spite of himself. She might have been the Helen for whom the war of the world was fought; she might have been Mylitta or Venus Basilea, and still would she have left him unimpressed. He would not have recognized the divinity—he bowed but to one.

"You remind me," said Yorke, who had watched his expression—"you remind me of De Marsay, who did not know what he did to the women to make them all fall in love with him. There is nothing as fetching as that. And there is nothing, at least to my thinking, that compares with that charm which a woman in love exhales to her lover. It is small matter whether the woman is the daughter of an earl or whether she is a cocotte. There are, I know, people who like their claret in decanters, but so long as the wine is good, what does the bottle matter?

"'Aimer est le grand point, qu' importe la maitresse?
Qu' importe le flacon, pourvu qu'on ait l'ivresse?'"

"De Musset was drunk when he wrote that," said Tristrem. "But whether he was drunk or sober, I don't agree with him. I don't agree with him at all. It is the speech of a man who can think himself in love over and over again, and who discovers in the end that through all his affairs he has loved no one but himself."

All of which Mr. Yorke pooh-poohed in the civilest manner, and when Tristrem had finished his little speech, expounded the principles of love as they are formulated in the works of a German metaphysician, supporting them as he did so with such clarity and force of argument that Tristrem, vanquished but unconvinced, left him in disgust.

The next day they were at Liverpool. In the confusion that is incidental to every debarcation Tristrem had had no opportunity of exchanging a word with his *vis-à-vis.* But in the custom-house he caught sight of her, and went forward to bid her good-bye.

" Good-bye," she answered, when he had done so, and putting out her hand, she looked at him with mischievous eyes. " Good-bye," she repeated, lightly, and then, between her teeth, she added, " Imbecile that you are ! "

Though what she may have meant by that, Tristrem never understood.

XIII.

It was under cover of a fog of leprous brown striated with ochre and acrid with smoke that Tristrem entered London. In allusion to that most delightful of cities, someone has said somewhere that hell must be just such another place. If the epigrammatist be right, then indeed is it time that the rehabilitation of the lower regions began. London is subtle and cruel, perhaps, and to the meditative traveller it not infrequently appears like an invocation to suicide writ in stone. But whoso has once accustomed himself to its breath may live ever after in flowerful Arcadias and yet dream of its exhalations with regret. In Venice one may coquette with phantoms; Rome has ghosts and memories of her own; in Paris there is a sparkle that is headier than absinthe; Berlin resounds so well to the beat of drums that even the pusillanimous are brave; but London is the great enchantress. It is London alone that holds the secret of inspiring love and hatred as well.

Tristrem sniffed the fog with a sensation of that morbid pleasure which girls in their teens and women in travail experience when they crave and obtain repulsive food. Had he not hungered for it himself? and did she not breathe it too?

The journey from Euston Square to the hotel in Jermyn Street at which he proposed to put up, was to him a confusion of impatience and anticipation. He was sure of finding a cablegram from Mrs. Raritan's attorney, and was it not possible that he might see Viola that very night? In Jermyn Street, however, no message awaited him. Under the diligent supervision of a waiter who had the look and presence of a bishop he managed later to eat some dinner. But the evening was a blank: he passed it twirling his thumbs, dumbly irritated, incapable of action, and perplexed as he had never been before.

The next morning his Odyssey began. He cabled to Mr. Meggs, and saw the clerk put beneath the message the cabalistic letters *A. P.* And then, in an attempt to frighten Time, he had his measure taken in Saville Row and his hair cut in Bond Street. But in vain—the day dragged as though its wheels were clogged. By noon he had exhausted every possible resource. Another, perhaps, might have beguiled the tedium with drink, or cultivated what Balzac has called the gastronomy of the eye, and which consists in idling in the streets. But unfortunately for Tristrem, he was none other than himself. The mere smell of liquor was distasteful to him, and he was too nervous to be actively inactive. Moreover, as in September there are never more than four million people in London, his chance of encountering an acquaintance was slight. Those that he possessed were among the absent ten thousand. They were in the country, among the mountains, at the seaside, on the Continent—anywhere, in fact, except in the neighborhood of Pall Mall. And even had it been otherwise, Tristrem was not in a mood to suffer entertainment. He had not the slightest wish to be amused. Wagner might have come to Covent Garden from the grave to conduct Parsifal in person and Tristrem would not have so much as bought a stall. He wanted Miss Raritan's address, and until he got it a comet that bridged the horizon would have left him incurious as the dead.

On the morrow, with his coffee, there came to him a yellow envelope. The message was brief, though not precisely to the point. "*Uninformed of Mrs. Raritan's address*," it ran, and the signature was *Meggs.*

For the first time it occurred to Tristrem that Fate was conspiring against him. It had been idiocy on his part to leave New York before he had obtained the address; and now that he was in London, it would be irrational to write to any of her friends—the Wainwarings, for instance—and hope to get it. He knew the Wainwarings just well enough to attend a reception if they gave one, and a slighter acquaintance than that it were idle to describe.

Other friends the girl had in plenty, but to Tristrem they were little more than shadows. There seemed to be no one to whom he could turn. Indeed he was sorely perplexed. Since the hour in which he learned that his father and Viola's were not the same he had been possessed of but one thought—to see her and kneel at her feet; and in the haste he had not shown the slightest forethought—he had been too feverishly energetic to so much as wait till he got her address; and now in the helter-skelter he had run into a *cul-de-sac* where he could absolutely do nothing except sit and bite his thumb. The enforced inactivity was torturesome as suspense. In his restlessness he determined to retrace his steps; he would return to New York, he told himself, learn of her whereabouts, and start afresh. Already he began to calculate the number of days which that course of action would necessitate, and then suddenly, as he saw himself once more on Fifth Avenue, he bethought him of Alphabet Jones. What man was there that commanded larger sources of social information than he? He would cable to him at once, and on the morrow he would have the address.

The morrow dawned, and succeeding morrows—a week went by, and still no word from Jones. A second week passed, and when a third was drawing to a close and Tristrem, outwearied and enervated, had secured a berth on a returning steamer, at last the answer came—an answer in four words—"*Brown Shipley, Founders Court.*" That was all, but to Tristrem, in his overwrought condition, they were as barbs of flame. "My own bankers!" he cried; "oh, thrice triple fool! why did I not think of them before?" He was so annoyed at his stupidity that on his way to the city his irritation counterbalanced the satisfaction which the message brought. "Three whole weeks have I waited," he kept telling himself—"three whole weeks! H'm! Jones might better have written. No, I might better have shown some common-sense. Three whole weeks!"

He was out of the cab before it had fairly stopped, and breathless when he reached the desk of the clerk whose duty it was to receive and forward the letters of those who banked with the house.

"I want Mrs. Raritan's address," he said—"Mrs. R. F. Raritan, please."

The clerk fumbled a moment over some papers. "Care of Munroe, Rue Scribe," he answered.

"Thank God!" Tristrem exclaimed; "and thank you. Send my letters there also."

That evening he started for Paris, and the next morning he was asking in the Rue Scribe the same question which he had asked the previous afternoon in Founders' Court. There he learned that Mrs. Raritan had sent word, the day before, that all letters should be held for her until further notice. She had been stopping with her daughter at the Hôtel du Rhin, but whether or not she was still there the clerk did not know. The Rue Scribe is not far from the Place Vendôme, in which the Hôtel du Rhin is situated, and it took Tristrem a little less than five minutes to get there. The concierge was lounging in her cubby-hole.

"Madame Raritan?" Tristrem began.

"*Partie, m'sieu, partie d'puis hier—*"

And then from Tristrem new questions came thick and fast. The concierge, encouraged by what is known as a white piece, and of which the value is five francs in current coin, became very communicative. Disentangled from layers of voluble digression, the kernel of her information amounted to this: Mrs. Raritan and her daughter had taken the Orient Express the day before. On the subject of their destination she declared herself ignorant. Suppositions she had in plenty, but actual knowledge none, and she took evident pleasure in losing herself in extravagant conjectures. "*Bien le bonjour*," she said when Tristrem, passably disheartened, turned to leave—"*Bien le bonjour, m'sieu; si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi.*"

The Orient Express, as Tristrem knew, goes through Southern Germany into Austria, thence down to Buda-Pest and on to Constantinople. That Viola and her mother had any intention of going farther than Vienna was a thing which he declined to consider. On the way to Vienna was Stuttgart and Munich. In Munich there was Wagner every other night. In Stuttgart there was a conservatory of music, and at Vienna was not the Opera world-renowned? "They have gone to one of those three cities," he told himself. "Viola must have determined to relinquish the Italian school for the German. H'm," he mused, "I'll soon put a stop to that. As to finding her, all I have to do is go to the police. They keep an eye on strangers to some purpose. Let me see—I can get to Stuttgart by to-morrow noon. If she is not there I will go to Munich. I rather like the idea of a stroll on the Maximilien Strasse. It would be odd if I met her in the street. Well, if she isn't in Munich she is sure to be in Vienna." And as he entered the

Grand Hôtel he smiled anew in dreams forecast.

Tristrem carried out his programme to the end. But not in Stuttgart, not in Munich, nor in Vienna either, could he obtain the slightest intelligence of her. In the latter city he was overtaken by a low fever, which detained him for a month, and from which he arose enfeebled but with clearer mind. He wrote to Viola two letters, and two also to her mother. One of each he sent to the Rue Scribe, the others to Founders' Court. When ten days went by, and no answer came, he understood for the first time what the fable of Tantalus might mean, and that of Sisyphus too. He wrote at length to his grandfather, describing his Odyssey, his perplexities, and asking advice. He even wrote to Jones—though much more guardedly, of course—thanking him for his cable, and inquiring in a postscriptum whether he had heard anything further on the subject of the Raritans' whereabouts. These letters were barely despatched when he was visited by a luminous thought. The idea that Viola intended to relinquish Italian music for that of

Wagner had never seemed to him other than an incongruity. "Idiot that I am!" he exclaimed; "she came abroad to study at Milan, and there is where she is. She must have left the Orient Express at Munich and gone straight down through the Tyrol." And in the visitation of this comforting thought Tantalus and Sisyphus went back into the night from which they had come; in their place came again the blue-eyed divinity whose name is Hope.

It is not an easy journey, nor a comfortable one, from Vienna to Milan, but Hope aiding, it can be accomplished without loss of life or reason. And Hope aided Tristrem to his destination, and there disappeared. In all Milan no intelligence of Viola could be obtained. He wrote again to her. The result was the same. "I am as one accursed," he thought, and that night he saw himself in dream stopping passers in the street, asking them with lifted hat had they seen a girl wonderfully fair, with amber eyes. He asked the question in French, in German, in Italian, according to the nationality of those he encountered, and once, to a little old woman, he spoke in a jargon of his own invention. But she laughed, and seemed to understand, and gave him the address of a lupanar.

He idled awhile in Milan, and then went to Florence, and to Rome, and to Naples, crossing over, even, to Palermo; and then retracing his steps, he visited the smaller cities and outlying, unfrequented towns. Something there was which kept telling him that she was near at hand, waiting, like the enchanted princess, for his coming. And he hunted and searched, outwearied at times, and refreshed again by resuscitations of hope, and intussusceptions of her presence. But in the search his nights were white. It was rare for him to get any sleep before the dawn had come.

Early in spring he reached Milan again. He had written from Bergamo to the Rue Scribe, asking that his letters should be forwarded to that place, and among the communications that were given him on his arrival was a cablegram from New York. *Come back*, it ran; *she is here.* It was from his grandfather, Dirck Van Norden, and as Tristrem read it he trembled from head to foot. It was on a Tuesday that this occurred, and he reflected that he would just about be able to get to Havre in time for the Saturday steamer. An hour later he was in the train bound for Desenzano, from which place he proposed to go by boat to Riva, and thence up to Munich, where he could catch the Orient Express on its returning trip to France.

XIV.

When the boat entered the harbor it was already night. Tristrem was tired, but his fatigue was pleasant to him. His Odyssey was done. New York, it is true, was many days away, but he was no longer to wander feverishly from town to town. If he was weary, at least his mind was at rest. Riva is on the Austrian frontier, and while the luggage was being examined Tristrem hummed contentedly to himself. He would get some dinner at the hotel, for he was hungry as he had not been in months. At last he would have a good night's rest; there would be no insomnia now. In the magic of a cablegram that succube had been exorcised forever. On the morrow he would start afresh, and neither stop nor stay till the goal was reached. It was no longer vague and intangible—it was full in sight. And so, while the officers were busy with his traps, he hummed the unforgotten air, *O Magali, ma bien aimée.*

The hotel to which he presently had himself conveyed stands in a large garden that leans to the lake. It is a roomy structure, built quadrangularwise. On one side is a little châlet. Above, to the right and left, precipitous cliffs and trellised mountains loom like battlements of Titan homes. The air is very sweet, and at that season of the year almost overweighted with the scent of flowers. In spite of the night, the sky was visibly blue, and high up in the heavens the moon glittered with the glint of sulphur.

As the carriage drew up at the door there was a clang of bells; an individual in a costume that was brilliant as the uniform of a field-officer hastened to greet the guest; at the threshold was the Oberkellner; a few steps behind him the manager stood bowing persuasively; and as Tristrem entered, the waiters, hastily marshalled, ranged themselves on either side of the hall.

"Vorrei," Tristrem began, and then remembering that he was no longer in Italy, continued in German.

The answer came in the promptest English.

"Yes, my lord; will your lordship dine at *table d'hôte?* Du, Konrad, schnell, die Speise-karte."

Tristrem examined the bill of fare which was then brought him, and while he studied the contents he heard himself called by name. He looked up, and recognized Ledyard Yorke, his companion of months before on the outward-bound Cunarder, who welcomed him with much warmth and cordiality.

"And whatever became of Miss Tippityfitchet? You don't mean to say you did not see her again? Fancy that! It was through no fault of hers, then. But there, in spite of your promise, you didn't so much as look *me* up. I am just in from a tramp to Mori; suppose we brush up a bit and have dinner together?" He turned to the waiter. "Konrad, wir speisen draussen; verschaffen Sie 'was Monkenkloster."

"Zu Befehl, Herr Baron."

Half an hour later, when the brushing up was done and the Monkenkloster was uncorked, Tristrem and Yorke seated themselves in an arbor that overhung the lake.

"It's ever so much better here than at *table d'hôte*," Yorke began. "I hate that sort of business—don't you? I have been here over two months, but after a week or so of it I gave up promiscuous feeding. Since then, whenever I have been able, I have dined out here. I don't care to have every dish I eat seasoned with the twaddle of cheap-trippers. To be sure, few of them get here. Riva is well out of the beaten track. But one *table d'hôte* is just like another, and they are all of them wearying to the spirit and fatiguing to digestion. Look at that water, will you. It's almost Venice, isn't it? I can tell you, I have done some good work in this place. But what have you been doing yourself?"

"Nothing to speak of," Tristrem answered. "I have been roaming from pillar to post. It's the second time I have been over the Continent, and now I am on my way home. I am tired of it; I shall be glad to be back."

"Yes, you were the last person I expected to meet. If I remember rightly, you said on the steamer that you were to be on this side but a short time. It's always the unexpected that occurs, isn't it? By the way, I have got my sphinx."

"What sphinx?"

"I thought I told you. I have been looking for years for a certain face. I wanted one that I could give to a sphinx. The accessories were nothing. I put them on canvas long ago, but the face I never could grasp. Not one of all that I tried suited me. I had almost given it up; but I got it—I got it at last. I'll show it to you to-morrow."

"I am afraid —— You see, I leave very early."

"I'll show it to you to-night, then; you must see it. If I had had it made to order it could not suit me better. It came about in such an odd way. All winter I have been at work in Munich. I intended to remain until June, but the spring there is bleaker than your own New England. One morning I said to myself, Why not take a run down to Italy? Two days later, I was on my way. But at Mori, instead of pushing straight on to Verona, I drove over here, thinking it would be pleasanter to take the boat. I arrived here at midnight. The next morning I looked out of the window, and there, right in front of me, in that châlet, was my sphinx. Well, the upshot of it was, I have been here ever since. I repainted the entire picture—the old one wasn't good enough."

"I should like to see it very much," said Tristrem, less from interest than civility.

"I wish you had come in time to see the original. She never suspected that she had posed as a model, and though her window was just opposite mine, I believe she did not so much as pay me the compliment of being aware of my existence. There were days when she sat hour after hour looking out at the lake, almost motionless, in the very attitude that I wanted. It was just as though she were repeating the phrase that Flaubert puts in the Sphinx's mouth, 'I am guarding my secret—I calculate and I dream.' Wasn't it odd, after all, that I should have found her in that haphazard way?"

"It was odd," Tristrem answered; "who was she?"

"I don't know. French, I fancy. Her name was Dupont, or Duflot—something utterly *bourgeois.* There was an old lady with her, her mother, I suppose. I remember, at *table d'hôte* one evening, a Russian woman, with an 'itch' in her name, said she did not think she was comme il faut. 'She is comme il *m'en* faut,' I answered, and mentally I added, 'which is a deuced sight more than I can say of you, who are comme il n'en faut pas.' The Russian woman was indignant at her, I presume, because she did not come to the public table. You know that feeling, 'If it's good enough for me, it's good enough for you.' But my sphinx not only did not appear at *table d'hôte*, she did not put her foot outside of the châlet. One bright morning she disappeared from the window, and a few days later I heard that she had been confined. Shortly after she went away. It did not matter, though, I had her face. Let me give you another glass of Monkenkloster."

"She was married, then?"

"Yes, her husband was probably some

brute that did not know how to appreciate her. I don't mean, though, that she looked unhappy. She looked impassible, she looked exactly the way I wanted to have her look. If you have finished your coffee, come up to my little atelier. I wish you could see the picture by daylight, but you may be able to get an idea of it from the candles." And as Mr. Yorke led the way, he added, confidentially, "I should really like to have your opinion."

The atelier to which Yorke had alluded as "little" was, so well as Tristrem could discern in the darkness, rather spacious than otherwise. He loitered in the doorway until his companion had lighted and arranged the candles, and then, under his guidance, went forward to admire. The picture, which stood on an easel, was really excellent; so good, in fact, that Tristrem no sooner saw the face of the sphinx than to his ears came the hum of insects, the murmur of distant waters. It was Viola Raritan to the life.

"She guarded her secret, indeed," he muttered, huskily. And when Yorke, surprised at such a criticism, turned to him for an explanation, he had just time to break his fall. Tristrem had fallen like a log.

As he groped back through a roar and turmoil to consciousness again, he thought that he was dead and that this was the tomb. "That Monkenkloster must have been too much for him," he heard Yorke say, in German, and then some answer came to him in sympathetic gutturals. He opened his eyes ever so little, and then let the lids close down. Had he been in a nightmare, he wondered, or was it Viola? "He's coming too," he heard Yorke say. "Yes, I am quite right now," he answered, and he raised himself on his elbow. "I think," he continued, "that I had better get to my room."

"Nonsense. You must lie still awhile."

For the moment Tristrem was too weak to rebel, and he fell back again on the lounge on which he had been placed, and from which he had half arisen. Was it a dream, or was it the real? "There, I am better now," he said at last; "I wonder, I—— Would you mind ordering me a glass of brandy?"

"Why, there's a carafon of it here. I thought you had had too much of that wine."

Some drink was then brought him, which

he swallowed at a gulp. Under its influence his strength returned.

"I am sorry to have put you to so much trouble," he said collectedly to Yorke and to a waiter who had been summoned to his assistance; "I am quite myself now." He stood up again and the waiter, seeing that he was fully restored, withdrew. When the door closed behind him, Tristrem went boldly back to the picture.

It was as Yorke had described it. In the background was a sunset made of cymbal strokes of vermilion, splattered with gold, and seamed with fantasies of red. In the foreground fluttered a chimera, so artfully done that one almost heard the whir of its wings. And beneath it crouched the Sphinx. From the eyrie of the years the ages had passed unmarked, unnoticed. The sphinx brooded, motionless and dumb.

With patient, scrutinizing attention Tristrem looked in her eyes and at her face. There was no mistake, it was Viola. Was there ever another girl in the world such as she? And this was her secret! Or was there a secret, after all, and might he not have misunderstood?

"Tell me," he said—"I will not praise your picture; in many respects it is above praise—but tell me, is what you said true?"

"Is what true?"

"What you said of the model."

"About her being in the châlet? Of course it is. Why do you ask?"

"No, not that, tell me—Mr. Yorke, I do not mean to be tragic; if I seem so, forgive me and overlook it. But as you love honor, tell me, is it true that she had a child in this place?"

"Yes, so I heard."

"And you say her name was——"

"Madame Dubois—Dupont—I have forgotten; they can tell you at the bureau. But it seems to me——"

"Thank you," Tristrem answered. "Thank you," he repeated. He hesitated a second and then, with an abrupt good-night, he hurried from the atelier and down the corridor till he reached his room.

Through the open window, the sulphur moon poured in. He looked out in the garden. Beyond, half concealed in the shadows, he could see the outline of the châlet. And it was there she had hid! He pressed his hands to his forehead ; he could not understand. For the moment he felt that if he could lose his reason it would be a grateful release. If only some light would come! He drew a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his face. And then suddenly, as he did so, he caught a spark of that for which he groped. The room turned round, and he sank into a chair.

Yes, he remembered, it was at Bergamo, no, at Bologna. Yes, it was at Bergamo, he remembered perfectly well. He had taken from one of his trunks a coat that he had not worn since he went into mourning. It had been warm that day, and he wanted some thinner clothing. He remembered at the time congratulating himself that he had had the forethought to bring it. And later in the day he had taken from the pocket a handkerchief of a smaller size than that which he habitually used. He had looked at it, and in the corner he had found the Weldon crest. As to how it had come in his possession, he had at the time given no thought. Weldon, in one of his visits, might have left it at Waverley Place, or he himself might have borrowed it when dining at Weldon's house. He was absent-minded, he knew, and apt to be forgetful, and so at the time he had given the matter no further thought. After all, what incident could be more trivial? But now the handkerchief, like a magician's rug, carried him back to Narragansett. As well as he could remember, the last occasion on which he wore that coat was the day on which the butler's telegram had summoned him to town. Then, on learning of his father's death, he had put on other things, of sombrer hue. Harris, without rummaging in the pockets, had folded the coat and put it away. And it had remained folded ever since till the other day at Bologna—no, at Bergamo.

That morning at Narragansett, when he was hurrying into the cottage, the man who had aided Viola home the preceding evening drove up with her hat, with this very handkerchief, and the story of a dream. Aye, and his own dream. So this was Truth. She had pursued him, indeed. He could feel her knees on his arms, her fetid breath in his face. But this time it was not a nightmare. It was the real.

Yes, it was that. One by one he recalled the incidents of the past—incidents on which his mind loathed to dwell, rebelling against its own testimony until he coerced the shuddering memories to his will. There were the numberless times in which he had encountered Weldon coming in or leaving her house, almost haunting it with his presence. There was that wanton lie, and the unexplained and interrupted scene between them. It was then, perhaps, that he had first shown the demon that was in him. And then, afterward, was that meeting on the cars—he with a bruise on his cheek and a gash on his neck. Why was Viola's whip broken, if it were not that she had broken it on his face? Why did the nails of her ungloved hand look as though they had been stained with the juice of berries? Why, indeed, if it were not that she had sunk them in his flesh. Why had he heard her calling "Coward" to the night? It was for this, then, that the engagement had been broken; it was for this that she had hidden herself abroad.

For the first time since his boyhood, he threw himself on the bed and sobbed aloud.

To stifle his grief he buried his face in the pillow, and bit it with his teeth. It was more than grief, it was anguish, and it refused to be choked. But presently it did leave him. It left him quivering from head to foot, and in its place came another visitor. An obsession, from which he shrank, surged suddenly, and claimed him for its own. In a combat, of which his heart was the one dumb witness, he battled with it. He struggled with it in a conflict that outlasted hours; but presumably he coped in vain. The next morning his face was set as a captive's. In a fortnight he was in New York.

XV.

The return journey was unmarked by incident or adventure. Nothing less than a smash-up on the railway or the wrecking of the ship would have had the power to distract his thoughts. It may even be that his mind was unoccupied, empty as is a vacant bier, and yet haunted by an overmastering obsession. The ordinary functions of the traveller he performed mechanically, with the air and manner of a subject acting under hypnotic suggestion. One who crossed the ocean with him has since said that the better part of the time the expression of his face was that of utter vacuity. He would remain crouched for hours, in the same position, a finger just separating the lips, and then he would start with the tremor of one awakening from a debauch.

Mrs. Manhattan, who was returning with spoils from the Rue de la Paix, asked him one afternoon, as he happened to descend the cabin-stair in her company, where he had passed the winter.

"Yes, indeed," Tristrem answered, and went his way unconcernedly.

Mrs. Manhattan complained of this conduct to Nicholas, her husband, alleging that the young man was fatuous in his impertinence.

"My dear," returned that wise habitué of the Athenæum, "when a man gives away seven million, it is because he has forgotten how to be conventional."

It was on a Sunday that the ship reached New York, and it was late in the afternoon before the passengers were able to disembark. Tristrem had his luggage passed, and expressed to his grandfather's house, and then, despite the aggressive solicitations of a crew of bandits, started up-town on foot. In the breast-pocket of his coat he carried a purchase which he had made in Naples, a fantastic article which he had bought, not because he wanted it, but because the peddler who pestered him with wares and offers happened to be the best-looking and most unrebuffably good-natured scoundrel that he had ever encountered. And now, at intervals, as he walked along, he put his hand to the pocket to assure himself that it was still in place. Presently he reached Broadway. That thoroughfare, which on earlier Sundays was wont to be one of the sedatest avenues of the city, was starred with globes of azure light, and its quiet was broken by the passing of orange-colored cars. On the corner he stopped and looked at his watch. It was after seven. Then, instead of continuing his way up-town, he turned down in the direction of the Battery. His head was slightly bent, and as he walked he had the appearance of one perplexed. It was a delightful evening. The sky was as blue as the eyes of a girl beloved. The air was warm, and had the street been less noisy, less garish, and a trifle cleaner it might have been an agreeable promenade. But to Tristrem the noise, the dirt, the glare, the sky itself were part and parcel of the non-existent. He neither saw nor heeded, and, though the air was warm, now and then he shivered.

It seemed to him impossible that he should do this thing. And yet, since that night at Riva, his mind had been as a stage in which it was in uninterrupted rehearsal. If it were unsuccessful, then come what sorrow could. But even though its success were assured, might not the success be worse than failure, and viler to him than the most ignoble defeat? Meditatively he looked at his hand; it was slight as a girl's.

"I cannot," he said, and even as he said it he knew that he would. Had he not said it ten thousand times of times before? It was not what he willed, it was what he must. He was in the lap of a necessity from which, struggle as he might, he could not set himself free. He might make what resolutions he chose, but the force which acted on him and in him snuffed them out like candles. And yet, what had he done to fate that it should impel him to this? Why had he been used as he had? What wrong had he committed? For the past twelvemonth his life had been a continuous torture. Truly, he could have said, "no one save myself, in all the world, has learned the acuity of pain. I alone am its depository."

"And yet," he mused, "perhaps it is right. Long ago, when I was comparing my nothingness to her beauty, did I not know that to win her I must show myself worthy of the prize? She will think that I am when I tell her. Yes, she must think so when it is done. But will it be done? O God, I cannot."

For the instant he felt as though he must turn to the passers and claim their protection from himself. He had stopped again, and was standing under a great pole that supported an electric light. In the globe was a dim, round ball of red, and suddenly it flared up into a flame of the palest lemon, edged with blue. "It is my courage," he said, "I have done with hesitation now."

He hailed and boarded a passing car. "Hesitation, indeed!" he repeated. "As if I had not known all through that when the time came there would be none!" He put his hand again to his breast-pocket; it was there.

He had taken the seat nearest to the door, absently, as he would have taken any other, and the conductor found it necessary to touch him on the shoulder before he could extract the fare. He had no American money, he discovered, and would have left the car had not the conductor finally agreed to take his chances with a small piece of foreign gold, though not, however, until he had bit it tentatively with his teeth. It was evident that he viewed Tristrem with suspicion.

At Twentieth Street Tristrem swung himself from the moving vehicle, and turned into Gramercy Park. He declined to think; the rehearsals were over, he did not even try to recall the rôle. He had had a set speech, but it was gone from him as the indecision had gone before. Now he was to act.

He hurried up the stoop of Weldon's

house and rang the bell, and as there seemed to him some unnecessary delay, he rang again, not violently, but with the assurance of a creditor who has come to be paid. But when at last the door was opened, he learned that Weldon was not at home.

As he went down the steps again there came to him a great gust and rush of joy. He would go now, he had been fully prepared, he had tried his best. If Weldon had been visible, he would not have hesitated. But he had not been; that one chance had been left them both, and now, with a certitude that had never visited his former indecisions, he felt it was written that that deed should never be done. He gasped as one gasps who has been nearly stifled. The obsession was gone. He was free.

In the street he raised his arms to testify to his liberty reconquered. Yet, even as they fell again, he knew that he was tricking himself. A tremor beset him, and to steady himself he clutched at an area-rail. Whether he stood there one minute or one hour he could not afterward recall. He remembered only that while he loitered Weldon had rounded the corner, and that as he saw him approach, jauntily, in evening dress, a light coat on his arm, his strength returned.

"Royal," he exclaimed, for the man was passing him without recognition. "Royal," he repeated, and Weldon stopped. "I have come to have a word with you."

The voice in which he spoke was so unlike his own, so rasping and defiant, that Weldon, with the dread which every respectable householder has of a scene at his own front door, motioned him up the steps. "Come in," he said, mellifluously, "I am glad to see you."

"I will," Tristrem answered, in a tone as arrogant as before.

"I am sorry," Weldon continued, "Nanny——"

"I did not come to see your wife; you know it."

Weldon had unlatched the door, and the two men passed into the sitting-room. There Weldon, with his hat unremoved, dropped in a chair, and eyed his visitor with affected curiosity.

"I say, Trissy, you're drunk."

"I am come," Tristrem continued, and this time as he spoke his voice seemed to recover something of its former gentleness, "I am come to ask whether, in the purlieus of your heart, there is nothing to tell you how base you are."

Weldon stretched himself languidly, took off his hat, stood up, and lit a cigarette. "Have an Egyptian?" he asked.

"Do you remember," Tristrem went on, "the last time I saw you?"

Weldon tossed the match into an ash-receiver, and, with the cigarette between his teeth, sprawled himself out on a sofa. "Well, what of it?"

"When I saw you, you had just contracted a debt. And now you can liquidate that debt either by throwing yourself in the river or——"

"Charming, Triss, charming! You have made a *bon mot.* I will get that off. Liquidate a debt with water is really good. There's the advantage of foreign travel for you."

"Do you know what became of your victim? Do you know? She went abroad and hid herself. Shall I give you details?"

For the first time Weldon scowled.

"Would you like the details?" Tristrem repeated.

Weldon mastered his scowl. "No," he answered, negligently. "I am not a midwife. Obstetrics do not interest me. On the contra——"

That word he never finished. Something exploded in his brain, he saw one fleeting flash, and he was dead. Even as he spoke, Tristrem had whipped an instrument from his pocket, and before Weldon was aware of his purpose, a knife, thin as a darning-needle and long as a pencil—a knife which it had taken the splendid wickedness of mediæval Rome to devise—had sunk into his heart, and was out again, leaving behind it a pin's puncture through the linen, one infinitesimal bluish-gray spot on the skin, and death.

Tristrem looked at him. The shirt was not even rumpled. If he had so much as quivered, the quiver had been imperceptible, and on the knife there was no trace of blood. It fell from his fingers; he stooped to pick it up, but his hand trembled so that, on recovering it, he could not insert the point into the narrow sheath that belonged to it, and, throwing the bit of embroidered leather in a corner, he put the weapon in his pocket.

"It was easier than I thought," he mused. "I suppose—h'm—I seem to be nervous. It's odd. I feared that afterward I should collapse like an omelette soufflée. And to think that it is done!"

He turned suspiciously, and looked at the body again. No, he could see it was really done. "And so, this is afterward," he continued. "And to think that it was here I first saw her. She came in that door there. I remember I thought of a garden of lilies."

From the dining-room beyond he caught the glimmer of a lamp. He crossed the intervening space, and on the sideboard he found some decanters. He selected one, and pouring a little of its contents into a tumbler he drank it off. Then he poured another portion, and when he had drunk that too, he went out, not through the sitting-room, but through the hall, and, picking up the hat which on entering he had thrown on the table, he left the house.

XVI.

SEVERAL thousand years ago a thinker defined virtue as the agreement of the will and the conscience. If the will were coercible the definition would be matchless. Unfortunately it is not. Will declines to be reasoned with ; it insists, and in its insistence conscience, horrified or charmed, stands a witness to its acts.

For a fortnight Tristrem had been married to an impulse against which his finer nature rebelled. It was not that the killing of such a one as Weldon was unjustifiable ; on the contrary, it was rather praiseworthy than otherwise. His crime was one for which the noose is too good. But to Weldon, in earlier days, he had felt as to a brother ; and though affection may die, does it not leave behind it a memory which should thereafter serve as a protecting shield ? It had been the bonds of former attachment, bonds long loosened, it is true, but of which the old impress still lingered, that seemed to Tristrem to tie his hands. Then, too, was the horror of such a thing.

There is nothing, a Scandinavian poet has said, more beautiful than a beautiful revenge; yet when a man is so tender of heart that if it be raining he will hesitate to shoo a persistent fly out of the window, it is difficult for that man, however great the aggravation, to take another's life. Besides, the impulse which had acted in Tristrem was not one of revenge. He had not the slightest wish to take the law into his own hands. The glaive of atonement was not one which he felt himself called upon to wield. That which possessed him was the idea that until the world was rid of Weldon there was a girl somewhere who could not look her own mother in the face. And that girl was the girl whom he loved, a girl who apparently had no other protector than himself.

In the rehearsals, it was this that had strung his nerves to acting pitch. When it was done he proposed to go to her with a reverence even greater than before, with a sympathy unspoken yet sentiable, and leave her with the knowledge that the injury had been obliterated and the shame effaced. For himself, whatever he may have hoped, he determined to ask for nothing. It was for her he defied the law; he was her agent, one whom she might recompense or not with her lithe white arms, but one to whom she would at least be grateful. And how beautiful her gratitude might be! Though she gave him nothing else, would not the thanks of her eyes be reward enough? And then, as he worked himself up with the thought of these things to acting pitch, then would come the horror of it all, the necessity of taking the life of one who had been his nearest friend, the dread of the remorse which attaches to death, the soiling of his own hands. It was in this fashion that he had wavered between indecision and determination, until, at last, stung by the cynicism of Weldon's speech, there had come to him a force such as he had never possessed before, and suddenly the deed had been done.

The possible arraignment that might follow the inquest, he had never considered. It is said that the art of killing has been lost. The tribunals, assizes, and general sessions have doubtless led somewhat to its discouragement, and yet it must be admitted that the office of police justice in one way resembles that of lover in the tropics—it is not exactly a sinecure. Perhaps, nowadays, it is only the blunderers that are detected; yet, however numerous they may or may not be, Tristrem, without giving a single thought as to how such a thing should be done and remain undetected, had had such chances in his favor that Vidocq himself might have tried in vain to fasten the death of Weldon on him. No one had seen him enter the house, no one had seen him leave it. Even the instrument which he had used, and which he had bought hap-hazard, as one buys a knick-knack, had served his end as cleanly as a paralysis of the heart. It had not spilled a drop of blood.

As Tristrem walked on, he did not think of these things; the possibility of detection had not troubled him, and now the probability that Weldon's death would be attributed to natural causes brought him no satisfaction. Of himself he gave no thought. He had wondered, indeed, that his presence of mind had not deserted him; he had marvelled at his own calm. But now his thoughts were wholly with Viola, and when he reached Fifth Avenue he determined to go to her at once.

A vagabond hansom was loitering near, and with its assistance he presently reached her door. Even as he entered, it was evident that she was not alone. On putting his hat down in the hall he noticed two others, and through the portière came the sound of voices. But he pushed the curtain aside, and entered the room with the air of one to whom the conventional has lost its significance. Yet, as he did so, he felt that he was wrong. If he wished to see Viola, would it not have been more courteous to her to get into evening dress than to appear among her guests in a costume suitable only for the afternoon? Society he knew to be a despot. Though it has no dungeons, at least it can banish, and to those that have been brought up in its court there are no laws rigider than its customs. Besides, was he in a mood to thrust himself among those whose chiefest ambition was to be ornate? He was aware of his mistake at once, but not until it was too late to recede.

Among those present he recognized a man who, though well on in life, devoted his entire time to matters appertaining to the amusements of the selectest circles. He was talking to a girl who, moist as to the lips and eyes, looked as had she just issued from a vapor-bath. Near to her was Mrs. Raritan. Tristrem noticed that her hair had turned almost white. And a little beyond, a young man with a retreating forehead and a Pall Mall accent sat, splendidly attired, talking to Viola.

Mrs. Raritan was the first to greet him, and she did so in the motherly fashion that was her own. And as she spoke Viola came forward, said some simple word, and went back to her former place.

"Come with me," said Mrs. Raritan, and she led him to an S in upholstery, in which they both found seats. "And now tell me about yourself," she added. "And where have you been?"

Truly it was pitiful. She looked ten years older. From a handsome, well-preserved woman she had in a twelvemonth been overtaken by age.

"I have been in Europe, you know," Tristrem answered; "I wrote to you from Vienna, and again from Rome."

"I am sorry," Mrs. Raritan replied; "the bankers are so negligent. There were many letters that must have gone astray. Were you—you had a pleasant winter, of course. And how is your grandfather?"

"I have not seen him. I am just off the ship."

At this announcement Mrs. Weldon looked perplexed.

"Is it possible that you only arrived this evening?" she asked.

"Yes, I wanted to see Viola. You know it is almost a year since—since—I tried to find you both in Europe, but——"

"Mr. Varick, did I hear you say that you arrived from Europe to-day?" It was the gentleman who devoted himself to the interests of society that was speaking.

"Yes, I came on the Bourgogne."

"Was Mrs. Manhattan on board?"

Tristrem answered that she was, and then the gentleman in question entered into an elaborate discourse on the subject of Mrs. Manhattan's summer plans. While he was still speaking a servant informed the vaporous maiden that her maid and carriage had arrived, and presently that young lady left the room. Soon after the society agent disappeared, and a little later the youth that had been conversing with Miss Raritan took his splendor away.

As yet Tristrem had had no opportunity of exchanging a word with Viola. To his hostess he had talked with feverish animation on the subject of nothing at all; but as the adolescent who had been engaging Viola's attention came to Mrs. Raritan to bid that lady good-night, Tristrem left the upholstered S and crossed the room to where the girl was seated.

"Viola," he began, but she stayed his speech with a gesture.

The young man was leaving the room, and it was evident from Mrs. Raritan's attitude that it was her intention to leave it also.

"I am tired," that lady said, as the front door closed; "you won't mind?" And Tristrem, who had arisen when he saw her standing, went forward and bowed over her hand, and then preceded her to the portière, which he drew aside that she might pass.

"Good-night, Mrs. Raritan," he said; "good-night, and pleasant dreams."

Then he turned to the girl. She, too, looked older, or, perhaps, it would be more exact to say she looked more mature. Something of the early fragrance had left her face, but she was as beautiful as before.

Her gold eyes were brilliant as high noon, and her cheeks bore an unwonted color. She was dressed in white, her girdle was red with roses, and her arms and neck were bare.

As Mrs. Raritan passed from the room, Tristrem let the portière fall again, and stood a moment feasting his famished eyes in hers. At last he spoke.

"He is dead, Viola."

The words came from him very gravely, and when he had uttered them he looked down at the rug.

"Dead! Who is dead? What do you mean?"

"*He* is dead," he repeated, but still he kept his eyes lowered.

"He! What he? What are you talking about?" She had left her seat and fronted him.

"Royal Weldon," he made answer, and as he did so he looked up at her.

Her hands fluttered like falling leaves. An increased color mounted to her cheeks, and disappearing, left them white. Her lips trembled.

"I do not understand," she gasped. And then, as her dilated eyes stared into his own, he saw that she understood at last. Her fluttering hands had gone to her throat, as though to tear away some invisible clutch. Her lips had grown gray. She was livid.

"It is better so, is it not?" he asked, and searched her face for some trace of the symptoms of joy. As he gazed at her, she retreated. Her hands had left her throat, her forehead was pinioned in their grasp, and in her eyes the expression of terrified wonder was seamed and obscured by another that resembled hate.

"And it was you," she stammered, "it was you?"

"Yes," he answered, with an air of wonder that equalled her own; "yes——"

"You tell me that Royal Weldon is dead, and that you—that you——"

"It was this way," he began, impelled, in his own surprise, to some form of explanation. "It was this way—you see—well, I went to Riva. That man that brought back your hat—— Good God, Viola, are you not glad?"

She had fallen into a chair, and he was at her feet.

"Are you not glad?" he insisted. "Now, it will be—— " But whatever he intended to say, the speech remained uncompleted. The girl had drawn from him as from an adder unfanged.

"Assassin!" she hissed. "Assassin!" she hissed again. "What curse——"

"Viola, it was for your sake."

She clinched her hand as though she sought the strength wherewith to strike. And then the fingers loosened again. She moved still farther away. The hatred left her eyes, as the wonder had done before. With the majesty which Mary Stuart must have shown when she bade farewell to England, to the sceptre, and to life, Viola Raritan turned to him again:

"I loved him," she muttered, yet so faintly that she had left the room before Tristrem, who still crouched by the chair which she had vacated, fully caught the import of her words.

"Viola!" he called. But she had gone. "Viola! No, no; it is impossible. It is impossible," he repeated, as he rose up again; "it is impossible."

He staggered to the door and let himself out. And then, as the night-air affects one who has loitered over the wine, he reeled.

In a vision such as is said to visit the ultimate consciousness of they that drown, a riot of long-forgotten incidents surged to his mind. He battled with them in vain; they were trivial, indeed, but in their onslaught he saw that the impossible was truth.

With the aimlessness of a somnambulist, and reasoning with himself the while, he walked down through Madison Avenue until he reached the square. There, turning into Lexington, he entered Gramercy Park. Presently he found himself standing at Weldon's door. "But what am I doing here?" he mused. For a little time, he leaned against the rail, endeavoring to collect his thoughts. Then, as an individual, coated in blue and glistening as to his buttons, sauntered by, he seemed to understand. He left the railing at which he had stood, and, circling the park, set out in the direction of the river. As he reached Second Avenue, a train of the elevated railway flamed about an adjacent corner, and swept like a dragon in mid-air, on, beyond, and out of sight. To the right was a great factory, and as Tristrem continued his way through the unfamiliar street he wondered what the people in the train, what the factory-hands, and the dwellers in the neighborhood would say if they could surmise his errand. The river was yet some distance away. It was such a pity, he told himself, such a pity, that he had not accepted the invitation of the sea. That would have been so much better, so much surer, and so much more discreet. And then he fell to wondering about his grandfather, and his heart was filled with anguish. He would have done anything to save that old man from pain. But it was too late now. A gas-jet that lighted a wide and open door attracted his attention; he looked in, the building seemed empty as a lecture-hall. After all, he decided, perhaps that would be best.

Half an hour later, Tristrem Varick was

the occupant of a room that was not as large as one of the closets in his grandfather's house. The furniture consisted of a wooden bench. The sole fixture was an apparatus for drawing water. The floor was tiled and the upper part of the walls was white; the lower, red. The room itself was very clean. There was no window, and the door, which was of grated iron, had been locked from without. From an adjoining cell, a drunken harlot rent the night with the strain of a maudlin ditty.

XVII.

It was some little time before the powers that are could be convinced that Tristrem Varick was guilty of the self-accused murder. It was not that murders are rare, but a murder such as that was tolerably uncommon. The sergeant who presided over the police-station in which Tristrem had delivered himself up was a mild-mannered man, gentle of voice, and sceptical as a rag-picker. He received Tristrem's statement without turning a hair.

"What did you do it for?" he asked, and

when Tristrem declined to enter into any explanation, he smiled with affable incredulity. "I can, if you insist," he said, "accommodate you with a night's lodging." And he was as good as his word; but the cell which Tristrem subsequently occupied was not opened for him until the sergeant was convinced that death had really visited the precinct.

Concerning the form in which that death had come, there was at first no doubt. Weldon had been found stretched lifeless on a sofa. The physician who was then summoned made a cursory examination, and declared that death was due to disease of the heart. Had Tristrem held his tongue, that verdict, in all probability, would never have been questioned; indeed, it was not until the minuter autopsy which Tristrem's statement instigated that the real cause was discovered.

It was then that it began to be admitted that violence had been used, but as to whether that violence was accidental or intentional, and if intentional, whether or not it was premeditated, was a matter which, according to our archaic law, twelve men in a pen could alone decide. The case was further complicated by a question of sanity. Granting that some form of manslaughter had been committed, was it the act of one in full possession of his faculties, or was it the act of one bereft of his senses?

Generally speaking, public opinion inclined to the latter solution. Indeed, there seemed to be but one other in any way tenable, and that was, that the blow was self-inflicted. This theory had many partisans. The records, if not choked, are well filled with the trials of individuals who have confessed to crimes of which they were utterly guiltless. It was discovered that a recent slump in Wall Street had seriously affected Weldon's credit. It was known that his manner of living had compelled his wife to return to her father's house, and it was shown that she had begun an action for divorce. It seemed, therefore, possible that he had taken his own life in Tristrem's presence, and that Tristrem, in the horror of the spectacle, had become mentally unhinged.

In addition to this, there was against Tristrem—aside, of course, from the confession—barely a scintilla of evidence. The very instrument which was found on his person, and with which he declared the murder had been committed, was said not to belong to him. A servant of Weldon's thought she had once seen it in the possession of her late master. And it was argued that Tristrem had caught it up when it fell from the hand of the dead, and, in the consternation of the moment, had thrust it in his own pocket. Moreover, as suicides go, there was in Weldon's case a tangible excuse. He was on the edge of bankruptcy, and his matrimonial venture was evidently infelicitous. His life was an apparent failure. Many other men have taken their own lives for causes much minor.

The theory of suicide was therefore not untenable, and those who preferred to believe that a murder had been really committed were at a loss for a motive. Tristrem and Weldon were known to have been on terms of intimacy. Tristrem had been absent from the country a number of months, while Weldon had steadfastly remained in New York. During the intervening period it was impossible to conjecture the slightest cause of disagreement. And yet, no sooner did the two men have the opportunity of meeting, than one fell dead, and the other gave himself up as his murderer. And if that murder had been really committed, then what was the motive ?

This was the point that particularly perplexed the District Attorney. It could not have been money. Tristrem had never speculated, and his financial relations with Weldon were confined to certain loans made to the latter, and long since repaid. Nor, through the whole affair, could the sharpest ear detect so much as the rustle of a petticoat. Inasmuch, then, as neither of the two great motor forces, woman and gold, was discernible, it is small wonder that the District Attorney was perplexed. To that gentleman the case was one of peculiar importance. His term of office had nearly expired, and he ardently desired re-election. Two wealthy misdemeanants had recently slipped through his fingers—not through any fault of his own, but they had slipped, none the less—and some rhetoric had been employed to show that there was a law for the poor and a more elastic one for the rich. Now Tristrem's conviction would be the finest plume he could stick in his hat. The possessor of an historic name, a member of what is known as the best society, an habitué of exclusive clubs—a representative, in fact, of everything that is most hateful to the mob—and yet a murderer. No, such a prize as that must not be allowed to escape. The District Attorney felt that, did such a thing occur, he might bid an eternal farewell to greatness and the bench.

But what was the motive of the crime? Long before that question, which eventually assumed the proportions of a pyramid, was seriously examined, it had been demonstrated that the wound from which Weldon had died was not one that could have been self-inflicted. The theory of suicide was thereupon and at once abandoned. And those who had been most vehement in its favor now asserted that Tristrem was insane. What better evidence of insanity could there be than the giving away of seven millions? But apart from that, there were a number of people willing to testify that on shipboard Tristrem's demeanor was that of a lunatic—moreover, did he not insist that he was perfectly sane, and where was the lunatic that ever admitted himself to be demented? Of course he was insane.

A committee, however, composed of a lawyer, a layman, and a physician, visited Tristrem, and announced exactly the contrary. According to their report, he was as sane as the law allows, and, although that honorable committee did not seem to suspect it, it may be that he was even a trifle saner. One of the committee—the layman—started out on his visit with no inconsiderable trepidation. In after-conversation, he said that it had never been his privilege to exchange speech with one gentler and more courteous than that self-accused murderer.

Yet still the motive was elusive. In this particular, Tristrem hindered everybody to the best of his ability. He was resolutely mute.

The attorney who was retained for the defence—not, however, through any wish of Tristrem's—could make nothing of his client. "It is pathetic," he said; "he keeps telling me that he is guilty, that he is sane, that he is infinitely indebted for my kindness and sympathy, *but that he does not wish to be defended.* Sane? He is no more sane than the King of Bavaria. Who ever heard of an inmate of the Tombs that did not want to be defended? Isn't that evidence enough?"

It was possible, of course, to impugn the testimony of the committee, but the attorney in this instance deemed it wiser to let it go for what it was worth, while showing that Tristrem, if sane at the time of the committee's examination, was insane at the time the crime, if crime there were, was committed. It was his settled conviction that if Tristrem would only explain the motive, it would be of such a nature that the chances of acquittal would be in his favor. In this, presumably, he was correct. But, in default of any explanation, he determined that the only adoptable line of defence was the one already formulated; to wit, that in slaying Weldon his client was temporarily deranged.

Meanwhile he expressed his conviction to the grief-stricken old man by whom he had been retained, and who himself had tried, unavailingly, to learn the cause. Whether he divined, or not, what it really was, is a matter of relative unimportance. In any event, he had discovered that on leaving Weldon's house Tristrem, instead of giving himself up at once, which he would have done had he at the time intended to do so at all, had gone directly to Miss Raritan.

And one day he, too, went to her. "You can save him," he said.

He might as well have asked alms of a statue. He went again, but the result was the same. And then a third time he went to her, and on his knees, with clasped and trembling hands, in a voice broken and quavering, he besought her to save his grandson from the gallows. "Come to court," he pleaded; "if you will only come to court!"

"I will come," the girl at last made answer, "I will come to see him sentenced."

Such is the truth about Tristrem Varick. In metropolitan drawing-rooms it was noticed that since Miss Raritan's return from Europe the quality of her voice had deteriorated. Mrs. Manhattan said that for her part she did not approve of the French method.

THE END.

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THE POMPS OF SATAN

I

VANITY SQUARE

"We authors," Disraeli is rumoured to have remarked in the course of a conversation with V. R.; and though the plural was singular, it is rumoured, too, that with it he flattered her basely. It is rumoured also that nothing ever flattered her more except when he made her Empress of India. These rumours are repeated for what they are worth. One of them relates to an incident that occurred a long time ago, and may not have occurred at all. Even so, and even otherwise a point remains. Titles appeal to women. They are highly decorative, very becoming, serviceable in more ways than one. They may not perhaps lessen the length of the ears, but the attendant tiaras conceal it. *C'est déjà beaucoup.* The taste is not limited to women either. There are men who would not know how to get along without them. They secure credit from tradesmen and attention from heiresses. What more could the heart desire? In the circumstances a bill submitted to the Italian Parliament merits consideration.

The measure provides that in exchange for coin titles may be transmuted. After all, why not? The difference between mister and monseigneur is not of a nature to weigh with a sturdy American, but in New York it tickles the girls. Every one of them loves a lord, though it is not every one of them who has a lord to love.

The bill, then, is sufficiently praiseworthy. What it lacks is utility. Since the beginning of years and the beginning of things titles have been purchasable in Italy. They could be had in the Rome of the Cæsars as well as in the Rome of the Saints. There are at this minute a hundred princes who for a hundred dollars are not only able but anxious to supply them. The process, legally catalogued as adoption, has been performed again and again. For that matter a New York woman, who shall be nameless, secured, for causes that shall be nameless also, a divorce and journeyed abroad. Whether or not she collaborated in a theory we have long entertained, to the effect that a woman who marries a second time does not deserve to have lost her first husband, is immaterial. The point is that, discovering the name she bore—at arm's length—had its disadvantages, she purchased the right to be known and addressed as Princess. Principessa della Luna Bianca, let us say. A year passed. Two perhaps. Ultimately it fell about that at some function or other a man who had been introduced gazed musingly at her and asked if he had not had the pleasure of meeting her somewhere before. The Princess smiled and tapped him with her fan. "Why, yes, indeed; don't you remember? You used to be my husband."

The story has a moral, as all proper stories should have. Titles ought to be purchasable here. Such an arrangement would enable women to dispense with husbands. That in itself is enough to commend it. Society would be delightful were women all married and all men single. But the idea has another charm. It would check the export of heiresses. The latter are at a premium. Commercially speaking, the demand exceeds the supply. There are not enough to go around. As a consequence, in the absence of a measure such as we have suggested, we see no good and valid reason why another should not be passed inhibiting their abduction. A bill of this kind would not interfere with the tariff, and might increase the revenue. It would be a protective measure of the proper sort. The open door is all very well, but not where our girls are concerned.

Girls, though, are so constituted that there is no arguing with them. They believe in free trade. From certain statistics and studies we are enabled to infer that they believe in titles also. And very logically. A title can be divided. A duke makes a duchess, whereas a man of brains cannot share his intellect with a fool. Were it otherwise strawberry leaves might cease to appeal.

Yet were things otherwise than as they are life might be fair as a dream. Obviously, it is just the reverse. A woman's heart, for instance, —or, more exactly, the heart of a pretty woman —is a bonbon wrapped in riddles. A fool may stop to solve, but a wise man nibbles away. And very good it tastes, too, until indigestion ensues, and he turns to other fare. For the devil of it is that no man can subsist on one dish. However delicious the dish may be the hour comes when it palls. Muhammad probably understood this fact when he promised to the faithful throughout all eternity a fresh houri every day. Every day is perhaps excessive. Moreover, an eternal feast might prove as distressing as an eternal fast. Yet we assume there was to be nothing compulsory in the matter and that the faithful could diet if they chose. "Not too much of anything," said a profound epicure; and whether served with riddles or without, a variety of bonbons, even in courses, even in Paradise, must become as indigestible as the repetition of one particular sweet.

This is not right. It is not right that man should be so constituted that he needs must weary, not merely of one dish, but of all. But against this sorry scheme of things novelists without number and poets without publishers have spawned copy by the ton. Quite unavailingly, too. Nobody by taking pen and paper can add a charm to a statue. Life is just about as hard. The scheme is indeed sorry, particularly when you consider that the world is filled with charming people whom we never meet—except in a few memoirs that are out of print and a few operas that are out of date. Ballets, indeed, occasionally present them, especially the variety known to foreigners as *féeries*, which are delightful comminglings of fair faces, lips of silk, incandescent eyes, skirts of tulle, shuttled with clinging measures, sudden caresses, startling flowers, auroras, and apotheoses. Representations of this order are really consolatory. They fascinate the eye, release the imagination, and send it vagabonding afar through the marvels of lands where dreams come true.

"*O Paradis*," the tenor sings in the last act of "L'Africaine," "*O Paradis, sorti de l'onde*." There it is, and without the nuisance, too, of assisting at the soprano's demise under an upas-tree. In these lands there is nothing of that kind — at most the spectacle of a faithless favourite sewn in a sack and tossed by your hurrying eunuchs into the deep and indifferent sea. That, though, is a sight very dreamlike and agreeable to contemplate. So, too, are the caravans of Circassians, the swaying palanquins, the sombre and splendid bazaars. The turbans of the merchants that pass are heavy with sequins and secrets. The pale mouths of the blue-bellied fish that rise from the sleeping waters are aglow with gems. In courtyards curtained with cashmeres chimeras and hippogriffs await your approach. In the air is the odour of spices, the scent of the wines of Schiraz. The silence is threaded with the hum of harps, with the murmur of kisses and flutes. The days are grooved with alternating delights; they detain, indeed, but the nights enthral. There are a thousand and one of them, and they are the preludes to the *Pays des Songes.*

Before entering a mosque the Moslem leaves his slippers at the door. Before entering fairyland leave stocks in the Street, perplexities behind, and with them the usual collection of unhallowed ruminations. These things are as sacrilegious as automobiles would be. They are out of place in a land where the palace of the White Cat rears its enchanted turrets to the sky, where at any moment you may stumble over the *Belle au Bois Dormant*, find Cinderella's little foot in your hand, encounter the seduction of sylphs, the witchery of the willis, feel the April of their lips on yours, taste the rapture of life as it ought to be, the savour of immaculate joy.

Before Tahiti was vulgarised by Loti, and Bora Bora took to moral corsets, it is possible that the savour was apprehensible there. It is possible that in some of the untrotted islands of the South Seas an illusion of it still subsists. But elsewhere it has gone. Even the ballet does not produce it any more. It has vacated the earth as beauty will do. Progress is too utilitarian for either. What progress does not need it lops. It has made it easy to travel and nowhere to travel to. Enchantments have evaporated, hippogriffs are no more. The sky has changed and colours with it. There are scenes as there are sorceries that have gone from us for ever. There are advertisements where there were witcheries, commerce where there were caprices, patent medicines in lieu of enthralments, the shriek of steam where sylphs have strayed. The one place in which the past and the poetry of it persevere is the neighbourhood of thrones. There is the ideal's last refuge. There, too, is the Mecca of Vanity Square.

Americans who want to get there, and cannot, catalogue as snobbish those who can and do. Everything being possible, the cataloguing may be exact. But snobbishness is not appreciated at its worth. It is something very commendable. Snobbish people are always trying to appear other than what they are, and the effort is certainly virtuous. Contentment is a very degraded condition. It is bovine. Discontent is a most reassuring sign. People are always discontented when they are trying to improve. The desire for improvement is an aspiration, and what aspiration more praiseworthy can there be than the ambition to look down on your neighbour? Call it snobbish if you will, but recognise that snobbishness has its merits.

Courts, too, have theirs. Yet if we may believe what we hear, and that is always such a pleasure, they are not what they were. Those who frequent them take a succulent satisfaction in relating the disillusions they have met. Even so, apart from the ballet, they are the sole resorts capable of suggesting fairyland now. It is unfortunate that Mr Cook is not in a position to supply round-trip tickets to them, but, progress aiding, no doubt that enterprise will come. Meanwhile, one of the easiest passports being a title, it is only natural that the latter should appeal.

There are, though, titles and titles. A year or two ago the *Revue des Revues* demonstrated that those promenaded by members of the Jockey, the Pommes de Terre, and the Cercle de la Rue Royale were not worth the cards on which they were printed; that there was not an authentic noble in the lot. The demonstration was denounced as unpatriotic. We saw it alleged that it was calculated to throw a scare into the hearts of American girls, who, being heavy consumers, had largely increased the national wealth. At the time this argument did not seem to appeal to our friend and brother-in-letters, M. Henri Rochefort. "Should it occur," he declared, "should the hour come when our sprigs of nobility are no longer purchased by exotic quails, I, for one, would not weep for grief." And M. Rochefort added: "The idle descendant of a Crusader is a sucking pig. The female Yankee is a peacock. What good can such a couple work? There may have been unions between them which have not turned out badly, yet in that case the parties have been more lucky than wise."

M. Rochefort is quite right. It was, of course, very rude of him to call our heiresses names. Besides, admitting them to be quails, they can't be peacocks also. That is impossible. Ornithology is unacquainted with any such fowl. But he scored a point. To us as to him the heiress is a *rara avis.* Hence the beauty of the measures which we have suggested. Hence the *pro bono publicanism* of them, too. Though we have lost our bisons let us preserve our birds — from Frenchmen at least—and while we are at it, from all other foreigners as well. Russians especially, though very taking, should be admired with circumspection and avoided with care. They are all princes, and we know what the Bible says about them. If we have our facts correctly—and if not it would not surprise us—their prevalence is due to some old ruffian of a Tsar who in a drunken fit ordered every hereditary title, save those appertaining to his own family, to be abolished and the documents relating to them destroyed. These titles some successor or other restored, but as the original grants were no longer in existence everybody who possessed the energy was free to put in a claim. From the results we should judge that the number of persons possessing that energy must have been inordinate.

German titles are not advantageous either. When authentic they are awkward, and American purchasers are not in favour in Berlin. The Kaiser calls them *gemeine Amerikanerinnen.* English titles, though they come higher, provide more for the money. They are, perhaps, the best. But though the best, we cannot regard them as desirable for our girls. When obtained, certain results have occasionally ensued. In these instances the party of the second part is usually a duke who in other circumstances would prefer to follow a fashion set by his ancestors and get a bride from among the nobility of his land. But the nobility is poor, the castle is crumbling, the moat is choked, sheriffs are passing over the drawbridge, there are no warders to guard it any more. In short, there are ways and means to be considered, and who can supply them so well as a nice little American girl?

That little girl is not merely nice; she is charming. She never omits to have in her that which will make a duchess worthy of the strawberry leaves. And so quickly does she assimilate the conditions of her new existence that no one suspects her origin, no one dreams that she once had a twang, that she lived in a land of savages and dressed in feathers and beads. No; no one knows it except the duke, and he is too ducal to tell, too considerate to let anyone suppose that, among the redskins where he found her, had she not had bag upon bag of wampum he would have rubbed noses and passed on his way. And he is very sweet to that little girl, very loving, very thoughtful, very courteous, until it occurs to him that there are other women in the land, that a duke acknowledges to himself but one law — his pleasure, and to his duchess but one duty —

neglect. And presently in the castle, rebuilt now and rewardered, yet so far from the long grass and palm-trees of home, that little girl will sit and weep, and if she is a good little girl, as all nice little American girls are supposed to be, she will sit and weep alone.

The tableau is affecting, yet hardly emulative. But, then, arrangements of this kind do not always turn out so badly. On the contrary, they turn out worse. The parties to them yawn in each other's face.

Such are the conditions in Vanity Square. When those who dwell there are not up to some devilishness they are bound to be alarmingly dull.

II

THE GOLDEN FOLD

SAID a man to us once: "I have a big income, I have a big house. I want to get into society. How can I do it?" "Bite by bite," we replied. He took the tip. Everybody with whom he had so much as a bowing acquaintance he asked, re-asked and asked again to dine. Some accepted Some went so far as to be decently civil in return. Before he moved to another and, we assume, a higher sphere, you could have read his name in the papers every day of your life. That is social success.

Coincidentally, a woman of wealth approached us with a cognate query. "Leave a lot of p. p. c.'s and go abroad," we told her. The advice was taken. The lady left cards on everyone she knew not yet longed to, migrated to Mayfair, consorted with countesses, returned to Manhattan, where, received at first as a distant cousin, ultimately she succeeded in dying in an odour of perfect gentility. What more could the heart desire?

These are magnificent instances. But they occurred in an epoch when New York was closer-fisted and more open-armed than now. To-day, barring the court circles of Vienna and the region known in mythography as the Faubourg Saint-Germain, there is no society in which the line is drawn tighter.

That line is not the clothes-line. In Manhattan you behold coronets on republican cambrics, crowns on democratic heads, and débutantes in three-thousand-dollar frocks. These things are very beautiful. So, too, is the taste of the exponents. *C'est le monde ou l'on s'en fiche.*

The line is not drawn at birthmarks either. The latter are essential in Vienna. But nowhere else. To be *hoffähig* there you must have a bushel of quarterings. You need not necessarily have anything more. They suffice. But in their absence you possess nothing which represents, however remotely, a recognisable existence. Your dimensions become microscopic. You are a minim, a molecule, a mite.

The Faubourg Saint-Germain is assumed to be equally fastidious. The assumption is erroneous. The Faubourg is more exacting. There your quarterings are important but so also is the quality of your intelligence. Descent from a problematic Crusader is a prime prerequisite. But, incidentally, you must be negative. Anything that savours of originality is distinctly common—*rasta*, to use a localism of the realm. *C'est le monde où l'on s'ennuie.*

Manhattan is more liberal. Birth is not a requisite. If it were, the golden fold would be composed of young people still in their teens. Society, as at present organised, had no existence twenty years ago. The men and women who moved and had their social being then have been lost and submerged in the plutocratic flood. Here and there a few ultimate survivors linger on. But their condition is quasi-phantasmal. At an affair that occurred during the winter, a woman said to us: "Who is that man over there who does not seem to know anyone?" "An old New Yorker," we replied.

Brains are not a requisite either. In that Manhattan has modelled itself after the Faubourg. But, unlike the Faubourg, in and about Manhattan originality counts. It not merely counts, it consists in devising new ways of being dull. In a society at once so polished and so ornate that is quite as it should be. The result, too, is commendable. Society toils and spins yarns, but it does not read. That is not because it does not know how. It is because it has a fine contempt for literature—yet a contempt which, though fine, is hardly that which familiarity breeds.

Though birth is not a requisite, or brains either, genealogy is. The statement being complex, illustrations may clarify it. In London you begin by being smart and end by going into trade. In New York you begin by going into trade and end by being stupid. The process is not identical, but the result is the same. With this difference, however. In London the smartness of smart people, whether in trade or out, is due to genealogical memories. In New York smartness is derived from genealogical manufacturers.

And quite naturally. It is related of a Turk that, being shown over the country seat of an English gentleman, he mused at the pictures of the incumbent's progenitors. "You paint them?" he asked of the housekeeper. The woman replied that she did not know how to paint. "You try," he added, "and you paint better."

On Fifth Avenue housekeepers are spared such sarcasm. There are a dozen houses we wot of in which the pictures of the owners' ancestors are works of the highest art. No art, indeed, could be higher. For while the people depicted in the English portraits once lived, however hideously, the people whom the pictures on Fifth Avenue represent never lived at all. There is triumphant democracy.

There is surprising magic, too. Endearing examples of similar witchcraft reside in the archives of the local biographical society, which, during its incubatory incorporation, excited the hilarity of the impolite. It used to be a jest in Europe that we imported our nobility. This institution has done away with that slur. Statistics in hand, it has shown that we produce enough not only for home consumption but for export purposes to boot. According to the statistics cited, we have already succeeded in raising a regiment of descendants of Alfred the Great and an army of descendants of other and yet greater sovereigns.

After all, why not? Yet precisely as in an occasional newspaper article you read of a prince running a lift here, of another serving as waiter there, of a third who has set up as shoemaker somewhere else, and, all of them, the world forgetting by the world forgot, so does New York society ignore those who are merely princely and nothing else. As one may see, its line is by no means lax.

In spite of an absurd idea to the contrary, that line is not wholly auriferous. Nine months out of twelve the hotels of New York are congested with Crœsuses, with whom even the clerks will not condescend to converse. Apart from these hobo millionaires, the town is packed with plutocrats, of whose existence we learn only through hearing that they are dead. Occasionally, as in a recent case, they have to be murdered to attract our attention.

These poor devils come from the pampas, the savannahs, the mines, the lakes, from the Lord knows where else besides. They come, allured by the phantasmagoria of the mirage projected from Upper Fifth Avenue, drawn by newspaper reports of famous functions, dazzled by the glamour of the golden fold. The sheen of the spangles of glittering gaieties entrances such wives and daughters as they have managed to accumulate. It magnetises the loot of their hazardous days. Then, too, knowing the country is free, believing that one man is as good as another, certain that they have the coin, convinced that that talisman is a sesame, urged by the females of their clan, propelled by their own ambitions, excited by such imagination as they possess, in dreams forecast and in leaded type they behold the announcement of their presence among the gala gangs behind the gilded gates. Whereupon the poor devils conclude that, since the dream is blissful, the realisation must be Paradise.

In the thousand and one nights that were less astronomic than our own Paradise was a definite resort. It was very neighbourly. It was just overhead. Since then it has tumbled down. What is worse, there is nothing to take its place. You cannot go to Elysium. It is out of date. There is no use getting a guide-book and looking up Valhalla. It has fallen to pieces. It does not pay to hunt for lodgings in the Orient either. Devachan is a fiction and Nirvana a fraud. The Star of Ormuzd has burned out in the sky. The Lotus of Azure has vanished.

These plaisances were so many synonyms for happiness. In their disappearance it is but natural that the mind of the ordinary man should cast about for a substitute. The mind of the ordinary man is an engaging collection of zeros. An ordinary woman has the mind of a hen. The latter appreciation is not our own.

It was expressed by Confucius, who considerately added that an extraordinary woman has the mind of two hens.

To a conjunction of intelligences of this order society appeals as Paradise did in nights less astronomic. But because society appeals to them it by no means follows that they appeal to society. On the contrary. Along Fifth Avenue they have the substance of shadows on glass. There the tramp millionaires, whom we have been considering, discover, very greatly to their own amazement, and without any assistance whatever from idealistic philosophy, that, in spite of their coin, they do not exist: that they are not even the perceptions of a perceiver. Then it is quite one to them whether they are murdered or not. Dreams are true while they last. The dreams of these poor devils do not linger long after they have crossed the ferry.

Yet what could be more logical? There are people who compose cantatas. They have the gift for that sort of thing. There are others who can tell what will not happen to you six months hence. They have the faculty for such clairvoyance. There are women who, on not a dollar more than twenty-four thousand a year, manage to look like angels. Only, of course, much better dressed. It is an art of theirs. There are novelists whose produce sells by the ton. They have a charm that appeals to chambermaids.

It is the same way with New York society. To belong to it birth is not necessary. It is not, as vagrant plutocrats fancy, a question of bank accounts. Brains have nothing to do with it, breeding less. It is wholly and solely a matter of temperament.

In Paris it is a platitude that a man is born an Academician as he is born a prelate or a bore. He may, if it pleases him, abuse the Academy continuously, and be elected none the less; but three hundred masterpieces, recognised as such by the genuflections of an adoring universe, and even by the Academy itself, will not aid him to open its doors unless he be predestined.

Society is quite like the Academy. If destiny has given you the temperament it is a mere detail who and what you are. Your mother may have been a cook and your grandfather a crook —you will get there. But if you lack the temperament, then, though you descend from Charlemagne, though you have the manners of a Chesterfield, the genius of Cæsar, and the coin of Crœsus, you might as well try your hand at cantatas, at clairvoyance, at seraphising on small sums, at charming chambermaids with stupidities, as attempt to get in. Yet if, through accident, attraction, or affiliation, you should do so, you will not remain. It will not be because you are urged to go. It will be because you do not care to stop. The temperament will be lacking.

Given the temperament, and, in an atmosphere of orris, you will discover women talking about nothing at all to men who have devoted their lives to the subject. In sittings limited in spaciousness, but unlimited in splendour, you will encounter the prettiest girls in the world; heiresses of the first water, the deliciousness of ruedelapaixian confections, the aroma of Manhattan mingling with the accents of Mayfair.

You will observe, too, the same *piaffe* as in Paris; the same veneer that Vienna displays. You will miss, though, the grace and seduction of manner, the desire, coupled with the design, to please, which is noticeable there. But then, as you will be necessarily aware, the local young person has been so cracked up that she fancies herself top of the heap, dispensed as such from any effort.

In health, colouring, spirits, and general *je m'en fichisme* she is indeed a little dear, and the fact that she has not been schooled to charm has, as all things else have, an explanation. In European circles women have nothing to do but that, and they do it to perfection. They put flowers in your heart, to which, years after, you may turn and find fresh and unfaded still. With legerdemain of that kind the breeziness of our climate interferes. Girls here have other allurements, tricks worth two of that. They are disquietingly candid and delectably serene. Moreover, like all *objets de luxe*, they are a pleasure to behold. It is their conversation that is less enticing. On the subject of that which it is colloquial to term Who's What, and Why, the immaturest among them could give a lexicographer points. But that aria at an end, the rest of their repertoire detains only those who have the temperament to withstand it.

Aristocracy, an old chemist announced, should be composed of equal parts of beauty and of brains. In the pharmacy of American plutocracy brains are put up homeopathically. The entertainments of the gilded gang provide you with everything that eye and stomach can decently require. There is the beauty and the bowl.

Il y a, comme aux beaux jours d'antan, des franches repues et des vastes lippées. Yet always by way of interlude are there illustrations in the gymnastics of yawning.

Save among the decrepit and the kids, there is rarely the rumour of a flirtation. Of scandal, this year, there has been barely a breath. In Europe, *autre guitare.* But over there women, being sure of their position, do not bother themselves with it, while in New York they are too busy with what they call their status to go poaching on one another's preserves. The tone is therefore quite edifying, and very dull. It resembles that of a club of millionaires in which few of the members think and none have emotions.

This is not right. These people should do nothing but sin and sparkle. They should be forced to amuse us, if only in return for the attention with which they are gratified by the country at large. Time was when they did. It is not so long ago that they treated the world to a series of splendid wickednesses, to stunning treacheries, to superb betrayals, and therewith to an arrogance so medieval that in certain cases occurring in our private practice we saw mortification morbus set in and death ensue. It was like living in a novel to move among these people, and not a three-volume English affair either, nor yet in the dollar and fifty cents' worth of truck which American authors serve, but a novel such as d'Annunzio could write and the authorities would seize.

For never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, has there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves. No wonder there are proletarians. There is no debt as faithfully acquitted as contempt, and the disdain of these delightful people for the outer world, for the world that is outside of Burke and their own Libro d'Oro, is a point for the future psychologist, a nut, too, for those wastrels to crack who emerge and emigrate from the Lord knows where, with the dream, absurd in its pathos, of being welcomed in the golden fold.

III

THE GILDED GANG

SOCIETY we once defined as the paradise of the plebeian. We are frequently in error, and we were then. Morality we coincidentally defined as consisting in improper thoughts of other people. There, too, we were in error. But little mistakes of this nature have never disturbed our conscience. To err is highly literary. Besides, a man who is always right is a bore. If he does not send you to sleep he makes you feel ignorant, and either proceeding is very vulgar.

The awakening to our errors is due to an eruption, quite volcanic, which not long ago convulsed the press and reverberated through the small talk of the land. In the light of it we beheld society as we had never beheld it before. We learned that the gilded gang, which is indifferently known as the Smart Set and the Upper Four, is an aristocracy without a pedigree, whose Newport morality is a zero from which the periphery has gone.

All of which, in correcting our errors, interested us very much. It disclosed vistas of gaiety which we had not discerned before. It disclosed originality also. Personally, we have never found either at Newport. There, as in the metropolitan crush, the gilded gang has seemed to us ornamental and inept. In other climes and epochs society was livelier. According to history, it used to sin and sparkle. According to observation, to-day it sins and yawns.

That may be progress, but it is not right—the yawning at least. The sinning is another guitar, on which we will presently strum. Besides, assuming that sinning there be, it has a precedent to back it up. What more could the censorious require? Unless we are again in error, and it would not surprise us if we were, Antisthenes described the *jeunesse dorée* of Athens as the cosmetics of sin, an expression which so pleased Juvenal—or if not Juvenal, then some other chap—that he, or whoever it may have been, handed it out in Rome. It will be seen that we have no pseudo-erudition to display. But there are certain things we remember. Among others, the inkstand which Luther flung at Satan and his pomps. That is entirely too lovely to forget. So also is the *farandole* which Diderot, Voltaire, *et al.*, executed on the follies of fine folk, and from which a revolution ensued. And look at Mr Dooley! All these cynics have shown up society quite as thoroughly as the press has talked it down. As a result, progress is manifest. Where it sparkled, now it yawns. Only the sinning remains.

For sinning there is, though it be but in taste, of which society has so much, and all of it so bad. Yet, no; there we are in error again. Not all of it, but a good deal. A good deal is more than enough. "Not too much of anything," said Epictetus, whom society never reads, not, of course, because it does not know how, but because it does not consider it smart to read anything. And why should it? In these days of emetic fiction there is nothing fit to read. Then, too, it is so much more delightful to live novels. In which respect, if we may believe everything we hear, the existence of the gilded gang is comparable, as already noted, to a romance that d'Annunzio might write, and which if he did the authorities would seize.

Let us see about that. To see it the better *place aux dames*. Among them we have beheld not a few who resembled nothing so much as figurines of Fragonard retouched by Félix. They are adorably constructed and constructed to be adored. What is quite as appetising is the fact that they dress with a deliciousness that never anywhere, at any time, has been exceeded. Whether they digress with equal effect is a matter which we will reach later on. Meanwhile it is worth noting that the beauty of the raiment of the young empresses of old Byzance is not in it with them. A dream, a delight, and a desire, is the briefest form in which their millinery can be expressed.

In addition, even during the *Régence*—had you had the good fortune to have lived in that fortunate time—you could not have dined more admirably than you may at their tables. The service is impeccable. At Windsor V. R. was served with greater pomp but not with greater perfection. The tables, too, are set in homes far more satisfactory and infinitely less uncomfortable than many a royal palace. And about those tables you will see stones by comparison to the glare of which there are crown jewels that are lack-lustre.

The bank accounts are as gorgeous as the gems. Since the days when Caligula got away with a sum equal to four hundred millions of our money, and in so doing succeeded, to his delight and to ours, in turning himself into a bankrupt god, an emperor without a copper, since those fair days, and the fairer ones still, in which Heliogabalus declined to touch the same garments, the same shoes, the same jewels, the same dishes, the same lips twice, there has been nothing like unto it—financially, that is—no, not even when Hertford, Hamilton, and De Grammont-Caderousse startled Europe with the splendid uproar of their orgies.

Add that all up and you will find that there is more money represented in the gilded gang than in any other society however famous or infamous. You will find also that among these people there are better opportunities for prodigality than have been enjoyed by any society however distinguished or extinguished. And not merely for prodigality profuse and perverse, but for wickedness magnificent and majestic. Since the Medici vacated the planet and the Sun Kings of France followed their excellent example, never has there been such a chance.

Yet that chance which is there, seated at their tables, careering in their automobiles, scudding in their yachts, accompanying them to the links, tiptoeing along their halls, plucking at their sleeve, whispering to them: "Behold me!" they ignore.

Is not that a shame? Indeed it is. It is regrettable also. It is deplorable that from settings such as these, from halls so spacious and *lingerie* so divine, succession of stunning scandals do not burst like bombs.

But they do not burst. We regret it, and our regret, if not poignant, at least is ethical. The splendour of billionaires and millionairesses should be manifest in Sardanapalian luxury, in super-Babylonian magnificence, in Belsarazzurian festivals, in Assyrian disdain of the prejudices of the herd. What are they here for, if not to entertain us? Yet were they to go about it in any such fashion we would affect to be shocked, of course, for that is our endearing custom. But, privately, how we should revel!

A succession of such things, a beautiful string of bombs bursting to an accompaniment of *fanfares* in the monotony of the eternal blue of our sky, a profusion of stunning scandals tossed off like Roman candles in the azure of our nights, a cascade of devilry and gorgeousness combined, a high projection of incandescent loveliness and licence exploding to the hum of harps and the kiss of flutes, would do us all a world of good.

Yes, indeed, it would heighten us in our own esteem. It would show Europe that in the diversions of our gilded gang we have nothing to envy its royal circles. There is patriotism, is it not? Of course, the press would rail and the pulpit fulminate. Yet, what of it? It is only through sheer excesses that man can in any way approach the ideal which Nature in her divine prodigalities herself has set. It is only through the higher emotions and their transcendant aspirations that man can so much as attempt to clutch some fringe of her mantle of stars. Therein are the ethics of our regret.

The gilded gang does not look at it in that light. Now and then behind their gates there will occur a romance unpretentious as one of Chopin's, now and then the waltz from "Faust" is heard, now and again the *Ernani involame* warbles from dog-collared throats. But the *romanze* and the *arias* are never very palpitant. They are usually without conviction and generally in minor keys.

That is not right. When Louise of Belgium wanted to sing she sang at the top of her voice. It is true she was declared insane, but if every princess of similar lungs were treated in that fashion the asylums of Europe would have to be enlarged. And look at that other princess, an American this time, who executed a *fugue* with a fiddler. She made no bones about it whatever. And consider the bedrabbled ermine in the various courts over the way, including those of bankruptcy, Saxony, and divorce.

Consider, too, the men. There is Leopold, for instance. This gentleman is now too advanced in years to perform any more fantasias, and his neighbours, the last King of Holland and the Prince of Orange—Lemons to the ladies of the ballet—are dead, damned, too, for all we know to the contrary, *bien qu'ils soient morts en hommes qui savent vivre.* Yet these people, together with their cousins throughout Europe, are the very ones whom the gilded gang do their best, though not their worst, to imitate, and in no way succeed at all. The day is not distant, *que dis-je*—what are we saying?—it is here, when the giving of automobiles and polo ponies by way of cotillon favours, will, with little games of pillows and keys and other nursery romps, satisfy, and amply, their conceptions of What's What.

A condition of things such as this cries, if not to heaven, at least to us all. It is a matter that narrowly escapes being personal. Many of us, it is true, possess only such acquaintance with the gilded gang as seeing their name in the paper affords. Many of us, it is also true, are no better off than the law allows. Yet though we live on a hundred dollars a day we can always dream of a million. Moreover, in a land so well supplied with bumper crops as this is, nobody can tell what spoiled old men of Fortune the poorest of us may yet become. In addition, the gilded gang being an aristocracy without a pedigree, we are not obliged to regret any more than they do that the best part of us is not underground.

But the point is that we are all interested in them. As a nation we are simply splendid. We are a righteous, self-respecting, God-fearing lot. We have no cant or hypocrisy or pretence about us. We never have stood, and never will stand, for snobbery of any kind. In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, entrance to the gilded gang is the goal of every ambition.

A very laudable ambition it is. Entrance there enables you to take your proper place. It fortifies the consciousness of your merit. It throws your neighbour into spasms of indignation. That is quite as it should be. Yet, the circle being restricted, few are chosen and many left. Do you know what happens to the latter? Some affect a lofty indifference. Some succumb to mortification morbus. Some become hydrophobiac. We have beheld splendid specimens foaming at the mouth. We have understood that retention from functions kept their wives awake. We have been told that it gave their daughters nightmares.

Quite unavailing, too. Indifference does not appeal to the smart set. Hydrophobia, insomnia, and nightmares do not either. There are but two things that do. The first is money; the second is push. Given these little things, and in no time you are in the thick of it. Without them, then, though you descend from Charlemagne and have the soul of Chopin, you will never get there. *Jamais*, *nunca*, *niemals*, never.

To be modish you must have money; tons of it. You must have push; acres, and more to spare. In modesty there is not a bit of merit. In genteel poverty there is no gentility now. The worship of what clergymen call the fatted calf—or is it the golden one?—never was more ardent. That calf has Nebuchadnezzared the country. His fleece is as admired in society as his fleecing is loved in the Street. Yet, has a calf a fleece? No matter. The simile is there, and behind it is the gilded gang.

These premises accepted, it follows that since admission to it is the dream of every right-thinking citizen and his wife it would be nicer were the gang remoulded more in accordance with our heart's desire. It would not only be nicer, it would be gayer, and if it in any way resembled descriptions which we have encountered, it would be ideal.

These descriptions represent it as composed of vicious, sinful, and wicked people. But was anybody ever really wicked? Has there ever been anything in human nature beyond—or below—egotism, curiosity, the love of power, and the faculty of being bored? Psychology rather doubts it. Even otherwise, an abhorrence, real or affected, for what Mr Swinburne calls the roses and raptures of vice, is distinctly *bourgeois*. Quite so. As for sin, what is it, except what we think it, and does not what we think it depend on where we live?

Conceptions of sin vary with geography, occasionally with the weather, very often with the times. It is not so long ago that the hoop skirt was regarded as an invention of the devil. Next year or the year after it will be the fashion again. It is not so long ago that a man, when walking with a woman, offered her his arm. Now the woman would be considered indecent if she took it. It used to be the custom to drink claret after dinner. Now there is no claret fit to drink. But there are men who still offer an arm to women, precisely as there are others who drink chemistry and see no sinfulness in it.

The subject therefore, however considered, resolves itself into the point of view. Yet though a criterion escape, and with it a synonym, an autonym we possess. Catalogued as morality, we once, as already noted, defined it as consisting in improper thoughts of other people. In so defining it we have fancied ourselves wrong. But we won't any longer. For it is in those thoughts that sin resides. The most and the worst to be gathered concerning it is obtainable only from the small talk of the pure.

Purity being rumoured to be infrequent in society, it follows that there can be precious little sinfulness there. Apart from occasional lapses of taste there really is not much. For that matter, barring the nursery romps to which we have referred—barring, too, the uncertain *arias* from "Ernani" and "Faust"; barring, also, the golden calf, the perfection of millinery, the perfection of push, the perfection of cooks —there is not much of anything. Instead of being splendidly sinful the gilded gang is amazingly dull.

Yet, from afar, how it glitters! In view of which—in view, too, of the fact that admission to it is the dream of every imbecile—we know of no good and valid reason why, since we have reconciled ourselves to one definition, we should not reconcile ourselves to another, and again sum up society as the paradise of the pleb.

IV

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING AN EPICURE

There is a story, presumably untrue, and therefore all the more delightful, of an epicure who never went anywhere except to bed and the Maison Dorée. He got up, as a gentleman should, at four o'clock in the afternoon, proceeded to the Maison Dorée, and there, in devout meditation, prepared for the serious business of life—which is dining.

Whether or not the story be problematic, neither he nor any one else shall longer observe these rites. The Maison Dorée, the anti-penultimate resort of the gourmet, has fallen.

There is another story, one for the truth of which we can vouch, and which, therefore, is less inspiring, of a lady who went to Paris on her honeymoon, and who, returning there ages later, remarked that it had altered. "Yes, indeed," the poor thing added, with a sigh; "*On ne suit plus les femmes.*"

That little amusement of the idler, together with the serious business of the epicure, used to constitute the supreme Parisian attractions. Over the subsidence of the amusement we have no tears to shed. The point is that the business is menaced. Long since the Frères Provençeaux departed. Vachette has gone. Véfour has vanished. Only in memory does Véry survive. Presently the Café Anglais will close, then Voisin will pass, and the last sanctuary of the high and radiant Muse of Savarin and of Brisse will have crumbled. Then, precisely as sculpture, painting, and the *bel canto* have declined, so will the art of cookery.

The contingency may seem unimportant. It is the reverse. In the art of cookery is the fate of nations.

For that aphorism we are indebted, not to our inner consciousness, but to President Loubet. In the course of a recent address M. Loubet remarked that the destinies of France were involved in the supremacy of her cooks. In default of a text he had a pretext: Germany has conquered France twice. First with her bayonets; latterly with her beer. The result being that, in the restaurants of

Paris, where the high muse once reigned supreme, you to-day need an interpreter to tell you whether the dishes are Bavarian or Berlinese.

That is all wrong. Gastronomy is essentially eclectic. It admits every system, adopts every method, accepts every school, assimilates every theory. It is at once symbolist, Parnassian, romantic, and classic. Art has no frontiers. Gastronomy is, primarily, cosmopolitan. It may be French, Italian, Chinese, Russian, occasionally Spanish, but German — never! Never Bavarian. Never Berlinese.

German cookery is bad when it does not happen to be worse. In which respect it resembles our own. Yet that, perhaps, is libel. There is nothing viler than good, plain American fare.

No, nothing. A poet once sneered at us and said that we have a hundred religions, and but a single sauce—inferior at that, he might have added, and probably would have, had he thought. The oddity of it is that we did not get the sauce from Germany. Yet, from her refinements, and the lack of them, there is a hint that could be advantageously absorbed.

At the court of Hanover — to-day extinct — the king was graciously pleased to command that on the royal menus there should appear, conjointly with the dishes, the names of the artists by whom the dishes had been composed.

The king struck the proper note. Anonymity is advantageous to the critic, to the criminal, and to the cook. But not to the *cordon bleu.* A masterpiece should be signed.

A perfect dinner should resemble a concert. As the *morceaux* succeed each other, so, too, should the names of the composers. You may not care particularly to know what their names are, but they think you do. The idea gratifies them. It heightens their *maestria,* improves their technique, encourages them in the efforts of conception. It stimulates in them that noble pride which induced the immortal tragedy of the kitchen — the suicide of Vatel, unable to survive the dishonour of a *plat manqué.*

Those were the good old days. At one particularly delectable banquet there was produced a representation in wax work of the labour of a queen and the birth of a prince. At another Mount Ætna was served, with fireworks going off from the crater. For another there was prepared a middle dish of gods and goddesses eighteen feet high, yet which, to the righteous scorn of the artist, could not be set, because as he put it: "Monseigneur refused to have the ceiling heightened!"

These things were not, of course, intended to be eaten. The genius who had delighted your palate devised them to charm your eye. They were due perhaps, as all things are, to reminiscence. In days not better, but elder and more orgiac, the courses were served on platters so wide that they covered the tables. On these platters you encountered dormice cooked in honey, sea wolves flavoured with cinnamon, and occasionally a beautiful boar, from which, when carved, hot quinces fell and live thrushes flew.

There was magic in that. Or, perhaps, it would be more exact to say that there was a cheerful disregard of expense. The art of dining then was rather elaborate. Vitellius did not consider excessive for one meal a sum equivalent to fifteen thousand dollars. In four months Cæsar ran up a supper bill of twenty-five millions. We are not inventing that. It is all down somewhere. So, too, is the fact that the guests whom

Heliogabalus entertained had set before them loaves of silver, puddings of gold. Before them, too, was a menu embroidered on the cloth—not a mere list of dishes, but pictures, drawn with the needle, of the dishes themselves, and, presently, when the precious jest in metal had been enjoyed, you were served with camels' heels, combs torn from living cocks, flamingoes' brains, nightingales' tongues, peas and amber, fig-peckers peppered with pearl dust, jewels in jelly. For napkins there were boys in whose curly hair you wiped your hands. For tobacco there were perfumes. For middle dishes there were live lions, properly secured, of course, but sometimes a stupid guest, not knowing that, fainted from fright. When the dinner was done panels in the ceiling opened and flowers fell, so many that now and then guests that had fainted were smothered.

Charles Lamb maintained that no woman who led a pure life would refuse an apple dumpling. Between the table of an emperor and the table talk of an essayist there is a gap which, if you please, we will bridge in a moment. The art of dining, as of writing, consists in graceful transitions. It is general ignorance of both which makes our literature so savour-less and our cooks so bad. So bad, that the late Mr Travers, on seeing, newly hung in his dining-room, the legend: "God Bless Our Home," exclaimed with enthusiasm, "Yes, indeed. God bless our home, and damn our cook." The latter, it is agreeable to assume, had produced an apple dumpling.

That is a dish for which, in epicurean Rome, a caitiff of a cook would not have been cursed merely, but crucified. The art of the *entremets sucré* was known in that sybarite city, and its traditions are still preserved by a few—a very few—Neapolitan chefs. But nowadays no one so much as sees sweets—real sweets, that is—except in the Orient and the eyes of their best beloved. The only other variety that can be comfortably assimilated is flattery. Of that the least among us can never have enough.

Other forms should be abolished. In their stead a little extravagance would be acceptable. A lot of it, for that matter. The more the merrier. Extravagance is highly poetic. So also is originality. Metropolitan dinners display neither. The dishes are the same. So also is the talk. Both are abysmally commonplace, utterly *pot-au-feu*. During these solemnities no hostess, however smart, has ever been witty enough to introduce a pig.

Why not? In all the wide realm of art there is nothing more ideally voluptuous. A pig, a properly nurtured pig, a pig whose parents have been fed on vipers and who has been bathed in tepid water twice a day, a pig, young, tender, and shy, is of delicacies the most chastely sensuous that has been given mortals to revere. To the perfect pig, particularly to the little pink darlings of the Montaches nursery, the table is but a second cradle, and to the epicure a sheer joy—a joy serene, equable, sedate, a joy wholly suave, quasi-paternal, a joy interpretable only by the hum of harps.

In lieu of which there is the inevitable redhead, or else the tiresome canvas-back that is appropriate but for junketing royalty, yet never the abiding beatitude that this little angel provides, and which, to the hum of harps, it not merely provides, but distils. Lacking the harps, the cherub should be served to the kiss of flutes, or better perhaps, to the accompaniment of the tenor's aria from the last act of "Lucia."

Then you have something fit.

For variation, the seraphic suckling may be replaced by a *poularde truffée.* It is not up to it. Yet, properly prepared by a poet, there you have a dish that should be eaten with genuflections. It is sacrosanct. The true epicure rises and bows to it. Then in silent emotion he begins. If he thinks of anything earthly it is of the preliminaries and transitions that have lifted him to this bliss.

In regard to anterior courses, we have, in our private practice, obtained excellent results from a *potage crême d'Almond.* You are requested not to read *crême d'Amant.* A spoonful or two of that passing into emptiness is like a rug of silk thrown on a naked floor. Then not terrapin — that horrid little mud-turtle, with its nasty sauce, is, like canvas-back, fit only for touring grand dukes—but a silver eel.

For *entrée,* we have found nothing the matter with truffles. Not the black, but the white. Brought, hermetically sealed in glass, from Piedmont, stewed for fifteen minutes in Sillery, then for fifteen more in Clos de Vougeot, and served like potatoes, in napkins, these things transport you to Devachan.

For *relevé,* a simple fillet of reindeer a trifle decomposed. Or, if that be impracticable, an *amourette*—pretty word, isn't it?—of lambkin to the tune, not of mint, which is ignoble, but of violets, which is divine.

There you have a nice little dinner.

In it there is, perhaps, a trace—the very faintest—of originality. There is, perhaps, a symptom or two of prodigality as well. Perhaps, also, there is just a suggestion of art. These condiments are essential. If you are not prodigal you may lead a pure life, but you will remain a poor host. If you are not original you may be a commendable citizen, but you will be always a bore. If you are not artistic you may be a devoted husband, yet never an epicure. It is highly important to be that. At the table of the epicure is the radiant presence of the muse.

Yet here, if you please, a hint may be serviceable. It takes two to eat a good dinner—the dinner and yourself. The number may be increased. But not indefinitely. A big dinner is a bad dinner. The bigger the dinner the worse it is. At a perfect dinner there should be an air of home. When more than twelve are gathered together that air evaporates. Eight is better. Four better yet. To four agreeably assorted people a perfect dinner resolves into the ideal. Here endeth the first lesson.

Here is the second: "Not too much of anything," said Epicurus, and, however prodigal you may naturally be, you must remember that. Lavishness should be manifest in the service, in the appointments, in the surprises of the chef, in the orchestras and aviaries behind the screens, but never in vulgar plenty. Leave all that to ignorant millionaires. The distinction of the gourmet resides in virtuosity, not in abundance. His table never groans. It chants canticles *en sourdine*, in the lilt of which you join. Provided, however, and on condition, that Eros be absent.

Eros and the muse never have, and never will, hit it off. The muse is jealous, and Eros distracting. The most agreeable men and women to have about you are those that have loved and are over it. To that end married couples are indicated. But in matters epicurean there is but one safe course: *Se défier de l'amour en général et des femmes en cabinet particulier.* Here endeth the second lesson.

The third concerns the wines. Among smart folk there is an abominable custom of serving nothing but champagne. Champagne is not a wine. It is a beverage, lighter indeed than brandy and soda, but, like cologne, fit only for demi-reps. Among smart folk you may, if you prefer, have mineral water instead. But not the best. Not Eau de Vals, for instance, or Rhenser, which is superior. But to the gourmet these indecencies do not matter. The gourmet does not drink at dinner. He does not drink before dinner. No gourmet has ever touched that nastiness that is called a cocktail. The cocktail poisons the palate. The epicure perfumes it.

The hour for that sacred rite arrives when the cloth has gone. Then there should be different wines. There is no harm in them whatever. There is an idea to the contrary, but in all matters stupidity is very generally diffused. The harm is not in different but in indifferent wines. In mistaking medicine for Madeira, for instance, or chemistry for claret.

"Claret for boys, port for men, but brandy for heroes," shouted Johnson, who was merely a boor. There is no port in any storm nowadays. There are no heroes either. But there is yet Rousillon, there is yet Château du Pape. There is also Rosenwein, which is the king of all wines and of which bastard varieties are presented with sonorous titles — Johannisberger, Yellow Seal — or Blue — from the Imperial Cellars, *und so weiter etcetera*, and so forth.

Of such syrupy turpitudes the epicure steers clear. But of Rousillon and of Rosenwein he will take a glass, two glasses, three perhaps, not more. Yet to further perfume the palate he may, if he can get it, gargle a thimble of Tokai Princesse, or, failing that, half a *petit verre* of mandarin liqueur. But nothing else. *Niente, nada, nichts, rien.* Nothing whatever. For he remembers Epicurus, whose life was one long hymn to asceticism, and he has forgotten the prayer: "O Lord, reliver us," for his own liver, at any age, is as good as Methuselah's must have been.

These rites accomplished, he rises not a drunken loon but a fighting cock, inspirited and prepared, if necessary, to administer the the affairs of state, to elevate humanity, and benefit man.

President Loubet is, therefore, quite right. His address contains a hint which we need. The supremacy of French cooks is, perhaps, nonsense. But there is no nonsense about the relation between destiny and gastronomics. If more were thought of the latter not only would more be thought, but thought would be less parochial.

Are we wrong, Vatel? Shade of Carême, have we erred?

V

THE SEVENTH DEVIL OF OUR LADY

WOMEN who neglected certain proprieties used to be stoned. For that matter, they are still. But more often than not the stones come from Bond Street. Then, too, the proprieties are not what they were. Originally they must have been quite simple. To-day conceptions of them are tolerably mixed. They vary with the latitude and even with the architecture. In Mayfair and along Fifth Avenue observance of them is an afterthought. In the slums they are a compromise with the police. The Middle Classes are rumoured to have lumped them into a fetish which they call Etiquette.

What that may mean we do not know and refuse to be informed. Erudition is not in our line. But, summarily, the proprieties may be taken as representing that which you expect from your neighbour. Yet, of course, not that which your neighbour is permitted to expect from you. Otherwise everybody would be of the same mind on the subject, and we should all know What's What.

The fact that we do not all know is sufficiently obvious and equally deplorable as well. But it has its excuse. The proprieties lack a criterion. There is no solvent by which an action can be resolved into right or wrong. Guizot tried to find one and failed. In the course of solemn platitudes spawned through interminable pages he stated with perfect philistinism that the obligations to avoid wrong and cleave to right were laws as much acknowledged by man in his proper nature as are the laws of logic. Yet though he had the gift of producing phraseology as nauseous as that, for the life of him he could not devise a distinction. To give him his due, though, the difficulty that he omitted to remove he was tidy enough to conceal.

Aristotle was quite as circumspect. He stated that it does not depend on ourselves to be good or wicked. The information may be consoling, but it is hardly helpful. Neither is the scholastic corollary that every being acts according to his essence. It is the same idea divested of its clarity. Nor are we aided by repetitions of the Goethean aria: "*Du bist am Ende was du bist.*" For there we get it again in German. On lines such as these the test is obscure. They promise but do not fulfil. Every silver lining has its cloud.

Here, though, is a break in it. Descartes, who, if we may believe all that we hear, taught of two substances, mind and matter, precisely as if he had seen and counted them, could, Madame de Staël has said, distinguish between right and wrong as readily as between blue and yellow. But is abuse evidence? Besides, women are sad gossips. Hell is paved with their tongues. Moreover, when the remark was made Descartes was too dead to defend himself against any accusation of omniscience.

Yet everything being possible, and assuming that the lady told the truth, in what did this power exist? Surely it was not Madame de Staël's intention to represent Descartes as being so wise that he knew, did he go home late and intoxicated, he would set a bad example to his baby sister, for common-sense could have told him that. Nor could she have meant that Descartes' ability to discriminate consisted in believing that whatever he said was right and whoever disagreed with him was wrong, for there is nothing unique in that: it is what we all do. *Oui, monsieur, vous aussi.*

Perhaps, then, what the lady meant—presupposing that she meant anything and also that she told the truth—was that Descartes knew What's What. If this supposition be correct we have only to inquire what is what, and at once the distinction between right and wrong becomes approachable and the mystery of the proprieties is dissolved.

To do that we have but to determine what attracts, what repels, and then co-ordinate their contradictories. Nothing could be simpler. But here a loop is needful.

Clergymen to whom it has been our privilege to listen have, according to their fervour and grammar, denounced with more or less ability this vice and that, forgetful, or perhaps unaware, that the root of all evil is not original sin but commonplace jealousy. Beside that seventh devil the others that were projected into the swine of the Gadarenes must have been beneficent sprites. Eliminate it from the scheme of things and war would lapse, greed as well, discord ditto, and harmony reign. In lieu of the rivalries and strikes, divorces and dances, libels and races; instead of the failures and festivities and all the seductions, surprises, and general surreptitiousness that we read about in the papers, there would be nothing to read about at all, and society, through sheer calm, would develop obesity of the mind.

However satisfactory that might be, jealousy is not to be eliminated. It is part and parcel of human nature. Regarded in the abstract it is the woof of every crime. Regarded in the concrete it is a tribute to our virtues. Specifically considered it is the Seventh Devil of Our Lady.

In cataloguing it as such studies and statistics have necessarily made us aware that a jealous woman can be very tiresome to a man. But statistics and studies have made us equally aware that when she is not jealous it is of the man she is tired.

Jealousy is the barometer of a woman's heart. When its manifestations subside her temperature is falling. When it departs she is packing her boxes, she is preparing to follow. For it is the corollary of her love to doubt, to doubt always, to doubt in certainty, to doubt in conviction, to doubt with every possible evidence of constancy under her nose. The heart has logic that logic does not recognise. Then also, though constancy may be obvious, fidelity is not necessarily so clear. Constancy may demonstrate nothing more than lack of opportunity, but fidelity always demonstrates a lack of imagination. And of the vagaries of the imagination a lady may be, and indeed should be, more jealous than of anything else. Faces fade, but dreams abide.

There is, though, jealousy and jealousy. There is a jealousy that comes of a lack of confidence in another. There is a jealousy far more discreet and infinitely more delicate that comes of a lack of confidence in oneself. To the student of pathology either form is interesting, but on condition that the patient is in skirts. A male patient may, of course, be interesting also, but not more so than any other dog in the manger. The story of Othello and Desdemona is a case in point.

There was a couple admirably mated. The one had no manners and the other no small talk.

In spite of which, or perhaps precisely on that account, their adventures are quite endearing. According to Shakespeare, Othello, not content with being a blackamoor, made a fuss, raised the roof, and smothered Desdemona with it. Shakespeare described the lady as entirely immaculate. Even had she been otherwise, the proceeding was, to say the least, in bad taste. A man of decent breeding never sees or hears anything that is not intended for him. Moreover, had any smothering seemed necessary, it was himself he should have asphyxiated. Yet bad taste always leads to crime, and to such vulgar forms of it at that. Nowadays, of course, men do not murder their wives, at anyrate in polite society. But some of them do worse. They institute uncivil proceedings. There are, though, others of finer sensibilities who collaborate with their dear departed in an effort to observe the amenities of life, while agreeing that individual tastes shall suffer no interference. *C'est d'un pur.*

Shakespeare to the contrary, we have reason to suspect that Othello was a man of just that highmindedness. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, made the brute a Moor. Personally, we do not know much about Moors, but for purposes dramatic we assume that anything, even to goodness, may, at a pinch, be expected of them. It now appears that Othello was not a Moor but a patrician. Indifference is a patrician trait. Of that, however, more by-and-by. The point is the sudden discovery that Othello was less black than he was painted. *Les Maures vont vite.*

The discovery came about in this fashion. Recently a palace situated in that quarter of Venice, known as the San Maria Formosa, was demolished. From the rafters documents fell. Collected and collated, it was found that they contained a chronicle of the final years of Venetian dominion over Candia. It was found, too, that in them Don Othello was mentioned as the last governor of the island. It was found, also, that he was a man of rank. The documents, continuing, showed that after his marriage to Desdemona they proceeded to Candia; that later, the island being besieged by the Turks, Desdemona returned alone to Venice; that there she met another, a dearer one yet, a third, perhaps a fourth; that in each instance *sa forte fut sa faiblesse*; that ultimately, Candia having fallen also, Othello supervened; that undonesquely he beat her, subsequently concluded to die, and that for years thereafter the consolable Desdemona resided in that *casa* on the Grand Canal which to-day every gondolier points out with an "*Ecco!*"

These facts, disencumbered for the purposes of the present paper from layers of detail, were not long since given to the world by the official who in Italy occupies the position of Minister of Instruction. Although they are too good to be true, we will assume that they are exact—all, indeed, except the undonesque greeting which Desdemona received, for that, if the other facts be accepted, seems highly problematic. Our reasons for so regarding it are brief.

The gossip about Desdemona originally appeared in a now forgotten novel. Cinthio, the author of it, was an early Bourget, an earlier Balzac. For literary purposes he went about here and there collecting scandals, which he set up in black and white. In default of linen from his neighbour sometimes he washed his own. In a pretty woman he saw not her eyes but a plot, and from her heart he proceeded to dig it. It was in the observance of this process that the story of Desdemona appeared. That the author was acquainted with her husband is presumable, but whether he collaborated with the young woman in any of her inconsequences we may surmise yet never know. According to his story, however, Othello was a brave young soldier of colour, the glitter of whose exploits awoke Desdemona's love and won for him the command of the Candian troops. The two are married and embark for the post. With them go an ensign and a corporal. The ensign makes up to the lady. He is repulsed. The emotions she has inspired addle into rage. The ensign recites to Othello that his bride is an abandoned creature and that the corporal is assisting in her *abandon.* Othello bribes him to kill the corporal. The ensign slashes the poor devil in the leg. Then Othello takes a hand; he takes a sand-bag, too, and pounds the lady with it until she gives up the ghost.

Barring the climax, which we assume to be literary, the rest of the story coincides tolerably well with the documents recently found. But here is the objection. Cinthio's novel appeared in 1565. Shakespeare's rendition of it was produced in 1604. The capture of Candia occurred in 1669. As a consequence, if, as we assume, the facts produced by the Minister of Instruction are exact, Othello on his return from Candia could not have been less than one hundred and twenty-five, and Desdemona must have been at least a hundred and ten. At an age so mature one may fancy that all her wild oats had been sown, and, even otherwise, Othello must have been too feeble to beat her and too indifferent to care.

Indifference is a great aid to the maintenance of the proprieties. It is more conducive to harmony than anything we can cite. It is, as we have noted, a trait quite patrician. Obviously then, however young or old the Othello recently discovered may have been, he would have patricianly neglected to see or hear anything that was not intended for him, and by the same token he would have omitted to raise the roof. In order to induce him to do so both novelist and playwright were forced to twist him into a Moor, and as such capable of jealousy that a patrician might feel but not exhibit. Jealousy is the basis of every affection, whether maternal, paternal, filial, sororal, connubial, or even patrician. It is, therefore, a natural emotion. In the case of a woman it is not merely natural, it is occasionally attractive. But emotions that may be attractive in women are always repellent in men.

Here then, at once, if our illustrations have been serviceable, we are back again in the contradictories from which we started. The deductions that ensue follow almost of themselves. For it must be patent that, whether or not Desdemona was lacking in certain circumspections, whether or not Othello was jealous;

whether, indeed, as may have been and probably was the case, the lady herself was possessed of the seventh devil and through the process of its manifestations drove Othello first to drink and then to derision, in any event, their reciprocal attitudes were not conducive to harmony.

Harmony is that which always has appealed and always will appeal to civilisation. It is Nature's first law, the truest of her vocables. In the form of Beauty, which is its outward and visible sign, it has been an object of worship since worship began. Its exponents were singers and seers. It was Harmony that Hermes taught, it was beauty that the Buddha preached. Civilisation is in love with it and at odds with discord.

If, therefore, our deductions be worth a row of pins, it follows that the test of an action is its beauty or the lack of it, that according as it conduces to harmony or discord, according as it is capable of attracting or repelling, so is it moral or the reverse. In view of these premises it becomes permissible to transfer virtue from ethics to esthetics and to regard the proprieties as functions of art.

And why not? Life, as conducted to-day, is at its best either ridiculously vulgar or snobbishly absurd. Society, which used to sin and sparkle, now simply sins. There is modern progress for you, and a progress induced wholly by a misunderstanding of What's What, complicated by the presence of that seventh devil, from which all evil proceeds.

VI

DE L'AMOUR

It is said of somebody somewhere that he became Poet Laureate because he lived on very good terms with his wife. That is certainly poetic. So also is the result. It constitutes a fine case of what a boulevardier might—if he thought of it—describe as *lauriat mediocritas.* Moreover, it shows, or seems to show, that connubial virtues are more estimable than literary sins. That is quite as it should be. But the converse of the proposition is equally true. Domestic difficulties are preferable to halting hexameters. The world is filled with good husbands. Good verse is more scant. For that matter, the better the verse the worse the husband. An ideal spouse would be both a perfect lover and a perfect poet. But no mere mortal has succeeded in being both, for any length of time at least; and very naturally too. The Muse is highly jealous. The task of serving two masters is nothing to having two mistresses on your hands.

These views have, we fear, a false air of originality. But we claim no copyright on them. They have been running about the bookshelves ever since books were shelved. Said Michelangelo: "Art is wife enough for me." Said Flaubert: "However refractory the Muse may be, she is better than any woman." Said Bacon: "Matrimony is an impediment to great enterprises." Kant, Newton, Beethoven, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Gibbon, Macaulay, Handel, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Camoëns, Voltaire, Cavour, and Mr Dooley appear to have agreed with him. In such fine company we may not presume to intrude. But we are quite sure that there are plenty of people who long for heaven, if for no other reason than because there is no marrying or giving in marriage there. We have not a doubt but that while Mrs Carlyle was among us she felt pretty much that way too. We have not a doubt but that Mrs Donizetti did also. For Donizetti used to get very indignant at that lady, which was not philosophic, and occasionally beat her, which was certainly not polite. Even so, the exercise must have been good for him. One day, five minutes after laying her out, he composed the "*Tu che a Dio,*" an aria which a seraph might envy—the most bewitching in the entire Italian repertory, and which anyone who has heard the last act of "Lucia" will recall. Exercise of a similar nature Byron took with his little Guiccioli, and with proper poetic results. One of the liveliest scenes in "Les Trois Mousquetaires" was evolved by Dumas just after he had torn hair by the handful from the head of a young person who honoured him with her affection. "Were her tears but pearls," he announced, "I would make a necklace of them."

These incidents happened a long time ago, and fail to stir us very deeply. They do not demonstrate much, either, and what they do it would not be honest to print. But, in conjunction with others, they lead us to assume a few little things; for instance, that had Petrarch got as close to Laura as he wished, he would have maltreated her, or the Muse would have maltreated him. We assume, with equal ease, that had Beatrice been a reality instead of a dream, the world would be minus a volume or two of good verse. We assume, with equal readiness, that had the affairs of Ariosto been as immaterial, the world would be plus a volume or two which it lacks.

"The position of lover," said Byron, "is not a sinecure." Nor is it. There are times and occasions when it is hard labour. It is a position suited only to the mentally idle. In the life known as cerebral it stultifies when it does not wreck. Consider Sappho. Because a little mucker preferred another mouth to hers she killed herself. And consider Antony. Because of a viper of the Nile he flung away the sovereignty of half the world. Abélard should have known better than to behave as he did. On the other hand, had he omitted to, his name would be the echo of nothing and that of Héloïse be lost. Such is fame.

Such, too, is the fame of Tasso. His verse is less interesting than his woes. The latter were quite poignant. Goethe wrote a play about them, Donizetti an opera, and Delacroix added a picture. The picture represents the poet in prison. That is a fine place for a gentleman. But Tasso, instead of confining himself, as he should have done, to the raising of anapests and *rime amorose*, found, in the wide leisures of the court of Ferrara, nothing better to do than to make up to Leonore of Este. The lady did not object. On the contrary. But her brother, the Duke of Ferrara, did. By way of putting a stop to the proceedings he had Tasso tossed into a madhouse. Whether or not the honour of the lady was at stake is a detail, immaterial at that. There are women who discredit virtue in affecting to possess it. We have not a doubt that Leonore was one of them. Even so, and even otherwise, we do not blame the duke. We have noted before, and perhaps may be permitted to note again, that there is nothing so perversive as a young poet, except an old one.

How perversive Tasso succeeded in becoming we may surmise and never know. What we do know is that he got what he deserved. He ought to have left all that sort of thing to her. In the case of an ordinary individual we should, of course, strum a different guitar. Ordinary individuals are free to do as they like, and be hanged to them. But the thinker has a mission. For the furtherance of that mission every extraneous desire and each subsidiary whim should be locked in cages, where, for the fun of the thing, now and then he may be permitted to go and see how they are. Women should be to him the *joujoux* they used to be and not the *objets de luxe* they have become. Better still, he should have everything, even to sex, in his brain.

Seraglios are delightful to read about and particularly to write about, but to live in them must be deadly dull. Personally, we have never tried it. It is true we have lacked the opportunity. Otherwise we should doubtless jump at the chance. But then, thank the Lord, we have no mission. It is a great thing to be an ordinary individual. *Le métier de poëte laisse à désirer.* Just how much the business of poet leaves to be desired it would take the ghost of Tasso to tell, of de Musset, too, of Byron as well. There are three whom the love of woman has led from deserts of disgust into oases of ennui. There are three whose genius women have slaughtered. It is only that we may not seem to know more than we do that we refrain from citing three hundred. Yet, while we are at it, there is a case so pertinent, so recent, and so picturesque, that it would be a shame to let it go. Here it is.

During the Third Empire a young man appeared at the Tuileries. Eugénie kissed him, and in the process declared him to be the handsomest prince in the world. At the compliment the young man blushed, and blushed still more at the embrace. His name was Ludwig. By profession he was king. In addition, he followed the entirely genteel avocation of lover. But *en amateur* merely. He had yet to learn that the art of loving and the art of being loved are separate and distinct. It was his cousin who taught him. This young woman, afterwards Duchesse d'Alençon, lived in the heart of a Bavarian forest. A poet who chanced to encounter her there has related that he mistook her for a sylph—one of those enchanting apparitions that dwelt in dim green woods and long German ballads, and whom princes used to woo. Ludwig mistook her for a saint. To err, poets and princes are liable alike.

There is, a thinker announced, as much mud in the upper classes as in the lower, only, he added, in the former it is gilded. In the case of the young woman Ludwig appears to have discovered the mud, but with the gilt off and the guilt on. Yet not, of course, at once. Meanwhile the girl intended no wrong, and that, perhaps, because she never would have considered wrong anything she wished to do. Moreover, she was very pretty, and pretty girls have more incentives than those who are not. Then, too, she had another excuse. It had been predicted that she would be burned alive. No one believes much in predictions unless Time comes along and verifies them. In her case Time did. A few years ago she was caught in the fire that occurred in the Paris Bazaar. With a fate such as that before her it may be she tried to make the most of the worst. If the supposition be correct, her success was remarkable. She ruined her life and that of her lover as well.

Ludwig looked as if he had stepped from a fairy tale. As he looked he acted. He charmed peasants and empresses. He suggested romance incarnate and enthroned. These suggestions his cousin lived to see him change into realities. She lived to see him dot the country he ruled with palaces of enchantment. She lived, too, to see him hide himself in them. She lived to see the handsomest prince in the world change into a bloated sot. She lived to realise that it was her work, and, so realising, perhaps was glad to die. For, if not a saint, at least she was human. When ultimately, in cups of champagne strained through violets, he tried to drown his reason, she lost her own. Subsequently, as noted, she lost her life. It may be that it was fate that felled her, yet in that case it is a pity that fate was so slow. Had it but throttled her in the cradle, or smothered her in the green and quiet of the slumbrous wood, Europe might have enjoyed the spectacle of an ideal king reigning ideally. But the discovery that the girl who had imparadised his heart was no better than the law allows transformed *Lohengrin* into *Hamlet*. He turned his back on her, and incidentally on the world. There developed within him a horror of being seen. At Munich a mechanical device enabled him to be served by invisible hands. When he drove it was at night. Now and again he disappeared entirely. No one knew where he was. Infrequently he received at dinner. The guest whom he preferred was Louis XIV. With him he was quite at home. The royal phantom came and went at his bidding. Yet that which pleased him most was to stroll, crowned and sceptred, through the splendidly lighted halls of Herrenchiemsee and people the empty rooms with the great poets and princes of the past. With these, too, he was at home and every inch the king, King of the Kingdom of Beauty and of Dreams—of Chastity, too, for never once was the mystic music with which he flooded those mystic halls broken by the discord of a woman's voice. His cousin had cured him of that. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*

After the episode with this lady the life of Ludwig of Bavaria was a long anachronism, but a very beautiful one, marred only by the insanity that overtook him in the end. That insanity was in the family. His brother is mad as a hatter, and his grandfather lost over Lola Montez the few wits that he had. Behind these people, back through the chronicles of the House of Wittelsbach, there are chapters choked with crime, scenes smeared with sin, a story of calamity singularly straight, one in which other descendants, notably the Empress of Austria and her son Rudolph, had their undoubted share. For the purposes of this paragraph it would be convenient to assume that there is a curse on the clan. And if there be, that curse is love. In any event, it is the cause of their dementia. But then, apart from gold, is not love the cause of every folly that has occurred since the days when, for Helen's sake, the war of the world was fought? Truly, when you come to sit down and think it over, or even, as we do, stand up and dictate, the panorama of unhallowed disasters that unrolls does not make one much in love with love.

Yet though, like gold, it has its defects; like gold, too, it has its charms. Every reputable writer has denounced it and disreputably enjoyed all he could get. To say one thing and mean something else happens to all, even to the best. But the main point about it, and which, as such, we have left to the last, is the fact that concerning it doctors disagree. That, however, is natural enough. Love has a hundred symptoms, a thousand phases. It may come at first sight—which does not mean second sight. It may come from propinquity and also from the lack of it. The less we see of people the more delightful they appear. It may come of curiosity, which is the instinct of self-improvement. It may come of sympathy, which is the pleasure we take in the unhappiness of someone else. It may come of antipathy, for in every affection there is the germ of hate. It may come of mutual attraction. That is very common. It may come of natural selection. That is very rare.

Natural selection presupposes a discernment that leads a man through mazes of women to one woman in particular, to the woman who to him is the one woman in all the world, to the woman who has been awaiting him and who recognises him when he comes. And it is just because the process is exceptional that doctors disagree, husbands and wives also, sweethearts and swains as well, poets and princesses too. Therein lies the root of the disasters that it has given us a real pleasure to relate. It is, indeed, a pleasant subject. But it is one that would have perplexed Euclid, and for all we know to the contrary, doubtless did. The more abundantly it is written about the more abundant does ignorance appear. For love is one of those phenomena which elude exact knowledge. A huckster of phrases thought he summed it up in defining it as the Why and Wherefore of Creation. Another huckster nauseatingly labelled it the sweetest shape of pain.

Everything being possible, it may be either and even both. Yet studies and statistics have rather inclined us to the theory that, apart from pathological conditions, love is either the affection of somebody else or else the fusion of two egotisms, the contact of two epiderms, the tragedy of those that lack it, the boredom of those that don't, and in this country the prime incentive to matrimony, which also studies and statistics have led us to regard as three months of adoration, three months of introspection, and thirty years of toleration, with the children to begin it all over anew. *Et voilà ce que c'est que l'Amour.*

VII

THE TOILET OF VENUS

BRUMMEL liked his smartness unperfumed. "The linen of a man of fashion smells, sir," said he, "but of the open." The remark, a paradox then, has become a platitude since. As with men of fashion, so with women. Cologne water has been abandoned to ladies' maids and extracts double-distilled to shop-girls. To-day the most modish perfume is health. The next best is a suspicion of orris. Occasionally one encounters a suggestion of lilacs that are far away. The farther away the better. In smart life these represent the gamut. Anything more florid jars. In Brummel's day, and during its many morrows, the use which fine people made of patchouli was nothing less than dissolute. They had a love for millefleurs which we can only qualify as depraved. The epoch has gone, thank fortune, and may it never return. It was a matter of taste, no doubt, but it was all so bad. The farther back memory wanders the worse it gets.

Consider the lilies of the field! There is a spectacle simple and sedate. Its elements do not figure in the perfumery of Judæa. Said Solomon: "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." A cluster being insufficient, he added a mountain of myrrh, a hill of frankincense, an orchard of pomegranates, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon. The beloved became a conservatory—sultry, sticky, and soporific at that, and yet, we assume, entirely symbolic. Even so the beloved was alluring beside the vision which Muhammad evoked.

Hell is certainly paved with women's tongues. But Paradise, as mapped in the Koran, is floored with musk. It is with musk that houris are garmented. That, however unnatural, is natural enough. Muhammad, afflicted with *hysteria muscularis*—the only disease, parenthetically, which ever founded a religion—intercepted in his hallucinatory trances, and afterward detained, reminiscences of anterior worship. In days when the world went slower the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. At the shrines of long ago, in the temples of

Bel, in the crypts of Memphis, in the sanctuaries of Jerusalem, everything sacred was scented. Perfumes, it was believed, not merely pleasured the gods; it was believed that they were tokens of their presence. Witness Aphrodite. However humid her breast may be with the salt of the sea, always she brings with her a whiff of ambrosia. So it was with Isis. The atmosphere in which she dwelt was charged by her divinity with fragrance. In appealing to her perfume and prayer mounted conjointly, and the more readily because of the conjunction.

The circumstance is worth noting. It elucidates obscurities of Muhammad, of Solomon, too, and helps to an understanding of the real significance of perfumes. But we will come to that in a minute. Meanwhile we may offer a conundrum: What were the charms of Circe? Ovid told, but his work, like many another, was turned into palimpsests. There let it rest. We have something as good. It is a treatise by Apollonius, a historian of whom we know so little that it is idle to attempt to know less. Yet what we don't know of him he knew of Circe. The witcheries of the wicked enchantress were entirely apothecary. It was the old lady's habit to apply to each part of the body a different variety of unguent. The effect, novel in itself, delighted Ulysses, and, surviving the years, became fashionable in less legendary life.

Smart Athenians perfumed the hair with marjoram and the brows with an essence of apples. The arms were rubbed with mint, the knees with ground ivy. Baccaris, an extract of crocus, was put on the soles of the feet, and rhubarb on the fingers. They used these things, others as well. They painted the face with white lead, the lips with alkanet, the eyelids with kohl, and the nails with henna. The recipes, regarded as common property, were inscribed on marble in the temples of Æsculapius. The custom is citable. Fine folk wished not merely to look fine; they wished everybody to look fine also.

The wish was not limited to them. It preoccupied the legislature.

At that time a woman who presumed to be out of the fashion, whose peplon, for instance, did not hang right in the back, or whose general appearance was not modish, there and then became a disturber of the peace, and as such liable to a fine, which varied, with degrees of slatternliness, from ten to a thousand drachmæ. Those, indeed, were the good old days.

There were others, however, particularly in Rome, where individual smartness was loved as never before and, except sporadically, as never since. Perfumes there were not limited to the person. The tunics of men of fashion were elaborately scented. So, also, were their baths, their beds, their horses, their dogs, and the walls of their houses. Melinum was one of the odours most in favour. Made of quinces, it came in three forms—liquid, solid, and powdered. There were yet richer perfumes. One much affected in high life consisted of twenty-seven ingredients, and cost, in our money, about a hundred dollars a pound. Nothing earthly would induce us to have a grain of it about us.

Another scent was saffron. As an essence it streamed through entertainments. At dinners where guests lay, fanned by boys whose curly hair they used for napkins, a preparation of it was found serviceable in neutralising the fumes of wine. Perfumes then offered possibilities in debauches, in cruelty, too, with which, unhappily, we are unacquainted. Caligula spent a fortune on unguents. He waded in them. Such was the joy of Nero at the death of his wife that he had more incense burned than Arabia could reproduce in a decade. Heliogabalus asked a lot of people to dinner, and from panels in the ceiling had such masses of aromatics fall on them that before they could escape they were smothered. We are not making this up. The carouse is down in Lampridus. It is true. he may have invented it; but that we doubt. Lampridus was not imaginative, and Heliogabalus was. That painted boy, who looked like a dissolute girl, and who, to the Romans, contrived to be both emperor and empress, had perfumes that were poisons. He got them from the curious East, whence he came.

The odour of one of them perverted the imagination, stained the thoughts, and depraved the mind. It turned conceptions of wrong into right and made the unholy adorable. It set men mad and made women hide themselves in the Tiber. It smelled as purple looks. In certain seraglios and ceremonies of the Orient it is rumoured to be detectable still. But we must not believe every thing we hear. In any event, it is not used on Fifth Avenue. That, though, is a detail. The point is that there never was a place so scented as the splendid city of the Cæsars. Not merely did men, women, and animals come in for their share, but the victorious standards of the victorious legions, which dripped with blood, dripped, too, with perfume. The purple sails of the jewelled galleys were perfumed. In the colossal delight of the amphitheatre, where, beneath a canopy of spangled silk, a thousand musicians answered the roar of beasts and the cries of the multitude with the kiss of flutes, the hum of harps, and the blare of brass, at stated intervals there rained from the terraces showers of saffron, of cinnamon, and myrrh. Those, too, may be catalogued among the good old days.

It was during them that Venus managed to be, if not at her best, not quite at her worst. In years subsequent and sedater her toilet became more substantial, yet we entertain a suspicion that what it gained in texture it lost in grace. The perfumes that she trailed through Rome were not lasting. They faded with the click-clack of her sandals. It took the Moors to detain them. The Moors invented a number of things—how to whip Spain, how to make rhymes, how to play checkers, how to give serenades, how to do algebra, how to set clocks, and how to extract and preserve perfumes by means of distillation.

The process was performed with an alembic, which means a still. But that bit of erudition need not alarm. It has a false air of learning which is not in our line. We have no pedantic familiarity with this subject or, for that matter, with any other. We are able, at most, to recall that perfumery, as understood to-day, began just about then, and that the fragrance of it was first noticed when Salahaddin flooded the floor of Omar's mosque with rose-water.

The odour passed with the Crusaders through Europe. Its vogue was immediate. Venus promptly utilised it in her finger-bowl, where it must have been serviceable, for the fork had not yet come, and when it did was regarded as a piece of great foppery. But that, too, has a false air of learning which we despise. In order that we may not seem to know more than we do, we will just note that so grew the daintiness of the lady that presently she had perfumed gloves, perfumed candles, perfumed bellows, perfumed pillows, and with them, we take it, perfumed dreams. If the latter resembled the rest of her *batterie de cuisine*, they must have been nasty enough. They must have been heavy, cloying, and bitterly sweet. Perfumery she had, but not perfumes. Even so, she was better off than she had been for a long time past.

In those dismal ages society stank vilely. The very select used balsams instead of baths. The less select used neither. In "Much Ado About Nothing" *Pedro* says of *Benedick*: "Nay, he rubs himself with civet." And the deduction follows: "The sweet youth's in love."

This, of course, occurred in days semi-fabulous and wholly barbaric. In a later and more neighbourly epoch taste ran to what was called the essence pot—"amber, musk, and bergamot, eau de chypre, eau de luce, sanspareil, and citron juice." The taste became a subject of legislation. A trifle over a century ago an Act of Parliament declared that "all women, of whatever age, rank, profession, or degree, that shall impose, seduce, and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by the use of paint, false hair, false teeth, iron stays, bolstered hips, or scents, shall incur the penalty of the law in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanours, and the marriage, upon conviction, shall stand null and void."

And quite right, too. Divorce we have always regarded as the mother-in-law of invention, and we can imagine no better ground for separation than the use of scents. Beside them iron stays and bolstered hips are charmful. In the hair of the Beloved—not Solomon's, but ours—there is a fetching freshness. We like it best when blown by the wind of the ocean. The smell on her of brine and of seaweed is more captious to us than was musk to Muhammad. When from the woodlands she returns, her frock redolent of the breath of brooks, of the odour of acorns, and the clean, cool smell of under-grass grown overgreen, we could sit down and write—and even stand up and dictate—a sonnet.

The smoke of the small black shavings that come, or are supposed to come, from the Vuelta Abajo, endears her to us also. A pretty mouth seems to us a pretty place for a cigarette. The use of it by no means betokens the fast woman. Fast women try so hard to appear respectable that they would not smell of tobacco for a farm. It is a mistaken idea to the contrary which preserves middle-class femininity from its lure. We hope this paper will not enlighten them. We are not here to educate their taste. To pass from them to the Beloved: most does she imparadise the heart when on the saddle she has managed to accumulate the emanations of the fields and hedges over which she has shot. Beside her, then, a nosegay of the essences that bloom on Bond Street seem cheap and meretricious. On such occasions she suggests nothing so much as a human flower—a jasmine in flesh and blood.

That is what we call perfume in its perfection. It has but one higher stage. Before entering it a prelude may be of use.

There are a baker's dozen of problems, all of which look very simple, and which it is conveniently supposed were solved long ago. So they were. But the solutions have not a leg to stand on. For instance there is the toilet of Venus. Ask any scientist why it is that with every evocation of the goddess come gusts of ambrosia, and if you pin him down he will give it up. Scholars are readier. They can cite Homer. But Homer is descriptive, not explanatory. Yet for every effect there is a cause. This is not an exception. Solomon intercepted it. So, too, did Muhammad. We who are less agile know Elysium, Heaven, and Paradise to be the same place with a different name. Ideas of it vary with peoples and prophets. But though creeds confuse, though they change, too, as climates do, there is one conception common to all. It is that humanity has fallen from a higher estate and that ideals are but reminiscences of what we once beheld when we were other than what we are.

Assuming the conception to be correct, we enter with it into a more intimate understanding of the toilet of Venus than science and scholarship have been able to provide. For with it, hand in hand, comes a clue to the problem of perfumes. However much the latter may be out of fashion now, they have their reason and their rhyme. Everything has. The purpose of centipedes and critics is not entirely clear. The purpose of jellyfish and bores is not obvious either. But they were not put here without an object. As with them, so with the rose. Its patent of nobility is to be useless. It charms, indeed, but it seems to have no other scheme of existence. In the lap of nature it lolls, lovely and enigmatic. But Solomon, who was a seer, and Muhammad, who was a medium, divined its meaning. Their joint love of perfume was due to an intuition that in the ethereal hereafter it is on the odours of flowers that spirits subsist.

It is for this reason that the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. It is for this reason that everything sacred was scented. It is for this reason, because, like ideals, perfumes are reminiscences of the divine. In an ancient geography it is written that beyond Astomia dwell beings who live on the scent of the rose. Astomia should not be confounded with the Astoria. Beyond it means beyond the tomb. Even so, the customs of the next world are not suited to the Waldorf. When society was more primitive, and consequently nearer its anterior state, perfumes, however pungent, were permissible, and, for that matter, praiseworthy, too. To-day the Beloved no longer suggests a cluster of camphire. From Aphrodite, as she deigns to appear to us, every trace of ambrosia has gone. She smells of fresh cambric and fresh air. She is pretty as a peach and, parenthetically, just about as witty, but she doesn't go to the apothecary for unguents now. She perfumes, herself with health, occasionally with virtue. She leaves essences to maids, extracts to shop-ladies, and, unless she had a dictionary handy, she could not spell patchouli to save her life.

So do customs change, fashions, too, and with them the Toilet of Venus.

VIII

THE QUEST OF PARADISE

THERE are people who charm at sight. There are others who produce sites that charm. There are even some who do both. Dr Lucas is one of them. We never heard of him before, and already we have learned to love him. Dr Lucas is an associate of the Geological Survey. As such he has announced a grand discovery. He has succeeded in locating the Garden of Eden. For reasons sufficient to him, and therefore good enough for anybody, he designates Luzon as the spot. Here, or rather there, is the First Family's Midway Plaisance. Here, too, is not merely a grand discovery but a sort of national thanksgiving. In acquiring the Philippines we have annexed Paradise. What have the anti-imperialists to say to that?

The discovery is of a nature to interest them precisely as it must interest everybody; yet particularly, perhaps, Mr Thomas Cook and Mr

Baedeker. Should the site be accepted as exact, we assume without effort that one of these gentlemen will prepare round-trip tickets, and the other the obvious guide-book. The Story of the Fall, which Mr Baedeker is sure to intercalate among the usual Hints to Travellers, will, for many, have the force and flavour of a new scandal. The doctrine of Original Sin, expounded in the appendix, all conscientious Sunday editors will seize upon as a feature. It will be new to them also.

Yet the delights of the guide-book, however manifold, will pale beside the pleasures in store for the tourist. Fancy the sensations which the most satiated of globe trotters will experience on beholding a tree which is certified to be that of Good and Evil! Fancy, too, the travellers' tales of those who have vacated the Gates! Possibilities such as these are too good to be true. According to Moses, or, more exactly, according to scholastic interpretations of his statements on the subject, Paradise was situated in a garden of gold, of bdellium, and of onyx. Arminius put it in a clear conscience. Villon in the eyes of the well-beloved. Dr Lucas has put it on the map. There is the ideal, or rather, there is progress.

Others, though, have been as progressive. Consider, for instance, the Canaries. *Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blumen?* There it is. According to ancient, yet not standard authorities, there, too, was Paradise. The Canaries are the Fortunate Isles, Iambulus says, or is said to have said, for really we have not read him, and probably could not if we tried, and would not bother to, anyway—however, Iambulus is reported to have stated that these islands were inhabited by a set of people who had elastic bones, bifurcated tongues, whose lives were a succession of sweetnesses, and who, when overtaken by age, lay on a perfumed grass that produced a voluptuous death. That must have been a long time ago. Perhaps, too, the story is not true. In any event, nothing of the kind is encounterable there now. Yet we might just as well have had these islands as the Philippines. Everything being possible, it may be that some day we shall. In which case those whom Dr Lucas' discovery does not satisfy may betake themselves to the Canaries instead.

Then, also, there is Venezuela. From the Gulf of Paria Columbus wrote loyally to Ferdinand and Isabella that just beyond was Paradise. He wrote not merely loyally, but logically. In the neighbourhood were the enchantments of El Dorado. A trifle to the north were Bimini's Waters of Youth, and, more remotely, stretched Tlapallan, the Land of Colours.

That land of colours is Yucatan to-day. The enchantments of El Dorado have dissolved in the sultriness of Trinidad, and Bimini's Waters of Youth Ponce de Leon sought and failed to find in Florida. The latter we have, and many of us a few Palm Beach hotel bills by way of reminder. Over the others ultimately our flag will flaunt. In the quest of Paradise, therefore, we are by no means limited to Luzon. Yet though there is a trust in the matter there is no monopoly. Others have been quite free to pick and choose.

Some old chaps selected Avalon, where rapture was such that a year was a minute. We have not an idea where it can be, otherwise the location would not be withheld from our readers. But it is somewhere. So, also, is Ceylon, where a good bishop said every prospect pleases and only man is vile. So, too, is the Kingdom of Prester John, just beyond which other old chaps declared Paradise to be. Nor is this all. Theologians have placed Eden in Mesopotamia, travellers in Central Africa, ethnologists in

Atlantis, mythologists in Limuria, philosophers in Utopia, and litterateurs at the Pole—which, to be as cosmopolitan as the rest of them, constitutes, we think, a real embarrassment of choice.

Even so, it did not embarrass Sven Hedin. Last year—or was it the year before?—he dismissed them all, and, quite as definitely as Dr Lucas put his finger on Luzon, this gentleman indicated Janaidar.

Janaidar is a city in the uplands of Asia, to which the Kirghiz look and pray as they pass. Perched on a peak of the Pamirs, provided with flowers that never wither, with delights that never end, with songs that never cease, it surges above the barren plains a mirage of terrestrial bliss. Dr Hedin tried to ascend the height on which it is set. Being mortal, he failed. It is as well, perhaps. He has an illusion left. So have we. Always and everywhere there is an abode of bliss. But on condition that it is treated as the Kirghiz treat Janaidar, that it is looked up to, prayed to, and then passed by.

Through an inability to imitate the Kirghiz, or, perhaps, because they never heard of them, others have attempted artificial ascents. Among these is Baudelaire. With nothing but haschisch for ladder the ascent was effected; he was there, living in uninterrupted delights, listening to harmonies no mortal ever heard before, contemplating landscapes of amber and emerald, perspectives the colour of dream, and with them, perhaps, the lost arcana, the secrets of the enigmæ of the universe, the science that Plutonian cataclysms engulfed, the recitals of the genesis and metamorphosis of the supernal, the chronicles of the forgotten relations of nature and man.

Another was De Quincey. In the hallucinations of the glass of "laudanum negus, warm, without sugar," which he used for ascent, there were infinite cavalcades, the undulations of tumults, the catastrophes of mighty dramas, choruses of passion, trepidations of innumerable fugitives, tempests of features, forms, and farewells, shuttled by sudden lambiencies, by the consonance of citterns and clavichords, by Æolian intonations, by revelations of power and beauty, by pomps and glories, until a vault, opening in the zenith of the far blue sky, showed a shaft of light that ran up for ever through millennia, through æons; and up that shaft his spirit mounted, mounted, mounted ever farther yet, until peace slept upon him as dawn upon the sea.

In addition to haschish and opium other ladders have been used. Among them mescal is citable—not the agave preparation, but a plant which yields a substance brown and bitter, and of which the effects resemble Indian hemp.

Mescal is much in vogue among the Tarahumari, a tribe of Mexican Indians, to whom the plant is a god, approachable only after fastidious rites, the body perfumed with cophal, the heart entirely devout. And no wonder. For, properly placated, the god conducts the worshipper to a series of visions in which he is beckoned into Paradise and then shown out — provided he has absorbed the proper dose.

That dose we have personally lacked the opportunity to absorb, but if we may believe everything we hear—and we are always most anxious to—Mr Havelock Ellis has. With it he encountered a vast field of golden jewels, perfumes also, on which flowerful shapes convoluted into gorgeous butterflies, gyrated in loops of flame, and performed skirt dances before him, providing him with living pictures, or, rather, what he, with perhaps a higher conception of the possibilities of language, calls "living arabesques." In the background were, he noted, architectural sweetmeats in the Maori style—whatever style that may be—enhanced "with the moucharabieh work of Cairo."

This sort of thing continued for hours, until, indeed, Mr Ellis went to bed, when he became, as he expresses it, greatly impressed by the "red, scaly, bronzed, and pigmented appearance of his limbs," particularly—and strange to say—whenever he was not gazing directly at them.

Dissatisfied with the result, he experimented on a friend, to whom he amicably distributed an overdose, and who with some pathos relates that thereupon he had a series of paroxysms which made him feel as if he were about to give up the ghost. He enjoyed a sense of speedy dissolution, accompanied, and presumably accentuated, by an entire inability to resist, yet quickly followed by an acuter apprehension that one of his eyes had turned into a pool of dirty water in which millions and millions of minute tadpoles were afloat. Then he, too, was gratified with a skirt dance of arabesques that arose, descended, palpitated, and slid, for which, however, he was presently punished by a procession of sudden frights. His left leg became solid, his body immaterial, his arms impalpable, the back of his head emitted flames, to his mouth came the burn of fire, to his ears the buzz of bees, interrupted by the impression of skin disappearing from the brow, of dead flesh, of hot chills, and, finally, of a grinning skull.

It is into such byways that the quest of Paradise may lead one. Yet there are others, notably those disclosed by drink. Byron used that guide, so did Poe, so did de Musset. Under the influence of the Yellow Fay, whose name is Eau de Vie and should be Au Delà, they left the world, crossed the frontiers of the possible, and in a swift pursuit of larger flowers, rarer perfumes, pleasures unenjoyed, passed from new horizons into visions brutally beautiful, wholly solid, dreamless and real, where, fairer than the desire of a fallen god, the Muse stood, her arms outstretched.

It is a wonderful journey, but the landscapes it unveils are not suited to common clay. There are colours there to which the rest of us are blind, melodies to which we are deaf, the white assumption of realised ideals. Such things are not for ordinary man. The summit scaled, or even attempted, instead of resplendent perspectives, instead of the pulsations of higher hopes, the savours of life unto life, the odours and foretastes of immaculate joy, there is stupor when there is not horror, delirium when there is not death, Purgatory instead of Paradise. It is a great place, though, for men who want to drown their sorrows, and always will be until they learn that sorrows know how to swim.

In an effort to forget, or, rather, not to remember, that the end of life is darkness and the font of it pain, persons more fastidious have turned to love. But that also has its defects. In the smart set it is a game, and a very pretty one too, only when you are old enough to play it properly you are too old to play it at all. In which respect it is inferior to bridge whist. Platonism is much better. The trouble, though, with that arrangement is that either the party of the first part loses her head or the party of the second part loses his temper. Neither result is conducive to happiness, and happiness is but a synonym for Paradise.

Happiness is what we think it is, but only when what we think it is what we have not got. Love is refreshing and wealth delightful. But they do not bring happiness. Even golf may fail. Matrimony too, for that matter. The happiness of matrimony is not, however, a subject that may be lightly talked away. There are and have been, and presumably always will be, a number of marriages that are delicious. Yet none is perfect. But, then, does perfection exist?

Personally, we have heard matrimony defined as one woman more and one man less. The definition seemed to us inadequate. Then, too, it is a long time since the noose matrimonial ceased to be news. Yet that noose we have heard praised for the opportunities which it affords for the development of the emotions known as unselfish. Certainly it is highly chastening. But chastened people have no individuality. The big bugs of history were thorough-paced egotists. Cæsar at the Rubicon, Napoleon at Marengo, Carnegie at the Steel deal, did not care a rap for a soul save themselves. Do we not honour them for it? It is of such stuff that greatness comes. But, like matrimony, like golf, and bridge whist, greatness is not happiness. When Alexander was tramping India in search of the sight that Dr Lucas has found in Luzon, an ordinary person presumed to tell him that he was on the wrong road. "The right way," said the person, "is humility." We have tried the path and discovered, just as Columbus discovered in the Gulf of Paria, that Paradise lay beyond.

"We are all born in Arcadia," said Schiller, who omitted to add that we emigrated at once. But the idea is sound. We are born with a belief in Paradise. The quest of it fills our dreams. The delays in getting there furnish our nightmares. Yet of all those who have sought it, nobody has ever got there after the age of forty, or, we may hasten to add, before.

Beautiful as an uncommitted sin, it stretches far away, too far, indeed, for laggard steps like ours. It is not in Luzon, as Dr Lucas has announced. It is not in the Fortunate Isles, as the ancients thought. The artificial substitute does not pay, the Biblical Plaisance has ceased to be. In the twentieth century there is no such place.

These premises admitted, there should be something to take its place, and there is. An epicure provided it. He called it Contentment. Given that, and the possessor can dispense with Paradise every day in the year. The factors are twofold. The first is health; the second indifference. The conjunction of these little things does not produce Elysium, but it steers one clear of Hades. Anyone who expects more than that is too good for the good things, and particularly for the bad things—which are often better—with which this world is bestrewn.

IX

TRUFFLES AND TOKAY

LITERATURE used to be a battlefield. To-day it is a restaurant. A virtuous writer no longer pinks a rival; he caters to the public. The food is cheap, easy of digestion and as easily prepared. The equipment necessary for its production is readily acquired, and profitable when obtained. All the cook needs is an absence of imagination and a fountain pen. Given these condiments, success is sure.

That is natural. One touch of stupidity makes the world kin. Considered as a nation, we are, of course, perfectly splendid. The glory that was Greece, and the grandeur that was Rome, are not in it with us. We have only to look at the papers to be convinced of that. The pæans of our progress are as deafening as leaded type can make them. The celerity with which we breed plutocrats is exceeded only by the servility with which we cultivate them. In the export of heiresses the manufactories of Europe cannot touch us. Before our professional beauties the Peris of Paradise slink abashed. We produce everything, including panics, and raise all things except masterpieces.

That, also, is natural. We are, perhaps, masterful, certainly mercenary, but not metrical. The land of the free is the home of progress, yet not of poets. In years when the world went slower poets were regarded as butlers of the gods. Their ambrosia was received with genuflections. In their nectar was the divine afflatus. The custom has been abrogated. Barring Mammon, the gods have gone. There is not a trace of the afflatus left. Our climate does not agree with it. Our climate does not agree with poets either. It induces in them radiating chloroformania. Instead of genuflections they are greeted with yawns. Their nectar obtains every kind of reception except consumption. Their titles have been examined. It has been found that in descending the years they have degenerated from butlers into apothecaries. Their ambrosia is a drug on the market. In a wide-awake, democratic country like this that sort of thing doesn't do. The vocation, as a consequence, creates not yawns and ridicule merely, but indignation. "Who is that chap?" a man in some misery asked us recently. "He is a young poet," we answered. "I hate young poets," was his reply. And yet, as Gautier, with a charming affectation of naïvete, remarked, an inability to write in verse can scarcely be considered as constituting a special talent.

Perhaps, however, it may. An inability to write anything but cheques is the smart thing here. A pilgrim from Paris noted that we have developed a hundred religions and but a single sauce. That sauce, surmounting our kitchens, has assimilated our flummeries, our festivities, our frescoes, and fiction. Here and there the sameness of it is relieved by a touch of originality. But the touch is sporadic. The blue ribbon is scarce. Hence the rarity of masterpieces.

The cuisine of the latter differs from current cookery. In Milan the education of a ballet girl begins at the age of six. Until she effects her debut she works ten hours a day. The young of both sexes who aspire to be *cordons bleu* should begin a little earlier and work harder yet. By way of *batterie de cuisine* there is the dictionary. Spelling they may leave to their problematic proof-reader; grammar too. No grammarian ever wrote a thing that was fit to read. They need not bother with style either; geniuses often write badly, and so much the better for them. Besides, style is easy enough to manipulate when you know how, and seems easier still when you don't. But to the *chef en herbe* words must have no secrets. He must know how to toss them as a juggler throws knives. He must be able to plant them in such fashion that they will explode like bombs before the reader's eyes. If necessary, they must enable him to have an attack of hysterics on paper.

After the conquest of the dictionary, the scullion who has anything to fricassee will know how to prepare it. Yet then should an idea, however complex, a vision, however apocalyptic, surprise him without words to convey it, he may just as well take off his apron. He lacks, not necessarily the elements of success—on the contrary—but the gastronomics that distinguish the first-class cook. He may stew succotash by the pail, yet never truffles and tokay. On the other hand, should chance enable him to catch Inspiration in the dark, should fortune assist him in throwing her down, and talent aid him in filching a masterpiece from her glittering corsage, he may be intimately convinced that it was the wrong party he met should that masterpiece prove popular. A book that pleases no one may be poor. The book that pleases everyone is detestable.

To young ladies of cognate aspirations the same course of sprouts is requisite. But with no matrimony in it. An authoress should not wed unless she can marry a publisher. A publisher is a handy person to have about the house. Failing the chance at one, in no circumstances should she even for a moment consider the possibility of taking any form of husband not equally serviceable and quite as lack-lustre. Look at Marie Corelli. The heroes of whom she has delivered herself would fill a ten-acre lot. And yet for the hand of that delicious, bareback, sawdusted circus-rider of the fountain pen, princes have wooed unavailingly. And look at Ouida. The types of manhood that she has produced are quasi-divine; and yet, though wooed too, neither has she been won. Then there is, or rather there was, George Sand. Through an early page of her career there wandered the dissolute Greuze of literature, whose name is Alfred de Musset. Through a later chapter there passed the Apollo of impeccable accords, whose name is Chopin. As neither happened to be in the publishing business she used them both for copy, and married a philistine.

These statistics are not voluminous, but they have the superior merit of luminousness. They show that princesses of the pen who do not remain single prefer commonplace consorts. And that, after many vigils and much communion, we regard as quite right. It is an axiom in law that fighting cocks should be kept apart. It is an axiom in letters that epigrams from the other end of the table are provoking. It is an axiom in lyrics that, however delightful the exchange of repartee and kisses may be, neither is conducive to the production of fiction, trite or thrilling.

Young gentlewomen have, then, a choice between living novels and writing them. The former condition is to be preferred. The revels of romance may be roseate, or the reverse, but matrimony is no child's play. Besides, young gentlewomen should, perhaps, content themselves with continuing to be. The moment they cease to shirk every duty in that sphere of life to which it pleased God to call them, their charm becomes so pernicious that they incite to bigamy—a crime of which the penalties have been summarised as two mothers-in-law, or at-law, in the discretion of the judge. But as the subject is momentous, let us consult the authorities. Here, for instance, is Nietzsche. According to him, man should be reared for the vocation of warrior and woman for the warrior's recreation. Now, if she work, how can she be recreative? And here is Dr Watts: "Satan," he says, "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." The conversation of a lady who lacks the leisure to be mischievous is bound to be very dull. Then, also, wives that write have not time to argue with their husbands, and when a woman ceases to quarrel she ceases to love. In view of all which, it seems to follow that girls cannot combine matrimony and masterpieces—at the same time at least—and young gentlemen cannot either. Eagles, poets, and kings must—and will—circle alone. By the same token, all dealers in the ideal are better off by themselves, or, at a pinch, less worse off with transient flirtations than permanent families.

There are reasons for all things. We have several for this, and may find another. Matrimony presupposes happiness. It usually takes it out at that. But there is the general theory. Assuming it to be valid, happiness dulls the brain. As such, it is to be avoided. It is only when authors are absolutely miserable that the wretches can do themselves justice. And even were matrimony, through its chastening effects, to induce that result, it is open to a yet graver objection.

To stir the wits, to make ink flow in floods and the pen acrobatic, there is nothing like solitude. No one not in the business can understand how populous it is. No one not in the trade can understand how loquacious its phantoms become. They have their defects. They poison you for the realities of life. None the less, to be worth his syndicate an author must evoke them. He must play with hallucinations as Mithridates did with drugs. But he must play alone.

Literature—when not a restaurant—is a divinity, and a jealous one. She suffers no other worship. She forces you to shut every extraneous desire, ambition, and inclination into cages where, now and then, for the distraction of the thing, you may go and see how they are. But you must go alone. Take a companion in the shape of a wife or, worse yet, a husband, and there is an end to the high hallucinatory fever that she provides. There also is a farewell to that untrammelled freedom which is the pundit's natural heath. The lives of great sages all remind us that in their sagacity they were too sagacious to marry. The lives of great poets all remind us that, uniformly married, they uniformly wished they were not.

These are the reasons that we promised. Here is the other that we didn't. Should matrimony occur, the party of the second part, being a mere mortal, will, like other mere mortals, love society, will affect to say, as others have, that it is a bore to be in it, and feel, as others do and will, that it is a tragedy not to.

Yet in society how many dealers in the ideal are there? There is the Duchess of Sutherland. There is the Queen of Roumania. But these ladies are superior women, and superior women, being always long-winded, are able to do double duty. Apart from them, magnificent examples are few. They exist, however, yet not on the list of smart people. The latter are charming, but they do not read; and, as for writing, good Lord! possessing, as they do, the ability to write cheques, they fancy that therein is all the law and most of the profits. What is worse, they are right. In the way of literature anything further would be a surfeit.

Society is hard labour. So also is fiction. It is, an old troubadour remarked, a toil at which galley-slaves would balk. One form of hard labour is supersufficient. An added variety would do up a football team. Hence it is that society is not literary, and the literary are not social. Of all pursuits this is the most difficult. The sculptor has his chisel, the musician his piano, the painter his brush. The novelist has but his brain. The sculptor, the musician, the painter have instruments to second them. The novelist is the instrument and the instrumentalist. He chisels the impalpable, attunes the inaudible, and paints the unseen. Or at least he did before he was submerged in the swirl of succotash that gushes from the sculleries of the department stores.

What will become of that deliciousness, and of anterior messes quite as delightful, the giant library now in process of construction on Fifth Avenue one of these days will tell. If we may believe all we hear—and that is not always a pleasure—this library is to be a very fine place. In some splendour and entire spaciousness Error will sleep there side by side with Truth. How much of the one and how little of the other its galleries will contain, speculative spiders may decide. But one thing is certain. The best books will not be there. Precisely as the prettiest women are always those whom we have yet to meet, so are literature's most fascinating productions still unwritten.

If, as is generally suspected, the value of a work consists more in what it suggests than in what it says, the most uplifting books will not be in that library either. There is, for instance, the Book of Nature, a treatise that all philosophers begin and none of them finish. There is also the Book of Destiny, which all thinkers consult and none can construe. Then there is the Book of Love, whose scroll age cannot scan and youth cannot fathom. Finally, there is the Book of Life, of which the pages vanish as you turn them.

These books will not be found on Fifth Avenue. In their stead there will be an acre of information on everything that it is easiest to forget, another acre of everything that it is useless to remember, ton after ton of rubbish that none but the authors and their enemies could be hired to look at, ton after ton of solemn lies that have survived only because Death has ignored them, ton after ton of defunct theories, of demised ideas, of deceased lore, and derelict science—with here and there a few baskets of truffles, a few bottles of tokay, a few flowers of real literature, of which the wit and wisdom can never die.

For the rest of the cemetery our hopes are slim. We foresee dimly, yet surely, an hour when Posterity will dump the lot in a dust-bin and put a *Hic jacet* on it all—put it, we say, yet providing, of course, that she takes the trouble, and that in moments of faithlessness we rather doubt. And the reason, if complex, is clear. In the last fifty years, particularly in the last twenty, and more especially in the last five, literature has held a continuous show. Authors have spawned copy, publishers have belched books, and novelists have pyramided, remorselessly.

The entertainment has been diverting, but to call it enduring is another guitar. According to statistics there are produced in the United States sixty books a day, or two and a half every hour, and what more could anyone ask? Except, indeed, those who are ambitious to be known. For in that flood is the bankruptcy of Fame. So many claims has the lady on her that she needs must fail through sheer inability to pay her debts.

Without pretending to know more than we

do, it is easy to predict that this sort of thing cannot go on for ever. The production of succotash is not a misdemeanour. The love of light yet heavy reading no jurist has codified into crime. The sale of stupidities under the name of stories is at best, or at worst, but a question of taste, however poor that taste may be. Yet nothing is constant but change. Across this swirl of dish-water there is passing a transverse stream.

We lack the space, which is a detail, for we also lack the art, to picture that stream as it deserves. But two aspects of it we may indicate. One consists in the fact that those of us whose lives are not devoted to fame are devoted to fun. Another lies in the multiplication of telephones, the increasing facility of communication, the coming abolition of time, and the sequestration of space.

It has been the absence of these very things that in the leisurely past has been most conducive to the production of poppycock. People nowadays have not so much time to spare. In the future they will have less. In the next generation, what with air-ships, telectroscopes, and interplanetary news, they will have none—or rather none for the light yet heavy reading of to-day.

Literature then will be electric. Instead of fat books stuffed with nauseous phraseology there will be brief pages of brilliant ideas. Instead of padding their wares authors will aim to say as much as possible in the fewest possible words. When that day comes the models of literary excellence will not be the long and windy sentences of accredited bores, but ample brevities, such as the "N" on Napoleon's tomb, in which, in less than a syllable, an epoch, and the glory of it, is resumed. That is the kind of cutlet the restaurant of the future will provide, and Fame will halo those who serve it quickest with truffles and tokay.

X

THE ENCHANTED CARPET

THE beauty of Az Zahra a congress of poets in active collaboration would be impotent to depict. Az Zahra was the palace of the Caliphs of Cordova. Forty thousand men worked at it ceaselessly for forty years. To-day not a trace of its enchantments remains.

There have been other bewilderments almost yet not quite as witching. Nero devised a residence so ineffably charming that on the day of reckoning may it outbalance a few of his sins! About it were shimmering porticos, glittering avenues, green savannahs, forest reaches, the call of bird and deer. Within were domes of sapphire, floors of malachite, crystal columns, and red-gold walls. It has crumbled.

Before the peacock throne of the Great Mogul there was an inscription that ran: "There is a Paradise. And it is this. And it is this." Of that paradise the legend alone endures. The enticements of Dar Sargenu are rumoured to have exceeded those of Eden. They have evaporated. Trumpets of triumph woke Sardanapalus from the splendour of dreams to settings yet more splendid. Like the dreams, the settings have faded. Beneath Cyclopean arches, in matchless magnificence, Belsarazzur lounged and laughed. The arches have fallen, the magnificence has gone. At any evocation of Bel's Home of the Height the pens of archæologists have spluttered. Bel has vacated the skies, his earthly tenement has fallen. The sumptuousness in which Semiramis dwelt exceeds the powers of prose. The lady has dwindled into myth and the sumptuousness with her. Mounting upward with the stream of life and light the memory of the imperial palace at Byzance surges—a gorgeous vision. By comparison Versailles becomes an eyesore and Windsor a blur.

For sheer loveliness Az Zahra beat all these places hollow. It was a fairyland that would have thrown the architects of the Great Mogul's peacock paradise into stupors of admiration. Beside it Nero's surprising construction would have looked quite squalid. If a surmise be worth a line of type, we may assume that even the gorgeous vision of Byzance would have slunk from it outdazzled. And there, one day, or it may be one night, a caliph stood and smiled.

Well he might. Before him was one of those jasmines in flesh and blood which used to grow on the Guadalquivir. And smiling, he lassoed the girl again and again with rope after rope of pearl. But even in fairyland, even in Az Zahra, caliphs had counsellors. This prince had his. They were prudent persons, and they represented to him that the lassoing was too lavish. These representations the caliph treated as cobwebs. "You are just like everyone else," he remonstrated; "you put a lot of value on things that have none." Then he mused a moment. "Tell me," he continued, "what are pearls good for except to punctuate the prettiness of a pretty girl?"

The syllogism, propounded in unanswerable Arabic, the counsellors were insufficiently casuistic to refute. Moreover, they were perhaps struck by the profundity or the truth it contained. The pearl is sacred to prettiness. Personally, we prefer the opal. The opal is a pearl with a soul. But opals are not *jeune-fillesque.* The pearl is. Vishnu could find nothing better for his daughter. Cæsar ransacked Britannia to find enough for the long line of young women whom he had on his list. Nero was less thoughtful. He used to toss them—the pearls, not the young women—about the room. Heliogabalus liked them best powdered into pepper. Cleopatra preferred hers in a cocktail.

The possibility of that entirely vulgar performance has been doubted. But the dissolution of a pearl can be effected, though the flavour is reported to be less appetising than vermouth. And naturally. The pearl is a disease. A mortal one, too, in this respect, that it dies. It is only the jewel that does die. Diamonds, for instance, live for ever. One might say they have always lived. They count, like light, among the first created things. Generated in flame before the earth was cool, they preceded the primal monera. Pearls, on the other hand, are charming accidents, and, parenthetically, the only ornament that nowadays a man can decently wear. Balzac understood that fact very thoroughly. Previously, Buckingham had dripped jewels in a promenade through the Louvre. Previously, too, Richelieu had dazzled Vienna with a satrap's suite. Previously, as well, *les grands seigneurs* made themselves multi-coloured as quetzals. Adornment has been the fashion. But in Balzac's day fashion had changed. It was much simpler, yet not entirely severe. Then it so fell about that one evening Balzac appeared at the opera with a stick, of which the handle blazed with gems. The glare of it drew the attention of the entire house. It was barbaric. It was more—it was unique. It was something else, too—it was a lesson. Apart from the stick Balzac was not adorned. The other men present were. On the morrow they stripped the jewels from their fingers and the trinkets from their shirts. Anteriorly gentlemen had been known by their dress; since then they have been known by their address. That is quite as it should be, were it not that in speech, as in costume, they have, in forcing the note, become entirely lack-lustre. There is modern progress.

We have not a word against it. But if our summary has been serviceable it will have shown that splendour has departed. This we regret. We prefer silk to flannels, velvet to tweed. Had fortune sufficiently favoured us we would wade in jewels. We see nothing distressing in Buckingham's promenade through the Louvre. Were we able we would eclipse Richelieu's entry into Vienna. Merely for the manner in which Nero lodged himself we forgive every crime he committed. Sardanapalus is our patron saint. It may be—though we doubt it—that he was wickeder than Heliogabalus; but what of it? He was magnificence made man. Byzance is rumoured to have been the sewer of every sin, yet such was its beauty that it is the canker of our heart that we could not have lived there. By way of compensation we are treated to certain conveniences and equally certain ugliness. Cities grow less uncomfortable and more hideous day by day. We live in a land of ready-made clothes, in an epoch that cant has sterilised and snobbery debauched. The stage is as mediocre as life. Even the Muse has fled. In lieu of the glare of genius there are antiseptic preparations, and automobiles instead of art. Only in Nature and the convulsions of her does splendour endure.

Nature, though convulsive, is curiously cautious. She possesses a sort of a stock in trade of which her supply is uniform. That stock is energy. She transforms it, transmutes it, and transposes it. But never does she suffer a speck of it to get away. She may store it in microbe or man, in sporules or stars, but on to it all she holds very tight.

These premises accepted, it follows that if splendour has vacated this neighbourhood it must be somewhere else. The pity is we cannot stalk it. And yet, why not? In the Arabian Nights there is a story about an enchanted rug. You had but to get on it, and presto! it carried you wheresoever you willed. That rug has been regarded as fabulous. It was, perhaps, woven of the imagination, but imagination can do as well to-day. All it needs is a foothold. Lacking that, a footnote. Here is one about Mars. It says that we can see the canals there, and sooner or later we shall see the streets.

Seeing is one thing, hearing is another. But recent experiments have induced the idea that we shall not merely see the streets but talk with the citizens. The idea may seem fantastic, yet it is the charm of certain ideas that beginning as fancies they end as facts. In this instance the idea is to telephone along a shaft of light. That is simple enough. Sound that can be projected a mile can be projected a million miles. It can be projected to the ends of space, if ends there are. Assuming, then, the possibility of such projection, and there is the enchanted rug.

On it we may proceed after splendour, and presently we shall stalk it, too. Mars is many a kalpa our senior. In science and sapience, manners and modes, she is, as such, in a position to give us points. There must be forces she has mastered of which we know nothing, senses she has cultivated of which we are unaware, problems she has solved which to us are mysteries, and with them refinements and ideals unimagined here.

Granting, then, the possibility of communication, and there would be not merely the pleasure but the profit of learning from her pundits the history of time, of receiving from her erudites the charts of space and of flirting through the telescope with her pretty little girls. And who knows but that in putting two heads, or rather two worlds, together, interplanetary communication may result in interplanetary trips, that we shall visit Mars, that the Maritians will visit us, that there will be transsidereal elopements, marriages, divorces, and, in their triple train, romances and tragedies such as no local mortal ever dared to dream before.

That possibility, however suggestive, is trivial beside another it evokes. Mars, though our senior, is an inferior planet. The superiority of planets and of their inhabitants is in direct proportion to their distance from the sun.

In accordance with this proposition—which all self-respecting novelists have adopted—the inhabitants of Mercury may be represented as human hyenas, those of Venus as commonplace brutes, the inhabitants of this world as uninteresting prisoners, those of Mars interesting poets, while the denizens of the distant spheres possess attributes of increasing perfection and enjoy conditions of supernal delight.

If then we, in our inferiority, are once able to ring up Mars, it will be found that long since Mars has been able to connect with Jupiter, the latter with Saturn, and so on to the Postmortem; and there is the circuit complete. Given, then, communication, and the romances and tragedies that may result sink into nothingness beside the opulence to be.

We shall know then, not merely where our early splendour has gone, but what splendour really is. Everything being possible, we may discover that it consists not in the manipulation of magnificence, the multiplication of masterpieces, the sumptuousness of settings, the thrones and diadems of the elect, but in the spectacle of other worlds and the junkets we shall take there.

This idea has a false appearance of originality which we hasten to disclaim. It is old as the Sphinx. It is older. We know to-day that that monstrous curiosity was disinterred ages ago from beneath masses of sand under which it must have brooded interminably. But the meaning of it was so clear that Egypt adopted it for a crest. The claws of a reptile, the wings of a bird, the body of a beast, a human head, and there, before Darwin, before history, by a civilisation that has left no other souvenir, in traits great and grave the descent of man was told.

There remained his ascent. Above the Sphinx Egypt sent circling the Phœnix. The one expounded the mystery of life, the other the secret of death. That secret is reincarnation. "Shall I believe in it?" a youngster asked Voltaire. "Believe in it?" the ogre shouted, "believe in it by all means. There is nothing more poetic." Nor is there. It has a defect, however. It explains everything. It explains why some of us are rich and some are poor, why some are smart and many are not. It explains the reason of joys and sorrows, the cause of smiles and tears. It explains these things, others too, and very simply, on the ground that this life, which is the refuse of many deaths, has acquired merits and demerits, in accordance with which are punishments and rewards. It explains everything so fully that it leaves you nothing to do but to bore yourself to extinction. That is its defect. Here is its charm. It sends the reincarnated junketing to spheres where life is larger than it can be here. It does more. In weaving a garland of migrations that stretches throughout the universe it sows our seed in every world and marries our memoirs with that of the sky.

There is the enchanted rug again, and therewith a quality of splendour so resplendent that beside it the witcheries of Az Zahra are reduced to mud pies. The main difficulty about it consists in the obvious fact that it is all too devilish good to be true. Any entertainment of it is comparable only to fancying that an uncle whom you never had has left you a billion he never possessed. Dreams are exhilarating, but not exact.

Yet if splendour be not stalkable in other spheres it is not to be quarried here. This world has done with it. It is one of the platitudes of philosophy that history repeats itself; history does nothing of the kind. The one deduction deducible from its divagations proves that nothing is constant but change.

In the change of things the world has deteriorated. Artistically it is bankrupt. Ethically it is nothing to boast of. Ambitions have veered, tendencies altered. Heredity, environment—the influence of snobbery and its sister cant—have modified manners and sugared speech. But appetites have been left unaffected. Eliminate the penal code and we should be assisting now at the frank freedom the past beheld—with the difference that the settings would be less sumptuous and the architecture more trite. In but one thing has the world improved. One is a great many. Scientifically there has been a quintuple discount on everything that was. There is no telling how far science may advance nor yet into what wonderlands its enchanted rug may take us. In order, then, that we may not seem to know more than we do we will not attempt to prophesy. Besides, there is an old adage that the future sits in the lap of the gods. Or does it not lie there? As often as not it has promised most falsely.

It may be, therefore, that science, on which we all count so much, may turn and cheat us. It may be that our most intoxicating dreams, reincarnation, and interstellar trips, will be recognised as delirium. But if our proposition be sound, and nothing is constant but change, then from the coil of things other perspectives will beckon. Said Baudelaire: "*Pour trouver du nouveau plongeons dans le néant.*" The rug is more convenient. Borne on its arabesques, a condition of affairs is disclosed in which love will be regarded as a disease; wealth as a disaster; beauty as a horror; genius as stupidity; magnificence, madness, and originality vulgar. It will be wicked to be witty; righteous to be dull. The aim of life will be the attainment of complete colourlessness, and the ideal entire nullity.

The perspective may seem remote. From our rug it looks very neighbourly. The sun of splendour set long since. The dawn of nullity is breaking.

Salvation, if salvation there be, lies solely in extraneous succour. Precisely as dynasties are rejuvenated by fresher blood, so may humanity yet be reclaimed by superterrestrial conceptions. On the possibility of these conceptions we have already touched, yet theoretically merely, for the sake of their dreamlike beauty. To their support Mr Tesla not long since brought something more substantial. He brought a fact. Mr Tesla announced that he had been favoured with a message from another sphere. Personally, we did not presume to doubt him. But his brother scientists assumed an attitude of incredulity more or less impolite. That was to be expected. In the announcement of any novelty there is something curiously insulting to those labouring in the vineyards where that novelty, or the announcement of it, appears.

Yet we need not bother over that. Since Mr Tesla has received a message there is no reason, why he should not reply, no reason either, why communication should not result, nor yet why we should not learn what fashions are in vogue in the upper circles of the universe, and what customs the smart sets of the best planets observe. Thereupon society, being innately snobbish, will proceed to follow suit, the dawn of nullity will break to pieces, and an era of such general gorgeousness ensue as shall make Sardanapalus hide his diminished ghost. In short, even in the limits of this paper there are no limits to the joys in store — provided, of course, that the message to Mr Tesla did not reach him when journeying on an enchanted rug.

XI

THE GOLDEN CALF

Ninon de l'Enclos wore her wrinkles on her heels. How she managed it she never told. The secret of her smartness evaporated with her. The secret of contemporary smartness is less clever and more clear.

It consists of three things. One is youth. There are belles and beaux who are no longer young. They are belles and beaux in their own imagination. Imagination is not a prerequisite. Youth is—so, too, is coin—and there is another little thing, entirely atmospheric, which is as difficult to acquire as it is to describe We have heard a rumour that in Bloomsbury it is known as the *je ne sais quoi*. The meaning of the phrase is beyond us. That may be due to the accent. In Belgravia, though the accent is encounterable, the phrase never is. People there either possess the little thing or they don't. When they don't they are bounders. Returning now to that which a certain familiarity with the classics enables us to call our muttons: given youth and money, no one need despair of the other. Old people, however rich, can't acquire it. Poor people, however young, can't either. The two things must beat as one. The high regard in which they are held, a certain familiarity with archæology enables us to catalogue as antediluvian. Always has youth been adored, always has money been worshipped. Between them they have managed to monopolise the attention of every drawing-room, prehistoric, pagan, and polite. Beauty and brains may be — and have been — talked away, but never money. However obtained, it is holy. Virtue and vice have been — and always will be — climatic, geographic, relative at that, but youth is unquestionable. There it is, and where it is there, too, is a great stirring of the affections.

Affections are just like fashions: they come and go. By the same token, what is smart to-day will be shabby genteel to-morrow. The only things for ever modish are youth and money. To the list we might add death. Death, though, has its disadvantages. So, alas, has life. Uncertain as Wall Street and false as an obituary, its obvious defect is its brevity. But the obvious is misleading. It is not life that is brief, it is youth. And what is youth without money?

A page once put to himself that question. Quite young, equally impudent and abominably good-looking, one day, or rather one night, across the wide leisures and rigid ceremonial of the Court of Spain, a princess smiled at him and beckoned. That was enough. There and then he was sent to another world, to a better one—to the tropics which Columbus had found. He landed at Hayti, or rather at Hispaniola, as the island was then more musically named and, with easy gallantry, assisted in eliminating the natives.

Cæsar used to create a solitude and call it Peace. Spain used to do the same thing and call it Civilisation. In furthering her designs, the young chap learned that a neighbouring island was a mine of gold. It occurred to him that if he got enough of it he might get the princess also. Through processes with which it is idle to encumber this paragraph, he succeeded. When he left that island, which to-day is known as Puerto Rico, he had gold to melt.

Between the foregoing sentences there are years. There are torrents of blood. There are all the civilising influences of Spain. Incidentally, the young chap had grown old. Whether he remembered the princess in problematic. That he missed his good looks is clear.

Here the plot thickens. Meanwhile he had heard that a little to the north was a land on which spouted a fountain whose waters effaced old age. To recover his youth he sailed that way. Were we writing fiction we should so arrange as to let him find the fountain, find his youth, find the princess tender and true, or better, perhaps, in view of his rejuvenation, find her daughter, and even her granddaughter, more to his taste. But this is not fiction. It is the history of Ponce de Leon—not the hotel at St Augustine, but the adventurer after whom it was named. The fountain was not found by him, but Florida was, and with it, not youth but fame.

The fountain which he sought represents the quintessence of a dream which many smart people have shared. It hallucinated the great Alexander. He tramped over India in search of it. Bacon was visited by it. He tried to produce its waters in a still. They represented to him not youth merely, but gold besides. His still produced nothing so important, but if we may believe everything we hear—and we are always most anxious to—there are other alembics which created both.

Of these the most ample was the property of a man who made himself a contemporary of the Pompadour. At the time he was quite young—or appeared to be. But people quite old remembered him as still quite young when they were very youthful. Different people remembered him under different names. The Danish Ambassador remembered him as the Vicomte de Bellamye, whom he had met, three or four decenniæ back, in Venice. The Baron Stoch had dined with him in Lisbon, where he was known as the Duc de Betmar. That, too, was a couple of generations back. An antiquity, in recalling the red-heeled days of the Regency, recalled that he was then the Marquis de Montferrat. When, later, he made himself a contemporary of the Pompadour, he made himself also Count de Saint-Germain. Apparently nothing was easier.

Meanwhile, though his titles had changed, his looks had not. The circumstance is not as surprising as it otherwise might be. According to his own account, he had assisted at the Council of Trent. Other accounts which he gave of himself were equally conciliatory. He had supped with Pilate and thrown dice with Faustine. These accounts, while admired, were not always accepted. In smart circles his origin was regarded as fantastic, but not fabulous. He was said to be the son of a lackey and a queen. In the antitheses of "Ruy Blas" the story is told. It is told so well that it would be an impertinence to repeat it. "Don't touch the dead of Dante," shouted Foscolo; "they frighten the living." The grave of Hugo's dead shall be to us as sacred.

To pass from it to the gay, the Count de Saint-Germain wore corsets. Behind them was a stone wrapped in flesh. In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, he kept mothers awake and brought their daughters dreams. He had other accomplishments. He played on the violin so deliciously that he might have been born with one in his mouth. He was good at chemistry and good at quoits. His conversation was jewelled. Voltaire was not wittier, Diderot not more learned. His familiarity with the past was such that it enabled him to speak of King Arthur as though he were his first cousin, and of Charlemagne as though they had been jilted by the same woman.

His resources were as enigmatic as his age. Without anything so material as a rent roll, he lived magnificently, entertained royally, and always paid cash. When he gambled he had the tact to lose. He had the tact and, what is more, the ability to please. The mystery of him bewitched a monarch. But that was child's play. He bewitched gems. He made little diamonds big. He bewitched women. He made dowagers demoiselles.

A man lives as long as he desires, a women lives as long as she is desirable. A princess whose desirability was declining asked his aid. He gave it in a phial, the contents of which he told her to drink on the morrow. The princess took the phial home, remarked to Radegonde, her maid—a respectable person of forty—that it contained a remedy for cramps, and went to bed. During the night Radegonde, who had supped on lobster, and who, in consequence, was somewhat incommoded, turned to the phial for relief. In the morning, when she appeared to dress my lady's hair, the princess cursed her, as only a princess can curse, and rang for Radegonde. "But I am Radegonde," the poor thing expostulated; and, as a matter of fact, so she was, only, instead of being a respectable person of forty, the cramp remedy had turned her into a soubrette of sixteen.

The *Gazette de France* states that all Paris exclaimed at the miracle. The *Gazette* adds: "*Mais M. le Comte de Saint-Germain était parti.*" We won't attempt to follow him. It would take too long. We won't attempt to explain. It would take too long also. Besides, we lack the ability. The point is that thirty years later, when he concluded to die—and for no other reason, apparently, than, as he said, because he was tired of living—the Landgrave of Hesse, whose guest he had been, took his papers, which he punctiliously and privately destroyed. Among them was the secret. It had come from Flamel.

Flamel was a scrivener, poor as a rat, but much more honest. His table was set between the pillars of the Church of Saint-Jacques. For the privilege he paid eight sols parisis a year. The amount, though small, was hard to make. To enlarge his business he set up a book-shop. There, presently, a stranger appeared with a manuscript. It was beautifully illuminated and profoundly abstruse. Flamel, unable to make head or tail of it, bought it just for that reason. He not merely bought it, he paid for it.

A man who buys a book which he can't read is a bibliophile. A man who buys a book and omits to pay for it is a bibliofilou. These definitions help to a better understanding of Flamel. The understanding will be improved when it is added that every leisure moment he gave to a study of the manuscript. For years he devoted himself to it. First the tail appeared, then a glimmer of comprehension; finally, when, after inordinate vigils, the full light was his, precisely as Monte Cristo he could have cried: "The world is mine!"

Flamel had discovered how to get rich and, incidentally, how to grow young. In the "Traité des Lavures," a work which he left, and which is still on view at the Bibliothèque Nationale, he expresses his pleasure as follows: "It was about noon, on a Monday, that I succeeded. But truly I tell here a secret which thou shalt find rarely written. Yet please God that all may make gold and youth at will, and, after the fashion of the sainted patriarchs, lead fat cattle to pasture."

That is all very well as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough. It never gets to the secret. Yet there was one. There must have been one. After that Monday noon Flamel, whom the payment of eight sols had previously burdened, became prodigal in philanthropy. He established fourteen hospitals, laid out seven cemeteries, endowed a dozen churches, and built as many chapels. Some of them are Objects of Interest still. More than that, their origin and endowments are matters of record. What is yet more interesting is the fact that, several centuries later, just previous to the apparition of Saint-Germain, it was currently reported and generally believed that Flamel, amazingly young, outrageously rich, yet no longer philanthropic, was filling other cities with the uproar of his debauches. Whether or not it was he who, under the name of the Vicomte de Bellamye, erupted in Venice and, as the Duc de Betmar, entertained Baron Stoch at Lisbon, is a detail. Were we writing fiction we should assume it to be a fact. The point is that he really did have a secret which others succeeded in sharing. There was Talbot, for instance; there was Lascaris; and, last and least, Cagliostro.

These people all knew a little more than the rest of us. Among other things, Talbot knew how to forge, but not how to do so undetectedly. As a result, he hid in a Welsh hamlet. The innkeeper there showed him a bit of parchment and an ivory ball. Both had been taken from the tomb of a bishop. The latter had been suspected of being rich. He was suspected, too, of having concealed his riches in his shroud. As a result, the tomb was rifled. Only the parchment and the ball were found. This booty the innkeeper had acquired in exchange for a mug of ale. Talbot offered a guinea. Already he had discovered that the parchment was a recipe for the manufacture of money. The guinea accepted, Talbot, who had his reasons for avoiding London, got to Germany, got to work, and, what is more notable, got gold. He projected it as a hose projects water. He waded in it. Everyone who came near him did likewise. He turned pebbles into coin as readily as we turn paper into copy. But it was the contents of the ivory ball, a white powder, that did the trick. Though he could read the recipe he could not compound it. When the powder gave out so did his money.

But no matter. There was another and a more capable person about just then. Who he was and what he was never have been and, now, never will be known. He did not float. He was not fluid. But he appeared, disappeared, reappeared, changing in these changes everything, even to his appearance. Without age, without identity, his presence, more often suspected than perceived, persisted for a century. He had as many names as Vishnu, perhaps as many avatars. Of his names the most certain is Lascaris. Of his avatars the most palpable is prelacy. He entered history clothed with the dignities of a Lesbian Archimandrite. Whether he brought with him gusts of those songs which blew through Mitylene one may surmise and never know. But this is clear: The multiple and sufficiently attested transmutations which he effected were accomplished either through the medium of previously trained adepts, or, when personally conducted, were produced for purposes entirely altruistic.

In a village at nightfall a stranger appears. He has come unawaited, as death and thieves do. He enters the poorest home, asks for old iron, turns it into gold, and evaporates. It was his custom and his poetry. Someone who knew what poetry was said: "On the morrow he was sought, but he had vanished like the holy apparitions which sometimes visit the heart of man."

The apparition that succeeded him was more tangible, more brilliant, more real. Carlyle used his worst ink to dirty it. But Time has its revenges. Carlyle is handsomely bound and never read. The memory of Cagliostro is immortal. Born without scruples, he omitted to acquire any. A cheerful disdain of righteousness is highly conducive to fame. People more censorious than ourselves regard that disdain as conducive to infamy. It may be so. But in the spaciousness of the perspectives of history you can't tell t'other from which. In lieu of scruples Cagliostro had charms, which is more than can be said of Carlyle. He knew all languages, including the latter's dialect, which was a feat in itself, and including silence, too, for silence is a language also. He had other accomplishments more surprising still. He knew how to make his clients believe anything they wished. He knew how to make the dead appear in mirrors and the quick in carafes. He knew how to turn ugliness into beauty, age into youth, hemp into silk, and lead into gold. He knew how to be two thousand years old. He knew how to hide beneath the plumage of a peacock the beak and talons of a bird of prey.

Charming and cruel, he could captivate and coerce. One of his conquests was Louis XVI. By royal edict it was treasonable to speak ill of him. A greater conquest was Paris. Released from the Bastile, where he had been put because of that tiresome old story of the diamond necklace, festivals were given, streets were illuminated, Paris went mad. Boulogne did, too. When he took ship there five thousand people implored his benediction on their knees. His release was felt to be a blessing, his departure a curse. The multitude called him the Benefactor of Mankind—big words, which he rewarded by foretelling the fall of the Bastile. He foretold what would occur the following week, the following month, the ensuing year, or ten years later in Madrid, in Vienna, in Pekin. He foretold everything, except, indeed, that the Seer of Chelsea should write him down and we should write him up.

Clairvoyance has its limits; so, too, has cheek. Cagliostro possessed both, and with them a secret—that of not having any, and yet appearing to have one. It is the greatest of all. His predecessors, Flamel and Co., were more inventive. Their discoveries are lost, thank fortune, yet—barring the probable—everything being possible, science may find them again, and perhaps, too, the ability to radiate that atmospheric seduction which Bloomsbury calls the *je ne sais quoi.*

We hope not. Smartness, restricted to the few, now disturbs the many. With a different kettle of fish the words of Flamel would be fulfilled. The possession of youth and gold would be universal, the pasturing of cattle ditto. That is not a consummation to be wished. Though smartness and its appanages would then be common, human nature, being invariable, would remain unchanged. People would want, as people have ever wanted, just what they have not got. Instead of trying to be smart everybody would succeed in being stupid. Youth and its loveliness would no longer allure and poverty be the world's desire.

XII

FASHIONS IN POISONS

Poisons may be toxicolloquially catalogued as triply fascinating. First, because of the mystery of them; second, because behind the mystery loom the great figures of the Borgias and the Brinvilliers; and, finally, because they involve the whole subject of murder considered as an art.

The term "art" is used for the reason that De Quincey so labelled it. He had a pretext. Had he wished he could have had a text.

Once upon a time people who got in the way were dosed with hemlock. Death came very agreeably. It neither convulsed nor distorted. It left the beauty of the victim unmarred, the features uncontracted, the mouth half closed. It left no trace either. There is art. Whoso says art says Greece. In Greece poisoners were artists. That is, a number of centuries ago.

In the days that succeeded them art persisted but methods changed. Occasionally people who were in the way did not wait to be killed, but killed themselves. That simplified matters. Occasionally, too, they were urged to die. It was the young emperors of old Rome who did the urging. Yet sometimes they did not bother. A lady named Locusta discovered a way of cooking mushrooms which was found to be very serviceable. Nero served it to his brother Britannicus. Agrippina set it before her husband, Claudian. Domitian administered it first to his father, Vespasian; next to his brother, Titus. They were all in the way. The mushroom stew dispersed them. What the ingredients were we may surmise and never know. It was an imperial dish, however, and, as such, reserved for the purple. Patricians, in their inability to obtain it, invented a needle and a ring.

Lampridus, or Spartian, or whoever the brute may have been that abridged a chronicle in the "Scriptores Historæ Augustæ," describes the needle. It had a poisoned tip. Those who liked gave a little prick to those they did not like, and the latter fell dead. This performance usually occurred in the Forum, where the crowd was such that the assassin could lose himself in it.

Samples of the rings, recovered from the ruins of Pompeii, any one may examine at Naples. They suggest nothing so much as vipers of gold. A receptacle, moved by a spring, contained poison which exuded at a touch. At table, in the animation of small talk, the assassin made but a gesture. On the food of his neighbour a drop would fall. The deed was done.

There also was art—too precious perhaps to be lost. It is rumoured that Naples is not now the sole depository of these playthings. In New York, a few years ago, a death occurred which a jewelled snake, resting for a second on a glass of champagne, is believed to have occasioned. The belief may be unfounded, yet the possibilities in it are splendidly ornate.

Possibilities not similar but cognate were thoroughly appreciated during the Renaissance. That was the age when murder really flourished. There were sixty recognised modes of eliminating, without fuss or scandal, such people as got in the way. It would be fastidious to describe them all. The most fashionable was Aqua Toffana, which remained in vogue up to the beginning of the last century, and of which to-day we know only that, presumably a preparation of arsenic, it was without colour, taste, or odour. But it was very effective. Adepts smeared it on one side of the blade of a golden knife, with which they then cut a peach, and after giving the poisoned half to the lady who had incurred their jealousy, ate the other half in her presence. It is difficult to regard that as otherwise than artistic, too. But there was another preparation still more so. It acted not at once, but years later. The victim became toothless, bald, and dessicated, expiring after an agony relentless and prolonged. Artistic and ingenious as well were the poisoned candles, poisoned gloves, and poisoned flowers, with which, under the Borgias, death was distributed in Italy, and which the Medici introduced into France. These things left no traces. Not that it would have mattered much if they had. The Medici cared nothing for the existence which they led in the minds of other people. The Borgias cared less. For that matter, the Borgian mode of life is to-day untellable except in Latin—the one language, parenthetically, which is suited to love, to religion, and to crime. But the callousness of the clan, a callousness legendary in Lucretia and accentuated in Alexander, culminates in Cesare.

In history's caverns there are monsters more masterful than he, but none more cold-blooded. A galley-slave in Mars is as familiar with the sonnets of Petrarch as he was with shame. The term had no meaning for him. Without heart, without nerves, without sensibilities of any kind, he turned sin into a system, crime into a code, and thus equipped, trusting no one and assassinating those who trusted him, cleared his way almost to the pontificate.

Alexander, his father, exhaled death. He had cups, perfumes, and even eucharists which produced it. And this pontiff, from whose presence poison emanated, trembled before his son. It was as well, perhaps. But perhaps, too, he trembled insufficiently. For presently, together they planned the elimination of five cardinals. Then, through what jugglery is less uncertain than clear, the wine intended for the prelates, and which had been studiously blended with cantarella—the household drug—father and son drank instead. Alexander tumbled over. He was dead. But Cesare, who knew what he was about, had himself placed in the carcass of a bull, from which, either by virtue of an old superstition, or else because of antitoxic properties which the carcasses of bulls do not possess to-day, he emerged subtle as a serpent that has discarded its skin.

Among poisoners anterior and subsequent Cesare Borgia is princeps. The champion of the lot, he was a pestilence in flesh and blood.

Beside him those whom it remains to consider may seem rather trite. This we regret. If only for the purposes known as literary, we should like to present a crescendo of crime. Yet in the career of Madame de Brinvilliers we find some consolation. Though less spacious than his, it is almost as fine.

The Marchioness of Brinvilliers, née — not Retroussé, as someone somewhere amusingly noted, but—D'Aubray, was the daughter of a Frenchman of note. According to an account which she was conscientious enough to provide, her childhood was remarkable only for its perversity, and her conduct, while yet a girl, left more to be desired than even she found it convenient to express. By way of offset, she charmed on sight. Extremely pretty, fetchingly slight, she had the face of an angel, the smile of a seraph, the attitude of a saint, and a voice which was silken in its sweetness. Fancy a demon masquerading as Psyche and her portrait is done. At the age of twenty she became the wife of De Brinvilliers, a young nobleman of wealth. The wealth came to him through his mother from Gobelin, founder of the tapestry looms. In the halls to which he took his bride the number of these tapestries which must have been needed surpasses belief. In any event, a few of them are required to drape this story. For the marchioness promptly interested herself elsewhere, and the marquis followed suit. The immediate object of this lady's fancy was a lieutenant named Sainte-Croix. Though her husband did not mind, her father did. He had Sainte-Croix thrown into the Bastile, from which ultimately the lieutenant issued. But meanwhile two things had occurred. The marchioness had accumulated an intense hatred of her father, and the officer had acquired a thorough familiarity with arsenic. When finally he was released, the dance began.

In the guise of a sister of charity, the marchioness proceeded to promenade through hospital wards. To the ill and ailing she brought words of comfort and delicate food. But those to whom she ministered died, in great agony at that. The marchioness, however, was merely experimenting with poison which she had got from Sainte-Croix. When she was assured that its effects were not suspected, the experiments were complete. At this juncture her father invited her to visit him. As a result she ministered, too, to him. For eight months she caressed him with one hand and dosed him with the other. After poisoning him twenty-eight times vainly, she doubled the dose, and he died.

That death slaked her hate. It enriched her also. But she had brothers and sisters whom, unfortunately for them, it enriched besides. During all this time the marchioness and her husband were leading the life which befits people of rank. Such a life requires money. To obtain more she poisoned her two brothers, and planned to eliminate her sisters as well. Meanwhile, to keep her hand in, she distributed arsenic right and left. She fed it to her servants because they were awkward; to her daughter because she was stupid; to her husband because he was in the way. The marquis was highly accommodating, but he continued to be, and that prevented her from marrying Sainte-Croix. But Sainte-Croix, who had no desire whatever of becoming the mate of this reptile, fed De Brinvilliers with antidotes, and the poor chap, poisoned one day, was counterpoisoned the next. How he enjoyed what was going on within him is a detail, the point is that enterprises so amusing ended as all things must. In the thick of them all it occurred to Sainte-Croix to die, and in dying to leave behind various documents and confessions so compromising that the marchioness was arrested, tried, convicted, beheaded, her body burned, and the ashes dispersed.

It is said that her end was highly edifying. We have not a doubt of it. But so, too, was the fashion which she set. Paris, and more particularly Versailles, became powdered with poison. Even the king got a pinch or two. That he merited it is clear. The fourteenth Louis of France was not a good man, he was not even a good-looking man, but as kings go, he was very imposing, quite august, and not unreasonably royal.

Among his caprices was Louise de la Vallière, a human flower that exhaled everything which is sweet—and sad. The charm of her was too delicate to last, too delicate at least for the peppered palate of the monarch, too delicate in any event to withstand the splendour of the sunburst projected by the Montespan. In the glare of it the girl withered. Her rival then became Queen of the Court of France. Royally beautiful, regally robed, sovereign in manner, and sumptuous in magnificence, Madame de Montespan, in lieu of charming, coerced. To use a localism of the land, she made the rain and the fine weather. She did more, she made her children "princes of the blood."

A lady so resourceful does not abdicate readily. At the first suspicion of a possible successor she bethought herself of the powders which Sainte-Croix had dispensed. The effort to obtain them led her into strange company and stranger halls —into cellars where life was an article of commerce, into dens where hags compounded philtres, into chapels where the Black Mass was held, into orgies sacrilegious, necromantic, and obscene. From one such excursion she returned with a mixture of bat's blood and honey, a remedy which was regarded as highly efficacious for the restoration of alienated affection.

In a recent work concerning the lady, M. Funck-Brentano says that this brew made the king deadly ill. The point to note is that when he recovered the new star waned; only, however, to be succeeded by another. The latter, Angélique de Fontanges, a very pretty maid of honour, so entranced the volatile heart of Louis that the prestige of the favourite was menaced as never before. In her rage she determined to kill them both, and at once she was back in those cellars, haunting those dens, consulting with artists in death, making her plans, and expending in the preliminaries nearly a million of money.

From these attentions Louis, of course, escaped, but Angélique died. Then the details of the plot, obtained by the secret service, were, together with the confessions of the various artists and assistants, submitted to the king. What happened to the accomplices is unimportant. Some of them were promptly broken on the wheel; others lived for years—one of them for forty—chained by the foot in subterranean cells. With Madame de Montespan, mother of children of the house of France, nothing very serious could be done. She was thanked for her good offices and invited to retire into a convent, where ultimately she died, quite like a saint.

Meanwhile the taste for poisons increased. There was barely a woman of rank who was not suspected of trying to get her husband out of the way. Many grandes dames were tried; some were convicted; others, including the Duchesse de Bouillon, were requested to amuse themselves elsewhere. But while the taste increased the mode improved. Powders ceased to be fashionable. It was no longer considered elegant to put arsenic in food. A drinking-cup was devised which turned wine into venom. Modern science has denied that such a cup could be. Another invention was a looking-glass. Its properties were such that anybody who looked in one fell dead. Modern science has denied the possibility of that magic. Modern science is very sceptical. It has routed many a beautiful legend. By way of compensation, it has produced toxics which would have thrown the dilettanti of the Renaissance into stupors of admiration.

Consider, for instance, the micro-organisms which cause disease. Speaking relatively, it is but the day before yesterday that science made their acquaintance. We all know now that the cause of this complaint and that is an insidious yet infinitesimal germ which, removed from the patient, can lead a separate and potentially virulent existence until, introduced into other circles, it infects anew. Given any of these terrific little things and a modern Medici could distribute viaticums as indetectably as Fate.

Within the bit of lignum vitæ which served Caracalla for heart there were concentrated the cruelty and the guile of a wilderness of tiger-cats. When the pretorians eliminated him they found in his luggage poisons supersufficient for the destruction of all the legions that he led. What fresh turpitudes he was devising history has omitted to relate. But this is clear: could he have foreseen the possibilities in microbes which we have suggested, mountains of poisons would have seemed to him paltry.

Apart from these possibilities, any physician to-day who happened to be artistically inclined could adapt penalties to persons. In a lady, for instance, who had become superfluous, he could induce consumption. Consumption is a very ladylike disease. No gentlewoman, however sensitive, would be ashamed to die of it. Then there is gout. Gout is a highly aristocratic complaint. Any self-respecting snob in whom it was induced would succumb to it with thanksgiving.

Of possibilities and powers such as these the past knew nothing. By way of compensation it possessed poisons that were perfumes. Their odour perverted the imagination and stained the thoughts. They turned conceptions of right into wrong and made the unholy adorable. They drove matrons mad and senators madder.

Long since, these perfumes have evaporated. In their stead are corrosives just as coercive. Catalogued as libel and slander, they are quite as convenient as the cantarella of the Borgias and even more maleficent than microbes. These are the poisons that are modish to-day. Such is modern progress.

XIII

CLARET AND CREAM

THE British Academy of Letters has, we learn, become a fact. We learn, also, that its object is uncertain. To others, perhaps, yet not to us. In the cannibal South Seas old people are knocked on the head. That is quite as it should be. Old people are tenacious of their ideas. In killing them off progress is facilitated. England is eminently conservative. Instead of filling cemeteries with the decrepit she furnishes an academy for them. So are the just rewarded; so, too, is conservatism maintained.

In the circumstances there is no good and valid reason why we should not have an academy in the States—but on different lines; for that matter, on lines so ample that the clothes-line would not be omitted from them.

What we require are not the *arrière-pensées* of age but the frank enthusiasms of beauty. It is only from the young that one really learns, and one learns best from those who are gracious. Highways are trodden and sterile. It is in the pampas, the savannahs, the forest primeval, in lands that are virgin and minds fresh as they, that Nature gives utterance to her thoughts.

We cannot listen to her too often. She has always something new to say, or, if not new, then something so old that it seems quite novel. But it is only to the young that she says it. In default of her, let us listen to them, and, with that object, form an academy of those who have done nothing.

There are plenty of them. From the tons of manuscript—unsolicited and with stamps enclosed—which we see daily dumped on editorial desks, we think it safe to assume that out of the wilderness light shall come. In any event, it is clear that there are enough amateurs in our midst to stock academies by the cityful.

They have, indeed, done nothing yet. But therein is their charm. An academy composed of young people who have done nothing yet would be more alluring than one made up of fossils who are unable to do anything more.

Such an academy would be ideal and its

establishment easy. Any one of the multitudinous millionairesses whom we behold floating about could usher it into being with but the wave of a cheque. Then, quite like Sappho at Mitylene, she could beckon about her clusters of fair young women, who, from kissable lips would instruct the world in the arts of love and life.

What more could the heart desire? Those kissable lips would tell us what we have long since learned to forget—that we all make a great fuss over things which are not worth bothering about; that constancy, for instance, which we always exact and never accord, is the result of nothing more than an absence of imagination. That would be very good for the first lesson; for there is nothing so tiresome as a woman without imagination, except a woman who has too much.

Those kissable lips, in dilating on the subject, would cite apposite examples, among others, a recent case perhaps, in which a pistol shot, fired in the dead of night, reverberated through the small talk of the land. The echoes, subsiding, dwindled, it is true, into the nothing from which they had sprung. But, assuming that a shot there had been, what an endearing homily could be drawn on the tastefulness and tactfulness of those who, for bagatelles such as this, do their worst to raise the roof. "*Il fait beau aujourd'hui*," a French caricaturist made one English lord say to another, "*allons tuer quelque chose.*" There are people who are just as eager the moment the domestic sky is obscured.

A fine rebuke they would get from fair women, and fine applause, too, would be bestowed on the gentleman who, discovered behind the curtains of a boudoir, and being noisily asked by the husband what he was doing there, answered, with an assurance entirely Apollonian: "I am taking a walk."

In this way we should acquire instruction, not merely in manners, but in repartee. As a people we need it. As a people we are, of course, delightful; but we are neither witty nor well bred. By way of compensation we are highly moral, or think ourselves so, which amounts to quite the same thing. Our novels are padded with purity and scenery and our newspapers with hypocrisy and cant. Were proof of our morality required, there it is. But through some defect of the climate—unless it be of the schools—we lack the higher morality which was inculcated by Epicurus, by Epictetus, by one of the popes, Boniface VIII., and which consists in accepting with gaiety and indulgence such accidents as we cannot avoid. But not a bit of it. We make the mistake of taking ourselves seriously when there is nothing earthly worth taking seriously at all—except, indeed, the quality of the champagne which we drink and the giving and the acceptance of invitations to dine.

Apropos whereto those fair women would have a word or two for the metropolitan hostess. They would tell her that, of all forms of iniquity, dining is the most barbarous. In primitive days people fed in common through fear of being attacked. As often as not the fear was justified. Nowadays people feed in common through the more dreadful fear of being bored, and succeed very perfectly in becoming so. "*Venez messieurs*," said a numbered Louis of France, "*allons nous ennuyer ensemble.*" That is the way modern invitations read. Yet, since such things must be, those who love righteousness without abhorring mammon should throw out the sweets. In this sanitary age flattery is the only variety that can be hygienically assimilated. Of that the least among us can never have enough.

In discussing our modes, caprices, passions, and disillusions — which is about all we can call our very own, except, indeed, our further charm—the fact, as Goethe noted, that we are all of us capable of crime—though it be but that of bad taste, which is assuredly the worst of all—in discussing these things those fair women would pass from grave to gay and display for us the bewilderments and witcheries of life as it is.

They would show us that it is a continuous catastrophe. They would show us that, whether it be that of an individual or of a nation, life is but a diffusion of stupidity and vulgarity. The showing would not be cheerful, but it would have the merit of being exact.

They would not stop there either. From the premises advanced it would be logical and agreeable to assume that life on earth is a sort of leprosy, the result, perhaps, of a morbid secretion from which healthy planets are immune.

And, after all, why not? Sir Robert Ball, not long since, informed us that, within the relatively narrow sphere to which observation is confined, there are not less than three hundred million worlds. Beyond the uttermost of these worlds there are other planets, other systems, other suns. Wherever imagination, in its weariness, would set a limit, there is space begun.

In view of which, and of more, too, it becomes humorous to suppose that the vulgarity and stupidity on exhibition here are indefinitely repeated throughout space. On the moon life there may be. The moon was once part of the earth. It may, in consequence, have been infected with the original complaint. It is possible, also, that, through atmospheric and aqueous affinities, Mars has been exposed to the same disease. From Venus and Mercury science has discovered that such affinities have been withheld. But of the other worlds and systems we know so little that it is idle to attempt to know less.

Yet, though one and all of these worlds move in a mystery which is due to our ignorance, we may pierce it with the hope that they have been preserved from the bewilderments and witcheries of which life on this planet is the cause.

In displaying these things the cluster of fair young women would indicate the forethought of Providence, which has provided us with ample compensations. For there are compensations. There are two of them—and two is a good many.

The first is evil. We do not appreciate evil at its worth. It is the handicraft of Satan. We do not appreciate him as we should. He is a great artificer. He is more; he is a great artist. It was he who created this compensation, which is a jewel, a luxury, and a necessity in one. And naturally. Evil is the counterpart of excellence. Both have their roots in nature. One could not be destroyed without the other. For every shape of evil there is a corresponding form of good. Virtue would be meaningless were it not for vice. Beauty would have no charm were it not for ugliness. Genius would have no message were it not for bores.

Evil is, therefore, a jewel, and highly salutary at that. Were it eliminated from the scheme of things life would have no savour and joy no delight. Existence would provide the monotony of silence. Happiness and unhappiness would be synonymous states.

The other jewel which Providence has set in our tiara is superstition. What would we do without that? A superstition is a hope. Besides, is it not nicer to be wrong in a given belief than not to have it at all? Of course it is. We believe what we wish, never what we should.

It is fortunate that we can. Were it otherwise, the vitriol which science has thrown at faith would have set society mad. But not a bit of it. Society turned its back. The attitude is commendable, for it is on superstition that we all subsist—superstition by day, dreams at night.

Superstition covers a multitude of stupidities. But it is ductile and plastic. It lends itself to combinations which are as marvellous as they are enchanting. We are indebted to it for the masterpieces of art, for the splendour of cathedrals, for the seductions of song, for real literature and good verse. We owe to it everything, even to the amenities of life. Superstition is the essential ingredient of everything that is charming. It is the basis of ethics and the foundation of beauty. It has decorated life and robbed death of its grotesqueness. It is, therefore, in accordance with the order of things and the necessities of man.

Truth, on the other hand, is vicious. We may sigh for it, but it is best that we should sigh in vain. Truth is hard. It is rigid. It is not ductile nor is it plastic. It does not yield. It is vicious, and, being vicious, it bites. Get in its way, and, unless you have had the forethought to antisepticise yourself with indifference, it will cause a hydrophobia for which the only Pasteur Institute is time.

Superstition is just the reverse. It is amiable and consolatory. It is, indeed, a jewel. We should hold fast to it. We should hold fast to what we may and not try to prove anything.

From maxims of this fastidious morality deductions follow. It will be seen that life is not all that fancy might paint it. It will be suspected that its compensations are not as compensatory as they look. From these premises it will be argued that there must be an error somewhere, a big mistake, a stitch dropped from the original scheme of things, a blunder, extending back, perhaps, to the parturitions of the primal protoplasm.

Such argument is entirely valid. We esteem ourselves at a value which we do not possess; for no reason other than innate conceit we fancy ourselves advanced. That fancy is so comforting that with it we have developed an idolatry of the most amusing kind. We have developed the worship of self. The unction of that worship is so thick that through it we fail to see how stupid we look. We fail to see that the most gracious and indulgent sentiment which we can have for ourselves is not esteem but contempt. We have not advanced; we have deviated. It is not from apes that we should have descended, though better, perhaps, apes than reptiles; yet, had evolution had us really in its charge, instead of being superior animals we should be human butterflies, subsisting on dew and desire, with youth, winged and beautiful, for the crown and conclusion of life.

A life such as that, untroubled by dentists, unburdened by tailors, untrammelled by bills, unencumbered by bores, a life free, volatile, and quasi-divine, a life passed among flowers and suave perfumes, a life of sheer poetry which, but for some archaic error, might have been ours—a life such as that, however fantastic, would, to say the least, be more agreeable than one such as this, in which we do little of more importance than assist with the passivity which good breeding requires at the loss of our illusions, our umbrellas, and our hair.

Et voilà, *et cetera*, and so forth.

It is cups of claret and cream of this order that, in the ideal academy which we advocate, clusters of fair women would convey, and, in conveying, uplift.

For women, particularly when pretty, are the natural instructors of man. Their intuitions are more valuable than the certainties of mathematics, their insight surer than the demonstrations which logic provides. They are abundantly lacking in sense, it is true. But when has reason governed the world? It is by the heart-strings alone that men can be pulled, and it is only women that can do it. In addition, they have the immense advantage of being all alike, in that they are, every one of them, different. And a cluster of them delivering the messages of nature, to whom, through that weakness which is their strength, they are nearer than man, would constitute not merely an ideal academy, but give the world fresh conceptions of beauty and therewith a taste, as yet uncultivated, for claret and cream.

XIV

HUMAN HYENAS

The lives of good men are handsomely bound and never read—by ourselves at least—though no doubt there are people to whom they constitute a source of severe satisfaction. Conversely the lives of bad men have yet to appear. When they do, the fascination of their charm will be that which attaches to the abnormal. For though hyenas alarm they also attract. In history as in romance it is the shudder that tells. In menageries and zoos it is the wildest beast that obtains the best attention.

Quite naturally too. There are so few beasts now that are not entirely tame. By the same token shudders were never more scarce. Contemporaneous crime is very commonplace. But occasionally, by accident, something out of the ordinary will occur, and then even the virtuous take to reading about it. Particularly if there be a woman in the case. Yet it is only, in addition to petticoats, when murder and mystery are agreeably fused that you feel you are getting your money's worth.

That, too, is natural. There is nothing so comforting as a good old-fashioned murder. There is nothing so poetic either. For behind it is an effort to outwit destiny, the attempt to change the course of events, and to change them after the fashion of fate, indetectably.

The idea of being able to do all that is highly poetic. But it is also primitive. Primitive man had three or four ideas. Civilised man has not many more. With this difference, however. Primitive man, disturbed in his ideas, vanished. In his place there sprang a beast. That beast civilised man has quelled. But not exterminated. The brute is among us still. Yet so tame that the majority of us forget that he is about. It takes a murder to remind us of him.

Murder is neozoic. It shows a relapse of nature. The murderer may have in his appearance nothing resembling the cave-dweller, yet behind appearances—always illusory—is the troglodyte. Through causes generally reducible to crises of the emotions the creature's few ideas become disturbed. Then abruptly the being apparently civilised evaporates. He has gone. In his place is the hyena. There is a shriek.

A silence. The next morning the papers are full of it.

That is the ordinary case. There are others. There are crimes in which there is no atavism. There are murders incidental to the abstract sciences; felonies of the professional order. These are accidents. According to statistics—and what should we do without them?—in the Benighted States there occurred last year nearly nine thousand cases appertaining to this and to the former variety. That is a nice showing. In addition, there are murders effected by men who are not professional or primitive, but wise. Concerning these we have no data. They leave none. They leave nothing except now and again a death which is attributed to natural causes. These people are not hyenas. They are men of ability. They are very interesting. There is another class more interesting still. They form the coterie of criminals who are above the law. We will get to them in a minute.

Meanwhile, in ordinary cases, just prior to the shriek, to the silence, and to the headlines in the papers, there occur, almost invariably, certain phenomena which are perhaps worth noting.

First is a condition of irritability induced by a disturbance of ideas. From this condition paralysis of memory results. The patient forgets the past and its lessons, the present and its penalties. In his mind there is a complete obliteration of all knowledge, except the fact that some particular person is offensively occupied in continuing to be. That fact, increasing the irritation, induces a state quasi-somnambulistic. Of all the cells of the brain there is but one that is awake. Over the others sleep has slipped. But in that cell is an incitement inciting the patient to kill.

Then it is that there ensues the shriek and the succeeding silence. But before the reporters get to work other phenomena have occurred. Paralysis subsides. Somnambulism ceases. There is an immediate awakening of the entire brain. The past with its lessons returns. On its heels the present and its penalties troop. In their sudden rush the troglodyte dematerialises. Civilised man reappears. The patient sees what he has done, and, seeing, it seems to him that another must have done it.

He is right. The mind has many a cellar. In them strange tenants prowl. Beneath the brain are the caves of subconsciousness. There, influences that we know nothing of, impulses which the majority of us never feel, watch and wait. Our individuality is dual. Half our being is unaware what the other half is about. In normal condition man is a bundle of ideas and sensations arranged in order and sequence. But in certain crises of the emotions the orderly arrangement gets twisted, ideas and sensations become displaced, and from the individual, ordinarily normal, emerges the human hyena.

Usually the beast is subordinated, controlled, but never banished. It is there crouching in the caves of the soul. A distinguishing trait of the gentleman is that he never betrays its presence. A thinker is too philosophic. Hence the value of blue blood. Hence, also, the beauty of sound logic. But when in pathological conditions, induced by causes as yet obscure, the other, the simian, the secreted self, breaks loose, then there is the devil to pay and something to read about in the papers.

That, perhaps, is the psychology of every night murder. Among savans there is nothing of this. A trick merely with clogged dice. Among professionals there is some of the first and much of the latter. In the criminals who are above the law both elements are present with power added.

Power consists in having a million bayonets behind you. Its diffusion is not general. But there are people who possess it. For one, the German Kaiser. Not long since somebody or other diagnosed in him the habitual criminal. We doubt that he is that. But we suspect that, were it not for the press, he would show more of primitive man than he has thus far thought judicious.

Tsi An, the Empress Regent of China, has been less circumspect. As you may remember, a few summers ago, this lady succeeded in throwing us all into fits. Subsequently we derived much pleasure from an article by Lombroso, in which he catalogued her foremost among historic beasts. The naïvete of that seemed to us refreshing.

The lady is not, perhaps, one whom we should care to meet in the dark, but there are corridors in which we have encountered a number of people beside whom she is quite an engaging person. Take, for instance, Caligula. There you have an artist in blood, a connoisseur in crime, a ruler to whom general fiendishness was both a governmental necessity and a personal delight. And take Caracalla. A thinker has said that no mortal is wholly vile. Caracalla was.

He had not a taste, not a vice that was not washed and rewashed in blood. Beside a savage such as he and a saurian such as Caligula the old woman in China looks rather cheap.

There are others! In particular, there is Attila. Where he passed, the earth remained for ages bare. The whirlwind that he loosed swept civilisation like a broom. In the echoes of his passage you catch but the crash of falling cities, the cries of the vanquished, the death-rattle of nations, the surge and roar of seas of blood. In their reverberations Attila looms, dragging the desert after him, tossing it like a pall on the face of the world. In the fury with which he pounced on antiquity there is the impersonality of a cyclone. By comparison with the havoc which he wrought, the contortions of Caracalla become unimportant caprices. Beside this human avalanche Caligula dwindles ridiculously. "But who are you:" a startled prelate found the strength to gasp. Said Attila, "I am the Scourge of God."

Another fine fiend was Tamerlane. In the menagerie of history he is thoroughly red—red with what Marlowe called war's rich livery. It was part of him. When he was born his hands were full of blood. Subsequently, when he did not wade in it, it formed his usual bath. In his career is the monotony of the infernal regions. It is made up of groans. Yet then he knew but one thing—how to kill. He came, saw, slaughtered, and departed. When he had gone he left nothing—"at most," an old writer says, "a dumb sound like a drum beaten under a blanket." Beside that sound what are the tom-toms of Tsi An?

For that matter, what are they beside the timbrels of the Tsar Ivan, who, though quite demoniac, fancied himself divine. "I am your god," he announced to some wretches for whom he was preparing a hurried execution. "I am your god, as God is mine." Whether the announcement consoled them is immaterial. The theory of it delighted him. At Novgorod, for no reason whatever other than the exercise of his divinity, he began a leisurely massacre that outlasted a month. Every noon, from five hundred to a thousand people were driven before him and poignantly despatched. Occasionally he lent a hand, running his subjects through and through, killing them like so many vermin, laughing mightily at the stupidity of their agony, and, when his wrist wearied, ordering them off to tall gibbets, to seething vats, or, more expeditiously, drowning them wholesale in the river. Sometimes a mob of people were strung up by the heels. Sometimes they were hacked to pieces. Sometimes they were first strung up a bit, then hacked a little, and, finally, tossed into the vats. Sometimes also a pack of hounds was unleashed, and as Ivan eyed the fight of men and dogs the hyena within awoke, his own fangs glistened, and with a roar he would bury them in a subject's throat. Nor was he without humour. An envoy of the King of Poland presumed to appear before him with his hat on. By way of rebuke he had that hat nailed to the envoy's head.

The rebuke was not perhaps what we call epigrammatic. But at least it was to the point. It made up in irony what it lacked in paradox. Tamerlane would have enjoyed it. So, too, would Cesare Borgia.

There is another hyena. Ivan was human. He had his weaknesses. Among them were seven wives. In Cesare Borgia there was nothing human. The caverns of history hold monsters more masterful than he, but none more cold-blooded. To every hyena there come moments of repletion and fatigue. With these moments come a desire for rest. When the beast is fed he is at peace with the world. Cesare Borgia was never fed. As we have elsewhere noted, he was never weary. He was without nerves, without heart, without weaknesses of any kind. Beside him other fiends, including the Empress Tsi An, look rather vulgar.

The candle which that woman holds to Philip II. is not much of a dip either. That demon who presided over the better part of the globe, over an entire eclipse of the intellect as well, who made it blasphemous to think, and who, squatting in the Escorial, dissolved into a mass of mud, knew no pleasure—save that of motioning people out of existence—and never smiled, save at the human fireworks which the auto-da-fés flared for him on holidays.

In the perspectives of chronicles Philip, Ivan, Tamerlane, and the rest loom like ogres in a fairy tale. They affright, but they detain. There is nothing commonplace about them. They are the antithesis of the humdrum, homicidal maniacs, with death for delirium and the world for cell, the real hyenas, unmatchable, without lineage, whose successors shall never be. For the present at least. The times are too trite. There are none like them any more. By comparison Tsi An is but a vicious child. Much as we otherwise admire the lady, we cannot connive at Lombroso's effort to boost her to where they stand.

Seen through contemporaneous records Tsi An is a bad woman. But women, however bad, are never as bad as bad men. They may have the desire, but they lack the nerve. Tsi An could not face the allies.

The feminine in her took fright. A male hyena would have stood his ground, only to lose it perhaps, and his head as well. Yet, though he fell, it would have been in the roar of cannon, in the shriek of shell, defiant and hyenaesque to the last. It is of such stuff as this that fiends and heroes are made. They are not afraid. Tsi An was not either. Except of danger. It is that exception which debars her from mounting to the glorious menagerie where the other beasts are.

"What is glory?" a young barbarian asked an old Roman. "To create splendour," the latter replied, "or to destroy it." To-day destructive ability is lacking. Power, even when backed by bayonets, is powerless before the press. There you have the great deterrent. The press is not destructive. It stands for nothing that is. It is for this reason that crime, though continuous, is commonplace. In descending the centuries it has degenerated into a condition sometimes interesting, occasionally exciting, but symptomatic of a disease, for which, in the advance of therapeutics, a prophylactic some day or other will be devised.

When that day comes — when it does — the triteness that the morning papers will display makes us yawn in advance.

XV

THE COURTS OF LOVE

THE 'varsities are changing their chairs. It is high time. When we went to school we were taught everything it was easiest to forget. Our curriculum comprised the largest possible number of subjects of which the least possible use could be made. No doubt they were designed for our good. Yet we are unable to conjecture what difference it would have made had they been intended for our harm. We are unable to recall a single one of them.

Now, however, things are looking up. Oxford, for instance, is throwing out Greek. In the States generally, instead of the mummeries of the classics there are modern tongues and history in lieu of calculus. That is all very well. But the change is susceptible of improvement.

Learning is not fashionable. Society has a great contempt for it. If you do not believe us go and see. You will find it stupid to be wise all alone. For alone you will be. The more you know the more diligently you will be avoided. And very naturally. When your Red Badge of Culture does not put your hostess to sleep, it makes her feel ignorant. Neither proceeding is societyfied.

No, indeed. A knowledge of history, however superficial, will not bring you invitations to dinner. It is the same with languages. You may develop into a polyglot and die a bounder. The majority of us want to see our names in the papers. The ambition is quite noble, and highly American. But an acquaintance with Cicero, and even with Carnegie, won't help you to it.

It is for this reason that the change in chairs is susceptible of improvement. The better advancement and future prospects of the youth of the land demand that universities shall throw out history and languages as already they are throwing classics and calculus, and in their stead provide courses on What's What. And what is there but love and lucre?

These two little things are the motor forces of society. Beside them, barring the fashions and the charm of médisance—we say médisance because it sounds so much more cosmopolitan than tittle-tattle—nothing counts. No, nothing. Moreover, they are as potent and disintegrating as radium. Then, too, instruction regarding them is really diverting. Students who take them up will not merely learn something, they will remember it.

To be rich, for instance, seems complex. It is very simple. In an educational magazine, not long ago, Professor Carnegie, Professor Depew, and other savans indicated the process. According to Professor Carnegie you must push. Manners do not make the millionaire. Professor Depew advocated economy. A dollar in the bank is worth two on a margin. Professor Mills advised not more than eight hours' sleep. The other fellow must not catch you napping. Professor Morgan recommended investments. We believe that he has a few to unload. Now add all that up, and wealth, which looked complex, becomes easy as ping-pong.

Love is different. To love and to be loved seems simple. It is an art in itself. An art did we say? It is a philosophy, a theosophy, a pansophy in one. It is a science whereby the world, the flesh and the devil, the solar system, the universe—including what little we know of it and all that we do not—are reduced to a single being.

Sometimes to two beings. Occasionally to three. But though that number is odd there is no luck in it. It is dangerous in addition to being inconvenient. You never have a spare moment, and are obliged to lie like a thief. Two are less exasperating. Even with one carefully selected being your hands are apt to be pretty full. When that being is legally your very own you will find it advantageous to confine your attentions to her. Anyway, it is generally admitted that it is better to have loved your wife than never to have loved at all.

These remarks, of course, are purely ethical. Love is not that by a long shot. Love is a vicious little chap. He is essentially selfish, and, though little, the biggest tyrant out. A statue is not more callous. A hyena is less cruel. Personally, we should prefer a cobra about the house. A cobra you can elude. But not a bore —with civility at least—and when that little chap is not sticking pins in you he rivals our best selling novelists in the art of boring you stiff.

These observations have a false air of originality which, as is our duty, we hasten to disclaim. They have all history for support. Out of mythology,—and even there apart from the account which Apuleius gave of Cupid and Pysche,—there is not a single story of happily begun and happily ending love. No, not one. As pages turn and faces emerge, always when they are not weeping they are yawning.

Why? Because love is not merely a philosophy. It is a poem whose strophes age cannot construe and youth cannot scan. Because of all subjects it is the most discussed and the least understood. Because it consists in the affection of someone else. Because affections are like slippers, they will wear out. Because the angel who at twenty appeals at thirty has been known to appal.

At the opera now and then you may, if you are in luck, hear Cherubino ask the ladies who stand about to tell him what love is. The ladies make no answer. Not because they are rude. Still less because they are ignorant. But because Mozart did not care to have them disturb the innocence of the lad with an aria to the effect that love is the fusion of two egotisms. Truth should be charming or else withheld.

Truth is the residuum of the sciences known as exact. Among these sciences love, once upon a time, just escaped admittance. By way of compensation it was codified. What is more to the point, the code became law. Judgments in accordance therewith were rendered in courts open and plenary.

In 1907 these courts are to be revived. They are to be revived for the pleasure, it may be, but certainly for the instruction, of visitors to an exposition which is to be then held in Milan. You may have wondered what we were driving at. There is the reason of these remarks. There, too, is a tip for St Louis. There also, perhaps, is the model of the schooling which the youth of our country lack.

We inject that "perhaps" because we are sceptical by trade. But we live in hopes. Meanwhile, Milan being remote, 1907 far away, and St Louis uncertain, a summary of the instruction may contain a few hints.

The elements of this instruction are rumoured to have originated in Broceliande, a country which, as everybody knows, lies somewhere within the confines of the Arthurian myth. By whom they were evolved is undetermined. But it has been authoritatively suspected that they were cradled in the manuals of pure courtesy with which chivalry was familiar and which society has forgot. Anyway, they once existed, and existing filtered into Provence, where a parliament of peeresses did them over into a pandect, of which the statutes survive. Here are some of them. By way of commentary we may note that licit means lawful, and illicit the reverse. There is nothing like making things clear. But oyez:

It is illicit to kiss and tell.

It is illicit to love anyone whom it would be illicit to marry.

It is illicit to love two at a time.

It is licit to be loved by two, by three, by any number.

It is illicit to be open-armed and close-fisted.

It is licit for a woman to love her husband—if she can.

It is illicit for a lover to do aught that might displease his lady.

It is licit for a lady to be less circumspect. Et cetera, and so forth.

These statutes, always candid, sometimes are profound. They disclose an understanding of the heart and its subtleties. It was over matters of this delicate nature that the Courts of Love claimed—and exercised—jurisdiction. The judges were dames of high degree. At the time, in cases of tort and even of felony, the lord of a fief possessed the right of justice, high and low. But there are crimes now which the law cannot reach. It was the same way then. There were, and are, contentions which no mere male, however enfieffed, may adjust. It was to remedy this defect that the wives of the seigneurs erected tribunals of their own. Their strength was their weakness. They were pretty, and that appealed. They were patrician, and that appeased. They took themselves seriously too, and that must have been very satisfactory. Moreover, if not always clement, occasionally they were quaint.

Here is an instance. A confidant charged by a friend with messages of love found the young person so much to his taste that he addressed her in his own behalf. Instead of being repulsed his advances were encouraged. Whereupon the injured party brought suit. The prothonotary of the court relates that the plaintiff, having humbly prayed that the fraud be submitted to the Countess of Champagne, the latter, sitting in banco with sixty dames, heard the complaint, and after due deliberation handed down the following decision:—"It is ordered that the defendants be henceforth debarred from the frequentation of honest people."

Here is another case. A knight was commanded by his lady not to say or do anything publicly in her praise. It so fell about that her name was lightly taken. The knight challenged the defamer. Thereupon the lady contended that he had forfeited all claim to her regard. Action having been brought the court decided that the defence of a lady is never illicit, and it was ordered that the knight be rehabilitated in favour and reinstated in grace. Which, the prothonotary avers, was done.

But how? There is the beautiful part of it. To the Courts of Love no sheriffs were attached. Judgments were enforced not by a constabulary but by the community. Disregard of a decision entailed not loss of liberty but loss of caste. In the case of a man there was exclusion from the field. Entrance was denied him at the tournaments. In the case of a woman the drawbridges were up. Throughout the land there was no one to receive her. As a result the delinquent was rare. So, too, was contempt of the jurists.

Such were the Courts of Love. Women then did more or less as they saw fit, and it was in order that they might do what was fittest that those tribunals were established. They had another purpose. In guiding the affections they educated them. Women were admonished to love and instructed how to. They were taught, we will assume, that they who please generally fail to please profoundly. They were further taught, we will also assume, that to please profoundly a woman should never let herself be wholly known. Even in her kisses there should be mystery. Moreover, they were taught, or ought to have been, that when to mystery there be added uncertainty, and the two be sufficiently fused, then the party of the second part is not merely profoundly pleased but confoundedly perplexed. The poor devil does not know where he is at.

For of all things mystery and perplexity disturb the imagination most. Of all factors in an enduring affection the most potent is imagination. The woman who leaves a man nothing to bother about leaves him nothing to dread. Inconstancy is the result. The brute turns to pastures new.

But the woman of whom a man is never sure has him crazy about her for the rest of his wretched career. He feels that he could cut his throat for her. When a man does not feel that way he has no feeling at all.

Maxims of this fastidious morality were, we assume without effort, handed out in the Courts of Love. But pupils, however diligent, make mistakes. Though the decisions, decretals, and mandates of the courts were highly ethical, equitable also and instructive as well, occasionally misadventures occurred. Of these one which has been disinterred from a medieval manuscript may serve as instance. It runs as follows:—

"My Lord Raymond of Roussillon was a brave baron. His wife, the Lady Marguerite, was the fairest woman in the land, the most gifted and serene. It happened that William of Cabstaing, a poor knight's son, came to the court of my Lord Raymond and asked that he be received as varlet there. My Lord Raymond, seeing that he was handsome and hardy, welcomed him and told him that he might remain. William did so, and comported himself so well that my lord made him page to my lady. Now it so fell about that one day the page composed for the Lady Marguerite the song which says:

"'Sweet are the thoughts
Which love awakes in me.'

"When Raymond of Roussillon heard that

song he sent for William, led him far from the castle, cut off his head, put it in a basket, cut his heart out, and put it in the basket too. Then Raymond returned to the castle. He had the heart roasted and served at table to his wife, and made her eat it without knowing what it was. When the meal was over, Raymond stood up and told his wife that what she had eaten was the heart of the Knight William, and fetched and showed her the head, and asked her if the heart had tasted well. She understood what he said. She saw and recognised the head of the Knight William and, answering, she replied that the heart had been so good and appetising that never other food or other drink should take from her mouth the savour which it had left there. Raymond ran at her with his sword. She fled away, threw herself from a balcony, and broke her skull.

"All this was told throughout the realm of Aragon. The King Alphonse and all his barons and all his counts had great grief at the death of the knight and of the lady whom Raymond had so abominably destroyed. They made war on him, and having taken him and his castle, and slain him there, the King Alphonse erected at Perpignan a monument to William and to

Marguerite, and all perfect lovers prayed for their souls."

A gentleman never sees or hears anything that was not intended for him. The lesson in pure courtesy which Raymond got from Alphonse was well deserved. But it was insufficient. He should have had his ghost kicked. At the same time, if episodes such as that are to be given in the revival of the Courts of Love, we would not miss it for a farm.

XVI

BLUEBEARD

In the music-maddened nights of a generation ago there was imported for the benefit of old New Yorkers, who then were young, a little dish. The importation was effected, and served too perhaps, by way of finish to the banquets of delight which the opera seria provided. The dish was "Barbe Bleue." In was light and palatable. It suggested nothing so much as cream beaten with champagne into an ethereal foam. It left none of the after taste of truffles and red pepper which the more gorgeous fare produced. It expressed, as music should, that which cannot be told and concerning which it is impossible to be silent. Yet, though it charmed, it did not satisfy. It surprised and evoked. For who was this chimerically-bearded prince, who sang so deliciously and behaved so ill, who married and murdered so melodiously? From what land did he come? And was it all real or was it romance?

These problems shuttled the score. At this late date we can hardly look back and swear that they kept us awake, but with due regard to that love of truth which is our main consolation we may conscientiously affirm that, in the pauses of later interludes, they returned, as problems will return, demanding solution, exacting research, until, now, here at last, they are to have their way.

For Bluebeard was no more a creation of Offenbach—or for that matter of Perrault—than Don Juan was a creation of Mozart or even of Molière. These two great figures really lived, yet Bluebeard the more astonishingly. According to the documents contained in what is technically known as his procès-verbal—on which, parenthetically, our friend and brother-in-letters, J. K. Huysmans, some time since laid violent hands — his name was Gilles de Retz, and, at a period contemporaneous to the apparition of Jeanne d'Arc, he was seigneur of the domain of Tiffauges and, therewith, *seigneur de lieux dont j'ignore le compte.*

The domain of Tiffauges squats in an edge of Brittany. The manor is still there. Its towers have tottered, the moat is choked, the drawbridge has crumbled. But the massive wings of the keep—festooned with lichens and astragaled with moss—extend intact. The interior rhymes with the walls. There are high baronial halls, contracted cells, narrow corridors, a stairway which cavalry could mount, other stairs precipitately spiral, a circular gallery where the guard was stationed, a chapel in which a choir sang, a silence which you can feel, an odour of ruin, a sensation of chill, a savour of things dead and damned, an impression of space, of shapes of sin, of monstrous crimes, of sacrilege and sorcery.

To-day the castle is a skeleton. Yet in the days that were it must have been sumptuously if strangely splendid, a succession of elaborate suites hung with exquisite tapestries, furnished with that art which only the fifteenth century knew, set with combinations of woods, colours, leathers, silks, and metals, decorated with amazing frescoes, with scenes of pagan love and pastoral affections. There, amid the blare of fanfares and the swirl of plumes, Gilles de Retz held court and, while he was about it, other things too.

The chronicles of the day unite in describing him as insolently rich and alarmingly good-looking, a fine chap, a brave soldier, unfathomably devout, serving featly his God and loyally his king—so loyally that at the tolerably adolescent age of twenty-five Charles VII. created him Marshal of France. The point to be noted, though, is that devoutness. At the time an epidemic of mysticism, induced by the occurrences connected with Jeanne d'Arc—with whom, by the way, he had assisted at the siege of Orleans — infected the doct. It infected Gilles. The fever of it accentuated his fervour. He surrounded himself with prelates, enlarged his choir, alternated between mass and meditation, aspired to union with the supersensible, imitated the inimitable life.

Existence then was not what it had been before or what it had since become. For noblesse oblige read noblesse neglige. The lords and gentry were lack-lustre brutes, ignorant as carps, without other aims than dice, without other ambitions than brawls. Gilles de Retz had as much in common with them as they had with him. He was a scholar, a musician, and a poet. In an age in which no one read he wrote. In an age in which the best music was the click of swords he preferred the hum of harps. In an age in which the foremost diversion was drink he collected curious missals, startling gems, and surprising birds. Within the moat pink flamingoes brooded and about it white peacocks flocked. He delighted in the conversation of thinkers, in the observations of artists, in the subtleties of metaphysicians. In his large and splendid castle he entertained magnificently all who came, providing not merely open house, but the spectacle of a great noble living nobly, a prince properly presented, one who had his own men-at-arms, his own garrison, and therewith pages, squires, knights, deans, vicars, choristers, and, above and beyond these, the right of justice high and low.

To-day the castle crouches sullenly. In the meagre hamlet at its base there are women who cross themselves at mention of its former lord. To them he is Barbe Bleue. Not the Bluebeard of the lyric stage nor yet the Bluebeard of the fairy tale, but the monster who maltreated and murdered.

It is the opinion of thinkers that the conscious gratification of the senses is an unconscious flight toward the ideal, that the most poignant excesses are engendered by a desire for the impossible, by aspirations for that felicity which is superterrestrial and divine. These premises accepted, it may be then that the gulf of blood which Gilles proceeded to undike is susceptible of explanation. But what was his own excuse? Or rather, by what sudden steps was the mystic converted into a reptile? The question seems complex. The answer is simple. It will be found in the limitations of wealth. During the progress of the war for which he had furnished troops, during the leisures of court, where in his quality of great noble he had advanced sums more or less imposing, and during the prodigalities at Tiffauges, where he resided in a fashion entirely regal, his patrimony had become tolerably fluid.

In an effort to maintain the splendour to which he was accustomed, he mortgaged fiefs, bartered farms, alienated domains, and even put jewels in pawn. His heirs took fright. Charles was petitioned to interfere. As a result, by letters patent Gilles de Retz was inhibited from further disposing of his property, and there suddenly was this sumptuous individual literally without a copper.

In epochs more modern and recent, individuals less sumptuous, perhaps, but equally prodigal, have found themselves in a similar plight. To remedy it some have taken to trade, some have taken to stocks. None of these avenues was open to Bluebeard. But at the time there was another and a wider one, an immense highway descending from the remotest past, but which latterly had dwindled into a blind alley with a dead wall at the end. In it was a group of savans, a congress of the wise men and charlatans of the day. Gilles joined them. Or, to be exact, those whom he could he lured to Tiffauges.

These people were called hermetics. They were in search of the alkahest which Hermes discovered and which had enabled the satraps of eld to create enchantments which the world no longer knows, to erect at will cities fairer than the uplands of dream, palaces more luminous than the twelve signs of the zodiac, and with them shimmering retrospects of paradise. The escaping memories of that alkahest Caligula had tried in vain to detain. Bacon sought them in alembics, Thomas Aquinas in ink.

Experiments not similar, but cognate, had resulted in the theory that at that later day success was impossible without the intervention and direct assistance of the Very Low. The secret had escaped too far, memories of it had been too long ablated, to be rebeckoned by natural means. For the recovery of the evaporated arcana it was necessary that Satan should be evoked.

Satan at that time was very real. The atmosphere was so heavy with his legions that spitting was an act of worship. In the gloom of the abbeys legates of his shouted tauntingly at the cowering monks: "Thou art damned!" In the cathedrals, through shudders of song, his voice had been heard inviting maidens to swell the red quadrilles of hell. From encountering him at every turn society had become used to his ways, and had imagined that pact whereby, in exchange for the soul, Satan agrees to furnish whatever is wanted.

For the sake of gold into that pact Gilles presently prepared to enter. The crucibles, retorts, aludels, and furnaces which the alchemists unpacked at Tiffauges cooked nothing which savoured, however slightly, of the alkahest. They were repacked, the alchemists dismissed, and, from the confines of the Sabbat, into the manor magicians trooped. Either the Very Low was then evoked or else they lied basely. It will be said that they lied. But may not the evocation of Satan consist less in actual apparition than in suffering evil to enter the heart, in suffering it to batten there until it has gnawed the finer fibres away, until it has made us as base as we have conceived Satan to be?

Something of that kind must have occurred in this horrible keep. Gilles De Retz became really possessed. Alchemy failing, the soul of the mystic turned a somersault, and where the saint had been the vampire emerged.

"There is," he announced, "no one on the planet who has dared what I have done." We believe him. It was under his hand that the real massacre of the innocents occurred. Satan was supposed to enjoy the blood of the young, and to minister to that taste Gilles killed boys and girls, stalking them as another stalks game. In eight years he bagged eight hundred. More perhaps, for he had not kept tally.

Meanwhile the country was devastated. Whereever he passed shepherds vanished and schoolgirls disappeared. His first victim was a little boy, whose heart he extracted, whose wrists he severed, whose eyes he dug out, and with whose blood he wrote an invocation to Satan. Then the list elongated immeasurably. That lair of his echoed with cries, dripped with gore, shuddered with sobs. The subterranean passages were turned into cemeteries, the high walls reeked with the odour of burning bones, and through them Bluebeard prowled, a virtuoso and vampire in one, conjecturing how he might destroy not merely bodies but souls, inventing fresh repasts of flesh, devising new tortures, savouring tears as yet unshed, and with them the spectacle of helpless agony, of unutterable fear, the contortions of little limbs, simultaneously subjected to hot irons and cold steel. It is said that some of the children cried very little but that the colour passed from their eyes.

There is a limit to all things earthly. Precisely as no one may attain perfection, so has sin its bounds. There are depths beneath which there is nothing deeper. To their ultimate plane Gilles de Retz descended. There, smitten perhaps with terror, he considered the possibility of groping back through penitent acts, pious endowments, and nights of prayer.

It was too late, however. The echo of the cries with which the castle rang had reverberated beyond. The odour of the calcinated had filtered through the land. The anguish of parents fused with these things, and so insistently that the conjunction of clamours and stenches reached Nantes, with, for result, the besieging of Tiffauges, the taking of Gilles, his arrest, imprisonment, public confession—a confession so monstrous that women fainted of fright, and a priest, rising in horror, veiled the face on a crucifix which hung from the wall—a confession followed by excommunication and the stake. *Et ainsi fini l'histoire de Barbe Bleue.*

Yet where in this super-Neronian history *is* Barbe Bleue? Surely Gilles de Retz is not the charming prince who married and murdered so melodiously? Surely he is not the Bluebeard whom we met in the nursery and who warned his wife not to see anything which was not intended for her; surely, in spite of certain vagaries, that noble hero was not this ignoble hyena.

And yet he was. Legend takes strange licences. Sometimes he will so smear a seraph that he will look like a fiend, and again it will make a villain look highly virtuous. Tiberius, we are convinced, never dreamed of the infamies which are imputed to him, and had the ghost of Washington any sense of humour, which is doubtful, it would be rather amused at the veneration in which his memory is held.

It was much the same thing with Gilles de Retz. The legend regarding him fattened on frescoes instead of on facts. Some years ago, in a Breton church which dates from the thirteenth century, there was found a series of mural paintings. In one you behold the marriage of a noble demoiselle to an equally noble seigneur. In the next there is the same seigneur. He is leaving his castle, and as he goes he entrusts to his wife a little key. The scenes which follow represent the lady peering into a room from the rafters of which six women hang. Then come the return of the lord, his questioning and menacing glance, the tears of the lady, her prayers to her sister, the alarm of the latter, the interruption of her brothers, and her rescue from sudden death.

The story which the frescoes tell still endures in Brittany. There is many another like it. One and all have Gilles de Retz for hero. Yet for the honour of his race, instead of his name, that of Bluebeard has been given.

So, at least, says Michelet. Michelet usually knew what he was talking about. He devoted forty years to his history of France. When he finished it he sighed and said: "I have swallowed too many vipers, too many kings."

Gilles de Retz must have been one of the former. In any event, Michelet had at his disposal texts which we lack. Lacking the texts, we lack also pretexts for differing with him. We assume, therefore, that it is as he has explained it. Moreover, other historians, otherwise competent, have stated that Gilles, after marrying Catherine de Thouars, one of the great heiresses of the day, subsequently and successively became the husband of six other women — a circumstance which, the frescoes aiding, doubtless suggested to Perrault the tale with which we are all familiar and from which Offenbach wove his enchanting score.

Yet whether he murdered those women, or whether they just died of delight, we have now no means of knowing. What we do know is that this vampire really lived, and that his lair any tourist may visit.

In considering it, even the indifferent must wonder how such a contradiction could be, how it is possible that a man could alternately charm and torture, pray, and deprave. The complexity, however, is common enough. It is due to what novelists call heredity, what psychologists term dual personality, and plain people the Old Adam. More or less, and generally more than less, it exists in us all. Its home is the brain. In the majority of civilised beings it is, through one factor or another, subordinated and controlled, sometimes forgotten, more often ignored. But it is there. And when, through the shock of atoms, the play of destiny, excess of fatigue or cerebral commotion, the other, the inherited, the secreted self appears, then from the individual ordinarily normal emerges the human reptile.

Such is Bluebeard's case. Such, too, perhaps is the meaning of the archaic allegory which symbolised the struggle between Darkness and Light.

XVII

THE KNIGHTS OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE

THE Golden Fleece is just like the Garter. It has none of the confounded nonsense of merit about it. Medieval and magnificent, it was originated by Philip of Burgundy. Why he originated it no one knows. A German tried to find out. He devoted the whole of his wretched life to the subject. On his death-bed he chattered "Eureka." It had driven him insane.

Students less pertinacious, and possibly better equipped, have assumed that the motive was wholly gallant. Philip, to his eternal glory be it recorded, paid what we think we have seen described as addresses to twenty-four young women at once. Then came the twenty-fifth. The latter was Ysabel of Portugal. Meanwhile, from each of the others he had obtained coils of hair. These he had his coiffeur braid together into a sort of conglomerate souvenir. Through it there straggled an amber curl; it had come from the bright blonde locks of Marie of Rumbrugge. The sheen of it delighted him. From it, from that girl's empty head, the idea of the Golden Fleece emerged. On the occasion of his marriage to Ysabel thirty knights were chosen. Whether he required that, like himself, they should be *sans pudeur et avec reproches*, we may surmise yet never know.

What we do know is that self-chosen knights of a different order with the same name have been parading about ever since. In philosophic circles their order is generally, if figuratively, regarded as the insignia of the carpet highwaymen and other adventurers with whom the great capitals of this little globe abound.

High on the list of them is Lauzun. Insolent, indigent, and illiterate, the son of a nonentity at that, he yet managed to make himself Marshal of France and the husband of the Grande Mademoiselle. And not merely her husband, but her master, ordering that princess, who was the cousin of one king and the granddaughter of another, to pull off his boots, and beating her when she refused. The story of his career would read as a romance were it not that from it the probable is absent. Men do not dream any more as that man lived. Emerging obscurely from an obscure hamlet, the high road led him to Versailles, and chance into the presence of the king.

There he made himself so entertaining that the fourteenth Louis raised the adventurer from one grade to another, and so monumentally, that one day, angered at the withdrawal of a promised promotion, he whipped out his sword, broke it across his knee, and tossing it with a fine clatter at the feet of the king, bawled loudly that it was disgraceful to serve a monarch who could not keep his word.

Woman admire the brave, but they prefer the audacious. Some women at least, and Mademoiselle de Montpensier was one of them. The melodrama of the proceeding delighted her. Archroyal and super-rich, possessed in her own right of twenty million and four duchies, she was then thirty and passably disillusioned. By reason of her birth and wealth she had expected to be queen. She had had her eye on the Dauphin, another on the King of Spain, both on the Emperor Ferdinand III. Yet none whatever for Charles II., who, in his exile, had asked, and who, because of that exile, had been refused.

Heights appeal to women, so do extremes

Failing a throne, the Grande Mademoiselle resolved to accept a footstool. Lauzun appealed to her as even the closed crown of state had not. The adventurer understood it thoroughly. But at every step she made toward him he retreated two. He could have asked and it would have been given. He preferred to be asked and to accord. Finally he did. So also did Louis. At the formal request of the lady he consented to the mesalliance, and there was this nobody almost lifted into royalty—almost, yet not quite. For reasons which we won't bother over, the king withdrew his consent. Lauzun was thrown into prison, whence he issued years later, and then only because of the supplications of the princess whom he had bewitched, who then became his wife, whom he ordered to pull off his boots, and who, annoyed perhaps at the beatings which she got, gathered her millions and her duchies and left him to twirl his thumbs. There you have a true picture of the untrue knight.

An instance more modern and rather more modest is that of Baron Harden-Hickey. Born in San Francisco, the son of eminently respectable yet perfectly plain people, he evolved, entirely to their astonishment, and perhaps a little to his own, a dream of monarchy. His title astonished also. Where he got it no one knew and, except the police, no one, to our knowledge, ever asked. It may be that the Comte de Chambord, whose henchman he had been, gave it to him, or, as is more likely, it may be that it was self-bestowed. After all, why not? In any event, a dozen years ago he acquired, in addition to the title, the formidable reputation of being one of the wittiest men in Paris and the crack duellist of France. A poet at his hours and always a scholar, he was doubly dangerous. His pen stung as promptly as did his sword. As a consequence he was well supplied with enemies. He had more than he knew by sight. But their quality was superior. A stranger to them, he was a stranger to his friends, a stranger to himself, yet most conspicuously a stranger to his epoch. He was at odds with it. In an age less complex he would have been a pirate, and a very good pirate too. He was a survival, as lost on the boulevards as a corsair would be. He had beliefs in an epoch which had dissipated them and faiths in a land from which they have gone. Therewith he was antithesis made man. He edited a comic paper and wrote a book on metaphysics. He looked like a musketeer, acted like a debutante, talked like Aristophanes, and lived like a sage.

That was a long time ago. Presently from Catholic he turned Buddhist. At Andilly, a Parisian suburb, where he had a country house which he called a castle, he built a temple, decorated it with the lotus, installed the wheel of prayers, and entertained Colonel Olcott. After Buddha he took to Voltaire. Restless as a panther, haunted by the past, pursued by visions of Chambord, he needed a cause or a flag. It was the inability to find either which brought to him the dream of founding a monarchy for himself. "There is nothing worth living for," he once confided to the deponent, "and, what is worse, nothing worth dying for either." But that, too, is a long time ago. It was on a journey to the United States that he met a young heiress, who subsequently became his wife. Then, out of idleness, or perhaps to amuse his bride, he wrote a tract on suicide. Hardly had it issued from the press before an idea of a monarchy was hatched. He proposed to establish a kingdom at Trinidad—a speck of an island off the coast of Brazil—and proposed also to establish himself there as king. Entirely opera bouffe, he entered into the scheme with a seriousness which impressed even himself. He had a chancellerie in New York, another in London. Then the Powers intervened, or he said they did, and he turned an eye on Hawaii. But at this juncture annexation occurred; there was not a possible throne in sight, and like a true Knight of the Fleece, he shot himself.

But he shot himself too soon. It is one of the disadvantages of death that it prevents the departed from participating in the possibilities of life. Had he waited he might have been king. There was a throne then vacant, a throne ramshackle, remote, and ridiculous, yet none the less a throne, one that had been founded by just such another, by an adventurer who began by being French, ended by being German, and who managed to make himself an American monarch in between—a South American monarch indeed, yet still a monarch, monarch of Araucania, a land which he ruled under the style and title of Aurelius I.

Who he was, how he got there, above all, why he wanted to be, and in what fashion he succeeded in becoming, king, are matters that have been, and now always will be, problematic. It is known that his name was De Tonniens, but other data are scarce. It is rumoured, however, that in the early sixties he set sail from Havre for Peru. With him went a cargo of umbrellas. As it never rains in Peru, what he did with the umbrellas is conjectural in the extreme. Perhaps he took them to Chili. In any event, ultimately he reached Araucania. That is the one stretch of territory on this hemisphere which neither Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, nor English have ever been able to subdue. A portion of it Chili has gobbled, but the larger part is independent still. Whether the umbrellas appealed to the fantasy of the Araucos, and whether because of them they allowed De Tonniens to constitute himself king, is immaterial. But that king he became is history. It is history, too, that as a means of livelihood he instituted a series of titles and decorations, which he took to Europe and peddled about. The supply of these things being greater than the demand, poverty overtook him and he died. Meanwhile, he had not neglected to establish a court. According to a recent explorer —M. Henri le Baux—the Court of Araucania still exists. What is more, the throne, though vacant, exists as well. There would be a chance for Harden-Hickey. There yet is a chance for any other knight.

Examples such as the foregoing are useful if for no other reason than because they show the relativeness of things. To be born, as Lauzun was, a nobody and to marry a princess, predicates charm. To be born, as Harden-Hickey was, a plain American, and to dream of being king, predicates romance. To be born, as De Tonniens was, a bourgeois, and to develop into a monarch, predicates enterprise. But to be born a slave and to become an emperor shows originality.

Solouque did that. He began life with a dust-pan and ended it with a sceptre. At the age of fifty he was a valet, very fat, very black, ignorant as a carp, unable to read, unable to write. But though unable to write he could make his mark—and did. Caught on the crest of a Haytian revolution, he flung himself from it into power. On his return after some sable Marengo the president of the local senate capped him with a crown of pasteboard and saluted him Faustin I.

Solouque sent to Paris for a real crown, sent for two—the second for the drab who was his consort; and, while he was about it, sent for thrones, for robes of ermine—all the tra-la-la of state. Therewith he instituted a civil list, a series of decorations, and created Knights of the Ebon Fleece. The court chamberlain was the Duc de Bonbon; the lords-in-waiting, three in number, were gratified respectively with the titles of Prince of Watermelon, Marquis of Lemonade, and Viscount of Ice Cream. Their share in the budget was placed at a hundred gourds per annum. When they asked for it this Philip of Hayti had them shot. If open-handed he was close-fisted. One day he held a review of his grenadiers. Georges d'Alaux, a writer who was there at the time and who has left a book on this Offenbach monarchy, states that the helmets of the guard glittered with plaques, on which was inscribed: "Sardines à l'huile, Barton et Cie, Marseilles." Like the emperor, the grenadiers were unable to read. Presently it was discovered that they were unable to fight. Projected against neighbours by whom they were demolished, Solouque said it was good riddance. Thereat, to while away the time, he created more decorations, more nobility, parodied the coronation of Napoleon, ordered a general massacre, abdicated, fled away and died, full of years and dishonours, grotesque to the end.

Of an order quite as grotesque, yet a trifle more recent, was De Rougemont, a Frenchman who spoke English with a German accent, and who, after an alleged thirty-year residence on the Sea of Timor, turned up not long ago in the columns of a magazine. According to his own account he must have been born with an honest imagination and a love of misadventure, for, according to that same account, fate conducted him to a coral reef and left him there with but a dog and a New Testament. The former he appears to have preferred to any human being he ever met, while the theological difficulties which he encountered in the latter seem to have fully occupied his leisure. For amusement he rode turtles, steering them with kicks in the eye, built a house of pearl shells, made a hammock of shark's hide, and played pirate with pelicans, whom he robbed of their fish. For visitors he had parrots, for almanacs, stones. And so the years fell by. Ultimately savages appeared, who, on beholding him, fancied that they were all dead and that he was the Great Spirit. If that is not an example of honest imagination, one may wonder what is. Yet here is more. Conducted by the aborigines to the mainland, he there became king of the tribe, rescued white girls from black men, discovered gullies of gold and ditches of diamonds, conciliated recalcitrant cannibals by throwing handsprings and somersaults, found a newspaper, read in it that the deputies of Alsace had refused to vote in the German Parliament, marvelled thereat, for he knew nothing of the war of 1870, and, as much perplexed by political enigmas as he had been by theological difficulties, left sceptre, diamonds, gold, and girls behind, made for Melbourne, shipped for London before the mast, and turned up safe and sound in the office of an English magazine.

Everything being possible, it was conjectured that the story might all be true. The north-western corner of Australia, where, as king, he had resided, is a region still unexplored. Moreover, was not Bruce disbelieved and Du Chaillu flouted? The eccentricity of the story consisted in the fact that a gentleman who reached Melbourne with such first-class copy in his head should have been compelled to work his way to London. *Mais nul n'est prophete.* The story of R. Crusoe de Rougemont-Munchausen was at least entertaining enough to find favour in the eyes of the British Association, and his hand-spring device for charming the enemy may, with entire deference, still be commended to Lord Roberts for future use at the front.

Meanwhile, it is pleasant to note that in a subsequent issue of the periodical in which Mr Alice de Rougemont first told of his adventures in wonderland there appeared a caveat to the effect that the editors no longer vouched for his veracity. It were difficult to be more circumspect and less rude. Elsewhere he was labelled Psalmanazar. But the label, though meant to be fierce, was merely stupid. De Rougemont gulled the British Association. Psalmanazar gulled Great Britain. By the press at large De Rougemont was received with cheerful incredulity. The learned reviews swallowed Psalmanazar whole. De Rougemont produced a new edition of the Australian Nights, Psalmanazar produced a new language, a literature, and a religion. To this day nobody knows what Psalmanazar's real name was. What is De Rougemont's real name nobody cares.

Psalmanazar represented himself as a Japanese from Formosa. He published a book which contained an alphabet of his own manufacture, portraits of false gods, pictures of fictitious people, and with them engravings of imaginary shrines. It was accepted as gospel. In his memoirs Psalmanazar says: "I was but twenty and I deceived all England." The Bishop of London became his patron. He lectured at Oxford, took orders, and everything else he could get. But then, a century and a half ago, in the good old days when he lived and lied, knowledge was limited and the earth was not. Had De Rougemont come then his success might have been proportionate, and yet again it might not. Success is an uncertain quantity. One never knows whom it will visit and whom avoid. Keely is a case in point. A moralist recommended that nothing but good should be said of the dead. The advice is excellent. We have no intention of disregarding it. An ex-waiter who, with nothing more complicated than a half-dozen neologisms and as many concealed tubes, could extract five million out of the pockets of his fellow-citizens deserves something better than abuse. He deserves enrolment among the Knights of the Fleece. He deserves even, what we lack the space to give him, a full biographical page. In days when speech was more abstruse he would have been called a thaumaturge. Thaumaturgy is at once simple and complex. It consists in making a stranger feel at home and then in taking that home away. There are a number of books about it. Of these the best bear big names. They are signed by Albertus Magnus, by Nostradamus, and by Paracelsus. They are not uninteresting either. They tell of the great secret which is the philosopher's stone and how, with it, metals cannot be transmuted but how pocket-books may. More or less, and generally more than less, every Knight of the Fleece knows its charms. Apollonius of Tyana knew them thoroughly. He knew other things as well. He knew all languages, including that of Silence, for silence is a language too. It was in the latter that Keely conversed. So subtle was his use of it that nobody understood. He eluded comprehension. There was his secret. It is the great secret of all. It is the secret of not having any, and yet in appearing to, which constitutes the philosopher's stone. With it Keely charmed experts. But who are so foolish as wise men? Had Keely come a few centuries earlier, by the wise men of the day he would have been deified. Such is luck, or rather, such is destiny.

For the Gates of Life are double. On the one stands written Too Late. On the other Too Soon. Between them chaps like these get strangled.

XVIII

THE UPPER CIRCLES

THE Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has decided that a belief in spiritualism does not predicate insanity.

It would be curious if it did. In this country there are millions who believe in it. In Europe there are others. In Asia there are more. For all we know to the contrary there are a lot in Africa. If not, there ought to be. It was in Africa that spiritualism originated.

Moses found it there. He found it in the crypts of Memphis. These crypts were difficult to enter. But Moses, whose real name, by the way, was Hosarisph, happened to be a nephew of old Rameses. The relationship was a pull. It opened for him doors which otherwise would have been closed. Behind them he heard all about spiritualism.

It will not pay you to hunt for evidence of this in that part of the Bible which is associated with him. The evidence is not there. Nor in it, either, is there any doctrine of a future life. These things were not given to everybody. They were reserved for the few.

Among the latter were the priests. The priests had three ways of expressing a given idea. The first was ordinary and simple, the second complex and symbolic, the third hieroglyphic and abstruse. Any term used by them had, therefore, a triple signification. It could be construed naturally, figuratively, or transcendentally.

It was in their language that the Mosaic views were originally expressed. When, later, they were put into Phœnician; when, from that, they were turned into Chaldaic; and when, subsequently, the latter was translated into Greek, the original meaning had gone. There had been too many cooks. St Jerome, who knew pretty much all that was going and a good deal that was not, said of the residue that it contained as many secrets as words, and that each word held several. It is for this reason that the Pentateuch nowhere exhibits any evidence of spiritualism—

any evidence, either, of a doctrine of a future life.

These things were secret things, and secret things, Moses expressly declared, belong to the Lord.

In Egypt, where he found them, crouched the Sphinx. Above was the Phœnix. In the one was the key to things terrestrial. In the other was a clue to things divine. The Sphinx expounded the mystery of life. The Phœnix explained the enigma of death.

Moses took them both. But he did not display them. In their perspectives were heights and abysses. On the heights were immensities; in the abysses, worlds. They held categories greater than the average mind may comfortably contemplate. As a consequence the doctrine, withheld from the many, was reserved for the few.

The reconstruction of the doctrine—a reconstruction relatively recent—is due to causes so opposed that they laugh in each other's faces. The first is criticism higher than that which is known as high; the second is experimental psychology. The former has conducted us behind the accepted meaning of phrases; the latter has led us to the threshold of another sphere.

Through the highest criticism obscurities have become limpid. Through experimental psychology a door has been thrown open on the invisible and the respectability of atheism shocked.

We fail to see why. Demonstrations, however surprising, ought not to shock. Only ignorance should. Yet if it hurt, too, how many there are that would yell. Besides, though it may be more cheerful to be wrong in your beliefs than not to have them at all, it is perhaps a mistake to regard errors as assets.

But far be it from us to seem to even wish to convert. The spirit of proselytism is not in us. At present writing only the desire to show the sanity of spiritualism is. That sanity has for basis premises major and minor, with a deduction for astragal.

Here are the premises: First is the cautiousness of nature. Nature neither adds nor subtracts. She does not increase her possessions. She does not diminish them. She puts them up, pulls them down, and does them over anew. But on to the lot she holds very tight.

It is for this reason that what seems to us to constitute death is to nature but the constituent of a change. It is for this reason, because nothing dies. Because when what is called death occurs there ensues not a cessation of energy but a liberation of it. A tenement has crumbled and a tenant gone forth. Though just where is the puzzle.

It would be convenient to say that that puzzle was solved long ago. It would be convenient, but inexact. Myriads of people who like to have others do their thinking have pinned their faith on a residence right overhead. The existence and accessibility of that residence they have regarded as a universal belief.

It is not a universal belief. Even if it were the fact would prove nothing. Every universal belief is erroneous. Public opinion is the stupidity of one multiplied by the stupidity of all. The majority is always cocksure and dead wrong. The belief in that residence is a case in point.

Primitive fabulists erected an edifice of dream, which they catalogued Creation. It was composed of a cellar, a groundfloor, and a roof garden. On the groundfloor man lived, moved, and had his being. Then, according to his behaviour, he was tossed into the cellar or shoved into a lift and shot to the roof.

The idea had its charms and also its deceptions. It was simple, but not scientific. Science has shown that the earth stands to creation as a drop of water does to the sea. It has shown that within the relatively narrow sphere to which observation is at present confined there are not less than three hundred million worlds. These worlds we may assume do not revolve there just for the fun they may get out of their own gymnastics. We may further assume that the energy loosed among them cannot be dissimilar to that which is recognisable here. By way of corollary we may also assume that there, too, are sentient beings.

There are the premises. They hold, we hope, nothing not sane. For that matter, nothing, we hope, that can in any way be construed into originality. They are but the platitudes of logic. Now for the deduction.

If the premises be accepted, and with them the theorem, that man has not fallen from loftier estate, but is rising to one, it follows, or seems to follow, that not the dwellers on this planet alone, but those strewn throughout the universe, are en route for higher things. In which event it is advantageous to know what our individual chances are of reaching them. That knowledge spiritualism supplies.

Spiritualism has been much abused. The abuse is righteous. As often as otherwise when spiritualism is not perfect rot it is fraudulent commercialism. Yet commerce is not conducted solely by cheats. There are honest men everywhere, even in jail. Even in spiritualism there are scientists. Their statements may be derided. But so were the initial statements concerning the telephone. So was the proclamation of wireless telegraphy. Such derision is helpful. It is a bountiful Providence that has enabled us to despise whatever we do not understand. And spiritualism, even to its believers, perhaps particularly to its believers, leaves a good deal in the dark. That also is a dispensation of Providence. Were spiritualism able to solve every problem, we who cogitate for the distraction which cogitation affords would have nothing left to do but to bore ourselves stiff.

Anything of that kind would be very distressing.

Meanwhile, general distrust of spiritualism has been due not merely to the puerility and trickery of its manifestations but to the fact that the majority of us believe like brutes in the reality of things.

Of all illusions reality is the greatest. Everybody knows, for instance, that flowers grow, but nobody has ever heard them at it. That is only because our ears are not adapted to receive the vibrations. Were they so adapted the noise of growing flowers would be thunderous. Yet because we are not deaf we do not believe it. None the less the vibrations are. In the same way, because we are not blind we imagine that there can be nothing which is not obvious. It is the obvious only that is illusory.

"Ghosts!" cried Carlyle. "Nigh a thousand million of them walk the earth at noontide." Ocular evidence of the promenade being lacking we could wish a little proof. That proof spiritualism supplies. It is voluminously provided in the reports of the Society for Psychical Research. But, though voluminous, it is not always luminous. The facts displayed are appallingly trite. Yet they are facts all the same, and though trite, so, too, were the rotting logs which once upon a time Columbus beheld. Beyond those logs was another world.

From the world which spiritualism is approaching already one discovery is announced. One is a great many. In the present condition of things it is even enormous. For in this discovery — a discovery rigorously examined, patiently tested, and scientifically indorsed—is the assurance, positive and unequivocal, that human personality persists beyond the tomb.

A discovery of that magnitude and certainty means something. Moreover, in it there are others. Or, rather, from it data depend. For though the persistence of personality is shown, as yet nothing has been adduced which confirms accepted ideas of heaven, nothing in support of any existing creed.

That seems odd. But where all is marvellous the marvellous disappears. The phenomena detected defy explanation. They defy refutation as well. There is, though, nothing odd in that. The phenomena of thought do the same. The latter are so common and familiar that we give them no heed. Yet the human being has never lived who understood them. That is pretty much the way it is with psychic phenomena. Because we cannot understand them it does not in the least follow that they cannot be.

On the contrary. Moreover, in reference to them Sir William Crookes has spoken thusly: "I do not say that such things may be. I say that such things are."

Sir William is not a crank. He is not a poet. He is passionless as algebra, precise as calculus, and the foremost chemist going. He is somebody. In the course of explorations conducted by him along the frontier of the other world he has officially announced that he has been the percipient of direct communications, the beholder of phantom forms. One of the latter, a young woman, decorated his coat with a rose, gave him a lock of her hair, allowed him to snapshoot her, and sat in his lap. It were difficult to be more sociable.

Instances similar, cognate, and still more curious you may fish from the reports by the ton. Unless you prefer to regard the testimony as a mystification devised by a corps of savans and scientists for no other purpose than your hocus-pocussing, then, though the testimony be hard to swallow, it is just as hard to reject. But that which may help a bit to get it down is the fact that the deponents go as far as they can, but not an inch or the fraction of an inch farther. They are enabled to demonstrate the persistence of consciousness after death and the visibility of the unseen. But not the immortality of the soul.

The reason, if complex, is clear. Travellers returning from the upper circles bring with them only what they took. Only that and their experience in transit. Their understanding is not broadened. Their wisdom is not increased. They know as little of what is beyond them as we know of what is beyond us. When you come to think of it that is in the nature of things. A trip across the country never develops faculties which the traveller lacked when he set out. It is probable, therefore, that death is but a posting-house, where horses are changed, and whence you proceed with such luggage as you brought.

But whither you proceed, and whether in proceeding you get very far, fraudulent spiritualism may pretend to tell, but scientific spiritualism cannot. To borrow a metaphor from the land from which we started, the veil of Isis remains unraised. For these are the secret things of which Moses told. To us only the visible is permitted.

Summarily, then, the decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania is all right. Belief in the matters herewith submitted does not predicate insanity. That proposition is incontrovertible. But not the converse of it. Insanity may proceed from the belief.

XIX

THE MODES OF TO-MORROW

Somebody or other, an archbishop, perhaps, declared with obvious regret that a woman gowned in the height of fashion possesses a serenity of mind joined to an elevation of spirit which the consolations of religion are incompetent to provide.

We have not a doubt of it. But in what does fashion consist? Women have been known to state that they would rather be dead than out of it, yet when a definition was sought no adequate description could be obtained. For it is one of the charms of women that in explaining everything they explain nothing. That is quite as it should be. It is for them to exhilarate and for us to expound. Yet of their clothes we know little. A little is a great deal. But in a matter such as this no mere man may know much. It is even discomforting to reflect that when the hour comes in which all secrets are revealed Fashion may resolve into Isis still unveiled.

Meanwhile, to the masculine eye at least, the vagaries of it are as recondite as the forecasts of the weather. The mysteries of time and space—mysteries so mysterious that science has reduced them to figments of fancy—are not more enigmatic.

Perhaps, then, it will be safe to say that fashion is an active abstraction—a phrase which does not mean anything, but which sounds very well. In any event, it is a form of debauchery of which the door is closed to man. There are exceptions, however. The deponent has seen six-footers loll about and admire their hunting togs. And there are other instances. There is, for example, a certain marquis and there is also a certain clergyman. The former one day was standing bareheaded in Lincoln & Bennett's, waiting to be waited on. A prelate entered, marched up to him, took his hat off, and asked him if he had one like it. The marquis examined it, handed it back, and with a sweetness which was silken, replied: "No; and if I had I'll be shot if I'd wear it." The clergyman wanted to assist at a table-d'hôte and could not. Through a tailor's defection he had no trousers to wear.

He said he was not a bit more particular than other people, but he had noticed that a clergyman going in to dinner without trousers was almost sure to excite remark. Fashion is not, therefore, a purely feminine vice. There you have at least two men who were slaves to it.

At the risk of writing ourselves down as something else, we should like to call ourselves a third. For, though our ignorance of fashion is abysmal, our admiration is without bounds. Apart from the pleasures of pure mathematics, we know of nothing more intoxicating. Behind its history is the history of love. Whoever invented the one invented the other. In days when tattooing was apparel it has been authoritatively surmised that woman's attractiveness was so meagre that she was as incapable of detaining men as animals are of detaining each other. There were herds, not homes. The development of the wardrobe was the development of the affections. The heart of man began to beat when woman ceased to resemble him. But it was not until meditation had made her modest and fashion fastidious that his enthralment was complete. Then at once where the boor had been the knight appeared. In place of the female came the woman. Hitherto she had served. Thereafter she began to reign. In the States to-day she rules the roost. Fashion has done it. Hence our admiration for that active abstraction. Hence, too, the serenity of spirit which a well-dressed woman displays.

That serenity is quite natural. Barring such abominations as golf skirts and blouses, smart women have never got themselves up more fascinatingly than they do to-day. In the old prints of earlier days they are astounding to behold. Frocks were masonry and chignons architecture. Caricaturists represent *les très grandes dames* followed by carpenters widening and heightening the doors through which they pass. In one sketch a hairdresser is shown on a ladder arranging topmost curls. On the head of the Duchesse de Chartres a *coiffeur* succeeded in exhibiting her entire biography. The hair of the Princess de Machin was manipulated into a cage, in which were loosed three thousand butterflies.

After the amputations of the Revolution fashion must have become simpler, but through epochs which we lack the art to describe it remained unalluring until Worth took a hand. The women he turned out looked like angels, only, of course, much better dressed. To-day the girls to whom Doucet has ministered are a caress to the eye. Personally, if we may refer to ourselves, there are frocks of Félix that have seemed to us more satisfactory than old masters, and there are also confections of Paquin that we have found as exhilarating as cups of champagne.

In what manner they are evolved and through what process, after their evolution, these ruedelapaixian seductions, primarily and, it may be, uniquely designed to pleasure some Princesse Lointaine, repeat themselves indefinitely, and variously vulgarised, reappear on the banks of the Neva, at the Golden Gate, in Bloomsbury and Bucharest, in Kandahar and Chicago, the Lord in his wisdom and mercy only knows, and in so saying it may be that we exaggerate, for, sure of nothing, we cannot be sure of that, although, indeed, there has just occurred to us an incident highly enlightening.

Some years ago the Queen of the Wends, Queen of the Goths, the Queen Matchmaker, who was the late Queen of Denmark, was also Queen of the Bicycle. In her obituaries the fact was not noted. Compared with her other titles it may have seemed unimportant. But it is only unimportant things that are really momentous. Louise of Hesse-Cassel became the progenitrix of sovereigns, and left the course of events unaltered. She got on a wheel one day and changed the face of the earth.

The event occurred before the flood, a full decennium ago, at a time when no decent person would have been found dead on a bicycle. It was at her summer court on the Baltic, through the wide leisures of which the selectest princesses and the least exclusive princes lounged, that the deed was done. What the mother of an empress *in esse* and of another *in posse* does, smaller fry copy. The young royals, her grandchildren, followed suit. Photographed, bike in hand, their pictures emerged in shop windows. At sight of them Paris went mad. Then New York caught a fever, which afterward spread to London, and ultimately was reported to have assumed epidemic proportions in Melbourne. So runs the world away. Meanwhile, the queen had put her wheel aside. Imitation is flattery's most odious form. None the less, a fashion had been set, industries founded, manufactories multiplied, and all through a monarch's whim, because of a summer day an entirely amiable lady had seen fit to mount a wheel.

That wheel has since been relegated to the provinces. In its place is the auto. Presently that will pass. Fancies vary, follies ditto. The one thing constant is change. Yet, as with the bike, so with bonnets. What great ladies do lesser ladies copy. Therein is the mode's *modus operandi.* These premises admitted, there arises the interesting problem, What shall the woman of the future wear? But, before deciding, it will be useful to determine what sort of a person that woman will be.

Could the subject be considered from the standpoint of Dr Schenck's promise that sex may be determined by maternal nutrition, it is obvious that woman would be scarce as Madeira and just as heady. But though Dr Schenck promised he did not fulfil. As a consequence, the subject becomes more complex. At the same time, women being all alike in this that they are every one of them different, it follows that what is true of them to-day was true in the past and will be in the future. Individually diverse, collectively they are undistinguishable. To the naked eye at least. And it was certainly to remedy this defect that Fashion was invented. For however fancies may vary and follies change, however distressing last year's hat may look, woman herself does not alter. It is the mode that passes, not the model. The eternal feminine is everlastingly the same. To tell, then, what sort of a person the coming woman will be, take a receipt from astrology and first hatch her milliner.

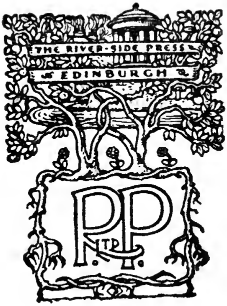
Even so and even otherwise, though it is the mode that passes and not the model, though through the change of years and the convolution of things the heart of archaic Eve beats throughout femininity to-day, the beauty of the lady has developed. Yet, as nothing is constant but change, that beauty is doomed to diminish. In the part of the world from which we write it cannot help itself. Beauty's patent of nobility is to be useless. Therein is the sorcery of the rose. It charms and does nothing. Commerce, combinations, concentration, and all that in them is, whether utilitarian, progressive, or both, are beauty's antitheses. The trend of the age is, as we have elsewhere noted, to things very large and very ugly. In their construction, development, and expansion we all either actively or passively collaborate. We cannot do otherwise. The Zeitgeist will not let us. It has us fast in its maw. For the bewilderments of feminine witcheries it cares not a rap. That for which it does care is progress. In moulding us to its will it moulds our senses and muddles our souls. The instincts it instils we will transmit. As a consequence the babies to come may develop both brains and brawn, yet never beauty. Now add the column up. The result is plain women.

And so much the better. Plain women are currently considered neglectable quantities. Such consideration comports an error that is profound. Memoirs and missions have acquainted us with many who dressed, undressed, and digressed divinely. The picture gallery of heroines is crammed with others who understood very well that, while beauty may allure, graciousness enchains. A service of Sèvres with nothing on it is less appetising than a *petite marmite.* Unaccompanied by other attributes, beauty alarms when it does not weary. Moreover, it is only the solely beautiful who are really plain. A really plain woman is one who, however beautiful, neglects to charm. By the same token a beautiful woman who contents herself with being merely beautiful is far plainer than a plain woman who does nothing but beautiful things. It is for this reason that the most beautiful woman in the world is always the woman whom we have yet to meet. It is for this reason, too, that in the Evangel of Women it is written, or rather will be when the Evangel appears: Blessed are the plain who succeed in charming, for theirs and theirs only is the Kingdom of Love.

But let us consider the subject less seriously. Beauty is relative. Perfect beauty is a phrase and nothing else. Once upon a time a philosopher produced a large volume, in the course of which he proved that God is perfection. Then he produced a second volume, equally large, in which he proved that perfection does not exist. It were impossible to be more exhaustively witty. Subsequently another philosopher produced a supplementary work, in which he proved that in the absence of perfect beauty a lady who is equally ugly all over is more satisfactory than one unequally fair. It were impossible to be more profound. These views, however, public opinion has failed to endorse. But that is natural. Moreover, there is a disease of the eye that is catalogued as hemiopia. Of any given object the patient sees but half. It is one of Satan's greatest *tours de force* to have afflicted us all with that malady and rendered us blind to feminine defects. It must amuse him not a little to see how we are all taken in. Were it otherwise men would devote themselves to pious works. For that matter, it is only those who have penetrated the guile of the Very Low that do. As a consequence, when, in the future, women are plain, men will occupy themselves only with virtuous deeds. And is not that a consummation devoutly to be wished?

Yet because the coming Eve is to be plain it by no means follows that she will be painful. On the contrary. In the good old days of the glory that was Greece, a woman whose peplon did not hang right in the back, whose general appearance was not modish, there and then, as we have somewhere remarked, became a disturber of the peace, and as such liable to a fine that varied with degrees of slatternliness from ten to a thousand drachmæ. Penalties not similar but cognate will, we assume with entire readiness, be visited by the legislators of the future on the woman who shall in her attire presume to neglect to charm. But we assume with equal readiness that such neglect will be rare. For while by that time hemiopia may have become curable and feminine defects be recognised and endured, it follows for that reason that women—*celles de la haute, bien entendu*—will be tricked out, adorned, and embellished, as were never even the goddesses of old.

How the ladies of the middle classes shall then appear interests us no more than how they appear to-day. We take it, however, that among them there will be some quite vulgar enough to be pretty. But about the plain yet peerless peris of the peerage of this and other lands there will be garments immaterial as moonbeams, gorgeous as quetzals, at once shadowy and stunning, luminous as the zaïmph of Tanit, coruscating as the shower of Danæ, the triumph of art, poetry, and the Rue de la Paix. For in default of feminine perfections such things as these must be, if only to perpetuate the species, and with it the jubilance and the guile of Satan and his pomps.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THE GHOST GIRL

THE GHOST GIRL

I

THE vivid climax to Nelly Chilton's wedding startled a metropolis long since used to the startling. But the spectacular termination of the beauty's marriage was commonplace by comparison to incidents that supervened.

In Bil Sayers' novel, "The Halls of Eblis," many of these incidents are told. The telling is the admirable work of an admirable writer. Events are set forth, not as they did occur, but as they should have occurred, which is the only way to tell a story. In the present document that process has been reversed.

Among those who stood witness to the events were Jim Bradish and your servant. He and I had been classmates at Harvard, fellow students in foreign universities, companions in the proscenia and side-scenes of life. We had travelled, feasted and starved together. I may say I knew him, that is if one human being ever does know another. While in Japan a cable caught us. His father was dead. Bradish was a very rich man.

At the time, I had, or thought I had, enough to go around, a bundle of bonds with which the trustee was diverting himself. When Bradish and I reached New York he was a plutocrat and I was a pauper. I hate the alliteration. More hateful still was the fact.

I have been about a bit and I know of no place where poverty is agreeable, or any place anywhere where it is less agreeable than in New York. Along the glittering precinct in which my people had moved, I was like the man who fell from the balloon, simply out of it. But not irremediably. Bradish did the obvious thing. He did not ask, he insisted on being my banker.

It would, I dare say, seem very fine of me if I had balked. I did nothing of the kind. I drew on him for what little I actually required. In two years I was afloat. A year later he was repaid. I was what is termed a best-seller. Nothing to boast of, quite the contrary.

Meanwhile the glittering precinct was closed to Bradish also, though, necessarily, not as it was to me. I lacked the money to walk in. He lacked the courage.

In looking back at it all now, I realise what I did not recognise then. In a previous life he must have done something very evil. What he had done only the keepers of the doors that close behind our birth could tell. But whatever it may have been, he paid for it. I have seen and, what is worse I have seen him see, people shrink back open-mouthed from before him. Karma had plastered his face with a birthmark shaped and coloured like a great scarlet spider. In spite of which he had the gentleness of a giant. After the lovable fashion of a sundial, it was only serene hours of which he took count. In unphilosophic New York that is always a feat. It is one, though, which presently he ceased to perform.

Meanwhile, I had pitched my tent in that loveliness that Harlem is. The tent was on the top floor of what is agreeably known as a walkup. Bradish hated it.

But he came there. I told him not to come. I told him I did not want him. I told him I did not want anybody. Idle tears. Up the interminable stairs he stalked and pounded and pounded, threatening to break the door down. When, cursing the interruption, I threw it open, in he would tumble, followed, as often as not, by Mike, one of his many servants, a mechanician usually bowed to the ground with a hamper of aspic and game, wine and strong waters.

In those days I was so out of it that I knew nothing except what I invented. But in Bradish's great, white, staring house, there were always men to dinner, to supper, to breakfast, for all I know to the contrary, and the talk of these men, who knew what was going on, and a lot that was not, he retailed to me and it was all so much fresh air. Again and again it supplied a situation, the slang of the day, the prompt retort.

I can see him now, sitting back, drinking his cigar, drinking, too, his strong waters and, in the orange light of my low lamp, that spider barely visible. Usually a dull brick it was only in moments of excitement that it reddened. It seemed then a living thing. There have been times when I could have sworn I saw it extending and contracting its antennæ. There have been others when it seemed about to spring. That, though, was later.

One night—it was in the third year after our return to this country—and on a night when it was snowing like the very devil, I heard the usual uproar. It was the only way that he, or anyone else for that matter, could get at me. There was no telephone. I had had the accursed thing removed. Moreover it was idle to ring, in addition to being hazardous. Touch the button and you get a shock. I had had a battery put in for that purpose. To lead a profitable life of crime requires silence, solitude and a natural gift for villainy. By this time, that gift and those fortifications aiding, I was afloat, all sales flying, if I may be permitted a stupid jest, one which, together with everything else concerning myself, I throw in to be rid of. This is not a biography, heaven forbid. It is the account of a door, closed and barred, and not mine either.

On this night, for the first time, I approached it. It was wide open, so wide that all I saw were the vistas beyond. It was not until later that I realised that there was a door there, a door that was to shut itself, shut tighter than a wall.

The night was vile. There was a wind to blow your head off and I thanked fortune that I had had the forethought, which I often lacked, to larder up beforehand, when I heard Bradish hammering and reviling me outside.

Superbly befurred, in a coat which even a tenor might have denied himself, but, the coat apart, dressed as he usually was, with that appearance of the threadbare which, in a man of large means, is always superiorly correct, he stamped in, kicking and throwing the snow off on me and, once in my workshop, removing the coat which he dropped on the floor.

Then, puffing a bit, he greeted me.

"You live like a bandit."

On one of my few chairs I sat down and looked at him.

"What do you want?"

"More than I can get. More than I deserve if I could get it."

"Here," I said, "don't run into excesses. The liquor is behind you."

He waved at me. "You remember the ships crowded in Aulis like white birds?"

I took it in and handed it back. "But not the face that crowded them there. I never saw the lady and I doubt that anyone else did. It all happened a long time ago and probably never happened at all. Anyway, beauty since then has departed. Successively women became handsome, good-looking, pretty. Now they think it smart to be plain."

It was a long speech and I lit a cigarette.

He fidgeted about and lit one also. "You would not have said that this afternoon." Informatively he continued: "Aphrodite never existed——"

"Good Lord! I thought it was Helen you were talking of."

"But she exists today."

"Well, I am sure Swinburne would be glad to know it. What is her present style and title?"

Negligently he strewed the ashes. "Miss Chilton."

"Oh!" I said longly, for even in my Harlem fastness the rumour of her beauty had reached me. "How did you swim into her galley?"

"Brevoort brought her to see some etchings."

"What did she say?"

"Nothing."

"Very well-bred of her. See here! The original Chilton was a patroon, was he not? Or no, he could not have been. A lord of the manor, that's it. There is a Chilton Manor somewhere up the Hudson. Didn't she say anything?"

"It was her mother who did the talking. I asked them to dinner tomorrow. You have got to come."

Well, why not? I thought, for the turpitude on which I had been engaged was done and I said: "Send a car for me."

To my knowledge he had six cars, which is only reasonable, and he may have had more, which is not. None the less he rebuked me.

"You act like a prima donna."

But he sent the car and I went.

The drawing-room, huge, high-ceiled, frescoed, fitted in yellow and black, was unusually bare, to the foot that is, and I wondered at it. At one end, fronting windows that gave on upper Fifth Avenue, were two rows of chairs. At them also I wondered.

"A camp-meeting?" I said to Mrs. Trefusis, born a Bradish, who was there with her daughter. The latter, a prim débutante who could throw a cartwheel without displaying much of her subsurface garments.

Additionally were Brevoort, a gay sort of ass; his sister, Hilaria Vaux, who was gayer; other topnotchers, and Cally, a physician, whom we called Cagliostro—a pleasantry which secretely he liked and openly resented. The best of us have our weaknesses. But as yet not the Chiltons.

Finally they came.

Bradish introduced me. "This is Chandos Poole."

Mrs. Chilton gave me her hand. A tall woman, admirably sent out, she had an easy way, which I fancied could be very repellent, and eyes flat as a snake's. Those eyes darted.

"I knew your mother." She turned to her daughter.

"Darling, you have heard me speak of dear Mrs. Poole?"

Probably the girl never had, though what she replied and whether she replied, I have forgotten. I was thinking of the ships crowded at Aulis, one of which instantly floated me to Paphos where I stood before Aphrodite when young and a girl.

Nelly Chilton had the low Greek brow, the ineffable Greek nose, lips lifted at the corners by the upturned comma of the Athenian mouth, buttercup hair, an apple-blossom skin and cornflower eyes. She seemed to have gems about her, not that she needed them or had them, but their glow was there and, with it, a charm that was overwhelming. Many a man would have paid through the nose to be allowed just to stand and look at her.

Aristotle, asked what beauty is, dodged it and said, "A question for the blind." I am not blind and I knew that I stood before it. It is a rare sensation. Only once had I experienced it quite so amply and that was when considering—through fieldglasses—a landscape of lilies and tigers.

But at once we went on and in to what I thought a very ordinary dinner, a sort of *pot-au-feu* with wings to it. The wings were ortolans, though where and how the caitiff of a chef had obtained them, I afterward forgot to ask.

The room, a sort of baronial hall, extended up through two storeys. Midway, it was circled by a gallery from which other rooms abutted and from which arrased tapestries hung.

I never cared for it, but I preferred it to the dinner which, in addition to being ordinary, was dull. If it had not been for Cally, it would have been deadly. Occasionally, Brevoort flared a little and then like a damp pinwheel went out. On one side I had the Trefusis girl.

Primly she remarked: "Must be jolly to write and do what you like to the heroines. Don't you find it nice and easy?"

I threw one of my own cartwheels. "Well, hardly. This morning I wrote a line. This afternoon I scratched it out. I am quite exhausted."

Up a bit, on the opposite side, was Miss Chilton. I saw her laughing at something Cally had said. Any emotion is unbecoming. True beauty is austere. Yet her laughter heightened hers. It did not deform, it humanised. It lifted her from mythology and set her down before you an unspoiled, unaffected girl.

From her I looked at her mother who was talking to Bradish, no, at him. After the manner of a woman of her *monde* and her years, she was considerably made up. Behind the paint and the slight contractions at her eyes and mouth, I could see her also, a soul disillusioned, hungry, fatigued, indomitable—a soul common enough, the soul of a woman at odds with fate and determined to outwit it.

Voicelessly I said to my neighbour, "Is Mrs. Chilton a widow?"

"He took his hat and umbrella and no one has seen him since."

Sensible man, I reflected.

At the moment, from across the table, Brevoort called at Miss Chilton.

"If you were not yourself, who would you dislike to be?"

"But that is just it," she answered. "We aren't any of us ourselves. We are all of us masked and it is that I dislike. I don't want a disguise, I want to be Me."

She spoke with little pauses in a husky Mayfair voice that was singularly fetching. At the time that was all I noticed, except that Bradish, who had been literally hanging on her words, looked as though he could jump straight down the throat from which they came.

That is all I noticed. But there is a Russian saying to the effect that life is a dark room in which we are shut in with an enemy—the eternal enemy that we have within us—and from whom we have to fight free. Afterward I recalled that saying and wondered whether she knew it and had been translating it for us. Yet how dark that dark room of hers was to become she could not have known. None of us knew. But even then its shadows were groping for her. At the glittering table, in the great lighted hall, more particularly perhaps in the brilliance of her incredible beauty, no one could see them. Yet, stealthy, ominous, relentless, they were reaching for her, reaching, too, for Bradish, stretching out to cover them both, to shroud them, to hide them away.

Then, at once, everybody was getting up.

Now, though, in the drawing-room, the chairs that fronted the windows were occupied by people, very sumptuous all of them, and all convulsed by some private joke.

For all I knew they might have been the pick of the social basket. Yet, suddenly, pushing back the chairs, there they were clapping and singing, kicking up before and behind, while one of them, a ravishing little animal, tiptoed out on the bare floor and danced.

The singing sank. At the piano was a fat lady. Still the girl danced, not acrobatically as I believe the fashion was then, but with what I imagined might be the fabled art of Taglioni. Presently, with a backward gesture at her spangled skirt, she stopped and bowed. On her forehead, one drop of perspiration glistened.

I did not see her again for a little and meanwhile a man, with a lot of hair and an affable manner, asked me for my hat, hoped I had not been careless enough to lose it, borrowed Brevoort's handkerchief, a square of folded linen, from which he shook out a shower of orchids that drenched Miss Chilton.

Then, at once, the other sumptuous people treated us to a farce, of which the fun was so good and so quick that some of us roared and Miss Chilton laughed.

I could see her at it and I thought she should never do anything else, except smile. For a while thereafter smile she did, no doubt, and often I dare say, if only for the mere civility of it, but when that little while had passed I never saw her smile again.

Presently there was a frisk and afterward there was supper. During the frisk, I delighted myself, and I hope the fat lady, by two-stepping with her. Bradish orang-outangoed with the little ballerina. But, good chap that he was, he put me beside her at supper, a real old-fashioned orgy, at which we all drank too much, except the Chiltons and the Trefusis, who long since had gone, the prim débutante showing off to the delighted Rialtians a tiptop cartwheel as she went.

How young we were then! How young and how mad!

II

Before me, the next evening, were the galleys of my latest crime. However iniquitous the copy, the proofs were worse. They were larded with microscopic felonies which required the eyes of a bug and the patience of a philosopher to detect, yes, and with the certainty of defeat in the end—yet I was attempting to correct them.

All at once the ink shook all over it. An earthquake had jarred my elbow. There was Bradish again.

When I opened, there was Cally also.

With my usual courtesy I greeted them. *"Entrez, canailles."*

In mitigation, Bradish gestured. "He picked me up in the street."

"Misfortunes never come singly," I resignedly replied. "They come single file and ask for a drink."

"For two of 'em," said Cally. "I have been dining at Duncan's. After dinner he danced a *pas seul."*

"For you?"

We were then in the workshop where I got out spirits which I knew water would dampen.

Cally helped himself abundantly.

"Some time since, Duncan called me in. He could not walk. He could shuffle a bit and even that hurt. Why, he did not know. No one knew. He had had the indicated tests which indicated nothing. He told me all about it, told it endlessly. I said: 'Do as I tell you and in six months you will dance.' Tonight, the six months were up. He danced. He danced on the dinner-table and broke it down. Pass the bottle."

"What did you prescribe, Cagliostro?"

"The dentist. I told him to have his teeth out, every one of them."

"And then robbed him!" I enviously exclaimed. "Lord! If instead of a hackman I were only a physician! It is true I have bankrupted a lot of people and I hope to bankrupt more. But I do it in cold ink. You do it in cold blood."

Cally nodded. "You are having a good time, aren't you?" Philosophically he added, "Well, we all had one last night."

He turned to Bradish. "In spite of the charm of one of your guests, I have held, and still hold, that beauty is a survival."

Blandly he turned to me. "Where is your telephone?"

"Down stairs, around the corner, two streets up, across the way, at the undertaker's."

Bradish lit another cigarette. "Did you ever hear of such a chap?"

"Genius is always eccentric," Cally quite as blandly replied.

He was bland. With a pointed beard, eyebrows that were a bit upturned and a beak of a nose, he had all the blandness of Mephistopheles.

At that beard he plucked. Then putting on his hat, out he went.

The door had not closed before Bradish was at me.

"The Chiltons are coming to supper. They are at the opera now with Mrs. Amsterdam. I told them to fetch her and that I would fetch you. You will like Mrs. Amsterdam. Or rather she will like you. She is very keen on good-looking young bloods."

"Go to the devil!" I retorted. "Good Lord! Mrs.

Amsterdam! I remember her when I was a little shaver. Why, I have sat in her lap."

"Have you? Well, don't remind her of that if she sits in yours. Now run along and dress."

I put the proofsheets before him. "While I am at it, here is some rot for you."

Bradish laughed. "You're the most hospitable chap I ever knew."

When I returned, he was looking at something else, at a mental vision of Nelly Chilton, I think, for as I entered he gave a sort of start.

It is years since then, but often I have thought how differently it might have fared with him and how differently it would have fared with her, could his vision have been clairvoyant. Yet, in that, I am probably in error. Probably, whatever the future holds for us is pre-written in our progression. None the less, I cannot but feel that all would have been changed, his life and her life, if for but a moment's space he could have beheld the halls that were waiting for him then. Hung with enigmas, tapestried with tears, Bil Sayers called them the Halls of Eblis, which, I believe, is Arabic for hell. If he could have seen them, and the "if" is enormous, he might have outwitted fate.

"Comeonski," I said, an invitation which we had acquired in Moscow.

He got at his watch. Thin as a wafer, it was always wrong.

"Yes, let's hurry. I hope Cally has not taken the car."

There were cabs in Harlem then, except when you wanted one and below, in the street, the spectacle of Mike hugging himself to keep warm, was comforting.

"Home," Bradish told him, "and never mind the speed law."

Whether or not Mike minded the law is perhaps unimportant, but just as we were approaching that home a fire-engine burst on the avenue like a typhoon. Incidentally a taxi was dodging it and against that taxi another car banged.

Already Mike had hopped off. Adjacently great doors had opened. Two servants, one with the face of a wooden mask and the other with the tread of a cat, hurried down. From the first taxi two women alighted; from the second a man. The typhoon had flown afar, chased by another.

But now we were all on the sidewalk, Bradish and I, Mike, the servants, the women, the man and two highly abusive mechanicians. How they pacified themselves is not a part of this document. The women, furred to the eyes, were unrecognisable; to me, that is, but not to Bradish, nor yet to the other man whose face appeared to be cut.

Bradish, meanwhile, was doing the honours of the pavement to the women, whom also the injured man addressed, and I saw one of them give him her hand, while the other affected to be unaware that he was about.

Bradish called at the wooden mask. "Peters, show the ladies in." He called at the catman. "Gedney, see to their wraps." He turned to the wounded. "You must not bleed to death. Come in with me and we will apply first aid. My name is Bradish. I see you know my guests."

"They are relatives of mine," lightly the wounded man answered. "My name is Austen. But I have only a scratch. Just as many thanks to you though."

As he spoke, he held his hat on with one hand and with the other patted his face.

Without lingering to hear more, I went on and up the steps, beyond which events were lurking, as they do lurk, until they are ready for us, though without waiting until we are ready for them, which only the sage ever is. Yet, as I look back now, I can see that even then they were gathering, prepared to pounce.

In the yellow and black room I found the Chiltons, found too that I was in no immediate danger. Mrs. Amsterdam was not there.

"Is he coming in?" Miss Chilton asked.

Without knowing to whom she referred, I told her of course he was.

"It is strange," the beauty continued. "I am fated to be in an accident. It is in my horoscope. But it is very wrong to believe in that. The Church forbids it. It is among the secret things and secret things, the Bible teaches, belong only to the Lord."

In speaking, she crossed herself.

I was profoundly astonished but I hope I did not show it.

"None the less," she continued, "when I saw that great mad thing rushing at us, I——"

"The typhoon you mean?" I put in.

"Typhoon! What typhoon?" Mrs Chilton surprisedly called at me.

But Bradish was effecting his entrance, and she turned to him.

"Sorry about Laura Amsterdam. She threw us over."

"The point is," Bradish with some gallantry replied, "that you are here and shortly your relative will be."

"Relative!" Mrs. Chilton, in the same surprised manner, exclaimed. "What relative?"

Bradish motioned. "A Mr. Austen who is slowly recovering from a wound that might have been mortal."

Mrs. Chilton motioned also. The gesture, though slight, contrived to be emphatic. It reduced any relationship to nothingness.

"Nonsense! Some of our people were related ages ago. If it comes to that, everybody is related to everybody."

Now though, in the wide doorway, he too appeared. The spaciousness framed him, disclosing the portrait of a man young, tall, virile, abominably good-looking, with an air curiously and attractively insolent. From his face the blood had gone. A strip of court-plaster replaced it.

"Aunt Mary," he leisurely remarked at Mrs. Chilton. "If that brute of a taximan of mine jarred you ever so little, you know I regret it."

What a crammer, I thought. For it was not regret that his face expressed, it was impudence. It was as though he were telling her: "See here now, I am, and shall be, one too many for you."

But as I am not writing fiction I may admit that that interpretation came to me not then but later when I thought it over. Yet though I still think the interpretation correct, I know he was wrong. He was not one too many for her. She was one too many for him. Yes, and fate was too many for both.

Meanwhile we had all gone in to supper. Bradish had Mrs. Chilton at his right, and, at his left, the beauty, next to whom Austen succeeded in seating himself.

I sat next to Mrs. Chilton who thoughtfully and generally remarked:

"It is too bad about Laura Amsterdam. She would have made the table even."

But she meant that it was too bad about Austen. Without him the table would have been evener.

I took that in with some pheasant that had been cooked, with oranges and almonds, in madeira and tea, and though that of course is the only way that a pheasant could be cooked, yet I felt that the caitiff below stairs was improving.

While I was savouring it, I glanced over at the beauty who was talking to Austen. At the moment she again suggested Aphrodite and I marvelled at this paradox in flesh and blood who looked like a pagan goddess and talked like a mediæval saint. Yet though the mythological quality persisted, it seemed sublimated then by something else, by just what I could not immediately determine, but in a moment I did. In her eyes there was a glow, in her voice a caress and it seemed to me that the beauty was in love, profoundly in love I imagined, and I wondered with whom.

When, finally, I nailed the lucky devil, it was without any applause for my own acumen.

"You do nothing but eat," Bradish threw at me.

"Yes," I threw back. "But I think when I eat and just now I was thinking of an ideal repast which we once enjoyed and which was composed of chrysanthemum soup and the maxims of Confucius."

"And dolphin, too," Bradish put in. "Don't forget the dolphin!"

"I never heard of such a thing." Mrs. Chilton resuming her surprised manner, exclaimed. "A dolphin! How was it cooked?"

"With various sauces and condiments," I told her. "You know the adage—Sweet are the juices of diversity?"

"No," she determinedly replied. "I do not know the adage and now that I have heard it, I dislike it extremely."

"Yes," said Bradish. "It is very painful."

But I did not propose to be snubbed and I took it up again.

"Everything that has to do with eating is painful. Eating takes away your appetite. I have always loved the bishop who said: 'God bless our home and damn our cook.' "

"But not Mr. Bradish's cook," Mrs. Chilton, with the same determination, retorted. "Last night the dinner was perfect and tonight the supper is *plus que parfait*. Darling!"

She looked at her daughter and turned to Bradish. "We must be going."

She added something which I did not hear. Then she repeated it. "Darling!"

Presently, when they were again furred to the eyes, and we were putting them in Bradish's car, I could not see Mrs. Chilton's face, though I would have given a dollar for the privilege. Unrebuffably Austen got in with them.

It was some time before I saw him again or the Chiltons either. When I did see them, a door was closing and beyond was a sphinx.

III

It must have been after two when, again in Harlem, I went up the interminable stairs. On the way I was thinking of that girl and her undreamed-of beauty. As I began at the fifth, I saw what I took to be an old woman huddled on the landing opposite my door. But, as I advanced, she stood up. I saw then she was not old but young and, immediately, as I approached her, I could not help it, I started and nearly slipped. Then I raised my hat. It was Nelly Chilton!

Why was she there? How had she come? What did she want? And where had she got a hat and where had she changed her furs? Where, for that matter, had she changed her expression? At supper it had been alluring. Now it was reserved.

My bewilderment must have been very manifest. In any event, at once she spoke. With an intonation, slightly foreign, she said something.

I heard, but I did not hear understandingly. That also she must have seen. She spoke again.

"Could you, without inconvenience, loan me a chair?"

I did get that and inanely I parroted it.

"A chair?"

She indicated an adjoining door. "I have lost my key. Until morning I am a vagrant."

And an exotic, I thought, for already I had recognised my mistake.

"You are quite right."

That is what she said and I started again.

"About what?" But, rallying, I resumed; "I have five chairs, I have even six, but the sixth is broken. You shall have whatever displeases you least."

I opened my door, switched the light in the hall and turned to her.

She entered and followed me into the workshop where I again switched a light.

As I looked at her then, she sniffed, much as a terrier will, and catalogued me.

"You are a literary man."

"No, I write for the magazines. There is nothing less literary than that. Will you try this chair?"

As I spoke, I looked again. In feature, in colouring, her resemblance to Nelly Chilton was curious. There it stopped. Similarly dressed and seen across a room, one could not have told them apart. A nearer view differentiated. Nelly Chilton looked like a goddess and talked like a saint. This young woman looked like a princess and, as I presently discovered, talked like a sibyl. The other girl's beauty was pagan. This girl's was noble. Otherwise, except in height and figure, not a pin to choose between them.

"We are not the same, are we? In the hall I saw you mistook me for her."

In private life, it was a bit weird.

Immediately she added: "Miss Chilton and I move in different spheres, but recently I came in contact with her. We both noticed the resemblance. It seemed to amuse her."

"Well, I'll be shot!" I exclaimed. "Certainly you are very gifted."

"Unfortunately gifted," she corrected. "Telepathy has its disadvantages."

"And its compensations."

"Occasionally, as in the present instance. I know

I can say that, for I know also you will not misconstrue it."

In speaking, she removed a glove. There are hands that are spiritual, hands that are coarse. There are philistine hands and hands that are artistic. I saw her fingers, long, tapering, and I chanced it.

"You are an artist."

"My hand is tell-tale, is it not? Yet the tales it tells are not quite true. For the moment, I am associated with a firm of interior decorators. It was there I saw Miss Chilton. But I am intruding. Perhaps you will help me with a chair."

As she moved toward one, I saw that she was simply and admirably dressed, dressed with an originality that is nowhere on sale.

"The landing is a bit bleak," I told her. "Why not make a morning of it?"

Momentarily she seemed to consider it. Then, like a good fellow, she removed her wrap and sat down.

I gave her my name and she gave me hers. It was Bolton, Aly Bolton.

At the combination I exclaimed and she said her father was English and her mother Russian. Both were dead. In outline she sketched her life. It was a very cobwebby outline. In exchange I gave her odds and ends from my own career. After which we got back at the beginning. She spoke again of Miss Chilton and I asked what she thought of her.

"Only the obvious things. She is a little obvious, is she not? But——"

She had hesitated and it trailed away.

I prodded her. "But what?"

Then it appeared she could "see," as that psychic term is used, and had "seen" since she was a child, when it perplexed and annoyed her parents. She had a brother who died. Afterward she played with him. Once, when he was in a chair her father sat on him. She screamed and hit her father and he punished her for it. After that, the talent was hid in a bushel. Since then it had diminished. But she could still "see," at least a little.

So she explained and I asked what she saw in Miss Chilton.

"In her? It would be hard to say. But, about her, I saw darkness, thick darkness and a light beyond."

"How did you see that? I mean how does anything of the kind come to you?"

"Very much as though I were looking through the wrong end of the opera-glass."

"And how do you interpret darkness?"

"It's a symbol. It means illness, misfortune, death."

I sat back. "Yes and, with the light beyond, the symbol is clear. 'Life is death in a land of darkness. Death is life in a land of light.' "

"Very beautiful," she said, "and probably true. Whose is it?"

"It is from the song of the singer going out from Amenti."

"Amenti?"

"The Egyptian purgatory. There the disembodied were judged. If they had harmed no heart, if they had made no one weep, if they had not talked abundantly, if they had not been anxious, harpers took up the song, they were free. From the land of darkness they passed to the land of light."

From my recital of antique sins, she turned. I could see her looking about, noting the absence of articles of virtue. Presently she said and I thought approvingly:

"You are clockless."

"Yes, and watchless also. Brain workers should be. Watches and clocks presuppose things to be done, appointments to be kept, amusements to be endured. They presuppose punctuality which is the thief of time."

She was good enough to agree with me.

From time we passed to space. We talked of everything in the universe, except Einstein's theory of it, which would have been premature. Altogether we talked for five hours. Never but once before had I talked so long to a woman and on that occasion I kept saying the same thing over and over again. Ultimately the sun leered in. It leered groggily, as though it had been making a night of it, and, asking her permission, I left the room, went out and around the corner, ferreted about, unearthed a locksmith, brought him back, set him to work and, with the key that he made, returned to her. Her arms were on the table, her head was in them, her hat on a chair. Sleep had sunk her in its deep lagoons.

In the street I had become a beast of burden, ladened with crescents, unsalted butter, fruit, cream. These I took to the kitchenette—horrible word!—where I made coffee. While the pot was boiling I arranged a tray. To embellish the tray, I took from the back corner of the cupboard's top shelf a Sévres cup that had come down to me wrapped in tissue paper. Other things that had come with it had gone with the diverted bonds.

On that early morning, with the tray and in evening clothes, I must have looked like a waiter when, rising from those lagoons, she looked up.

The experience of awaking in the rooms of a stranger must, I thought, be a novelty to her and I wondered how she would act. Whatever she did would be so much copy.

But there she routed me. I had put that cup before her. She took it, held it, her head went back. She seemed to be considering the ceiling. But presently,

"A large room. A man with a white beard. A little boy in blue. The old man is drinking from a cup. The little boy is showing him a wooden horse painted yellow "

From the ceiling, her eyes turned to me.

"This is the cup. Who are the people?"

Dumbfounded, I stared. What else could I do? For, as I told her, the old man was my grandfather and I the little boy. But this intimate demonstration of psychometry, which is the rarest and most curious of gifts, one that enables the gifted to tell from an object where the object has been and what occurred there, this miracle astounded me and I told her that also.

She took it lightly, with a light smile. Then, at once, she presiding, we fell to. The promenade around the corner and back had converted me into a hyena. I ate enormously, growling a little, as I suppose hyenas do, yet only at my own forgetfulness. I had omitted to fetch flowers. But then, praise God, it was not every day that I breakfasted with a beautiful sibyl. It would have been too disturbing.

"You live alone?" I asked.

A few hours before I had thought her face noble and reserved. Over the coffee-pot it projected an interior radiance, a glow clear and defined as mother-of-pearl.

"No, not alone," she answered. "I have a friend, Signor Matouchi."

Some opera-singer, I thought.

"He has the most ferocious whiskers you ever saw," she added, "and he will be sure to bite me if I do not hurry."

"Oh!" I said, inanely relieved, for what business was it of mine? "Well, give him my love and perhaps you will let me add a saucer of cream."

She thanked me, gathered her hat and cloak, took the key, thanked me again.

I saw her to the door, where I gave her the cream and where I heard Signor Matouchi meow. After which, I went to bed, slept prodigiously and woke from dreams of a mime.

For days he had haunted me. I had wanted, if possible, to produce something less ordinary than ordinary fiction and I had thought of doing a pantomime and of calling it *The Chatterbox,* though, as I look back now, I think the title came first and the idea of a pantomime came later. What better title, I youthfully reflected, could a dumbshow have?

The galleys of my last iniquity out of the way, I got at it. Except to the amateur, the getting at anything of the kind is a form of labour hard as a bricklayer's, much more engrossing and far less useful. It held me with invisible threads that were firmer than rope. They bound and gagged me, rendering me, as the opiates of creative dreams do render one, unfit for human companionship.

I did not forget the sibyl. Twice, in the hazards of hall and stairway, I saw and saluted her, but though indulgently she asked me, I did not return her visit. I did not forget Bradish, but I had other fish to fry. There were earthquakes. Hermetically I ignored them. *Que diable!* When I am not at home, I am out. Only a volcano could have erupted me.

Meanwhile, I dressed *The Chatterbox*. March went, April came. There were skies of silk, all the surprises and surrenders of spring, before I got up from it.

IV

THAT day, with a dozen violets in the lapel of a coat that still said Savile Row, I went junketing, not on Fifth Avenue, where the ornate used to stroll and where they stroll no longer, but to the east of upper Madison, wondering whether I might not happen on some flat less leprous than the walkup. Yet, as I look back now, I am sure the junket lacked conviction. Moving, the French say, is a little death. But in that sense all New Yorkers have their minor deceases and it was in trying to incline my heart that I wandered through thick streets, thin streets, streets of gloating windows, streets of obvious disquiet, streets of unaccountable beings, until finally, entering one that seemed pregnant with obscure calamities, I happened on a house that had a Leah-like air of desertion.

On it, a sign informed me that an apartment with all conveniences was to let and I was conjecturing these conveniences when, from the entrance, Austen appeared.

Instantly he amazed me.

"I was just thinking of you."

I stood and looked at him. Soberly and admirably dressed, he was the portrait of Aramis in modern clothes.

"Are you busy?" he asked.

Brummel's retort slid from me. "'Ants and people in trade are busy. Never ask a gentleman that.'" He took it with great good nature.

"Come in and let me offer you a sherry and bitters."

I did not want his sherry and bitters. It was the sign and the conjectural conveniences that tempted me and I followed him up two flights to a landing where, through the open door of an empty flat, I beheld a scrubwoman.

Leah, I told myself.

Adjacent was a parallel flat into which he showed me and then into a room that had an air careless and insolent, a room that resembled him, except that it was less well-dressed. There was a sideboard, a table covered with a drooping green cloth, the usual chairs, a bookcase, a green sofa and a cupboard, wide open, in which coats were hanging, fur coats, motor coats, rain coats, top coats, coats for every season and, it may be, of every colour. He closed the door on them, rang, and at once, as though sprung from a trap, a civil-faced gnome appeared.

"Shall it be a cocktail? Or would you prefer——"

"A drop of Polly, if you have it," I told him.

"A bottle of Apollinaris," he said to the gnome who seemed to produce it at once.

"Look here, Poole," he continued as the servant disappeared, "I have been wanting to call on you but I could not discover where you live. You are a member of the Buck, aren't you? I stopped in there yesterday, and asked the doorkeeper. Of course, he would not tell me, but I thought, in asking, that I might find you there."

"The flat next door is to let, is it not?" I appropriately enquired.

"Yes, or rather no. It was to let but a man I know has taken it. Have a cigarette?"

We were seated at the table, across which he shoved a case. I helped myself and he got back at me.

"What I wanted to see you about is Bradish."

"Hello!" I exclaimed. "How is he? I have not seen him in a hundred years. What's wrong with him."

"He is too confoundedly rich."

"Yes," I said, "it is disgusting."

"He ought not to be roaming around loose. I want him to keep off the grass."

What grass he meant, I did not know, but the effrontery of it was beautiful and I said as much.

"Then why don't you tell him so?"

"There you are! If I did, he would be in a position to tell me to go to the devil and I would have to swallow it. You know Mrs. Chilton?"

I drank the Polly. "Well enough to bow if she bowed first."

"Here it is then. She wants to make a match between him and her daughter and——"

"I don't see that that is any business of ours."

"It is my business at any rate and as a friend of his I think it is yours."

"Well," I said, "perhaps it is your business. You are a relative, aren't you?"

"A good lot more than that. I have known Miss Chilton ever since she was a little girl. I am about the only man she can turn to and——"

He looked away.

Everybody likes to be confidential, if they can be so to someone who will accompany them on the harp. But for the harp there must be intimacy. Between Austen and myself there was none and I understood why he looked away.

"But," he at once resumed, "that is neither here nor there. The point is that Miss Chilton is interested in someone else and it seemed to me that if you would say a word——"

"Good Lord!" I interrupted. "You speak as though he were persecuting her. That is not Bradish."

"No. Certainly not. It is her mother. She is doing what she can to force her to take him and it is for that reason I thought you might——"

"Never in the world. It would not help in the least. On the contrary——"

"But see here——"

"You don't know Bradish. Any interference makes him mulish and I don't blame him. I can be mulish myself. If I had his money I would be a wilderness of mules. Great Scott! What is the use of being rich as all outdoors if you can't tell anybody and everybody to go to the devil."

"Precisely, and that is just what I want him to say to Mrs. Chilton. If he doesn't, look here, Poole, if he doesn't, he is going to regret it."

I laughed. "Is that a threat?"

"You misunderstand me. He is not the man for Miss Chilton. I don't mean because of his unfortunate appearance. If he were Phœbus Apollo it would be quite the same. He does not appeal to her, not in the least. But her mother is so jockeying her that she may run her into it. In that case what sort of an existence can he expect to lead."

"He hasn't told me."

"Isn't it obvious though? I may be in error, but I'll wager he is as material as they make 'em."

"So am I."

Gracefully he yielded it. "I fear I am also."

"Well then?"

"But Miss Chilton is just the opposite. Miss Chilton is as spiritual as he is the reverse."

For a cited beauty, a beauty of her type and headiness that, ordinarily, would have been a bit thick. Yet, I knew it to be true. In her face were raptures. There were lilies in her thoughts. But that did not help matters. Even otherwise the matter did not concern me and I got up to go.

He, too, got up.

"Put in a word, Poole. You will be doing him a good turn."

You mean I will be doing you one, I thought, for I saw through it then.

But he laughed or affected to laugh and added:

"I don't pretend to know Bradish, but I do know Mrs. Chilton and that is enough."

He said it as he went with me to the door, where he thanked me and saw me out.

On the landing Leah stood, a pail in one hand, a mop in the other.

As I went down the stair, I little dreamed in what curious and tragic circumstances I was to recall having seen her there. What occupied me was my lucky squeak. By not more than a hair I had missed having Austen for a neighbour. He would have been waylaying and buttonholing me till I died.

Yet, as I afterward recognised, it was fateful for him, and not only for him but for all concerned, that he had buttonholed me at all.

I made straight for Bradish's house.

V

SINCE then, in looking back, there have been moments when it seemed to me that that moment was pivotal, that of all that afterward happened I was then the direct agent. There have been other moments when it seemed to me that it must all have happened anyway. The latter view is the more reasonable, the former more ambitious. As yet, I have made no choice.

Even when the servant told me that Bradish was not at home, even then, if I had gone away, the course of events must have swerved, though it is probable that sooner or later they would have reassembled in their designed combination. The old idea of the spiderous fates that sit and spin is picturesque, as any allegory should be. But behind the curtain, forces which we ourselves have created, play on us and on our lives. The fates that sit and spin are our own fingers. The spell they cast is destiny self-made.

These views, certainly superficial, came to me long later. At the moment I had turned to go. Before me on the pavement a man passed and nodded. That was the pivotal moment. The trivial incident arrested me and telling the servant I would wait I went on and in to the library.

Former Bradishes had been intensely respectable and equally dull. They were what, I believe, was called strict Presbyterians. Upstairs, in the rooms that extended from the gallery, some of their remains were covered with horsehair. In this room other remains survived—a severe carpet, a calvanistic table, stern bookshelves, straitlaced chairs. In a corner was the ugliest piece of statuary I ever saw. On the table was the biggest and ugliest inkpot ever made.

From a wall, Bradish's father looked down, very much, I suppose, as he had looked at these things when they all lived with him in Washington Square. Moreover, in an adjoining room, that gave on the street, were other felicities. The adjoining room, through which one had to pass to reach the library, was the real chamber of horrors. There Bradish received tiresome people, lawyers, agents and the like. Why, with all his wealth, he received them at all; why he stuck to the damning evidence of ancestral taste, these were mysteries from which I shrank.

But it was not all horror. On this day in that library I found an old friend who always had something new to say, in which he differed vastly from other people of my acquaintance. His name is Hugo's *Shakespeare*. The pages turn to the sound of trumpets, to the long parade of genius. The book is just what a book should be, perfectly impossible and equally exalting.

A moment and the pageantry took me. I was floating from height to height, from prophet to seer, hovering, a lost soul, before thrones in the ideal, passing from Isaiah and Æschylus, up through the ages to Hugo himself. Then abruptly, a titan reached and hurled me. Shot through space I was on earth again, in a highly uncomfortable chair, facing the insults that fell.

"What a beast you are!"

I shied the book. Bradish caught it and sat down before me.

With the disposition of a sundial—over which clouds will pass—the spider, at that moment, made him, as in moments of excitement it often did make him, unaffectedly hideous. Familiarity breeds many things. Usually I did not notice. I could not help noticing it then. It seemed about to spring.

He motioned. "I have gone to you. I have sent. The janitor said you were dead. What sort of a chap are you?"

"A mere pilgrim. What's wrong?"

"I am in hell."

"Look out," I told him, and far better than I knew. "There is always a deeper one. How did you get there?"

He put the Hugo on the table.

"It's Miss Chilton."

"See here," I said. "An hour ago Austen had the cheek to say you must keep off the grass."

Bradish stared. "He has been at you, has he?"

"He got me in his rooms and used me as a sewer. It appears that if you don't look out you'll get let in."

He started. "I will, eh? By whom then?"

"Her mother. He said she would jockey you into a corner."

"Gammon! She is in a corner herself and a pretty tight one. The woman hasn't a penny."

"There's the Chilton place."

"Mortgaged. Blanketed up to the roof, even to the vault there."

"Vault? What vault?"

"In colonial days every manor had its own cemetery. The Chiltons have theirs."

He was becoming historical, wandering away from it and, glad of it, I let him run on, but he did not run far. In a moment he was back again.

"Her mother is afraid they'll bolt."

I hoped they would. I omitted to say so however. Instead, I became sympathetic.

"Jim, if this were a novel of mine, I would make the hero—you are the hero—show himself in such fine colours that the lady would jump down his throat."

"Yes, you would be sure to write just such rubbish."

Pausing, he smoothed the table, which was entirely unruffled.

"I have, I suppose, a dollar or two. I have also, I suppose, a year or two ahead of me. I would give them all, everything I can claim in this world, everything I may hope for in the next, if——"

He broke it off, but I followed it and I thought, isn't it wonderful how the illusion of happiness which the idea of union with another can create, will pack a sane man's head with insanities. He thinks himself wholly in love with this girl and what he loves is not the girl but his idea of her. Any girl that resembled her would do as well. At which, up before me, surged that sibyl. Nelly Chilton and Aly Bolton were alike as two roses.

Meanwhile, painfully he was at it. "It's my face."

"Nonsense," I told him and I meant it. For a woman must be loved, though it be by a monster, perhaps particularly by a monster, provided that what it is conventional to call her affections are not otherwise involved.

"Hasn't Austen anything?" I asked.

"Enough to pay his tailor."

There had been an hour when even that potentiality had seemed chimerical to me and I might have said as much but, at the moment, Peters announced that luncheon was served.

Bradish got up. "Comeonski."

I, too, got up and, preceding him, went through the chamber of horrors and crossed the hall where Peters was opening the front door. I passed on and had entered the drawing-room when I heard a man speaking rapidly, in English, but with the unmistakable accent of France.

"Mr. Bradish? I am fortunate to find you. Is this yours?"

I turned. The man's back was to the light. I could not see his face, but I could see Jim's. He was looking at a strip of paper which the man held out to him—and held on to also—and, in looking, his face had grown vicious. Usually very civil to everyone, but already out of temper and angered by the abrupt intrusion, not only his expression was vicious, his voice was also.

"Never saw it before or you either. Peters, put him out."

"Ah, *flute alors et bien merci!*"

The man wheeled, he went, the door closed and I passed on through the black and yellow room and then through the portières that hung between it and the pseudo-baronial hall.

Bradish was at my heels and as I seated myself I put it to him.

"Who is your friend?"

Vicious still, he barked. "How do I know? He had a cheque drawn to somebody or other with what purported to be my signature."

"A forgery?"

He flung out his napkin. "What else? They will spot it quick enough at the bank."

"What was the tune?"

"Four thousand and odd."

"But look here. Are you sure it is not some cheque of yours that has been raised?"

"Even so, it would not matter."

He was wrong in that and I told him so.

He washed a clam down with chablis and exploded a "Ha!" to which he added: "Ever notice the little joker on a Bank of England note?"

"What little joker?"

"On the left side of the second letter of the word that tells the amount, there is a microscopic white speck. Unless you knew of it, never in the world would you see it was there."

"What of it?"

"Before the second letter of my name on my cheques I put a little pen prick. The tellers look for it first."

"Such originality is stupendous."

He put it from him. "It was my father's idea."

And what an old smarty he must have been, I thought. But I said, "Well, if you slip up on this cheque it won't hurt you. I would be ashamed myself to be as rich as you are."

He shoved at his plate. "You do talk such rot."

It was sheer envy on his part. He wanted to talk it himself. He wanted to trot Nelly Chilton out again. If you are gone on a girl you must talk of her even if you have to talk to yourself. He could not. The presence of Peters and Gedney prevented. Conscious of which angrily he ate and savagely he drank.

What were the courses that followed, I have forgotten but finally coffee came and to my regret the servants withdrew.

Then at once he was back to his muttons, endlessly, *da capo* and all over again until, after a full hour of them, Peters, to my joy, looked in.

"Mrs. Chilton, sir."

Enter the villain, I thought.

Bradish got up and half-turned. "Wait here."

The portières received him. They had parted and through the parting his voice floated back.

"This is so nice of you. Have you had luncheon?"

"Luncheon!" She seemed to spit it. "I am drowning."

"Do sit down."

"I tell you I am drowning and you ask me to sit."

"But——"

I could almost see him floundering with her.

"I want your help," she was saying. "You have got to help me."

That "got" was in italics.

"Certainly. Of course." I could hear him reply. "What is it?"

Slow music, I thought.

"How can I tell you?" But she must have known, for immediately she added, "I am in the hands of——"

Her voice had lowered. I could not hear her. I heard him though.

"A blackmailer!"

At her age! I thought.

Again her voice had sunk to inaudible levels. Yet presently a word swam up, a word of good omen. It was Bonheur, which means happiness, I believe, though hardly when it rhymes with Chanteur, for that means blackmailer, in French at any rate. Then, before I could put them together, a question rang frank as a sword thrust.

"Why don't you marry her?"

From before it, he must have backed.

"Why don't I? Good heavens, she——"

"Take her by storm! Go at her hammer and tongs! Carry her off her feet! God, if I were a man——"

He must have got his wind. "It isn't that. I would pick her up and run to the moon with her. There is nothing I wouldn't do, nothing! But——"

"I know," I heard her cry. "I know. 'God help me,' she told me, me her mother, 'it is either Fred or a convent.' A convent! With her looks! I shall go mad."

She seemed to tear the words, they came from her in tatters and I could fancy her lifting her hands, wringing them, crossing and recrossing the room, and I feared Bradish would say, "Calm yourself."

But at once she was at him from another angle.

"This painted beast, what am I to do with him? Only don't tell me I am a beast myself. I am a beast. I know it. But what is the amount to you? Besides, I thought you would never notice, or at least that I could make it good before you did. Now——"

"You might better have asked me," Bradish boomed in. "You could have had it and welcome. As it is I'll take it up. I can't do less."

"But there you are. He says only Nelly herself——"

Again her voice sank and again his swam up.

"I'll beat him to jelly first."

She made some sound, a sort of rasping laugh. "Much good it would do for us both to be in Sing Sing—so near the manor, too."

At that fine levity some plan must have occurred to him. In any event he suggested one.

"Go there. Go there now, today, as fast as you can. She does not know, does she?"

"Not yet."

"Don't tell her then. I'll settle him somehow."

"But of course I shall tell her. She can't refuse you then."

"No, no. It wouldn't be fair."

"Leave it to me," I heard her say and abruptly, for the first time, I realised that I should not have heard her at all. I felt as one may who has been listening at a keyhole. The feeling gave me a twist in the head.

I got up and went to one of the windows from which, in the garden below, I saw a fat man, all in white, a white linen baretta on his head, tormenting a dove-coloured peacock. Momentarily the picture distracted me. But snatches from the duo kept returning. They were like lines in a melodrama. In particular, one stood out: "It is either Fred or a convent."

Fred, I assumed, was Austen.

The fat man, who wore a third empire imperial pulled at it and looked up. I moved away and, as I turned, Bradish came in.

"Has she gone?" I asked.

"The Lord be praised."

"Look here, Jim. Beat me if you like. I overheard a lot of it."

He sat down, helped himself to a glass of brandy and looked over at me.

"That chap with the cheque was Bonheur et Cie. Ever hear of him?"

"Yes, and of Chanteur et Cie, and so have you. You might have known better than to be so quick with him. I must say you botched it famously."

"That's right. Put me in the wrong."

"You put yourself there."

"But how was I to know? He shoved the damned cheque at me and asked if it were mine. What else was there for me to do except send him to the devil?"

"Well, now you can go after him."

"I can, can I? Then you didn't hear his terms."

"He didn't mention any."

"Not here. But from here he went straight to Mrs. Chilton. What do they give you?"

"For blackmail?"

"Forgery."

"Three or four years I fancy. It depends on how polite you are to the judge. But that is all nonsense. You have only to say the cheque is yours and that is the end of it."

"I would have to say it in court. Besides there would be experts."

"Your testimony would prevail."

"But think of the papers! Think of the mess! He says I disowned it in the presence of witnesses and that either Mrs. Chilton can go to jail or else her daughter can come and see him. Those are his terms."

It was like a page from Balzac. It revolted me and I rounded on him.

"What did you mean then by saying you would settle him?"

"I meant I would lay him out, I suppose."

But that seemed very imbecile and to show no doubt that I could be an imbecile too—which I was— I said what afterward I could have bitten my tongue off for.

"Suppose you let me take a hand."

"If you only could, but how can you?"

"I heard you tell Mrs. Chilton to take her daughter and go to the manor. Did she say she would?"

"Yes, today, this afternoon."

"Follow them then and stand guard."

The strategy was amateur and, what is worse, catastrophic. But he jumped at it. I could see him picturing himself with outstretched hands, hands that dripped with money, protecting two women, one who was certainly no better than she ought to be, and the other too good perhaps for mortal man.

"Meanwhile," I added, "I will hold the blackmailer up."

"How?"

"I can't say. I don't know. But I will. At all events I'll try."

It was then I put my foot in it. At the time the door was open, wide open. It was I that gave it the first shove. That I meant well has nothing to do with it, or rather it has. Well-meaning people do the most harm.

"There is an inn there," he was saying. "I'll put up at it. Perhaps——" He broke off. He looked away. At what? I do not know. But almost at once he took it up again. "Well, you never can tell. When I am out there with them, she may reconsider it." Again he looked away, then at me. "If I wire you, you will join me, won't you?"

I stood up. "If you wire, I'll never get it. Telephone here. I'll be in tomorrow. It may be that by that time this creature will have changed his tune. If not——"

He nodded at me. "In that case, I'll ask her again."

I did not follow him and I told him so.

"If Nelly marries me, the cheque, whether good or bad, won't make a wrinkle."

"I suppose not," I said. But I was thinking of something else, and I added: "Whom will you take with you?"

"Mike."

"Hold on. Send a line to the bank. Say you guarantee the signature. And I may need Peters. Tell him so. While you are at it, tell him to pack your things. Then hurry out there as fast as you can."

He saw me to the door. As I went down the steps a motor passed. In it was a man with a dyed mustache. I did not know him from Adam, but the mustache reminded me of another, whose owner, a friend of mine, I had been of some slight service to the year before. Among New Yorkers, gratitude is phenomenal. My friend was a Dublin man and at the time—

the poor devil has since passed over—he chiefed it at Police Headquarters.

A taxi took me there. On the way, I evolved a series of schemes that had in view the rout and ruin of Bonheur et Cie. I have forgotten them all now and I regret it. They would have fitted any novel, however poor.

At Headquarters, then in Mulberry Street, I found my friend in the front room, which resembled a real estate office, and where, although he presented the forbidding appearance of an auctioneer, he greeted me with an affability that was painful.

"Me boy, you will just put your fist to this."

He had leaned over, fished from somewhere a copy of my last turpitude and produced a fountain pen. It made me feel like Ainsworth, who contrived to be the author of a hundred novels and a thousand crimes.

As it happened, he knew nothing of Bonheur and he sent for a vulture-eyed man with a battered beak who knew less.

Meanwhile, without mentioning names, I had given him the facts.

"And a Frenchman is he, me boy? Sure as you live if he is that kind of a bullfrog, he's wanted over there and that's why he's here. I'll send one of the lads to give him the look-over. Drop in tomorrow. I may have him in chains."

I took it of course at its face value. None the less it gave me an idea.

VI

THE next forenoon I rang at Bradish's door. Gedney opened, but, as usual, Peters was in the hall.

"Has Mr. Bradish telephoned?" I asked him.

"Yes, sir. Just now. I said you were not here, sir. Mr. Bradish said he would call up again in an hour."

"Where is your hat?"

"My 'at, sir?"

"Call a cab, please, Peters, and come with me. I won't keep you long and I may not need you at all. I am going to a shop on the avenue. When we get there, you stand by the door."

"Yes, sir. Beg pardon, sir. May I ask what it is about?"

"A crook who is trying to get the better of Mr. Bradish."

Peters was as straight and probably as strong as a grenadier. But, a professional man, he wore the professional mask. It was wooden. None the less a corner of his lip had lifted very much as a dog's does when about to bite.

"Thank you, sir. I'll have the cab in a moment."

The Maison Bonheur was on the ground floor. It has gone since but, at the time, a small groom stood at the door; a tall commissionaire on the curb. The window, very spacious, delicately hung, exposed nothing so commercial as anything for sale.

As I entered, a young person in black arched her eyebrows at me. The room, behind which extended a suite of other rooms, was fitted with mirrors, with brocaded chairs, with a table that shone. At the moment, a woman, whom I judged a topnotcher, was talking to another woman, whom I took for a première. But the young person had approached.

"Yes, sir?"

"Tell Bonheur to come here."

"Who shall I say?"

"Say it's a man who wants a word with him and who won't dilly-dally about it either."

The topnotcher looked from the première at me and from me at the première. The latter stared. But the young person had gone and I sat down.

Then almost at once, followed by the young person, the dressmaker appeared.

"I am Mr. Bonheur. What is your business?"

More for copy purposes than anything else, I looked him up and down.

Bradish was not Adonis, but you never would have mistaken him for any but the right sort. The dressmaker had blue-black hair that was curled; dark, crafty eyes; lashes so long that they were probably false; a straight nose, lips full and painted, a powdered chin, a loose tie, an embroidered waistcoat, a coat that fitted like a mannequin's, tight trousers, purple socks, patent leather pumps, the air of a coiffeur and an odour of musk. A chambermaid might have thought him attractive. I thought of what my friend at Headquarters had said and in French straight at him, I threw it.

"I have seen you before."

"You have the advantage of me."

"Every advantage. The last time I saw you was in the Cour d'Assises."

I flung the words at him like so many stones. I could see them land. I could see him wilt. I could see him going mentally down under them. With what he had been charged in that Paris court, he knew. I did not know. But he thought I knew and the stones were effective. Through mere chance, at the very start, I had him. The rest was easy. But I threw a few more.

"Your name is not Bonheur. It is Chanteur. Yesterday I cabled your description to Paris."

It was not very pretty of me to lie like that. But a chap who won't lie for a woman may be a Christian, he is also a duffer.

He had extended his hands. *"Mais! Mais! Comprends pas."*

"Yes, you do. You have a cheque that Mr. Bradish signed. You are trying to blackmail a client with it."

He smiled. It is rare to see such a smile. Entirely muscular, it revealed the teeth and left the crafty eyes unaltered.

"Je vois bien maintenant. It is a misunderstanding. I have no cheque signed by Mr. Bradish."

"You have a cheque that you brought to his house. That cheque I saw him sign."

"Another cheque, yes. But not this cheque. In the presence of a domestic he disowned it."

I turned. In the doorway, beside the little groom, Peters stood. I motioned at him. In he came.

"Ever seen this man before?"

"Yes, sir. Yesterday."

"Where was that?"

"In the hall at Mr. Bradish's, sir."

"Did you see a cheque, or hear anything about one?"

"No, sir, I did not."

The dressmaker shrieked it. *"Il ment. C'est puant."*

Peters edged nearer. "Beg pardon, sir. May I ask what he said?"

I smiled at him. "He complimented you on the ease with which he says you lie."

Peters had removed his hat. He put it on. In putting it on he removed his mask. The professional man had gone. Peters had emerged into private life.

"For tuppence, I'd knock your head off. Call me a liar and I'll knock it for nothing."

I motioned at him. "That will do, Peters."

At once the professional man returned. The mask was resumed.

"Thank you, sir."

I looked at the dressmaker. "Mr. Bradish has gone from town. Two ladies, who were misguided enough to come here, have gone also. But I remain and I'll tell you one thing. I'll tell you two of them. You can present that cheque or you can preserve it. But if I hear of so much as a peep from you about it, I will first lay you out and then hand you over to the police."

I stood up and passed on. As I went I saw him in a mirror. He was wiping his face. Alarmed, the top-notcher must have fled. But I could see the première and the young person considering him with slanting eyes.

VII

At the Buck Club, just around the corner, I had a truffled omelette, a cutlet in curlpapers, admirable service, the day ahead of me, but as yet no word.

On vacating the Maison Malheur which, I fear I vacated rather magnificently, but at the time I was rather young, I told Peters to go back to the house and, when the telephone asked for me, to have me called at this club, where I then instructed the operator to take down any message and send it to the dining-room on the floor above.

Vain oblations, though how disastrously vain, I did not realise until later. Meanwhile, the dishes gone, I sat and smoked, exchanged the time of day with a man I did not know from Adam and was wondering vaguely why I bothered to talk to him at all, when the message came, a few words from Peters to the effect that Mr. Bradish had not telephoned, that he had hurried in, got the upshot of things and had hurried away, leaving word that I was to be at the Chilton place on the morrow by noon.

The upshot of things? I uncomfortably meditated, as I went down and kicked my heels in the main room, what the dickens did Peters imagine was the upshot? The stones I had thrown, had been thrown in French and although he had seen some of them flying, he might have misjudged their effect.

For one mad moment, I thought of telephoning to him, the next instant sanity returned. I knew I could not. Even the sight of a telephone horripilates me and in my trade one has to avoid anything of the sort. Horripilation arrests the imagination and disrupts your work.

Afterward, in sackcloth and ashes, I regretted it, regretted rather that if the telephone was one too many for me, I had not sent for Peters, dug it out of him, and then flown up the Hudson as I would have flown if I had known. But I did not know. How could I? It is true, I had an intuition that a screw was loose.

Bradish's message was queer. Why should he want me to be at the manor at noon?

In an effort to solve the riddle, I thought of this, that and the other, of everything in fact except that he had botched the whole thing.

In view of what occurred, I have to say and although I hate emphasis, I cannot say it emphatically enough, that what he did, he did innocently, ignorantly, honestly, without knowledge of the facts, thinking it all for the best, best for himself I admit, but best also for her, poor girl, as, in the inscrutable wisdom of the powers that rule our lives, perhaps it was.

Meanwhile, I looked up a time-table, made a mental note of a train and sat back among matters personal.

The Pilar-Morin troupe had been giving pantomime and while I hoped they might rise to mine, I was uncertain whether to dangle it before them personally or have the dangling done by an agent. Yet as either course had its disadvantages, I postponed any immediate decision, yawned my head off, lounged out, lounged in, dined with two polo men and afterward read all the evening papers, in one of which I discovered that the Pilar-Morins had gone. When have I loved a dear gazelle that it did not sicken, yes, and die? It was too much and I went home.

The next morning I was up at what I think I have seen described as betimes. In spite of which, or perhaps precisely on that account, I missed the train. It may seem fantastic to say it now and yet I cannot but believe that, if I had not missed it, what afterward occurred would not have occurred at all.

When, ultimately, a village trap dropped me at the manor, Bradish ran out and cursed me. I expected nothing else. Through the mysterious laws of life any kindness is repaid in pain.

It was then a trifle after one and the day was of the Veronese school, a day made of light, of colour, of cobalt, apple-green and ochre. In the air was the smell of lilacs. Beyond was the Hudson and, before me, the house, ugly, comfortable, the mortgaged windows candid and open.

In the days of the landed gentry, in the days of big bugs, bigwigs, chariots, postillions, red coats, loud oaths and tenant-tilled estates, the manor had, I dare say, been as good as the rest of them, superior perhaps, but on that Veronese high noon, it seemed down at the heel, as such places do seem when the odour of gentry has gone and that of the bailiffs has come. It was like some of the places in England where the drawbridge has crumbled and the moat is choked. Moreover, originally mile after mile in extent, running far up from the river and reaching nobly to the north and south, time and creditors had dwindled and curtailed it. Of the great estate that had been, only the house and the immediate grounds survived, only these and two buildings, one of wood, the other of stone; one the family stable, the other the family vault.

But Bradish, ceasing to revile me, was talking, hurriedly enough, about matters that I did not quite grasp, but mainly that they were just sitting down to it, that owing to the haste of it all, there was only Mrs. Chilton, Mrs. Trefusis, Austen, the clergyman and the bride.

I looked at him. "The bride?"

"My dear chap, I am, or will be—it is a bit awkward for the moment—but I shall be the happiest man in the world and I owe a lot of it to you. Now come on in. You are too late to act for me at the wedding, as I hoped you would; you are in time, though, to drink our health."

"But——" I found but that.

He misunderstood it. "Bonheur be blowed. It is of no consequence now what he says or does. She is mine!"

His eyes lifted. His face had cleared. The spider was dead. He seemed transfigured. Never had I seen him like that before. Never did I see him like that again. It was his one moment of happiness. Already the door was closing on him. He was at the threshold of the Eblian halls.

At the time I knew nothing of that door, nothing of those halls. I knew only that Peters had botched it, that Bradish was unaware that Bonheur had been squelched, and a sudden picture surged—Mrs. Chilton telling her daughter the pretty tale of a blackmailer, leaving it to her darling to decide whether she would suffer her mother to be jailed, pointing to Bradish as their saviour, constraining her to accept him and I felt for the poor devil a pity that was infinite. For when that girl knew, as she would know, as everything is known, nothing could convince her that he had not been a party to it. Never for a second would she believe that she had not first been rooked and then bought and sold.

Rather idle to tell him that then. Rather idle to mar with now superfluous information, a day not merely perfect but which to him was ideal. I could do nothing except what I did do. I followed him in.

I had seen Nelly Chilton—Mrs. James Bradish as she then was—but twice. On each occasion her beauty had been incredible. Where was it then? She was standing behind a table. Beside her was Austen. Nearby, Mrs. Chilton was directing a waiter. In a window, a clergyman was talking to Mrs. Trefusis. Through another window, I could see Mike. From the walls, Chiltons with vermillion coats and lace jabots, others with powdered hair and pointed bodices, looked on. In the air was a scent of lilacs.

The table was spread. There were dishes, wines, flowers, all of which, the waiter included, must have come from Fifth Avenue, ordered by Bradish, charged to his account.

These details, unimportant in themselves, contributed to the atmosphere of this room that was stirred by that girl's vibrations. The clergyman held his head a trifle to one side, as though appreciating something said by Mrs. Trefusis, who was quite incapable of saying anything appreciable, and who was looking, not at him, but at the others, at Mrs. Chilton, painted and flushed; at Austen, black from the black tumult within him, and at that girl.

Hatted, dressed in a costume of light cloth that was dark, what had been done to her? Paphos had crumbled, Venus had gone. Instead was Hades and Proserpine drawn into it. Exquisite still, as Proserpine must have been, she had lost her flagrant beauty. White as a sheet, her lips quivered. There were no tears in her eyes. In their purple pools there was worse, a look that those have who are haunted.

Austen was speaking to her. She did not reply. She was gazing straight ahead, at what? I cannot say. At things visible only to herself perhaps, but, more probably, I think she was meditating ways and means of escape, which even as they fluttered before her, she must have known were absurd. Her spirit may have been brave. The pale camisole of what is correct, the straitjacket of conventionality, strapped her. None the less, I think that given one of the sudden tempests that the Hudson knows and from which, in a second, night is flung, given that and I believe she would have taken Austen and bolted. It was more the vivid day than the pale camisole that restrained her.

These impressions, however long in the telling, were close packed in a moment's space. They flooded me as I entered. A moment more and the atmosphere cleared. Mrs. Chilton smiled, Austen turned, the bride lowered her eyes, the clergyman abandoned the window, Mrs. Trefusis approached, the waiter advanced and, to the latter's patent astonishment, over the table, with head bowed, the clergyman said grace.

A cork popped. I found myself eating *foie gras,* an abominable dish, which reminded me of duties already sufficiently shirked and rising, glass in hand, I proposed the health of the happy couple.

The clergyman took it up. I like clergymen, when they are likeable, and Dr. Renwick, God bless him, was a likeable man, in fine form, and between us we managed to keep it going, managed to evoke at least the ghost of gaiety that every wedding feast demands.

But the whole thing was ghastly. That girl neither ate, nor drank, nor spoke. Ramrodded in her chair she looked at Austen, who looked at her, as she looked at him, with eyes that were tragic. But while her face, to which the rare and *riante* beauty seemed then to have said farewell, was white and tense, his face was black and violent.

It was poignant. An old air, quaint and sugared, an aria from the *Somnambula,* the *O perché non posso odiarte,* beat time in my head. It was precisely as though they were joining in, wondering why, in so much love, hate could not enter.

With that surety that breeding is, Bradish appeared unconscious of it. The spider had leaped into life again, but any venom it may have been distilling he splendidly concealed, rattling on at Mrs. Chilton, turning from her to the clergyman, from him to Mrs. Trefusis, and back again to his sudden mother-in-law.

That woman, with her painted face and air of intolerable secrets, had a look frightened and relieved. The fright was retrospective. It had gone. But fright, even in going, leaves its mark. The mark was on her, yet mitigated by an immense relief. Everybody was dished. Crœsus was her son-in-law. None the less, beneath her summoned smiles, perhaps she shuddered. Yet with the same surety that Bradish displayed, she talked and laughed, turning now to Mrs. Trefusis, again to her daughter, turning away, forced to seem as unconscious of her as Bradish appeared.

Foie gras is fit only for the cultivated taste of a drayman. *Suprême de poulet Régence* is a mockery to a hungry man. At high noon champagne turns one's stomach. I would have given a dollar, two dollars, five, for a cut of beef, a baked potato, a mug of ale. In that extravagant mood, ardently I wished myself elsewhere. The breakfast apart, it was distressing to look at the bride. It seemed to me painful to stare at Proserpine descending into Hades, though, could I have foreseen the deeper depths in which she was to pass, instead of staring, I would have screamed.

Then, to my relief, Bradish said something to Mrs. Chilton. She stood up. We all stood up, except the waiter, who was already standing. In spite of the odour of food and wine, faintly the scent of lilacs lingered. Through a window, from which I had previously seen Mike, I saw him again, grooming a car in which were bags and a hatbox. From the window I looked at the bride. She was talking then, talking inaudibly to Austen, saying perhaps the tender things that hurt and hurt, the words that bring tears swiftest. From them, I looked at Bradish.

"Jim," I called, and as I spoke I went over and took his hand, "I don't know where you are bound, but wherever it may be, my best wishes, all of them, every one, go with you."

He did not reply. He just nodded and shook my hand. He was, I realised, strung up to the breaking point of human emotion. But he did not betray it. It was the spider that did. Glowing with a crimson and baleful life of its own, I could almost see the antennæ contract.

"God bless you," I told him. "The things I leave unsaid to your wife, say to her for me."

Still he said nothing. He nodded as before and shook my hand with a grasp that was mighty.

Why did I not hold on to him as mightily? Why did I leave him for what he was going on to meet? It was there. It was just beyond. It was at the turn of the road. Eyes clearer than mine could have seen it. Hands firmer than mine would have held him. A voice more gifted would have told him not to leave that room.

In looking back at it now, when it is all over and done for, it seems to me, as it must seem to many another, that when we are a bit more evolved, we will look ahead as readily as we now look back; that the immediate future will be as clear as the immediate past. Or, more correctly perhaps, we will realise that there is no future, no past, merely a continuous present in which events occur. Those events we will see, as the traveller on a highway sees meadows or bogs, abysses or peaks, friends or foes, or, perhaps, merely courtyards curtained with cashmeres where chimeras and hippogriffs crouch. Consciously he goes on to meet them or, as consciously, turns away.

All that, and stupid enough it is, and, by the same token, sufficiently unconsolatory, came to me later. Meanwhile, I must have taken some sort of *congé*. I say I must have because, while I would have taken French leave, as they call it in England, and English leave, as they call it in France, some forms I did observe. But I remember nothing about it. All I do recall is a diligent smile that I got from Mrs. Chilton and a look, absolutely haunted, that came to me from that girl. That look, from that girl, who was barely a bride, accompanied me to the village where I went with the clergyman and with the waiter tagging behind.

I did not then know the clergyman's name. A few moments later I learned that it was Renwick, a good name as he, I am sure, was a good man.

On the way down, a car shot by. In it was Mrs. Trefusis. A car followed, a car long, narrow, grey, one which I had already seen at the manor. In it I had a glimpse of Austen, flying on, ignoring us, lost to everything, lost in the black tumult of his soul.

Meanwhile the clergyman had been quoting Thomas à Kempis. Interested in what he was saying, I forgot the haunted eyes. By this time we had reached the village and, as he was reciting a passage, it came, a bolt, as the phrase is, from the blue.

Mentally, it took me a moment to adjust myself. Meanwhile, I was staring at the man who had precipitated it. Seated in a waggon he was yelling at the clergyman, calling him by name, which I then learned was Renwick. It was not hot on that Veronese day, yet he was perspiring, yelling and wiping his face at the same time, urging Dr. Renwick to get in and: "You, too, young feller, if you know 'em."

He spat and shouted. "It was up yonder. They're all dead, all three of 'em. I'm headed for Dr. Curtis. But there's room for all. Get in."

In his cultivated voice, I heard Dr. Renwick say: "Mr. Belcher, I am sorry. I have not understood what you were telling me. Who is dead?"

Again the Comanche shouted: "Miss Chilton and two men."

We all know we are to die and few of us believe it, and naturally perhaps, since there is no such thing as death. But death, even in its literal meaning, lacked coherence then. I could not believe it. My mind had not yet adjusted itself to what my ears had heard. But I was aware that Dr. Renwick was hurriedly questioning and I was aware, too, of hurried and shouted replies. I was aware also of a gathering group, sprung from nowhere, from a saloon opposite, from the sidewalk, from a grocery nearby, from the station beyond, from the sky; a group that had dropped or arisen about us and it was dully, from sounds that seemed to proceed from afar that I absorbed and reassembled the purport of it all and of which the substance was that Bradish's car, flung out like a meteor, had thrown a wheel, reared, reversed, turned over and that those within were dead.

Then at once, from the momentary and mental swoon, I swam up and I thought, what does this Yahoo know about it? They may not be dead; knocked out perhaps, perhaps unconscious, but not dead.

Even then I denied myself the truth. That was sheer primitiveness, the instinct of self-preservation, for truth, some truths at least, can drive one mad.

VIII

When I reached the manor, they were there. Anything being preferable to the yelling Yahoo, it had been a relief to see him take Dr. Renwick and go. Of the relief that they were in search, I had my doubts and also my certainties. A country practitioner, what could he do? At once Cally and his wizardries hopped in my mind.

Already the door, the enigmatic door, was closing. I did not know that. I knew of no door. Yet, as I later discovered, in that door I turned the key.

Meanwhile, entering the station, I wrote a telegram to Cally which I incorrectly addressed. Since then I have often wondered what might have occurred if I had addressed it correctly. But as often I have concluded that Cally was prevented from receiving the telegram not, primarily, because of an error of mine, but because it was not intended that it should reach him. The progressions of life and of death it is not for mortals to alter. When they do alter them, or appear to, what is done was in accordance with higher designs. That is the occult view to which sometimes, though not always, I adhere.

The wire itself, it took me quite a little while to send, the operator happening to be refreshing himself elsewhere. It was therefore some time after the Comanche had gone that I reached the manor, and, as I have said, when I did reach it, they were there.

The door of the house was open. Open and empty too was the hall. In the room where we had breakfasted there were but the brave and bodiced Chiltons looking on from their frames on the walls, only these, half emptied bottles, dishes unremoved, the remains of a wedding feast at which Death, too, had looked on.

As I entered the hall, I heard voices that came from the floor above. There, in a room hung with faded chintz, furnished with rickety Sheratons, on a satinwood fourposter, lay that girl. Over her a little man bent. He was shaking his head. It seemed very empty. But the motion distracted me. I looked at the others, at Mrs. Chilton, at a woman I had never seen, and at Dr. Renwick who, holding a book from which he must have read the marriage service, was concluding some prayer.

"Heart failure superinduced by shock," the little man by way of Amen pronounced and I looked again at that girl.

Her eyes, that had seemed so haunted, then were closed and her face, that had been so drawn and tense, had recovered its former beauty. It was as though death in taking her life had given back her loveliness. The jewels, which imaginatively I had strung about her and which she had never needed, had gone, as the haunted look had gone. In their stead was peace, the peace that is perhaps beyond all knowledge, yet attenuated, I thought, by just the quiver of a passing smile, a smile that just showed itself and went. The effect, highly curious, was as though her *riante* charm had made an effort to return and death had pulled it back.

"Yes," Death seemed to say, "in my arms you may be lovely, but smiles I cannot brook."

That, too, was imagination. I saw it was. In the upturned commas of her perfect mouth there was no suggestion of any smile at all. Death had kissed her smiles away; kissed from her despair, happiness, sorrow, kissed her into peace.

"So far as I can determine," the little man was saying, "not a single lesion. Just the heart."

"And Bradish?" I asked and checked myself, for the girl's mother was sobbing.

It was her fault. At that moment she knew it. At that moment she knew what the Halls of Eblis are, the horrible halls of the horrible hell into which the foster sisters, Regret and Remorse, can fling you.

A hand covered her eyes, from which tears, possibly scorching, certainly unredeeming, ran down into the paint beneath. What could I do? What could anyone do? A poet said he could sympathise with anything except suffering. I had no sympathy for hers, but apparently Dr. Renwick felt differently.

"My dear Mrs. Chilton! My dear Mrs. Chilton!"

he was remonstrating. "Sorrow is sent to make us nobler than we were."

You are entirely right, I thought. But you miss the point. Sorrow afflicts the spirit that is freed, particularly when the spirit is probably present, probably in this very room. A line of de Vere's recurred to me: "Grief should be like joy, equable, sedate."

But more effective perhaps than the clergyman's ministrations, was the ingrained sentiment of form. Mrs. Chilton choked back her sobs and when her hand fell, as it immediately did fall, she displayed a visage blotched certainly (for water and paint do not marry very well), but assured. To have achieved that so promptly did not show callousness. One is never callous about oneself. But it constituted one of the minor triumphs of civilised life.

She turned to me. "Dr. Curtis says Mr. Bradish will recover. Will you come where he is?"

On the way, the little man buttonholed me.

"I did not say that. I said he might recover. A man of means, I understand. I'll telephone for a nurse."

"For a dozen," I told him.

In a room, practically a duplicate of the other except for the furniture which was Chippendale, Bradish lay on another colonial fourposter. Unconscious as he was, he did not know, and might never know, what had happened. Already his clothes had been removed; already, too, he had been examined. "A broken collarbone," the little man announced, and that I knew was nothing. "A broken ankle," he continued, and that I knew was less. But, to these, he added an occipital fracture and I thanked God I had wired for Cally.

The next visit was to poor Mike who, like that girl, was dead; though, unlike her, his neck was broken.

Mrs. Chilton, meanwhile, had disappeared and I went down to the hall, where I found Dr. Renwick. He was just leaving. The funeral, he said, was to be at noon, in forty-eight hours, and, since I was returning to town, would I insert the usual notices and add, it was Mrs. Chilton's wish, he explained, that the funeral was private.

"Yes," I told him, "but there is a lot else: Bradish cannot be moved. He will have to have nurses. The nurses will have to be fed. I know nothing of the domestic arrangements here but, apparently, they are not profuse. If Mrs. Chilton does not object, and I hope she will not, I shall send some of his servants."

Vaguely he motioned. "Pray do so, Mrs. Chilton was to have gone from here today. Now she will go immediately after the funeral of that poor child, whom I loved like a daughter."

"Where is her father?" I asked.

He raised his eyes, shook his head. I saw that he did not know, saw too that the question distressed him.

I put on my hat. "May I accompany you?"

Courteously he consented and, as we went down the road, which twice that day I had ascended and on which on each occasion, the Daughters of Hazard, of whom Æschylus tells, had lain in wait, he stopped and gave me his hand. He was going, he said, to the undertaker.

"An undertaker here! In this little place!" I exclaimed.

"Death visits the hamlet as well as the metropolis," he replied.

A cross-road took him and I went on to the station alone, more alone, I think, than I had ever been before. I could not comfortably contemplate a future from which Bradish was eliminated and, if he recovered, if he did, I felt that it would be harder still for him to reconcile himself to the long rain of days from which she had gone. To have got her partook of the marvellous, but to have got her one moment and to have lost her the next, might become to him a retrospective torture that would inhabit his thoughts until the accustoming hands of time calmed him and lulled him and let him forget.

So I thought. I thought it would pass as all things pass. Yes, I thought that. I could not foresee that there was to be no forgetfulness, nothing but the fidelity of torture that was to take him and play on him and strike from him every note in the whole gamut of pain.

IX

ANOTHER day after Veronese.

As the train flung itself along the river, I told myself I had done all I could. To the surprise of a clerk in a cage, I had shoved at him a marriage notice and a death notice of even date, both concerning the same person. He did not like it and who would? I had to establish my identity before he would accept them. Meanwhile I had shipped to the manor whatever an unconscious man needs the least. I had gone to the great white staring house and sent Peters with the chef and two other servants to the station. I had gone to Mike's widow. I had done other things which I have since forgotten. I had done all I could. But in the train that was taking me to the funeral, I had a sense of subconscious discomfort, the sense of some paramount thing overlooked. Then, just before the train was stopping, out it hopped.

Cally!

In the hurry of all I had had to do, I had neglected to go to his office. But, I consolingly reflected, what did it matter?

That it did matter, and monumentally, I was not to learn until later and yet why, at the time, it should have pricked me, I doubt if Freud could have told.

What did it matter? I reflected. I had not been to his office and would not have found him if I had, for he must have gone to the manor, where probably he had remained. The idea that my telegram was an estray never entered my head.

In the train were small detachments of silent and sombre people, relatives I fancied, and I was convinced of it when they all got out at the station, where conveyances for them which the undertaker must have seen to and supplied, yet perhaps inadequately; in any event there was none for me, unless I intruded on mourners whom I did not know, and while capable of a good deal, but not of that, I started off on foot, disconsolately noting that the day of the wedding and the day of the funeral were twins. There were the same colours, the same myrrh and cassia in the air that was not of spring or of summer but of both, a season not for death but for life, a time to love love, not to bury it.

"Will you get in?" someone was saying.

I had heard a car, but I had not looked. Then I did look. It was the long, grey car I had seen after the wedding and in which had been Austen hurrying on in that effort which is the most desperate of all, the attempt to escape from oneself. He was in the car then and, as I looked, I thought his face blacker even than before, a face that expressed not the sorrow that he must have felt, but rebellion at life, at death, at all there is, at all there shall be; the face of a soul in hell.

"Will you get in?" he repeated and, when I did, he asked about Bradish.

I told him what I could. He asked nothing else. He said nothing more. I fancied that he knew as much as I did.

In the papers of the day before there had been accounts headlined, featured, graphic, inexact. The tragic wedding of the last of the Chiltons to the playmate of her childhood. The beauty of the bride. The wealth of the bridegroom. The death of the one. The mortal injuries of the other. The manor. Colonial New York. The mourning of what was termed the four hundred.

These accounts Austen had certainly seen and I wondered whether he had already run up to the village. I did not ask, nor did I ever learn that he had, though afterward, from circumstances that developed, I realised that he must have. At the time however, during the brief drive, he said nothing more, nor did I hear him utter another syllable. Yet then, one does not go to a funeral to talk and necessarily this was more than a funeral to him, much more, though how I arrived at that extravagant conjecture is beyond me even now.

The brief procession from the train had entered the house when we reached it and together we passed on and in to the room of the candid and mortgaged windows, through which a breath of lilacs came.

Into that breath there filtered the subtler fragrance of lilies that banked an open coffin in which the dead girl lay. Behind the coffin, his back to the wall, from which the brave and bodiced Chiltons looked, was Dr. Renwick. Before the coffin were the mourners, among whom I had a glimpse of a man who, though he stood with bowed head, had an air of extreme distinction. I had a glimpse also of a stricken woman.

Rouge is not mourning. Her face was unpainted. But that air of ease, of potential arrogance, of intolerable secrets, the impression wholly atmospheric which previously Mrs. Chilton had suggested, the impression of a soul at bay, that had gone. She looked what she was, a woman conscious that the blow that had struck her her own hand had dealt.

Unobtrusively I hope, in any event as quietly as I could, I edged nearer to where the dead girl lay. Forty-eight hours earlier I had seen that Death in kissing her had brought her beauty back, heightening it even, rendering it calm, unaware of emotion as true beauty ever is, divesting it of anguish, divesting it, too, of joy. In Death's arms she had been at peace.

But at this time, as, in edging nearer the coffin, I saw her again, her expression seemed to have changed. Her lips half-parted showed the nacre of her teeth and in and about them, in and about the downcast eyes, there was a look different from that which Death had brought, different also from that which Death had kissed away. In those days I was less familiar with the phenomena of death than I have since become. I knew then that those whom the gods love die young. I did not know that the gods in sending death to those they love send with it some vision of the supernal. It was there. In those upturned lips and downcast eyes there was wonder.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life!"

The sonorous and exalting words, the most exalting that I know, shook me. From the dead, I looked at the living. I looked at the clergyman, at the mourners, at the lover.

Death, the death rather and the sight of it, may have wrought its miracles on him. In his car, on the way to the house, he had looked defiant, rebellious, a soul at odds with God and man. But now, in some way, through some special grace, through one of the miracles that Death achieves, peace had, or appeared to have, descended upon him. What his face displayed was not resignation, which may be, and often is, but a form of mental suicide, but relief, the relief that comes when hope, fear, uncertainty, all the vultures of the mind, have fled, when the worst that can be has been done.

At the time, it was in that manner that I viewed it. Afterward, in reassembling impressions, another explanation, less laboured and more obvious occurred to me. The change in Austen, if change there really were, I attributed to the simple process of thanksgiving. He had lost the girl he loved, yet the loss had been strangely mitigated. An unbearable knowledge had been lifted from him. He could not have her, but neither could anyone else. She had been taken, but not to another's arms. What he had lost, no one had won.

It was in recognition of that, I thought, that the thanksgiving had come, and I thought also that the thanksgiving was very human. That the girl of girls shall not be won, murder after murder has been committed. That too is human. Human and tolerably primitive.

Meanwhile, the service had ended. A stout man, fussy but silent, the undertaker, attended to the coffin's removal to the hall, where I followed and where neatly, swiftly, almost noiselessly, he closed it.

To me, it was like a kick in the stomach. I looked away. On the adjacent stair was Peters. Without speaking, I motioned. The motion, I knew, sufficed. I knew he would know that presently I would return. As I motioned, I thought of Cally. Where was he?

But at once the coffin's journey began again and we all went on and out to the grounds and the vault, a structure roomy and chill, where perhaps the shades of departed Chiltons greeted the spirit of their kinswoman who, forty-eight hours earlier, during that other ceremony had, I am sure, despairfully wished for the peace that was theirs, had wished also and far more desperately that Bradish were Austen.

As the coffin passed into the crypt, back from it came the odour of tuberoses, the scent sweet and deadly of wreaths put upon it. I have never forgotten it. Dr. Renwick was then reciting the last words of the final rites and, these ended, I turned back to the house.

In the hall was Peters.

"How is he?" I asked.

"The nurse says——"

"But Dr. Cally? What does he say?"

"Dr. Cally, sir? I haven't seen him. Dr. Curtis——"

"Do you mean to tell me Dr. Cally has not been here?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir."

It was inconceivable. The idea that I had botched the address never occurred to me. What did occur to me was that when I could I would give him fits.

The opportunity was not delayed. Mephistopheleanly, in the open doorway, there he stood.

I sprang at him. "What the devil! Where have you been? Why haven't you come before?"

One look, a look bland and sarcastic, was all he deigned to give me and that look he diverted to Peters.

"Upstairs? Lead the way."

"But see here," I threw in and started to follow.

He turned to me. "You stay where you are."

The stair took him, and would have taken me, had not philosophy, an old friend of mine, caught me by the arm, remarking that Cally was quite right, that I would be only in the way, that explanations of mine would explain nothing, that certainly he did not need to be told what certainly I did not know, whereupon instead of damning, I blessed. Thank God, he was there!

The mourners, meanwhile, were leaving. Not all, however. Two women and a man were entering the hall. One of the women was Mrs. Chilton. When I saw her in the room beyond, probably she had a hat on. I had not noticed. I saw it then, saw too that she was heavily veiled. I had moved aside and as, with the other woman, she passed me, she made some slight inclination of the head. Then up the stair they went. I had never seen the other woman before and I have never seen Mrs. Chilton since. Afterward I learned that that afternoon both had driven away. But had I known that that was to be my last meeting with Mrs. Chilton, mentally I would have wished her well. It is very pontifical to judge anybody.

Then, immediately, I found myself judging the man who had come in with them. He had an arid air, the dry, self-sufficient look of the super-rich and a mouth like a buttonhole. Probably a banker, I thought: probably, too, the husband of the woman who had just gone up the stair. I did not envy either of them and suddenly I felt very hostile.

He was there, fiddling with his hat, affecting to regard me as part of the furniture. It was not that that angered me. What angered was that Mrs. Chilton, instead of messing things with that blackmailer of a dressmaker, could not have gone to him and could not go, because, while manifestly the man was a relative, she knew him to be poor, unwilling to aid. For it is unwillingness to aid that constitutes poverty, and that is the poverty, not of the poor, but of the rich.

Then at once the idea passed, banished by another, the possibility that the painted blackmailer and the painted mother-in-law were in league together and I cursed myself that I had not thought of it before. Any jackass could have seen that ordinarily Bonheur would never have gone to Bradish with the cheque. Ordinarily he would have put it through his bank. And for how much was it after all? Bradish had said four thousand, but he had barely glanced at it. It might have been forty thousand and I could picture Mrs. Chilton waving it at the dressmaker, staking him with it in return for services that would enable her to force her daughter's hand.

Momentarily, the picture occupied me. Before I could elaborate it, there was Peters on the stair.

"Well?"

"Dr. Cally's compliments, sir, and if you are to wait, you will please not wait for him. No, sir, Dr. Cally is to be here for some time."

"But what else did he say? What did he say about Mr. Bradish?"

"Nothing, sir. Nothing to me. But I don't think he is easy in his mind about him, sir."

For that matter, I was not easy in my mind, either. Nor had I been, not for a moment since the Yahoo yelled. Consequently I did want something to go on and I said:

"Look here, Peters. You say I want to see him."

"Yes, sir, I will hascertain. But he has the door closed and he said he wouldn't let anyone in, not even Mr. Bradish's own mother if she came here from the grave."

Well, that at least was definite and I went out on the grounds where for a moment I stood and looked at the vault.

That door, too, was closed.

X

PEACE is never the bedfellow of the anxious, and anxious I was the next day, as I sat in my own workshop. Far more so than three years before when I found myself dished. A man may lose a fortune and recover and double it. He cannot replace a friend. At the time, I had no other friend than Bradish. The events of the last few days needed talking over.

I wanted to talk them over. Few can be conversational alone. But with whom? That also came to me. In the course of the evening I rang at Aly Bolton's door.

"Who is it?" she asked from within.

I told her and she opened.

The narrow hall, a hall identical in construction with my own, was hung with India shawls and the living-room, though also identical with my own, appeared much larger and so appeared because the centre was uncluttered. Moreover, at either end was a mirror. Then also, the *étagère,* the chairs, the table, placed back against the walls, were none of them in the way, while on the walls were prints, dark and old, from which the walls seemed to recede.

I used to think that a man's distinction resided in the distinction of his surroundings and though I think so no longer, none the less it would have been obvious to anyone not courageously vulgar that the occupant of the little flat was an artistic young woman. A gifted young woman, too, as I had already discovered.

"I have felt for you," she said as we sat at that table. "The papers told me. And now you are troubled."

"It is about Bradish," I replied. "He and I are pals. I don't know whether he will pull through. By the way. Occasionally he must have disturbed you. He used to come here and raise the dead."

She exclaimed at it. "I thought it was he! I saw him once at your door, but he did not see me. He was too busy trying to get at you. I liked his face. It is very beautiful."

Wonderingly I looked at her.

"Yes, the face of a beautiful nature."

I nodded. "Yes, he has that. But I am sure you are right in saying he did not see you. If he had he would have stood and mused and afterward told me of it."

"No, he did not see me."

She spoke simply as the complex do speak. On the table between us was a service, of Danish ware I think, and she asked would I have tea.

She got up to prepare it and again I looked about. The mirror at the farther end of the room was framed in lacquered bamboo. Adjacent were shelves of polished wood on which were books. Facing them was the piano. It was all very ordinary. It was the atmosphere that charmed. I have been in ornate apartments where the vibrations jarred; in opulent homes where they were so malign I could not remain. In this two-by-four flat there were none or, if there were any, they were restful. It was an atmosphere in which there was nothing discordant; not the atmosphere of the cloister for that is choked; not the atmosphere of bohemianism for that is pretentious. It was the atmosphere that is created only by those whose ways are pleasant, by the gentle and by gentlefolk.

Returning with the samovar, she poured me a cup. She made no offer of cream, of sugar, nor yet of lemon. It was tea she gave me, just tea, as tea should be drunk, when it is tea, and this was tea, the real thing, tea that needed only a honeysuckle or two to make it celestial, tea of a variety and of a quality that could be obtained but in the Chinese quarter and there at one shop only.

I knew that tea. It awed me. For I knew, too, what it cost and, vaguely, I wondered where she got the money.

"That night," she was saying. "You remember? You talked of antique sins. Anxiety was one of them. I think you need not sin that way. I may be in error, but I think your friend will recover."

It was easy enough to say, but merely because it was easy she seemed hardly the one to say it. In speaking, she had raised a cup and I had been looking at her. She wore a blouse embroidered in the Rumanian manner. As always, her expression was noble and reserved. Nelly Chilton had been sent out as perhaps only a blackmailing *faiseur* can send out a young woman. Apart from that, apart too from her *riante* look, apart also from her Mayfair intonation, in feature, in colouring, there she sat.

"It is startling," I told her.

That time she missed it. "But I may be wrong."

I shook my head. "It is the resemblance."

The cup which she still held she put down. "From what I read about her it was instantaneous. That is terrible. It would have been so inexpressibly better for her if she could have lingered a little and realised that she must die."

I took it up. " 'From battle, murder and sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us.' "

"Yes, and how profound that is. The shock of sudden death confuses. The dead do not know they are dead. They think they are still here. Well, perhaps they are. Perhaps they are the ghosts of whom one hears and never sees."

From her lips it sprang out at me, the central situation for a novel and commercially I exclaimed, "That's it!"

There again she must have missed it. She looked but she did not speak.

"Shop," I told her. "To a chap in my trade nothing comes amiss. We make copy out of our own disasters.

She laughed, and in laughing her resemblance to Nelly Chilton became not startling merely, but exact.

Without mentioning it, I sat back. "Yes, but the point is elsewhere or rather it is here. I have been threshing about for a plot. A moment ago before you sat the needy knife-grinder. Now he is needy no longer. You have suggested a story. And hello!" I interrupted myself to exclaim, "here comes the title, The bourne from which——?"

Noiselessly she clapped her fingers. "A ghost story! There never has been a good one. The chance is yours. Take it. The title itself should inspire. The bourne from which——"

She paused and added, "I wonder, though, if every reader can fill out the rest of it. Yet, even incorrectly given, 'The bourne from which no traveller returns' is too long."

"Well," I said, "when it appears, if it ever does appear, you must let me bring you a copy."

"Thank you. You will find it easier to mail it."

"You are not leaving here, are you?"

"Next week. I go to Paris."

As she spoke she went to the piano, rippled the keys and hummed rather than sang the *valse chantante, O Paris, gai séjour!*

Desisting, she turned. "The house where I am is sending me. You shall have the address."

"I congratulate you. But the story will keep until you return. Besides it would clash with that gaiety. If I can, I want to make the reader shriek with fright, tear his hair out and hide under the bed."

She laughed. "The shiver at last!"

On that high note I would have gone, but from somewhere Signor Matouchi appeared and yawned at me. I tickled him in the stomach. Ostentatiously, he purred.

Then, kissing her hand, I left.

XI

A WEEK later I would have burned an incense-wand, only I did not happen to have one. A message had reached me. If I had dictated it myself it could not have been more to my taste. It was a message which either clairvoyantly or sympathetically Aly Bolton had divined. Bradish would recover. That was all. There are brevities that are enormous. It was at the amplitude of this brevity that I would have burned an incense-wand.

The message was from Cally. It had come from his office. That day I looked in there. I found him at a vast table on which was a riding crop and a box of cigars. Nothing else, except over the table his infernal blandness, two fingers and a moment's talk.

The fingers withdrawn he pointed one at me.

"What have you behind the forehead?"

"Pulp."

"In that pulp the objective changes of the external world are converted into the subjective changes of consciousness. But in what manner the conversion is effected no one knows and, in our day, no one will."

"What of it?"

"A lesion of the occipital cortex may affect that mystery. Bradish has a lesion of that nature. He will recover, but whether mentally he is the same man again depends on circumstances which I am now too idle to explain."

He stood up. "Come again when I am busy."

A hand on my elbow, he was edging me along, dangling the keys of Destiny at me.

I shook him off. "When can I see him?"

"When I have him in town. You can see him then, that is if he does not object."

Mephistophelianly Cagliostro smiled. It was as though he were adding: "If it were I now, you'd never get in."

I, too, can smile and I said: "I'll pay you for that. By the Lord Harry, I'll put you in a book."

Blandly he shoved me out. "It takes genius to concoct a horrible revenge."

Well, he was right. As I turned the corner I thought of Æschylus, before whose spectres women swooned, and I wished for his stylus, a wish instantly replaced by a hope. I had walked straight into Aly Bolton and I hoped she was dying of hunger.

"Look!" I exclaimed. "Over there! A few streets down! A man is beckoning at you!"

"Very impertinent of him. Who is he?"

"A sorcerer. He is calling, 'Miss Bolton! Miss Bolton! Come to my arms and before you I will set strawberries and *crème vierge,* plovers' eggs beaten into an amber foam, quinces on platters of jade!' "

Always gracious, she smiled and turned and together we went down the street, packed as at that hour it always was with envy, greed and other things that do not look nice in print, yet to which she seemed indifferent or else unconscious . . .

She said nothing and her silence was very confidential. It was as though she were saying to me, We talk the same tongue and in that tongue there is no need for speech.

Silence has its licenses and I am sure she had no intention of according me any. The trick of eye, of look, of way, the arts rehearsed before a mirror, the little spells a girl may cast, if only for practise, she disdained or else ignored. Her silence may or may not have been confidential. It was not provocative.

In the gastronomic El Dorado which presently we entered, her attitude changed necessarily. Yet it was I who spoke first and not to her but to the waiter.

When he had gone, she said with that irrelevance which is always so apropos:

"And the ghost story?"

Ten minutes earlier Cally had shaken the keys of Destiny at me. I was yet to learn that the Urim and Thummim were then in her hands from which she was shedding the gloves.

The gloves were white, her costume was dark, admirably made, equally simple. I lack the huxter's eye but I knew it was not a bargain, and suddenly I recaptured a sensation which I had not experienced for years, that of intimate association with a charming and beautiful girl.

At once, and with the same irrelevance, I began about a house in which I had lived.

"The house was back from the road. The doorway extended up to and through the second story. Before the house was a high wall of grey stone. Above was a grey sky. Under the house was a cellar, which is the usual place for a cellar, but beneath it was another cellar. In the second cellar were barrels. In the barrels was gold."

"Yours?"

"I do not know. I do not know where the house is. I do not know how long ago I lived there. As a child, the memory of it was vivid. It seemed as neighbourly as the day before. Perhaps it was. Time is very relative. It may be that there is no such thing. Kant said that. Kant said that time is a category of the intellect. As a child I did not know it. As a child it seemed to me that I had just come from that house of which my people knew nothing. Since then I have realised that I lived there in a previous existence. But I have always felt that I shall find the house again and just now I felt that when I do find it, I shall find in it a girl who will look like you."

"A compliment should be brief. That is the most elaborate compliment I ever heard."

She smiled as she said it, but she smiled as much at the waiter as at me. The waiter was showing her, not the plovers' eggs that carelessly I had promised, but a salmi Sardanapale.

When he had served it, she said: "That is the great advantage of being a novelist. A novelist can imagine things that never happened, that never could happen, but which are real to him."

Without transition, as though wanting to get away from it, she added: "This salmi must have been cooked in a jewelled pan."

Leisurely I drew her back. "You are entirely right, but so too am I. Epictetus advised us to cheat ourselves and dream. But do we cheat ourselves when we recall what we did in a previous life? From the majority, any and all memory of it is withheld. That is very merciful. If people remembered what they did when they were here before, a hundred and one out of ninety-nine would go mad."

Whether it were that last word that prompted, or whether it were due to unconscious telepathy, I do not know and I do not believe she knew either, but, dismissing the subject, she said:

"How is Mr. Bradish?"

"I was just coming from his physician when I met you. He said that Bradish has a lesion that may result in cerebral deglutinisation. That's a bit stiff. Until latterly, Bradish was the sanest man I knew. But latterly he went quite mad over Nelly Chilton and while I do not blame him for that—how can I when you are her living image?—yet, assuming that he recovers, then when he learns she is gone and gone too just when he had her, it might topple him completely."

She nodded understandingly and stood up. She was going, she had much to do she said, as she thanked me, and I saw her to the door, to the eager sunshine, to the crowd that took her and hid her away. Behind me, from an orchestra in the restaurant, came a strain sweet and slow. I had never heard it before. I heard it afterward. I heard it every time I thought of her until I saw her again, which then was a long way off.

XII

SINCE then, in looking back, it has seemed to me that the Daughters of Hazard that threw Nelly Chilton into a stone vault, sank Bradish into depths where Death alone could follow, and then, because there are other depths, depths which only the living can enter, because he had not suffered enough, because he must suffer more, recalled him that he might know what pain is.

Then it was that, in the voids where he lay, an artery reached and drew him. His scattered senses, satisfied with their temporary decentralisation, resisted. During the subtle struggle, fought in a dim corridor of the brain, a memory stirred and spoke. Along the corridor two syllables sounded remotely. They were as taps on a damp drum beaten obscurely behind the shelves of thought. They awoke no echo, evoked no image. Drifted by the currents of unconsciousness, they passed. But the currents, barred by assembling ideas, broke to their murmur. A memory that had gone, looked back. The taps on the drum sounded less dumbly. From behind the shelves of thought a face peered out. On the lips of the sleeper there formed a name.

"Nelly!"

His eyes opened. Before him was a woman, plain, strange, dressed after the manner of the Belle Chocolatière. His eyes closed, partially they reopened and, quite as though he were back in earlier Parisian days, he said, and distinctly enough:

"A boire!"

"Bravo!" I said when I heard of it.

Subsequently, Cally had him removed to the great white staring house where at last I went, and where I found him convalescent, collected, entirely rational, apparently as sane as before.

At the time, he was in the library and as I entered he got up and limped toward me. Loosely his clothes hung about him. The spider reduced, had paled. Then, before I could attempt to condole, for the attempt at condolence is all one can make, he surprisingly eluded it.

"These chairs are beastly. There is not a chair in the whole house that is fit to sit in. Formerly I did not notice. One chair was as good as another. But since I have been up, I find I want, well, what we all want, what I lack. I must send Peters around to pick up something decent."

I lit a cigarette. "See here, old chap, you will be having a birthday soon. Sensible people have birthdays all the time. I'll give you one."

"What? A birthday?"

"A chair."

"You are becoming singularly generous. But I want to ask you. How did she look?"

I hesitated and he added, "I asked Cally."

"He wasn't there. I rather botched a message to him. He did not reach the manor until afterward."

"So he told me. How did she look?"

Fishing, I found the picture. "As though surrounded by the ineffable."

He held it up. I could see him visualising it. "Yes, that would be Nelly."

Still holding it, he continued, "I don't believe a word of it."

I stared. "Of what?"

"Of her death. I can't believe it."

That seemed natural and I told him so. "Of course not. If the circumstances were reversed I could not either."

Then, at once, anxious to get him away from it, I tried a twist. "Cally says what you need now is a change. He said Paris."

"Paris would not help me. I have supped on her."

"Yes, but the supper was years ago. Now it is dinner time. Before all this happened, I wrote a pantomime. I can't place it here. Recently a showman, an odiously familiar brute, clapped me on the back and said, 'Produce the stuff in Paris and I'll import the troupe.' "

Bradish shifted. "I know Chose of the Neuvelles, and if Machin has not forgotten me, I know him, too."

"At all events Emile has not forgotten you, or me either. I gave him twenty louis the last time I was there."

"Emile?"

"Don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt? Don't you remember how he used to rub his hands and ask, 'And what will ces messieurs be good enough to be willing to desire?' "

"The man at the Café Anglais?"

"Precisely. We can have Chose and Machin there and, with the champagne at their throats, one or the other will disgorge a contract. Then, on the first night, when they call for the author, you can appear and I'll shy a bouquet at you."

"I don't know that I would like that."

"Of course you will. That will be in the autumn and, meanwhile, there is Spain and the bullfighters, and the gipsies and the cigarreras and the highwaymen and, under the stars, their little dramas of love and hate that spend themselves not in a scene but in a murder."

"That's Granada."

I saw he was getting interested and I was about to strum another air when Peters appeared.

We went in to luncheon, during which I kept talking of the Andalusia I knew and loved, sending his thoughts skimming afar; promenading him along the crocus and pink Delicias; seating him before the castagnettes and guitars; showing him the flamenco; the slim, twisting waists, the eyes burning above butterfly fans; scenting it all with the odour of almonds, the smell of grape.

He looked up. "When could you go?"

"This minute. Call a cab."

"You seem to have a Golconda of enthusiasm! What do you say to a shot at next week?"

"Ole tu madre! Hurrah for your mother!"

Behind the hurrah, a hallelujah followed. There he sat, white, gaunt, shaken, sane. Save for the remark that he did not believe the dead was dead, a remark qualified by the supplement that he could not believe it, he had said nothing that was not humdrum, commonplace, normal. Previously, I had thought that with time, in which everything breaks, wears itself out, passes away, resignation would come and forgetfulness with it. But though he still remembered and though, too, the memory must have been poignant, already he was resigned. So I thought. That opinion I shortly and entirely altered.

XIII

On the floor were cigarettes, boots, books, shirts, coats, trousers, enough for a trunk, a big trunk, and, as I hate trunks, I was meditating how to get it all into a bag. The problem was pretty, it partook of geometry which I also hate. In similar circumstances a poet would have omitted to meditate. A poet would have called for his harp and composed a song. But I am a practical man and I decided that if, but this once, I could stuff everything in, for the next few months Peters, or Gedney, or both, would attend to the stuffing.

Then again came the rattle of Destiny's keys. At the time I did not know it. I mistook the shaken keys for a tradesman knocking, bill in hand, at my door. As I was out of commission, copyless, with nothing more commercial in my head than the fringes of that ghost story, I did not swear, I did not care. I went on and opened.

There was Bradish.

Not for a moment had I imagined it was he and I stared.

"What have you done with your earthquake?"

He limped in, limped along to the workshop, sat down, tapped at his teeth.

I waved at the floor. "You couldn't loan me Peters for an hour, could you?"

Whether he heard or not is unimportant. He had been looking down, he looked up and bit at his underlip. As I afterward thought, he was steadying it. Then it came.

"I have seen her."

I, too, sat down. "Seen whom?"

"Nelly."

Until then I had not noticed the spider. It was so violently red that I wondered if he had been drinking and I tried to humour him.

"Yes, of course. Occasionally I see her also."

"I tell you I actually saw her."

I thought of Aly Bolton and I said, "Look here, old chap, you have seen someone who resembles her."

He got up, took a cigarette from the floor, lit it, sat down again.

"Nobody resembles her. In all the world she is unique."

Well, you are wrong, I thought, but I said: "There is no such thing as mystery, there is only ignorance and with that I am abundantly supplied."

Yet, as I said that, I told myself that whomever he had seen could not be Aly Bolton. She had gone.

Gloomily he flicked his ashes: "I suppose you think me crazy."

I smiled at him. "I would think you abnormal if you were not. In open court here, Spitzka, testifying as an expert, said that all men are insane. In France, Janet said the same thing. Do you object to the evidence?"

He laughed fiercely. "Not if it includes you."

Glad that he laughed, I laughed also. "Well, then, the company I am in is nothing to boast of. But seriously now, you know as well as I do, and probably better, that alcohol or morphine can produce hallucinations which, though actually seen, represent merely the observer's mental condition."

He shook the cigarette. "You are talking rubbish.

I don't drink, at least not to excess, and I don't take morphine, though I have had enough to drive me to it."

"Yes, I know. But I know too that any strong emotion can have the same result. Why, good Lord! everybody knows that the attendants at morgues have to be on their guard against the false identification of the dead. People go there distracted by grief at the loss of a relative and with the image of that relative so glued to the retina that they identify the first body they see."

He gave a sort of groan. "I did not come here to exchange stupidities, my mind is clear as a bell."

"And so you will admit was Balzac's. Balzac intended to give Gautier a horse. He forgot to, but he talked so much about it that he believed he had given it and used to ask Gautier how the horse behaved. From that you can realise what the imagination is. You imagine you have seen the dead, whereas you know that that is impossible."

"Impossible?" he angrily repeated. "Time and again I have heard you say that the word ought to be kicked out of the dictionary."

"Well, except in connection with pure mathematics, so it should be. If, as Huxley said, we understood all that is implied in so common an instance as an object that falls, we would not doubt the possibility of any occurrence however incredible. At the same time——"

"See here, I am not drunk or doped or a novelist. I don't care what Huxley said, what you say, what anyone says. I saw her."

Argument weakens all things. I yielded.

"Very good then, where was it?' '

"In the Park."

"In the Park! How in the Park?"

He fumbled and produced some papers. "I had been to the French line. They hadn't much, but I got the captain's cabin, the first officer's cabin. Here they are. On the way up, the car took the Park. Near the carousal I saw her. She was alone. She was on foot. I got out. There were people just ahead of her. As I got out she passed beyond them. For a moment, I lost sight of her. There are steps there. They lead to a lake. I thought she must be on them. From the top you can see all around and I looked everywhere. Not a sign of her. She had vanished. Like that!"

"Hold on! Did you see anyone you might have mistaken for her?"

"I could not mistake children for her, could I? Or old women, or nursemaids, or babies, or a boy in a boat on the lake? No. I mistook no one for her. Believe me or not, it was she."

I, too, helped myself to a cigarette from the floor. As I lighted it, I nodded at him.

"But I want to believe you, only—and for heaven's sake don't think I am jesting—only you would have made it a bit easier if you had said you had seen her at night, in the old-fashioned way, at the foot of your bed, sticking her tongue at you."

He shook his head. "It was not her ghost, if that's what you mean. It was she, alive, Nelly Chilton in flesh and blood."

When he said that I was less eager to have that poor vagrant of a word kicked out of the dictionary. What he said was impossible and yet, as I had to recognise, for the impossibility of it there was a good measure of excuse. The sum total of all he knew about her death was hearsay. He had been flying along with her in the open and, without transition, he was in bed, a strange woman looking at him. Of intervening events he had no knowledge whatever. There were not only no intervening events, there was not even an intervening blankness. The last instant before he lost consciousness and the first instant when he recovered it, met and fused. Mercifully he had felt nothing, heard nothing, seen nothing. Since then he had felt and acutely. He had heard, and crushingly. But of the anterior moments and hours and days and weeks and all that had been packed into them, he had but the evidence of his own injuries and such information as others supplied.

Supported by the injuries, the information was credible. But human nature does not always accept the merely credible. That which, in nearly killing him, had thoroughly killed her, constituted a shock so overwhelming that he had not assimilated it. In any catastrophe there is always a sense of unreality and the seeming unreality of the girl's death must have been with him until just then, a little before, when in the Park, the sight of someone had accentuated the unreality and convinced him, at any rate for the time being, that she was not dead, but alive. After all, he had not seen her, as I had, in her coffin, and of those who had seen her, I was his only witness.

"Where is Mrs. Chilton?" I asked.

"Somewhere in France. My lawyers have the address. Why do you ask?"

"And Mrs. Trefusis?"

"Newport, I fancy. What do you want of her?"

"If Mrs. Chilton were in town I would ask you to see her. As she is not and as Mrs. Trefusis is away, I do wish you would see Austen or Renwick, or somebody."

"What good would it do?"

"Jim, look here. At present I am the only one you have talked to who was at the funeral. I wish you would talk to some of the others. They could only substantiate what I have told you, but what I have told you has not been enough. What you would hear from them would be cumulative and convincing. You would know from it that you are mistaken about what you saw, or thought you saw, in the Park. Besides I dare say Cally could explain it."

"I dare say he could. But he and the seven sages in active collaboration could not explain it away."

"I am not so sure. Cally told me you had a lesion of the occipital cortex. At the time he did not know, or professed not to know, how it might result. My own ignorance being unfathomable, I looked it up and I found that in cases such as yours there may be an impairment of vision."

"Yes, that's true. At first I could not distinguish objects very clearly, but that has gone. I can see now as well as ever."

"No doubt you think so. Lots of people are colour-blind and have not the slightest suspicion of it."

"Yes, and lots of people are stupid and don't suspect it either. But their stupidity does not affect me. I saw her. There is not the peradventure of a doubt about it."

Mentally, at that, I threw up my hands. I did not know what to say and, before I could determine, he was at it from another angle.

"I want you to help me."

Theoretically, it is a privilege to help anyone. Actually, it is the guano of ingratitude. Yet, weak as water, I nodded at him.

"Well, then, since she was in the Park today, she may be there tomorrow. It was about noon when I saw her and tomorrow at eleven I shall station myself at the top of the steps and I want you to be at the bottom. Will you?"

It was sheer insanity but, though insanity has always appealed to me, I did not at once agree.

"Assuming, not for argument's sake, but just to avoid one, that it was your wife you saw, it is not cricket to trap her. If it was a ghost your attitude should be equally correct."

"But it is she who is not running straight."

"All the more reason then why you should."

He got up, lit another cigarette and began limping about. It seemed to me that I had tangled him and, with my usual weakness, I switched.

"I'll go you. If I see her, I will salute her. If you see her, you will of course do the same. But if I were you, and mind you I am not, but if I were, I would stop there. To attempt in any way to detain or address her, unless she invites it, would be an evil act."

He turned on me. "I can't see where the evil would be."

"Yes, you do, you see perfectly. You know it would show a total lack of consideration for her personal independence. If Renwick had not mumbled a dozen phrases over you both, you would never dream of it.

Because he did, that does not make her your thing. But all this is utter nonsense. You did not see her and what you did not see, you will not see again. None the less I'll go you. I'll go you because I hate the humdrum and love the insane."

I broke off and added: "Can you loan me Peters for a minute or two?"

"Peters? Yes. Certainly. What do you want him for?"

"You may not know it, but he is a genius. He can pack. It is more than I can do."

"Pack! Pack for what?"

"Sevilla! Granada! Cadiz! There are the tickets, I'll toss you now. What did you pay? I'll toss you and give you a cheque for the one I lose."

"Oh!" he said longingly. "You are still going, are you?"

"Of course I am and so are you."

"Not now, not until I find Nelly."

I could not budge him. I tried, but not very hard. I knew the harder I tried the more mulish he would become, but I knew, too, that if I said little or nothing, sooner or later he would veer, suggest whatever I had and believe the suggestion his own. Not a very original process perhaps, but I have found it the only way in which one can live in comfort with unoriginal people.

Consequently I threw up the sponge. "All right, Granada will keep. But you're mad, mad as a hatter, mad as two hatters, mad as Lincoln and Bennett."

"Then you will be there at eleven tomorrow?"

"I will be there at ten fifty-nine."

He limped along. I saw him out, heard him lumber down the stair, crossed the landing and rang at Aly Bolton's door.

It opened and a frowsy lady said: "Are you the gasman?"

"Yes," I replied. "But not your gasman and, believe me, I deplore it deeply."

"Get along with you. What do you want?"

"Miss Bolton's address."

The lady displayed the most distressing mouth I ever saw.

"Are you meaning the party as was here? I never seen her. Likely the janitor can tell you. Is it a bill?"

"For the rent"—in my heart, I would have added but she closed the door.

XIV

For the purposes of that story of mine, already I had looked over the papers published by the Society for Psychical Research and, greatly to my amazement, discovered what I already knew, that the ego persists after death. But evidence of the persistence of the ego is not evidence that it revisits the glimpses of the moon. In the whole interminable set of records there is not one authoritatively established ghost.

And yet, either Bradish had seen a ghost or else he was mad.

It is true he might have been lying and I would have given him the benefit of that doubt if I had known him less long and less well. It was not that he could not lie and did not lie, for he did lie, as we all have to lie, out of consideration and civility if nothing else. But in his cock-and-bull story I knew that he had been telling, not the truth certainly, but what was truth to him.

I got up from the table, to which I had returned from the frowsy lady, and kicked my clothes about.

But good Lord! I mentally exclaimed. What ponderable reason have I for saying that it is not the truth? The fact that there has been no authoritatively established ghost does not prove that there cannot be one.

Dissatisfied with the reductio, I kicked again and tried to look at the matter from the angle of insanity. Cally had waved that flag. Yet, apart from the determination with which Bradish had clung to the idea that he had seen Nelly Chilton, he seemed normal as you please, to me at least, but while I knew precious little about insanity, I did know that the presence of an idea, fixed and erroneous, is the surest proof of dementia. The idea might therefore show that he was mad, unless, of course, it were not erroneous.

But that is nonsense, I decided. He did not see the the dead, he did not see a ghost. If he saw anybody, it was Aly Bolton, and yet how could he? She is not here.

But I am here, I disgustedly reflected, and what is worse, I argue with myself. I don't wonder the frowsy lady mistook me for a gasman.

Then back to me, from over the way, the possibility trotted. It might be Aly Bolton. Apparently she had gone. On the other hand, she might not have. She had said she was going and though clearly she had vacated the walkup, it did not follow that she had vacated New York. Then, suddenly, I realised that I knew nothing whatever about her, realised also, and for the first time, that while seemingly frank as an open newspaper, actually she might be secretive as a sealed book.

Exceedingly lovely, clothed in riddles, in her two-by-four flat, she had been out of place as a piano in a pantry. Her natural atmosphere was the spaciousness of some spacious domain. What she had was the stuffiness of a furniture shop. That in itself was incongruous. Yet, apart from it, where did she go? what did she do? For all I knew to the contrary, privately she might be a Borgia and publicly a bacchante. She suggested none of these things. What she did suggest was a soul singularly evolved. But even though she were not, even though she were no better than the law allows, her charm prevailed. That charm had inundated me. Because of it I knew, whatever she might be, that always before her my hat would sweep the ground.

When a man does not feel that way, he has no feeling at all. One might say he is callous.

None the less mystery surrounded her and I wondered if I had the right to probe it. She had been living there, across the hall, beautiful and solitary at night, looking like a princess and dressed for the rôle and, by day, associated with a furniture shop. It was not only incongruous, it was curious. It suggested that complexity which dual personality is, and yet which all problematic natures possess.

In considering the matter, it occurred to me that while I had no right to lift any of her veils, to even touch them for purposes of my own, yet, for Bradish's sake, perhaps I should. If I could lead him up to her, the shock he would get would be as pronounced as the one at my doorbell and far more effective, for definitely it would lay that ghost.

I reached for my hat, took a pair of gloves, stuck a stick under my arm and went down the stair.

On the main floor was the den of the janitor, a dirty, wild-hearted little man with a hostile and drooping eye. Long since I had tamed him. A dollar here, a cigar there, and he had become a watch dog, barking that I had moved, that I was dead, guarding me from interruptions.

"Tell me, pretty maiden," I said when I got at him. "What is Miss Bolton's address?"

He did not know. But he knew her place of business. It was a furniture store on Fortieth Street near Fifth Avenue.

In an hour I found the shop, which had the air of a Franco-Chinese bazaar. Among other curios was a chair that stretched its arms to me. Pending the attentions of a clerk with shiny hair and a shiny moustache, I accepted the chair's embraces. At the moment, the clerk was talking to a woman, a topnotcher, I thought, Mrs. Amsterdam for all I knew to the contrary, but presently he bowed her out and I asked for Miss Bolton's address.

"Miss Bolton? Never heard of her."

"Here is her picture then. A beautiful young woman, beautifully dressed, who speaks with a foreign intonation. She is connected with your firm. Where is she?"

"Oh, yes! I recognise the picture. But—er—she was with us under another name."

I shifted. "This is a decent chair. Send it to Mr. Bradish."

"Mr. James Bradish?"

I nodded.

"Is this Mr. Bradish?" he asked, looking, I could see, for the spider of which all New York was aware.

"No, but if he likes the chair, I will pay for it."

"Yes, sir. May I ask your name?"

I gave it, the Buck Club with it and added, "Well, where is the lady?"

He smoothed that moustache. "She—er—she disassociated herself from us just when Mr. Delatour was sending her abroad. I believe she is in Montreal—or is it Toronto?"

I could not tell him and he went back among tall bahuts, silk tapestries, porcelain monsters, and I saw him lean over a table.

Twelve hours away, I thought. If she is away!

But he was returning. "I don't seem to find it. Mr. Delatour may know. He is out now, I will ask him."

I got up.

He saw me out. "Yes, sir, it will be attended to and the chair also."

As the lift took me, I could have sworn that the lady of the steps was Aly Bolton. From the start I could have sworn it and would have sworn it, sworn it at Bradish, had I not believed she was in Paris and I know of no normal process whereby a young woman can be in two places at once. Or any normal process either whereby she can have two names and no address.

I was on the avenue by this time, looking in at shops that were filled with things I did not want. What I did want was a bite. I made for Sherry's, changed my mind, boarded a bus and got out at Bradish's corner.

In the hall was Peters and I asked him to get me a sandwich.

"And a glass of Madeira, sir."

Already Gedney had told me that Bradish was in the reception-room, and at once, as I entered that chamber of horrors, I discovered him at the window, standing there, looking out, a thing which a gentleman never does.

He turned and explained it. "I am on the watch now, you know."

"Well, you need not be. I have got it."

We went on in to the library and seating myself I added: "Also I have a chair for you. I thought it very comfortable. I thought it more than comfortable. It was what you might call a 'varsity chair. It was highly instructive."

"You have heard something."

"Rather a long story, too. But perhaps it won't bore you. There is a young woman hereabouts who might be——"

He had it away from me before I could get it out.

"Nelly's twin. She is employed at Delatour's. Nelly told me about her. If that is your story, what is true in it is not new."

"But look here——"

"Oh, I'm looking and I propose to keep at it. Here are your sandwiches. I hope they will seem more appetising to you than that story has to me. Did you think I would swallow it?"

Peters had put a tray before me and gone. The sandwiches went quite as quickly.

Smoking, he watched me and puffed. "Nelly said the resemblance was confined to the profile and colouring. She said the Delatour girl was more fragile and slimmer. I remember just the way she put it, 'She's me etherealised.' "

"In duodecimo," I threw out. "Yes, that's true. None the less——"

"You thought I could mistake one for the other. Never."

I pushed at the tray and he sat down and shoved a box at me.

"Have a cigar. You will be there tomorrow?"

"Yes, and the day after. As often as you like. But I think you are wrong. I think it was the Delatour girl, as you call her. I would have said so this morning, only I thought her in Paris."

"And thought me insane."

"Look here, Jim, either you are cracked or else you saw a ghost. There are no two ways about it."

"But you are ridiculous with your ghost. I never heard such rot."

"Ever heard of Carlyle then? 'Ghosts,' the old duffer said, 'nigh a thousand million of them walk the earth at noon.' "

"Carlyle was capable of anything, except decent English. He never saw one of his ghosts or you either."

"It is a pretty question. In England almost every old family has a ghost. A ducal family has two ghosts. You know about the Crookes ménage, don't you?"

"Who the deuce is Crookes?"

"An ordinary person who discovered thallium, invented the radiometer and foretold the x-ray."

"The chemist?"

"From what I hear, he is passionless as algebra. Now he said, 'I do not say such things may be, I say such things are.' "

"He did not say it about ghosts then."

"You are quite right. He said it about a spirit materialised by a medium, a very pretty spirit, a spirit that called herself Katie King, gave him her photograph, a lock of her hair and sat in his lap, sat in it not once, but a hundred times. I am not making this up, it is all down somewhere."

"I don't believe it."

"Of course you don't. You believe in the reality of things. You believe there is heat, you believe there is cold. There is neither heat nor cold. There is merely vibration and the brain to translate it. You believe there is light, you believe there is colour. There is no light, there are no colours. There is only matter and motion and the optic nerve. On the other hand you don't believe in illusions. Of all illusions the real is the greatest."

"Here! Help yourself to the Madeira but spare me your Fichte and brandy."

"Very good then, consider the lilies of the field. They toil not, neither do they spin and you have seen them in their ideal condition. But you have not heard them grow into it. That is because your ears are not attuned to their vibrations. If they were, you would precious soon discover the noise they make. Because you are not deaf, you don't believe it. Because you are not blind you believe there can be nothing that is not obvious. It is the obvious alone that is illusory."

"In the Park today, Nelly was perfectly obvious, with nothing illusory about her."

"Except when she vanished."

"I did not say she vanished. I said——"

"You said you saw her one minute and could not see her the next. Isn't that what you told me?"

"Well, yes, but——"

"Look here, old chap, a crustacean extracts from the water material wherewith to make a shell. From grain a bird produces feathers and an elephant produces ivory. These processes are marvellous. But they are so common that we accept them as a matter of course. Yet, in view of them, it is quite conceivable that the disincarnate can so utilise particles and elements of the air that materialisation ensues. Materialisation can be even forced upon them. The dead can be raised. It is true it takes black magic to do it and nowadays who believes in that sort of thing? I am sure I did not until occultism taught me better. Given certain conditions and the dead can be raised. Given others and they can raise themselves. There are more things in heaven and earth, Jim Bradish Horatio——"

"Beg pardon, sir."

In the doorway Gedney stood and with him a man and that chair from which I had set forth to tell Bradish what he knew beforehand. It was a mocking chair.

But now, stretching its arms at Bradish, he too let it embrace him.

He turned to me. "Jolly good. Where did you find it?"

"At Delatour's."

He turned to the man. "Tell Delatour if he has another like it to send it here."

In a moment, when the man had gone, he turned again to me.

"Very nice of you, I'm sure. Was it from that girl you got it?"

"Lord, no. I didn't see her."

"How did you know then about the resemblance?"

"She had a flat across the way from mine."

"At your confounded walkup?"

"Where else? I am not maintaining two establishments. But she saw you there once and said you had a beautiful nature. She was entirely wrong. None the less you might cultivate one."

"I think I am cultivating one. I have accepted your chair with gratitude and your remarks with charity. What more would you have?"

"Abandon this whole thing. If you are not cracked already it will drive you crazy."

"Beg pardon, sir."

There was Gedney again, this time with a card on a salver.

Bradish looked at the card, looked at me.

"A man with some leases. They won't take long."

He got up and limped into the chamber of horrors. On the table beside me was *The Dawn,* a novel by Bil Sayers, which the junior member of the house that published my rubbish told me had sold to the tune of sixty thousand copies.

Idly I opened it. Instantly the room dissolved. I was wandering afar in a fancy ball of the imagination, one in which I felt unworthy to tie the latchets of the writer's shoes. The ball he gave suggested a Baudelarian masquerade conducted by Gautier; the dual surprises that only a magician of letters can create; the words glued to the idea and the idea a winged thing. With the name of a prize fighter, Bil Sayers had the pen of a witch.

But the room reassembled its atoms. Bradish reappeared. Yet it may be he had lingered too long in the chamber of horrors. It may be that some of its atmosphere had permeated him. He startled me with the first thing he said.

"What did you mean by saying the dead can be raised?"

"Merely that and nothing more."

"How is it done?"

"Only the initiate know. But I understand that among the requisites are incantations, chemicals and buckets of blood."

"And the dead rise from the buckets?"

"With the blood and other substances the spirit materialises."

He had been standing. He sat down in the chair I had given him, reached for the book I had put on the table, fidgeted with it and shoved it back.

"And you say it has been done?"

"Read your Æschylus. In the *Persians* there is an account reasonably circumstantial and tolerably terrific. Since then, there have been a number of instances. Only the other day I saw an account of one in the London *Times*. It told of a séance at the Winter Palace where a Thibetan lama evoked for the tsar the spirit of Alexander II."

"His grandfather? The chap who was bombed? I don't believe it."

"How admirable you are today. You ask for information. The prettiest girl in all the world can only give you what she's got."

But there was Gedney again. Someone else had come and I reached for my hat.

"Tomorrow at eleven?" he said when he saw I was going.

"On the dot."

XV

The next morning I went to the roof. About me were fastidious tokens, the subsurface garments of my neighbours. In the street were hurrying insects. Above, indifferent to the idiot agitations of man, serenely the sun looked down. It reminded me of Brahma, who knows the nothingness of all.

But the sun, that is a divine lecturer, is also a heavenly clock. The hour of my rendezvous with the quick, perhaps also with the dead, was approaching. I threw myself down the stairs and ultimately reached the Park, where I found Bradish gazing, as Janus gazed, two ways at once.

Amicably he greeted me. "You are always late."

Inimically I answered him. "You look like a god."

Bolstered by a stone pillar, he stood at the top of a flight of steps. Beneath was a path that girdled a miasmatic lake. The path was punctuated with the exclamation points of trees, between which, at spaced intervals, were arbours, vine-covered, filled with mosquitoes. At the foot of the steps, three children shouted as only American children do shout. Along the path a man strolled, his hands behind his back, talking to himself. Otherwise, at the moment, there was no one.

Along the top of the steps were nurses, prams, old women. Beyond, on the road, were cars, victorias, girls on horseback. Across the road, more trees.

Bradish looked at his watch, which was always wrong.

"It's eleven-thirty," he informed me. "Now," he authoritatively added, "you go down there."

At the foot of the steps, I gave the shouting children a quarter and invited them to hasten elsewhere in search of lollypops, of which I hoped they would sicken and die. At once the man who had been talking to himself began talking at me. There are times when if I cannot answer rudely, I do not answer at all. This was one of them. The shouting children had got me on edge. Besides it seemed imbecile to stand waiting for someone who would never come, for something that could never happen.

I lit a cigarette. My talkative friend had moved on. The children had gone. But now, at the right, people appeared, tourists I judged, quite a lot of them, talking in that rasping voice which is one of my beloved country's many specialties and dressed in a fashion that is another. I looked at the miasmatic lake in which were intrepid ducks and suddenly I turned. I had heard Bradish.

At the top of the steps, his limping foot may have slipped. I could see him, one hand on the balustrade, pulling himself up, motioning at me with the other. But I saw, too, something else. Descending the steps was Nelly Chilton—she, or her ghost.

Dumbfounded, I gasped but I rallied, dropped my cigarette, raised my hat. At that instant she was midway on the steps above me. Whether or not she saw me I could not tell. She ignored me as only an entirely well-bred woman can ignore a man whom she does not wish to notice.

I stared. She was nearer then than the instant before and, in staring, I was conscious of three distinct and practically simultaneous impressions. First, that she was not Nelly Chilton but Aly Bolton; second, that she was neither the one nor the other; third, that whoever she might be, she was livid.

Confused by the conflicting impressions, I looked up at Bradish, looked without consciously seeing him, looked again at her, for her, rather. She was no longer there. During the shift of my eyes she had vanished.

The tourists then were directly in front of me. One of them, a man, was asking me something. I flung him aside, flung myself through the others, flung myself beyond and looked. Not a trace! On the other side of the path were bushes. No one! Nearby was an arbour. Empty!

I turned. Bradish, red as a tomato, was limping along the path. Behind him the tourists, bunched together, were rasping angrily at me. I was sorry to have appeared uncivil, but I was not in the humour to say so. I had my hands full with Bradish. Without his hat, passing and repassing a hand on his head, his mouth working, that spider venomously active, before me he stood, unable to speak, congestioned by emotion.

"Come here."

I got him in the arbour, got him seated, killed a few mosquitoes and asked if his car was waiting. I do not think he heard. He was stuttering something, what I could not make out, something to the effect that my Nelly was dead.

I never had a Nelly. Otherwise it was curious. Bradish, six feet tall, ordinarily nerveless as a stone wall, was shaking like a frightened girl.

In those remote days, brandy was to be had in the Park and very bad brandy it was. But there are times and seasons when bad brandy is better than none. This was one of them. I thought, My kingdom for a pony! His house, though, was very neighbourly. Rather than the hazards of sylvan bars, it seemed to me safer to get him there.

"See here," I said. "If you came on foot, we'll find a cab."

Again he passed a hand over his head. "Where is my hat?"

"Probably on the steps."

He got up. I put a hand under his elbow. He shook it off and limped along.

The tourists then had gone. The children I had hoped were dead had returned, dirtier, noisier, not sick but sticky. They were having a rough and tumble on the steps, from the top of which, Fletcher, who had succeeded Mike, was looking down.

By this time Bradish had himself in hand. In the car he said nothing but at his house he distributed various orders.

"Except to Dr. Cally I am not at home."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"Something to eat and drink in the library. Anything."

"Brandy," I threw in.

"And curaçoa," Bradish added.

Brandy and curaçoa make very good medicine. I applauded the prescription. Apart from which, I have often wondered how it was that in questioning his sanity, I did not question my own. For presently, after his servants had come and gone, and we had both dosed ourselves and he went back into it, I followed his lead, not head over heels perhaps, but with relative confidence.

The lead he gave was, at first, merely an indication.

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"I don't know what to make of it, except that whoever the lady of the steps may have been, neither of us ever saw her before."

He lit a cigar, puffed at it, lit it again.

"You are right. Neither of us has seen a ghost. Yesterday when you spoke of one, I thought it ridiculous. I did not believe it possible. I do now, though. No, I still do not believe it possible and yet I have to believe it. My eyes deny what my ears affirm."

I exclaimed at him. "Your ears! What have your ears to do with it?"

He was relighting his cigar and I doubled on him. "Look here! What in the world did you go and tumble over for?"

"It was her doing."

"How her doing? You don't mean she knocked you down?"

"In that beastly hole where we sat, I told you about it. You seemed more interested in the mosquitoes."

"Tell me again then."

"She was almost on me when I saw her. That was just before you did the football work through those people. To tell you the honest truth I did not expect to see her. I hoped I might. I did not believe I would. When she came on me, like that, I started, and she did, too. Yesterday, I don't think she saw me. But, today, when she did see me, she gave a sort of start and I was so overcome I out with something, 'Nelly!' or, 'My Nelly!' and tried to touch her. I know I stretched my hand toward her. She edged away, drew her head back and said, and said it from the tips of her lips, but as plainly as I am talking to you, 'Your Nelly is dead.' You remember how she used to look. She had a skin of cream with claret in it. At that instant she looked as though she did not have a drop of blood. I started again to approach her. Already she was hurrying down the steps. I slipped on a bit of orange peel and called to you."

It was rather rattling. To clarify it, I said, "You are sure she spoke?"

"There is no question about it. When I said 'Nelly!' or 'My Nelly!' she said, and said it as though she were annoyed, 'Your Nelly is dead.' "

"The devil!"

At the moment I found but that. Yet immediately I had it, or thought I had it, and I gave it to him.

"In that arbour, it occurred to me that when I went through those people and was headed one way, she had already taken the other."

"Supposing she had. I don't see how it matters."

"If what you tell me is true, I mean if you did not imagine it, it matters everything. What you saw and I saw was not a ghost. Ghosts may or may not appear, but, assuming they do appear, they don't talk. They cannot. The physical organs are lacking."

I could see him turning it over. Then he, too, had it, or thought he had it, and he gave it to me.

"Hold on! You told me that the spirit that sat in Crookes' lap said her name was Katie King. She must have talked to tell it."

"Yes, and for that matter I have had a spirit talk to me. In Boston, at a séance, a spirit bobbed up right in front of me. As she was young and pretty, or at least seemed so in the darkened room, I put an arm around her and she bleated, 'Don't, don't!' and cuddled closer. While I was hugging her, the medium barked like a bulldog, 'Young man! Don't you take liberties with Bright Eyes.' Then Miss Bright Eyes slipped from my arms and disaggregated through the floor."

I laughed as I said it, as one does in telling a thing of that sort, but it did not amuse Bradish. Gloomily he smoked and I gave the story its proper perspective.

"But look here, Bright Eyes and Katie King and any other mediumistically materialised spirit is not a ghost. A spirit is a physical exteriorisation of the medium's psychism. Apart from the medium, it has no existence whatever. On the other hand, a ghost, the old-fashioned ghost, had its own entity, its own volition. Like the wind, it came and went as it listed. But, except in novels, it never talked. How could it?"

Bradish got up and stamped about. An old trick of his, it had always annoyed me. But on this day, occupied as I was with what a German would call the being and the non-being, nothing mattered except the key to the riddle which had complicated itself by becoming a problem with an enigma added. The lady of the steps constituted the problem. Was she or was she not a ghost? In either case, who was she? In the latter query was the enigma.

The practically simultaneous impressions that I had derived from her, vividly confusing as they were at the moment, had since become less distinct. Of them all the third, being the last, was the strongest and I told myself that while the apparition might impossibly be Nellie Chilton, might possibly have been Aly Bolton, more probably it was a fair unknown.

Yet, in that event, why had she said that Nelly was dead? How, for that matter had she come to say it? Above all why the *de haut en bas* attitude? Assuming it were Nelly Chilton, assuming it were Aly Bolton, assuming it were a third and unknown quantity, what had Bradish done to be spoken to with such loftiness? He was a good sort and his attitude to the departed had been impeccable. Why then the air of saying, Villain, unhand me?

At that, quite like the mosquitoes on the lake, an idea hummed and bit.

I looked up at Bradish.

"Jim, would you mind continuing your promenade sitting down? I have something to ask you."

He turned to me. "Well, what?"

"You remember the ladylike dressmaker with the cheque. What did you tell them at the manor about him?"

It was a bit far away. It took him a moment to get there. In the process he sat down.

"I don't see why you want to go back into that. But if it is any benefit to you, I got Mrs. Chilton alone and put the matter before her. She took it to Nelly. When she returned she said Nelly would marry me."

"So I assumed. But just what did you tell Mrs. Chilton?"

"What Peters told me, that he had gone with you to Bonheur and that the scoundrel would not budge."

At that, I too got up and stamped about. I stamped the harder because I did not know what to say. Truth should be agreeable or else withheld. To have told him that Nelly Chilton had agreed to marry him solely because of circumstances which she was distressingly unaware no longer existed or which, if they had ever existed, existed only in her mother's imagination, to have told him that would have been tantamount to hitting him over the head.

"Well, why do you ask?" I heard him say.

I stopped and turned. "Oh, nothing."

"Nothing, eh? Then you have a mighty queer way of asking mighty queer questions about it."

I had turned away, I turned again. "The whole thing is queer. I am trying to get the rights of it. From the manner in which the lady of the steps spoke to you, it seems to me that she must have felt herself aggrieved."

"About what, in God's name?"

"She may have got the idea that the Bonheur story was too bad to be true."

"But where could she have got such an idea?"

"Ah, where! That's it."

"And from whom?"

"From whom, as you say."

"Well, then?"

"I do not know where she got it, how she got it or what she got, but from your account she appears to have, or appears to think she has, a grievance against you, if not about Bonheur, then about somebody or something else."

I sat down and he got up.

"I believe you are right."

But there now at the door was Peters.

"Dr. Cally, sir."

In he walked, the living image of the devil, and pointed a finger at Bradish.

"You're exciting yourself, my son. None of that I told you."

He nodded at me. "What's new on Parnassus?"

I got up to go. "What's new with you? Any interesting cases?"

Cally plucked at his beard. "My cases are all interesting—to the patients. But recently I had one that might interest a genius. George Eliot had a similar case in one of her novels. You, of course, could handle it better, much better. You have, what she lacked, the impressionist touch."

I knew he was guying me. None the less I walked straight into it.

"What sort of a case?"

Blandly he smiled. "Hard up for a plot? Well, some day I may give you one. But not now. Now I have to scold this young man. He seems in a very depleted condition. Been exchanging ideas with you, hasn't he?"

"Hardly that," I said, making for the door and smiling at him as I went. "Merely a tip or two. I was suggesting another physician."

XVI

In the workshop that night I tried to solve the riddle. The enigma passed and repassed. It galloped like Flaubert's sphinx.

> J'ai vu le sphinx qui fuyait. Il galopait comme un chacal.

In meditating that picture, a message reached me. Probably the result of what people who like fine words call unconscious cerebration, or of what people who like finer ones call inspiration, none the less the message seemed to originate not from within but from without. It seemed as though an invisible presence had conveyed it. Even now, though years have gone by since then, I am unable to say that it was not due to an external agency. The superjective, always potential in us, though in most of us usually dormant, may have transmitted it from one of the unseen helpers that we all have and who are most active in our behalf when we are striving, not for ourselves, but for others.

In any event and however the impact may have originated, eventually it supplied the key to the riddle, opened that door and changed three lives. The complex result was not immediate and in time much, if not all of it, would in any case have been achieved. Sooner or later all doors open, all lives change. But I believe now that the key was hidden in the message which, simple enough on the surface, told me to do what I had then no intention whatever of doing and that was to visit the Park the next day.

Châteaubriand, who knew what poetry is, said there are apparitions that visit the heart of man. They come, as thieves and angels do, and like them depart. An apparition had visited me. It instructed and I obeyed. On the morrow, at eleven-thirty, I was again in the Park, at the foot of those steps.

I had no plan of any kind, which often is the best plan of all. I had thought that when—and if—the lady appeared, I would let circumstances guide me. But though I had not planned what I would do, I had planned what I would not do. The day before she had cut me dead. Ghost or not, I did not propose to have her cut me living. If, graciously, she were so inclined and bowed, my hat would sweep the steps, and if by look or motion she intimated that I might address her, then, while I had no phrases rehearsed, I did think I might become quite talkative and not about the weather, either.

Meanwhile, on the third step from the bottom, I sat down. The dear children of the day before may have sickened at last. The tourists may have thought the Park a haunt of thugs. The talkative man who talked to himself, must have been talking elsewhere. Save for the mosquitoes I was alone. Beyond, on the miasmatic lake, a boat floated. Above was a tender turquoise and the indifferent sun. Of the lady, not a sign.

I lit a cigarette. As I tossed the match, my hand stung. From it fell a pebble. I looked up. At the top of the steps, Bradish was looking down. Then at once, as though he had no time to waste, he turned his back, a very fine back, draped beautifully in beautiful flannels.

I called at him. *"Au large, canaille."*

Still that back and I fancied he was gazing Janus-esquely as he had gazed the day before.

Up the steps, like a chamois on Chamonix, I flew.

"See here, confound it, you will only make a mess of things as you did yesterday, whereas I——"

"You will do wonders."

"At all events, I won't lose my head and my hat and tumble over backward. If she sees you, she'll bolt, godlike that you are. But me, now, she may not notice and I can tiptoe along and see what becomes of her. It is not supposable that she will dematerialise as little Bright Eyes did when her chaperon caught me hugging her."

"You never can tell. She dematerialised yesterday. She dematerialised the day before."

"But neither of us saw her at it. Now I saw Bright Eyes perform her little act. She sank from my arms through the floor, disaggregating as she went."

"She was a fool not to have disaggregated sooner."

"I dare say. But that's not the point. If you are to stop here, I'll go. If you go, I'll hold the fort."

Bradish grabbed me by the arm. "There she is now! In that taxi!"

In the cab, almost in front of us then, I could see her, see too that she was bowing, not at both of us, not at Bradish, that bow was for me, and raising my stick in signal at the mechanician I bounded. Before I could reach her she too may have signalled. A yard or two beyond the cab stopped, a gloved hand was held out to me and my eyes were eating her face.

"Well!" I exclaimed. "Of all people! You are not the ghost of yourself, are you?"

She smiled. "No. I don't think so. Yet I may be. One never knows."

"But——"

The smile persisted. "You thought me abroad?"

"And heard you were not."

The smile passed. She was no longer looking at me, but over me, and I felt a kick. I knew it was he, confound him, and half turning, I said:

"This is Mr. Bradish, Miss Bolton."

I had seen him in any number of situations, but I had never seen him awkward before. Shy, yes, and diffident also, but awkward never, yet there he stood, fiddling with his hat, his mouth twitching like an embarrassed schoolboy.

The smile returned. "How do you do, Mr. Bradish?"

He sort of gasped, but he let go. "Thank you, thank you. Had the pleasure of seeing you here yesterday, I believe. Yesterday and the day before."

I suppose she knew what he was thinking. She usually could tell what anyone thought, that is when she wanted to, but she took it very simply.

"Yesterday and the day before I was in Canada. I am on my way now from the station."

She turned to me. "When you can you must look in at my new quarters. Signor Matouchi will be glad to see you—and you also, Mr. Bradish, should you care to come. Will you tell the man to drive on?"

Another smile and she drew back. But I poked my head in at her.

"My love to your angel and say I don't know where he lives."

She laughed and told me. It was on the west side in the upper Eighties. As she told me, I saw travelling bags at her feet. She gave me her hand. I told the driver and fell back.

Bradish, his hat in his hand, his tail between his legs, was ambling away.

I caught up with him. "Well, sir, I hope you are satisfied. That ghost is laid."

With latent ferocity he turned on me. "Was that the Delatour girl? She doesn't resemble Nelly in the least."

"She doesn't, eh? After your telling her you saw her here yesterday and the day before! I like that!"

"I don't know that I particularly care what you like or what you don't like. At a distance there is a resemblance, I admit that. But the voice is different. This girl has a foreign intonation, a foreign look. Viennese, I should say. I did not notice that until she spoke. Then at once the slight resemblance faded. It was not she who said to me yesterday, 'Your Nelly is dead.' "

"It was not you either, I suppose, who grabbed me by the arm and said, 'There she is! There she is!' "

"I made a mistake, that's all there is to it. You needn't rub it in. Come on to the house and have luncheon."

Mentally, again I threw up the sponge. In trying to unravel it the night before, I found that I did not believe that the lady on the steps had spoken to him. I believed that self-suggestioned, he had imagined that she had. Other people have had auditory hallucinations, and why not he? Why not he, particularly? He was just in a condition for them. In any event one thing now was certain and, in a matter such as this, one was a great many. The lady of the steps was not Aly Bolton. Definitely she was eliminated. I was free to pick and choose between a dead girl and a *dame inconnue* and of the two I infinitely preferred the latter. At the same time, it struck me that in a town as beauty-lorn as Manhattan the coincidence of three young women identical in beauty was fabulous. Of the three one had now dropped out. The wonder remained. The subtraction diminished it by not more than a jot.

I looked at Bradish. "What did Cally say?"

"About what?"

"The condition of affairs in Peru."

He scowled. "You are always trying to be funny."

I laughed. "How splendid it is for you not even to have to try! Come now, out with it. What did he say?"

"He did not say anything. He had no chance. I did not tell him. If I had, he would have wanted to have me committed."

As he said that, he nodded at me and I nodded back.

"I am not so sure but that we both of us ought to be. Here we have been, two days running, hunting a ghost at high noon and in this beastly Park of all places. Not Cally alone, but anyone else would think we were cracked."

"Speak for yourself. What Cally did say is that I ought to get out of here."

I ran up the flag. "Granada, Sevilla, Cadiz! Can't you hear the castagnettes, the clinking heels, the guitars and the shouts? Can't you smell the orange-trees and the blood? Can't you see the flash of the rapier, the bull on his knees and the whole plaza yelling like mad? The Lord have mercy upon us! There people spend their coppers and live. Here they grub for them and die."

He turned on me. "All that is copy. You know you don't care a rap for any of it and you know, too, and jolly well, that I don't either."

We had reached the avenue. Just beyond, a man was scaling a bus. I did not know him, but he reminded me of Austen. I thought of the street of obscure calamities in which he had buttonholed me. As I remembered it, it was somewhere off there to the east and I asked Bradish if he knew where he lived.

Bradish gestured vaguely. "He left a card for me. Very civil of him, I thought."

We lunched like imitation barons in the pseudo-baronial hall. But Bradish played with the food. He had a headache, he said, and I never heard him say such a thing before.

Afterward, in the library, I caught him gazing at me with pensive malignancy.

"What did you have in your head yesterday when you brought up that Bonheur business?"

At the moment I had forgotten just what had suggested it and I told him so.

"I will refresh your memory then. You intimated that Nelly might have misconstrued it. What the devil did you mean?"

"Oh, nothing in particular."

I was wriggling. He saw it and pinned me down.

"I wish you would tell me."

A good straight honest lie has saved many a situation. But, at the moment, my imagination was indigent. I could not think of one and though I regretted it later, I told the truth.

"Well, then, since you will have it, you were a bit precipitate."

"How?"

"I lied like a thief to Bonheur. I told him I had seen him in the dock, told him I had seen you sign that cheque. Then I shook the stripes and handcuffs at him. When I got through, he was a wet rag."

Bradish bit his lip, but clutching back at his own version, he brought it out.

"Peters said he would not budge."

"Peters was only in there for a moment. He marched in and threatened to knock Bonheur's head off. I sent him out again. Afterward I rather feared he might have got it wrong and I sat about forever expecting you would telephone. You didn't, but then——"

"But then what?"

"Afterward I thought it all bunkum."

He roared it. "Bunkum! What do you mean?"

I looked him over. "See here, I have no desire to defame any woman, least of all your mother-in-law. But I'll wager what you like that she gave Bonheur that cheque—which she knew you would honour—just to pave the way for her to come here and throw a scare in you. That day Austen buttonholed me. I told you about it. He said she would jockey her daughter into marrying you. Well, she did. She jockeyed her, jockeyed you and that's the long and short of it."

He passed his hand over his forehead, got up, limped into the chamber of horrors and back again, while I threshed around for a palliative. I did not find any, or what I did find seemed very futile. Yet what is there in life that is not futile? As for this thing, I knew that by day he could rid himself of it. Through mere determination, one can, by day, rid the mind of anything. But, at night, I knew it would take him unawares, pull at his sleeve, wake him, sit there and stare.

"She has got to know. She has got to be told that I knew nothing of it."

He had stopped limping about and was standing in front of me, the spider pulsating as I had never seen it pulsate before. In standing he sort of shook, as one does with the ague.

"I don't know how I can get her to know. In the Park, if I see her again, she may refuse to listen. I——"

He broke off, sat down and got up again. "I'll import a lama, hang me if I don't."

I could not make head or tail of it. Perhaps he saw that I could not for he waved and added:

"You told me of a Thibetan lama that raised the dead."

"Lord of Eternity!" I helplessly exclaimed. "No doubt I did. I am capable of retailing any insanity. But a lama is not a prize-pig. You couldn't import one. Besides——"

"You said," he cut in, "that there had been any number of instances. Other means failing, there shall be one here."

I sat back. It seemed phantasmagoric. But what else had the episode on the steps been? Perhaps where all is abnormal, the abnormal ceases. Yet the abnormal need not be the illicit and I said as much.

"That way leads to Bedlam."

He laughed. His laughter was that which a poet catalogued as heard in hell, far down.

"Where else have I been since I woke up at the manor and saw that woman looking at me? As soon as I knew about Nelly, I wished I had gone with her. I have wished it a hundred times. I wish it now."

He sat down. "I suppose it is indecent of me to say so. It is always indecent to say how one feels. But, unless I find a way out of this——"

"Well, you will," I interrupted. "I have told you that. You are standing before a door that is closed, bolted, barred, sealed and walled. There are just two things than can efface it—time and silence."

Sotto voce I added: "And some one to beguile them both."

Angrily he protested. "Save that for your novels. Ten years hence, time and silence might help and would help now, I suppose, if all this had happened ten years ago. But today, tomorrow, the day after! Not for an instant."

"See here, if you don't mind, I'll ask some of your people to fetch me a drink."

I did not want it. To fuddle in the daytime has always seemed to me the act of a barbarian or else of a fool. But liquor, which excites most men, was a sedative to Bradish and I thought that under its influence, his mood might change, veer and pass.

He was one too many for me.

"Stop on here and get as squiffy as you like. My head aches to split. I am off to bed."

He was going, but he stopped, turned, pointed.

"That door you know—the door bolted, barred, sealed, walled—I'll break it down."

XVII

It seemed very unnatural of Bradish to have a headache. Unnatural too was his irritability. In my ignorance, the combination seemed to me symptomatic of approaching derangement and so weighed on me that that night I awoke calling for help. I had had a frightful dream about Switzerland.

It passed as such things do pass and that afternoon I went to the address which Aly Bolton had supplied.

By comparison with the walkup, the house was noble. A lift exalted me and presently a moonfaced maid conducted me to a sitting-room that was charming.

"Rather a change from Harlem," I said when the maid's mistress appeared.

She had come into a little money, she told me. In telling it, she gave me her hand and, indicating an oblong silver box that sat on a table, offered me a cigarette. But though she smiled, as I think she alone could smile, she had the languid air of those who are a bit overworked.

"And now tell me about yourself," she added.

I was admiring her frock. It was delicious and she was delicious in it. The combined delights sang about me.

"You may perhaps remember my ghost story."

"You have been writing it?"

"I have been living it. In the second chapter you walked in."

She was looking at me, reading me, I thought, but even for her clear eyes I felt that that second chapter was too involved and I shook it out for her after summarising the first.

In turn she summed it. "The lady of the steps you took first for Nelly Chilton, then for me, then for a stranger, after which she vanished, though not until she had told poor Mr. Bradish that his Nelly was dead. But what better ghost story would you have?"

"Personally I cannot improve it. But you might. Since yesterday I have been hoping you would. The curious gift that is yours may save a poor devil's reason."

Always superior, she did not deny the gift nor did she belittle it. She put it properly before me.

"One may psychometrise an object, not an illusion."

"Forgive me, this was nothing of the kind."

"A lady capable of a triple metamorphosis while descending a flight of steps may not be a ghost, but certainly she is a moving picture and would you not call that an illusion?"

"I will call it whatever you like. But I do not believe she spoke to Bradish. I believe that what he said she said was an auditory hallucination. Now, ignorant brute that I am, I do not know whether I have an open mind or not. But I can admit that if he had an auditory hallucination, I may have had an ocular one. That lady may be a figment of my own imagination. She certainly is as far as you are concerned. Yet, assuming that Bradish heard nothing and that I saw less, our testimony coincides in one particular. The vision appeared to us both. There is no illusion about that."

Her head drawn back, she was gazing upward, not at the ceiling, but through it and beyond. At what? I cannot say. At other stars perhaps, at skies more deeply blue, at lands that would be divine were it not for man.

A picture returned and I displayed it.

" 'I saw the sphinx in flight. He galloped like a jackal!' "

Leisurely she redescended to earth and to me.

"You have a solution?"

"No, but I had an impact. It directed me to the Park. Yesterday I saw you there. Then I knew why I was sent. I was sent to meet you, for you alone can help us."

"Tell me how."

"I will tell you more. Bradish believes that the vision has misinterpreted an entirely innocent act of his. That is impossible. Death took her too suddenly. It is true she might have acquired an erroneous account of it where she is and that, I think, is his idea. Yet how could she? One does not gossip in the astral. At least it is not supposable. But he won't look at it in that way. In the sheer luxury of his grief he wants to get at her."

"Orpheus and Eurydice!"

"A modern version. Orpheus, whose lyre charmed all nature, all hell as well, tried with it to recover his dear departed. Bradish thinks a cheque book equally coercive. I was idiot enough to tell him of a Thibetan lama who had evoked a dead emperor. Yesterday he spoke of importing one quite as though he had only to cable and hang the expense."

"Your poor Mr. Bradish might know that every lama is not a magician and also that magic is not confined to Thibet."

I took another cigarette. "There are satanists everywhere. I dare say there are a few here."

She moved a matchbox to me. "I know of one by repute. Probably there are others. The atmosphere of New York, charged as it is with grossness, is highly favourable for them. Yet I doubt that any or all of them could help your friend in the least. I doubt that a congress of black magicians could summon Nelly Chilton."

"She is too white, you mean?"

"That would have its effect. But there is another reason, one of a different order. I——"

She hesitated, paused, broke it off.

I picked it up. "Well?"

She pushed it away. "It is all so out of the common that sooner or later I shall be reading it, with your name on the cover. You have been living it, as you said. You know all the characters, all the facts."

"Not all the facts, there's the rub. Even otherwise, it entirely exceeds my absence of talent. For that matter I can think of but one writer who could do it justice and that is Bil Sayers. Have you read *The Dawn?*"

"Yes. Do you like it?"

"Enormously. The book is very able. So is he. He keeps his name out of the papers and nowadays it takes genius to do that."

For a moment she appeared to turn it over. Then she said: "It may be he feels that a writer should so arrange his life that posterity can find no evidence of his having lived at all."

I laughed. "There are writers that survive only because death has ignored them. But all this is shop-talk. What did Canada say?"

"Where I was it did not talk, it whispered. I went for that whisper. At times, New York deafens me, then it suffocates and I have to get away."

"While you were away, I took the liberty of enquiring for you at Delatour's. At the time I did not know but that you might be the lady of the steps."

"They undeceived you, I hope."

"A shiny young man was reasonably vague. I left with the impression that somewhere in Canada there was a young gentlewoman with two names and no address."

"The shiny young man knew me only as an expert. My individuality and my own name I keep for my friends."

"And among your friends is a sorcerer. Would you care to visit his cavern tonight?"

"Dear Mr. Delmonico? I should love to."

I stood up. "You're a brick. I will stop by for you then at, say——"

She helped me. "At seven-thirty."

Presently the lift was redescending me to earth.

XVIII

THAT night, when the philters had been removed, the den of the necromancer was void of the bewitched. The disenthralled were afar, at the sea, in the mountains. Those still under the spell had gone to roof-gardens, or else to joys less severe. In a corner two phantoms were tenderly telling how they hated each other. Occasionally a goblin moved as moves a form in a dream. At the entrance occasionally a face appeared and vanished. Otherwise we were alone.

Among the elixirs had been a flagon of Nuits. There is nothing so agreeably demoralising. A faint reflection of its scarlet midnight had passed into her face. On the table her right hand lay. In her left hand was a cigarette. Though years have gone since then, I can see her still, see the smoke as she blew it through her teeth, see the dawn with which the Nuits had tinted her face. From the back of her chair her wrap trailed. The colour, pale amber, rhymed with her dress which was mauve and which left her slimly and decently naked, not severely nude as one of the post-bellum frocks that began too late and ended too soon would have done, but after the engaging manner of what was fashion then, just calmly and properly bare. In that dress she looked like a song from Shelley translated by Baudelaire. The aërial effect was there; there too was the odour of exotics and these influences were more subtly incandescent than the headiness which Nelly Chilton in her more definite beauty had exhaled. Of that beauty one had been at once aware. It was flagrant. The beauty of this girl disclosed itself slowly as perfection ever does. It needed custom and a certain degree of intimacy before the full loveliness appeared. An acquired taste perhaps, yet a taste which once acquired none other can replace.

Ouvrons nos cœurs aux ivresses nouvelles.

In that line of Leconte de Lisle there is an invitation and a wisdom which most of us miss. Lifting the thimble of another elixir I was about to repeat it to her when she took it from me. With that curious divinatory gift which she possessed she may have seen it coming and, conscious that it awoke no echo, she waved it away. The heights are not for every mortal. They were not to be mine that night.

"We are here on business," she was saying and looking as she said it as unbusinesslike as you please. "If I am to help, there are one or two things I should know. Whom had she that was near to her?"

"Well," I said, "she had at least one distant relative. That was her mother. Mrs. Chilton had a Darling for her always. I think though it came from the lips. At heart I think she looked on the girl as a golden egg, or do I mean the hen that lays it?"

"And her father, was he a distant relative also?"

"A foreign one I should say. At some time or other he folded his tent. He may be now in Paris or he may be in San Francisco. When a New Yorker concludes to disappear he makes for the coast, or else for the Seine. What determines the choice must depend on memory, or such information as a club window supplies."

"A man of position was he?"

"I do not know. I do not know what a man of position is. But I fancy he was reasonably aware that he came of good stock. If he had come of better stock he might have omitted to be aware of it at all."

She raised a slender finger. "If I am to help you to help Mr. Bradish, please do not talk like a society play."

I raised my hand in salute.

The slender finger sank.

"The golden egg you mention spells Mr. Bradish, I suppose. From the spelling am I to infer the wolf?"

"The whole pack. They chased Mrs. Chilton through the doors of Bradish's bank where she dodged in and out and ran into a fine fellow who promised her the penitentiary unless she permitted him to make up to her daughter. Or so at least she confided to Bradish."

"You mean she invented it?"

"At any rate, Bradish swallowed it. And here the plot thickens. Previously and, I fancy, by prearrangement, the fine fellow had shown Bradish a forged cheque which naturally he disowned and, as it happened, in the presence of witnesses. At the moment, the poor chap never for an instant imagined that Jim the Penman was Mrs. Chilton. An hour later she swam in, owned up and, the next day, with an imaginary penitentiary staring her in the face, frightened her daughter into taking him. For a moment only. Since then Bradish has learned the truth. He thinks she has also and thinks she believes he knew of it at the time and got her under false pretences."

Aly Bolton, dropping her cigarette in a fingerbowl, watched it drown and looked up at me.

"There was a nearer one yet?"

"Much nearer. A chap named Austen. She was dead in love with him and is still for that matter. Dead in love is a ridiculous expression when applied to the living, but it fits a ghost."

Up again went that slender finger. "I asked you not to talk like a society play and now you are trying to talk like a low comedian."

"I wish I might so talk that——"

She had taken her gloves. She was reaching back for the wrap. I saw that the nature of my conversational ambitions she divined and dismissed.

Summoning a goblin, I paid and off we went and into a cab where I did not attempt to take her hand. I knew it would be withdrawn. I knew she was not the girl to give a man the lesser mystery of a hand to hold unless the greater mysteries were to follow.

I knew she would never graduate the degrees to the the temple. I knew she might never give anything, but I knew also that if she ever did, the gift, however slight, would be the token of everything else. I not only knew that, I knew that she knew exactly what I was thinking.

The experience of making up to her without the necessity of saying a word, delighted me. It supplied all the enticements of love without any of its disillusions.

But at once I was conscious that even the immaterial was denied me. We were seated together, a fold of her wrap just touching me, and it was through the fold that she may have got the current of my thoughts that were perfumed with her imagined kisses. In any event, without moving an inch, she drew the fold from me. The motion she made was so slight that had I been less conscious of her I would not have noticed it. But I did notice it. I knew it was a rebuke, one as unspoken as everything else had been, and turning to her I raised my hat.

"Forgive me."

Readily she might have asked for what? Readily she might have pretended ignorance. There was no pretence about Aly Bolton.

"Yes," she said. "I will." She paused and added:

"We have to see Mr. Bradish through and for that we must be friends."

Friends! Dear me, how long ago that is!

XIX

THE next day it rained ravishingly, a rich downpour that ordinarily would have been to me life's full delight. A nice long rainy day, what more can the heart desire? It keeps you in and keeps others out. But my table was bare. Bare was the cupboard of my mind. I had squandered my substance on ghosts and girls. In revenge, that drab of a muse had fled. She had deserted my bed and board. Mentally, that day, I was dished.

To the ripple of the rain I beat a tattoo on the window. Hollow device. Wearying of it and conscious of being in low spirits, the genial idea occurred to me of cheering Bradish up.

The fates had ordered otherwise. When drippingly I got to his house, Mr. Bradish was not at home, sir. Would I wait? No, I would not, and I descended on the Buck Club where that gay ass Brevoort supplied me with arid jests and offers of liquid refreshment.

"See here," in my misery I said to him. "What's up?"

"Not stocks. They have been up. Now they are down. Thank the Lord they can't go sideways. Another Martini?"

The day, though dark, was young. There were but two other members in the room and they were at the farther window. I knew that intentionally they would not listen and that even otherwise they were too removed to overhear. Mentally I weighed it. Should I tell him? Weighing it still, I beat about the bush.

"The last time I saw you, a very affable person converted your handkerchief into a conservatory. Remember it?"

"Shook it out, the beggar did, over Miss Chilton. Should say I do remember."

At his empty glass he nodded. "Tell you what. When I read about her, it knocked me silly."

Cautiously he looked at the other window. "I say! You don't believe in ghosts, do you?"

"No, I don't," I told him. "But I am dreadfully afraid of them."

Yet as I uttered that antique stupidity, I gasped.

The gay ass now was solemn. "Six days ago, no, hold on, five, it was on the eighteenth, I know because I had an appointment with my dentist. I was on my way to him when I ran smack into her. You don't believe me, of course not. Would not believe my own mother if she told me. Couldn't believe it myself. Yet there was Nelly Chilton and I off with my hat. Never noticed me. Passed straight on. I tell you a feather would have done for me. What bucked me, the Lord only knows, but I doubled and followed her. Followed her straight into a shop and found it was she and yet that it wasn't."

I snarled at him. "What do you mean?"

"Search me. Looked exactly like herself and yet she didn't."

I snarled again. "That second Martini that you haven't had, has not gone to your head, has it?"

"I don't wonder you ask. But I tell you there was something damn queer about it."

"You know she is dead, don't you?"

"Of course I know it. If the notice in the paper had not said, 'Funeral private,' I'd have gone. Sent flowers though. Knew her when she was knee-high."

He touched a bell and ordered. "Two Martinis."

I rounded on him. "In the shop, how did she look?"

"Ghastly."

"Shop lighted?"

"They all are."

"Calcium?"

"Don't remember. Why?"

"That might account for it. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"If you knew her since she was a child, you must have known her people. Had she any cousins?"

"Her father is the last of the Chiltons."

"Is her mother equally unique?"

"Her mother was a Fellowes and, by George! now I come to think of it——"

"Well, what?"

"She had a brother, Cranston Fellowes. He's dead. Got drunk on a yacht and fell overboard. They fished him out. Too much for him though. Pneumonia probably. That was before my time. Heard of it often though. My governor knew him. Said he and Mrs. Chilton were the living image of each other. Now he had a daughter. Never saw her. Don't know anybody that ever did. When she was fourteen she bolted with a chauffeur."

"A chauffeur!" I exclaimed.

Gaily the gay ass laughed: "Hey, why not? Everybody can't be a best-seller."

The cocktails had come. While he was drinking his, it naturally occurred to me that the lady of the steps and the lady in the shop must be the same and, conceivably, the chauffeur's inamorata.

I raised my glass. "What did she do in the shop?"

"That's it! A floorwalker asked what I wanted. I looked at him as much as to say, 'speak when you're spoken to,' just looked from her at him and back again and, begad, she'd gone!"

The coincidence was so striking that untasted I put the cocktail down and tentatively played out a rope.

"The usual sea of millinery had engulfed her."

"Devilish high the sea must have been to carry her off like that."

Still playing out the rope, I laughed. "Not a bit of it. The trouble with you is you are too fascinating. A woman has eyes in the back of her head. This woman knew you were following her. She feared for herself and entered a shop to lose you."

If you can chuckle gravely, the gay ass did. Yet at once, assuming a false modesty, he waved the picture away.

"Oh, for all of me——"

Again I rounded on him. "Look here! You go about telling other people what you have told me and before you can say Jack Robinson they'll clap you in Bloomingdale. Isn't it obvious that the lady in the shop is your chauffeur's girl?"

"He isn't my chauffeur. What's more, I fancy she is no longer his. But perhaps you are right. It may have been she. I didn't think of it before."

"Think of it now then."

We were seated as, in a club, men often are, at a window. Through it, for a little since, I had been aware of an encroaching blue. The ravishing rain had ceased. Westward the sky had cleared. At the houses opposite, the sun, from its magic treasury, was tossing aigrettes of gold.

But now a youth in a slashed waistcoat was bearing down on us.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Brevoort. A telephone call, sir."

With a gesture of excuse, he left me. I was glad of it. The advice I had volunteered applied to us both. I too needed to think of it and while he was shut in a cupboard, I ferreted about, found my umbrella and went out.

To go out when you have nowhere to go affords a spaciousness of freedom that is eminently relaxing. I had no wish to curtail it. After the stuffiness of that window, the puddles and gasolined air exhilarated and though it would be an excess of metaphor to say that they enlightened, none the less at the next corner I threw the chauffeur's girl into the middle of the street. Good enough for that gay ass if he wanted her, she was too fanciful for me. For a moment I had been inclined to swallow her, but on that corner I threw her up. The facial resemblance of cousins is rarely vivid and I abandoned the young woman with a shrug.

I was yet to learn that one does not get rid of a girl like that. It was some time before she caught up with me again but when I next saw her, then, in return for my shrug, she gave me a start.

It was near the Cathedral that I said goodbye to the misconducted daughter of Cranston Fellowes who, in addition to outraging the proprieties with a chauffeur, had managed to become mistaken for a ghost, and although I dropped her there, originally, in the club window where I first saw her, I had thought of taking her along and making her go through her tricks for the benefit of Bradish and his peace of mind.

Yet, as I afterward realised, nothing earthly could have benefited him. Back of the doors that close behind our birth it must have been all prearranged. Long ago, on inaccessible spheres, for some sin anterior and forgotten, all that had happened to him and all that was yet to happen, must have been written in his progression. Men who denounce the injustice of fate do not realise that their destiny is self-made, that as they sow they reap, though the reaping be postponed until their nominal death has intervened and they return here for the harvest.

These esotericisms did not occur to me when I was throwing the chauffeur's girl in the street. They came, with other things in their train, years later. At the time, innocently, in my ignorance, I thought that one may outwit fate. Innocently and ignorantly I thought I might help Bradish. I know I tried and, in his horrible journey to nowhere and back, it is possible that my efforts were of aid. But the journey itself, the long road hedged with hazards, no one but he could take, no one could save him from it. In the secret chambers of his soul he followed it. He had to follow it. Ineluctable as such journeys ever are, that journey was his destiny self-made. But I can say for him, that though he fell, as again and again he did fall, he saw it through and, not at the end, there was no end, there never is an end, but somewhere, midway between nothing and nowhere on that hazard-strewn road, he found peace. How he found it, and where he found it, will be related later on. Yet, now that I think of it, Swinburne told it better than I can, better than anyone could. "Even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea."

XX

"I DON'T like it, sir," Peters was telling me.

It was in my workshop. I am not the Pope and I had asked him to sit down. I do not think he liked that either. In any event, an expert in his vocation, he knew the niceties of its etiquette too well to accept. Civilly, but firmly, he had refused.

"Well, Peters," I told him, "you know I cannot listen to you. What Mr. Bradish does is his own affair. If he cares to tell me that is another kettle of fish, but you ought not to."

"Then who can I tell, sir?"

That was it. Bradish had relatives whom he studiously avoided. There was no one to stand in loco parentis. To produce another legal phrase, I was his nearest friend.

For a moment I turned it over. An idea crossed it and I said:

"Anyway, say nothing to Dr. Cally."

"No, sir, I certainly will not, sir. But that now is another thing that has made me hanxious. I asked Mr. Bradish if he would wish me to have Dr. Cally in. Mr. Bradish has always been most the gentleman to us servants. But he cursed me something dreadful. He looked frightful, sir. I was afraid he'd have a fit. But if I may take the liberty of saying it, the people that come there—" and Peters raised a hand in mortification—"they——"

I interrupted him. "I can't listen to that. I will stop by and if Mr. Bradish cares to tell me anything I may know what to say. In that box over there you will find some cigars. Help yourself."

A week had gone since I threw the chauffeur's girl overboard. In the interim, my old drab of a muse had returned more in love with me than before. Poor taste on her part, but there she was and I had been wringing from her a tale of the west. As, at the time, I had not been farther west than Hoboken, local colour stood about in jars. I had only to help myself. Within range of my gun—which I could pull by a slight of wrist too quick for the eye to detect—were prairies, cattle, saloons, faro-banks, cowboys, bad men, bad lands and The Girl, a flower, fleet as a mustang and pure as prayer.

I had gone at the accursed thing because I could not go at the ghost story and I could not go at that because I was living it. You never can properly begin a novel until it is finished.

All that by the way. I enter it in these papers only that I may make it clear, how it was that since the ravishing day when I pitched Miss Fellowes in the mud, I had not seen Bradish, or Aly Bolton either. For that matter, I had not even revisited the Park. But, at the time, I felt that the lady of the steps would descend them no more. It seemed to me that when Bradish first saw her there, she had not seen him. It seemed to me also that when she did see him, she may have feared that if she went there again, some effort might be made to detain her. I have, it is true, no facts to support my opinion, but I believe that the second time she was seen on those steps was the last time she returned there. In any event, neither Bradish nor I saw her there again, nor have I heard of anyone more fortunate.

But to go back a bit. I was in the workshop wringing a farrage of rot from that drab, taking down her gurgles, when I heard someone without. There was no pounding; just a tap, just a voice.

"Please, sir. It's Peters."

It was an awkward and perilous moment. But something might be wrong with Bradish. Consequently I had no recourse but to go forward with a backward eye and, while clutching the story with one hand, open the door with the other.

Four minutes later, Peters had gone. With him that fly-by-night had flown. Try as I might, it was idle, not a line would come. The only thing that prevented me from throwing my inkstand out of the window was the subliminal consciousness that I would have to buy another.

In the circumstances, what I did do was perhaps excessive. Resigning myself to the will of the gods, I went to sleep.

I awoke with a jump. Either the house had blown up or else the roof had fallen in. But no, it was merely Bradish at the door.

Without any of the amenities of life, he issued his edict. I was to come to his house at once. The pronunciamento pronounced, he deigned to be scurrilous.

"What on earth have you been doing?"

"Writing a book."

"Why haven't you looked in on me?"

"Writing a book is like having a baby. Any interruption is at the expense of the child."

"You talk like a wetnurse and act like a thug. I would have telephoned, wired or sent, but no one can get at you. Here I am, on the edge of it, and I have had to come myself. What is more, a blear-eyed scoundrel below told me you had married and moved to Brooklyn. What a devil of a way to live!"

We were on the stair while he was singing that song and presently we were in his car.

There he improvised another. "That door is not as tight as you think. I have got the locksmith."

As he said that, I could see Peters, his hand lifted in mortification at the people Bradish received.

"Where did you find him?" I asked. "In the gutter?"

"It was a bookshop."

"A bookshop!" I amazedly repeated.

"A cellar. Run by a lousy old party who sells queer trash. Sells it, no, has it on tap and sits there looking at it, twirling his thumbs, waiting for customers that never come. He had the effrontery to tell me he was busy, yes and fearless."

"How did you——"

"How did I find him? Through another bookseller. When I got in the cellar I asked for occult literature and an instructor. It was then he told me he was busy. I paid him for his time, promised him more money and gave him my address. He has been sending instructors ever since. Of the lot, I selected one. He is the locksmith. He says he can make the door open of itself. If he does, I believe I shall die of joy after having nearly died of grief."

We were flying through the Park. I was looking at the stars, at the myriad worlds, and a very convincing spectacle they are when you have erroneous ideas of your own importance. In the light of suns that reach us æons after the suns themselves have ceased to be, it occurred to me that Bradish had an idea, perhaps exaggerated, of the importance of mundane joys and sorrows. What he had said about the door opening of itself seemed to me equally exaggerated. I do not believe in miracles, although in view of my literary crimes it must have required a procession of them to keep me out of Sing Sing.

The flight of the car diminished into a soapy slide. We were at the house where, as usual, Peters was in the hall. His face, as wooden as ever, was an expressionless mask from which his eyes looked at me. There was no recognition in them, but there was, I thought, anxiety.

Bradish, meanwhile, had said a word to him.

"When the magus comes we will be in the library."

The magus! I chewed the title. The taste was rotten.

But in the library where already Gedney had preceded us, there were, in addition to authors less interesting, a set of the works of the monks of Chartreuse, operas from Cognac, and a sonata, pale yellow, that had been composed in Rotterdam.

Bradish began reading one of them and, I thought, very fluently.

Patting his mouth with his handkerchief, he sat down at the table where already I had seated myself and to which he drew another chair.

"For the magus," he told me.

I smiled. "Have you found him expensive?"

"Well," he replied, drinking quite as fluently again, "no." He waved the glass, indicating the room, the spaciousness of the great, white, staring house. "In view of this, I suppose he put prices up a peg or two. But that is neither here nor there. At any figure the key will be cheap. By the way, I wish you would ask for a look at it. I know nothing of these things and you do."

I sat back. "Good heavens! What I know could find a playground on the head of a pin. A few odds and ends I may have picked up, but that is all that can be picked up by anyone not an initiate and the initiate tell nothing. Or, if they do, they are killed."

Bradish put down the glass. "How killed? What do you mean?"

"In France a man named Delormel, who was an initiate, published a book—*La Période Solaire.* What was in it I do not know, but I do know that in twenty-four hours not one single copy of that book was anywhere obtainable and Delormel was dead."

"The magus!"

It was Gedney announcing the locksmith who, at the entrance, folded his arms and bowed.

Affectations have never appealed to me and that affectation of orientalism angered. To give him such credit as may have been his due, he saw my hostility at once, and saw it, too, though my expression had not altered.

But such credit as may have been his due, he must have been unable to obtain elsewhere. Thin, and by comparison with Bradish and myself, undersized, he wore a long frock coat, stained and shabby. On one hand he had a glove from which a finger had prominently gone. He had a high frayed collar, a dingy black stock, but no cuffs, none at least that I could see, and I divined the complete absence of linen. The man was in rags and he held himself with an air that Frederick Le Maître may have displayed, when, in *Robert Macaire,* he appeared princely in tatters.

He bowed again, moved toward us and sat down. His eyes large, black, piercing, commanding, turned from Bradish to me. His hair, yellowish white, the colour of old straw, was abundant and through it he ran that fingerless glove. His features, plainly Semitic, were otherwise regular and his skin, pale saffron, was blotched. He might have been forty. He may have been a hundred.

As silent he sat, turning his eyes without moving his head, I thought him the most repellent creature I had ever beheld, a soul unclean, which is common enough; but a soul so unclean that it attracted elementals as filth draws flies. Things revolting, unmaterialised and therefore invisible, but none the less hideous, might, I thought, be crawling all over him and, conceivably, might crawl from him to me. Mentally I crossed myself. Physically I edged away.

He saw that as, presumably, he saw everything and smiled. But what a smile! A smile that disclosed teeth that were vulperine, black and yellow, pointed and sharp, the fangs of a human hyena.

Then at once, but slowly, in the voice of a ventriloquist, each syllable carefully enunciated, he addressed me.

"You are young, therefore ignorant and in ignorance is disdain. You are contemptuous and unaware that I am a priest. Magus means priest and the knowledge you lack and which I possess is the sacred wisdom to which Plato, Plutarch and Virgil bowed and which caused three of its hierophants to lay symbolic homages at the cradle of your Lord. That wisdom, the Maghdim, created the gigantic civilisations whose ruins still support the weight of sixty cycles. In your ignorance you disdain the Maghdim which, in your mouth, is magic and magic a conjurer's device. Sir, magic is will. It was by the magic of his own will that Brahma created whatever is. By will man may also create, he may acquire prerogatives apparently superhuman and, if he be an adept, even as I, he can will to his will all the forces and powers of nature."

I nodded at him. "You are entirely right. I am an ignorant brute. Ignorant and cynical. But I have heard that magic is of two classes, the white and the black; that the one works through pantacles and prayer, the other by sacrilege and Satanism. Yours, I assume is the latter. Jim, pass the bottle. Give the magus a drink."

"I do not consume liquor, sir, and if I may further instruct you, Satan is the name that the perversely ignorant give to Elim Sabaot."

"Who is that?" Bradish asked.

"Elim Sabaot is the Being whom you call God."

"Ah, yes!" I exclaimed. Illiterately I added: "Elim Sabaot is the incommunicable name of which the mention was forbidden and which is employed now only in magical mantras by vulgar thaumaturges. Do you count yourself among them, Magus?"

"Sir, I am a priest of the Maghdim, and if that be vulgar and black, then black and vulgar was the power with which Swedenborg summoned the dead. Black and vulgar also was the power which Spiridon, a bishop whom the Church made a saint, evoked the spirit of his daughter. Spiridon and Swedenborg were priests of the Maghdim, even as I."

"Good Lord!" I disgustedly exclaimed. "If it comes to that, then so was Cagliostro."

"Permit me again to correct you, sir. Cagliostro, though he summoned the dead and had them parade before his guests at supper, possessed but an imperfect knowledge of the sacred science and was surrendered by the true magi to the Roman Inquisition."

Physically the creature was revolting. Morally he nauseated me. I felt I could stand it no longer and I started to go, but beforehand I gave him one more.

"It is wonderful to meet anyone as invariably right as you are. At the same time, the honour of being addressed by Cagliostro's superior is too overwhelming. Jim, I'll borrow your car and go home."

The beast had risen. He turned to Bradish.

"Since your friend intends to counsel you against my offices: nay, by his manner has so counselled you already, it is for me to go."

He backed to the entrance. There, folding his arms, he bowed as he had bowed before.

Bradish followed him out. For a moment I could hear them talking, their voices diminishing as they went, the key jingling in the wake. I was sorry then I had not asked to look at it and then flung it in the vermin's face.

For assuming the key, assuming also that it had even a minor value, it would have opened one door at least, the door of some box in which there was coin. Yet, I suddenly had to ask myself, was it not already in the lock of the cheque-book that Bradish signed? The fact that Bradish was a fool and this creature a knave did not lessen the magic of that.

But there was another angle, far more important. Any key of a door to the dead drips with perils. I feared them for Bradish who, at the moment, came limping in.

Malignantly he surveyed me. "Rather had you, eh? Served you right for being so damned uncivil. Never saw you show up worse, damned if I have, and I wanted you to sit in with us. Now he won't have you."

But that cup of coffee was a trifle too strong. In no circumstances would I have approached the door and there it went slamming in my face. The ease with which the trick had been turned made me laugh.

"What the devil are you grinning at? Do you think he can't do it?"

"Do what?"

"Break through."

Before answering, I helped myself to the Rotterdam sonata. Then I looked up at him.

"Given the Satanism, the occult knowledge, together with the ability to employ it and, everything being possible, perhaps he can. But the perils of the threshold——"

"Damn the perils!"

"Yes, but then they may damn you. In the last attempt at anything of the kind that I know of, one of the participants was strangled to death and another went raving mad."

"What became of the third?"

Surprised at the question, I asked one. "How do you know there was a third?"

"The old cock said there must be three and, hang it, I had counted on you."

"You will have to count again then. In this instance there were three. The third escaped in time."

Bradish gestured. "Escaped, did he, and from what? The effects of his own imagination. Otherwise they must have botched it. From what I understand, and I propose to verify it, in the course of the ceremonies the door will open and Nelly will appear."

"Perhaps," I told him and I told him, too, to mark the perhaps. "But," I added, "supposing that instead of the dead, there appear, as there appeared to the people I just mentioned, a materialised elemental that grapples with you, eats your throat out, tears your reason away. What happened to them, might happen to you. They also were trying to evoke a dead girl. A demoniac incube came in her place. For God's sake, Jim——"

He shoved the gin at me. "Have another. We are not in Sunday school."

I was looking at him and, as I looked, I had an impression, curious, abnormal and perhaps unfounded that he was obsessed. In his eyes was an expression so evil and about his mouth a twist so vile, that it was as though a psychical confiscation had occurred and I was looking at another being.

Since then I have been through the war, where I learned what fear is; where I learned also that in the presence of the fearful you will falter if you do not laugh. I had not learned that lesson then. None the less I laughed. I laughed at him—or at it.

Viciously he eyed me. Then at once, with a shake of the head, he raised a hand and passed it down over the face from forehead to chin. It was as though he were wiping, or trying to wipe, some of the evil away. But the action may have been entirely unconscious. None the less and though the horrible expression remained, it had diminished and in a moment, when he again spoke, it seemed to leave him, sponged away by an effort of his own volition.

"The old cock told me to say to you from him, Silence and Farewell."

I looked at my glass and from it at him. "Very considerate. It is the occultist leave-taking. I do wish he would say it to you."

As I said that, I could have sworn that in spite of his efforts, that revolting look, the look of another entity, glared out from him at me.

He turned on his heel and turned back.

"The car is waiting."

So too was that look. I did not laugh then. I went on and out. As I went the look followed. In the car, there it was. It was like a look shot through the keyhole of some door below.

XXI

In times of stress, and this was one of them, a cultivated indifference has its value, but it is perhaps less conducive to serenity than the opiates of work. Resolutely, on the morrow, I prepared to give my pen a skirt dance around that garbage flower of the west, yet, such was the stress, that it was not until evening that I had it sufficiently groomed for the grand écart. But what pen, however poor, can be saltitudinous on an empty stomach? With a view to various vilenesses at a cookshop nearby, but accompanied by cowpunchers, bad men and that prairie pearl, I was somnambulistically vacating the rookery when the janitor's drooping eye popped up and a note fluttered at me.

Anything of the kind was distinctly forbidden and I was about to give him fits but inadvertently I had looked at the superscription. Never before had I seen that writing. Yet its character, oddly cobwebby and equally clear, was as serviceable as a photograph.

"I thought as how," the dirty little man was saying, "seeing it was her——"

"And thou hast done well, my pretty maiden. Here."

I fed a dollar into his dirty paw and read.

Would I come and dine?

Would I? The bad men could shoot themselves through, shoot every cowpuncher I never saw. For all I cared the freckled lily could bolt for good, bolt for bad. A fairer flower was beckoning then.

"Will come with joy and leave with regret," I scribbled with her address on a card.

"And here," I said, feeding out another dollar. "Run around to the telegraph shop and send this at once."

She is a good sort, I presently remarked at my mirror as I tied my white tie.

Now, in looking back, I remember that the dinner was detestable. But though the dinner was vile, Aly was delicious. Not a philistine trace of preoccupation, no bourgeois attempt at excuse.

The attitude charmed me. Moreover, as I have lived as lizards live, on sunshine and dust, the quality of the dinner did not affect me in the least. It could not have been worse, though if it had been, what could it have mattered since she was there? Later I learned that she had left it all to the maid. Thrice happy maid who, while not the rose, yet lived nearby.

Presently coffee came. The cloth was removed and she played a little; an air from *Louise,* the *Depuis le jour;* then more perfumery, Salomé's song in *Hérodiade.* After which, turning on the bench, she looked at me.

"I think the lady of the steps is a Miss Fellowes."

"Hello!" I exclaimed, surprised enough at the sudden entrance of the young woman I had pitched in the street.

From the bench she moved nearer. "You know of a Miss Fellowes?"

"Why, when was it? The day after I brought you back here, I looked in at a club where a gay sort of ass, a chap named Brevoort, told me of a Miss Fellowes who ran off with a chauffeur."

"The gay young man told you something else."

"He certainly did. He said she was a cousin of Nelly Chilton."

"And looked like her?"

"He thought her her ghost."

Aly laughed. "He must be a dear."

"But," I asked, "why do you think she is the lady of the steps?"

"I happened to see her and the probability occurred to me."

"It occurred to me that the lady of the steps was you and, if I had not known that at the time you were in Canada, it would have occurred to me that you were Brevoort's ghost; or no, not his ghost, the ghost he thought he saw."

"I am glad to be acquitted."

"But your innocence is not a proof of this other girl's guilt. I don't think it was she at all."

"Whom do you think it was?"

"Some fair unknown who possessed the extraordinary advantage of resembling both you and Nelly Chilton."

"Why then may it not be this Miss Fellowes?"

"Well, you see, don't you know, in view of the chauffeur she must be considerably out of it. Brevoort said she had not been seen or heard of since she danced the *pas de quoi.*"

"Well?"

"Well, then, when Bradish hailed her as his Nelly, she would not have known him from Adam and as a consequence could not have retorted, 'Your Nelly is dead.' "

From the silver box Aly Bolton took a cigarette, lighted it, blew a ring of smoke, ran a finger through it and, incidentally, through my argument.

"Mr. Bradish is known to all New York. Miss Fellowes cannot be more out of it than I am and yet the first time I saw him I knew at once who he was."

"But my dear young woman. When——"

"Don't be so violent. I am not your dear young woman."

"My hated young woman then. When you saw Bradish in the Park, if he had hailed you as his Nelly, I will wager a bag of ducats you would not have assumed a *sainte n'y touche* attitude and told him what he knew."

"Yes, but, and to borrow your own mode of expression, you see, don't you know, Miss Fellowes may be more conversational. Then also, and however the chauffeur may have disconnected her, none the less she is one of the family and if she read the papers she would have known that her cousin had married and died."

"Where did you see her?" I suddenly remembered to ask.

"In the street."

"How did you know she was Miss Fellowes?"

"I did not know. I had never heard of Miss Fellowes. But when I saw her I stopped and said, 'This is Mrs. Bradish, is it not?' and she said, no, she was Miss Fellowes."

"Like that! Without showing surprise or anything? Forgive me. I don't get the atmosphere."

"It was today. I was passing the cathedral. She was coming out. I stopped and spoke. She seemed annoyed, if anything. Then I saw she had a man with her. If I had known she was not alone, I would not have spoken at all."

"The chauffeur perhaps?"

"I can't tell you. I had but a glimpse of him. I should say he was fifty and probably English. He did not look like a chauffeur. This man looked like a viceroy. He had the grand air."

"We can bury the chauffeur then. But after she spoke, did she vanish?"

"Yes, in a cab."

"And before that. How did she look? Brevoort said she was ghastly."

"Her skin was the colour of lard. I could feel that she had suffered and suffered acutely. Yet then, an impression of that kind I often get. Perhaps people are not always as debonair as they seem. But I had still another impression, that she was preoccupied about something. What, I cannot say. I might have picked her mind, but that, except when the picking is involuntary, I never do. Yet there is something that she is keeping to herself. Of that I am sure. I am sure, too, some day it will be known. Unfortunately for us all, sooner or later any secret we may have is bared."

Then for a while we discussed it, she maintaining that Bradish should be told, I maintaining that it would not matter now and relating the incidents of the night before.

"I know the magus by repute," she said at last. "His rags are a masquerade. If he is paid to open that door, he will. What he finds behind it is another matter."

I stood up. "You tell me that sooner or later all secrets will be bared?"

She must have seen it coming, for she called to her ostentatious cat.

But I did not propose to have Signor Matouchi interfere and I put it to her.

"When will mine be bared?"

Sagely she replied: "When its hour comes."

"That is not very comforting. I always picture the future as a greenroom of which the stage-manager is Time. The hours he motions to beset our lives are sad enough, but sadder still are those that are yet to come."

Quickly she looked at me. "Do you not think that that depends on ourselves? It is not the hours that are sad, it is we that sadden them."

As quickly I looked at her. "Bil Sayers said that. It is in *The Dawn.*"

She gave me her hand. "Yes, I was quoting from it. Perhaps it is not very profound."

"Less profound than your eyes," I replied. "When you quote to me, quote to me with them."

Tolerably banal, I resumed to myself when I was at last in the street. Why is it, when a man is in love, he talks like a fool?

XXII

WHETHER the western garbage-lily bolted or not, is certainly immaterial. In any event, so many amazing incidents intervened that it was some time before my pen could pirouette before her. The quick lariat of her slang, the astonishing grace with which she leaped on a horse from behind, the aura of purity that carried her on a piebald mustang unspotted through the machinations of the worst men in the bad lands, for these virginal acrobatics my publishers had to wait.

Another young woman, the girl I had pitched in the street, primarily detained me. Pictured by Aly, she differed from the ghost that Brevoort had pursued and although, the night before, when she so surprisingly appeared, I could not take her seriously, yet, such are the clarifying processes of sleep, that it seemed to me Bradish should be shown the composite view. It seemed to me that she must be the lady of the steps. It seemed to me also that since she had a name, she must have also a local habitation.

Apart from which I was curious about him. The evil look in his eyes, the ugly twist to his mouth, the highly uncomfortable idea of psychic confiscation, these impressions lingered, but only after the manner of nightmares that day has dispersed. I had been conscious of them. They had disturbed me. But afterthought had induced the idea that they were due to the malign influence of that Eblian rat, or else—and what was less fantastic and more reasonable—to my own attempt at interference and the hostility to the vermin that I had displayed.

Moreover, in the same manner that the strength and precision of my own impressions had diminished, it seemed to me that his own impressions might have lost their force, that I might find him, not as he had been, but perhaps less tedious than latterly he had become. Ever since the vision on the steps, he had been tiresome as only a self-centred invalid can be. For he was an invalid, mentally at least, with whose tediousness it was, no doubt, my duty to bear.

It is true that when a duty is not a joy I have shirked it and shirk it I always shall. The doing your duty for duty's sake seems to me sanctimonious cant. There ought to be joy in everything. There should be joy in that and not the sense of severe satisfaction which some people appear to get out of it. Anyway, brainworkers are different. Brainworkers represent a special form of life. For them to suffer themselves to be depressed is immoral.

It was with these Confucianisms in mind that I approached the great white staring house. Occupied as I was with them, I did not immediately notice Peters. He had come out from the basement before I saw him and then, to my amusement, I heard him urge me to go away.

Yet at once he must have thought better of it, incomprehensibly better, for he backed into an area, invisible from the upper windows, where he effected a dumbshow that would have been good business in my pantomime. His face, ordinarily wooden, was as full of expression as a Chinese mask and that, phenomenal as it is in an English servant, decided me. I marched in to where he was.

"Pardon me, sir, but Mr. Bradish's orders are that no one is to be admitted and Mr. Bradish particularly mentioned you, sir."

I looked at him and pulled at my nose.

At that, he clapped a hand to his mouth.

Immediately several things occurred to me. I realised that the grand Satanic séance was being held and that a man, straight as a grenadier and perhaps equally strong, was afraid of something which he did not understand. At the same time, I realised also that while courage is often the result of an entire absence of imagination, quite as often ignorance is the most potent factor of fear. Yet as I doubted that Peters had ever heard of the demoniac polka and as I was sure it would be too much for him if he had, I invented a palpable explanation, but, before producing it, I thought that for once he ought to have his say and I gave him the cue.

"What the devil is all this?"

I could see him jumping at it. His hand dropped.

"I don't know, sir. As God is my witness I don't. But have you noticed the windows, sir? All darkened, everyone in the 'ouse, even to those at the back and here in the basement. That isn't all; no, sir. The furniture taken out of the drawing-room, every stick of it, and a fire burning there, a fire all night, and Mr. Bradish in there with two men. Yesterday a man came in a closed carriage, he is one of 'em. That man as was here the night you were, sir, he's been in the 'ouse ever since and he's another and there are two lambs. The man as came in the carriage he fetched them and a copper pot big enough to boil 'em both."

The witches' cauldron, I thought, and I thought too, whoever wrote *Macbeth* knew what he was writing about.

"And no one allowed in since then, sir, and none of us allowed out. Gedney, he's at the side door. I am here and Fletcher is at the back. Mr. Bradish hasn't eaten anything, not one of 'em has, not a crust, and we are none of us allowed above the basement floor and what they are doing there with that pot and those lambs and in the dark, God 'elp me, sir, I don't know."

"It is very simple," I said. "Just a little ceremony in commemoration of the landing here of the first cargo of schnapps. All good Knickerbockers piously observe it. Nothing to concern yourself about. Noticed any wind yet?"

"Wind, sir? In the 'ouse? With the windows all closed!"

"Well, if you do, pay no attention. It will be over shortly. It'll stop by tomorrow."

Whereupon, with something to think of, I turned on my heel and, in passing, glanced up at the house which, with the windows closed and the blinds so drawn that not a ray of light could enter, looked both sepulchral and hermetic. But only to me. A passer who thought of it at all, would have thought merely that the owner was away.

And yet would he? Not if he were the least psychic. For about the great white staring house, there was a sensation of chill, a savour of things damned, an impression of space, of shapes of sin, of monstrous crimes, of sacrilege and sorcery.

And yet, I reflected—and reflected, too, very erroneously—if an ordinary passer had succeeded in looking in, he could have witnessed nothing more than the mummeries of three men in a darkened room where, set in a circle marked by cabalistic designs, stood a tripod topped by a pot full of blood, before which one of the men, turning and bending to the north and south, was invoking enigmatic beings, calling to them in words rhythmic and unprintable. But nothing else, nothing whatever, except what the normal eye could not detect, a crew of elementals swarming in a wind that swept through the dismantled room and tore along the hallways of the empty house.

That would be all, unless the passer lingered, in which case he might behold a vapour rising from the cauldron, a vapour that wavered, ascended, descended, expanded and, gradually solidifying, assumed a human shape; the form of a girl translucently beautiful, immortally pale. If, after that, he did not shriek and run away, it would be because he was a brave man and lacked imagination.

Certainly I, too, lacked it. There was far more for that imbecile to see than I saw for him. There were rites curiously revolting, a ritual of perverted horror, all the turpitudes of the black mass accentuated by the infamies of black magic. Of that I did not learn until later.

At the time, in picturing pictures for my imaginary passer, I had entered the Park where I found a bench free from nursemaids and babies. There the trees, the green, the grass, distracted me. I thought of hills and dales and winding lanes. I love the country when I am not in it. Wearily a squirrel eyed me and gingerly approached. I stretched my hand. A ball of fur and nothing! The squirrel had evaporated as suddenly as the lady of the steps. My thoughts went back to her, from her to Bradish, and I wondered. The always possible possibility of his becoming insane occurred to me, as it had occurred before. In those shadowy halls of his, Lyssa, goddess of the mad, goddess, too, of the elect, stood and waited. I could picture her also, picture her fanning him with her harlequin wings, binding him with her opal chains.

And for what? The tenuous theory of sins anterior and forgotten returned, but the immediate cause was clearer. He had everything, except one thing only. Certainly he was not Adonis. But what of it? When you are rich as Crœsus, though how rich Crœsus may have been I have no idea, yet when you are, then were your nose as big as a pillow and your face an open wound, always there are attractive women to call you Dear. You cannot keep them away with a club.

That was not enough for Jim Bradish. A dead girl, who had been in love with another man, was shoving him deeper and deeper into the shadowy halls, beckoning to Lyssa, calling to her, telling her to take him and bind him and hide him away.

What a fool! I reflected. What a bloody fool any man is who wants more than peace, fresh linen, a cigarette and a book! I thought of Aly. As addition to the little inventory I wanted her. But I knew, well enough, she did not want me. If she had wanted me, and I could have kept my head, I might have said, Refuse me everything.

Then along the path before me came Marguerite of Navarre. She nodded, stopped, smiled, tapped me with her fan and said: "*Si vous voulez cesser d'aimer, possédez la chose aimée.*"

Or did I dream it? Like the squirrel she had gone and I was back at those halls, at the window there, looking in at the unholy horrors that they held, and again I wondered. Yet there was nothing earthly I could do, except prime Cally who never needed priming.

I might adventure that way, I thought, submit a hypothetical case and get my bearings.

On I went. At his house, a servant told me it was not the doctor's office hour.

"So much the better then. Take my hat and stick."

The negro backed but he rallied. "He isn't in."

I turned on my heel and was going up the street when I saw Cally affecting to hide behind a lamppost.

I stood and looked at him.

"Well," he said, pretending to pretend that he had not been there. "I saw the literary light at my door. Highly effulgent. I've read your last book."

"You must have been very idle. See here, I have a conundrum for you. What would you do if a patient went mad? Rob him?"

"I would cure him first. Thinking of Bradish, eh? You need not. There is not a possibility of it. He's not a genius. If he were like you now——"

"Or you."

"Always the retort courteous. Poole, you are the most engaging man I know. Come on in and smoke a small cigar. I won't offer you a big one. I haven't the time."

At his office, he abandoned me in a dismal den where, as I kicked my heels, I reflected that since he was as confident about Bradish as all that, not only it was idle to bother but it would be beastly of me to tell tales out of school.

These meditations were interrupted. Cally returned cigarless. He had no cigars, he told me, and took one of mine which, hang him, he seemed to enjoy. As he pulled at it a remark he had made the last time I saw him occurred to me, and, with an eye to copy, I prodded him.

"What about that interesting case?"

"Which one?"

"You said George Eliot had written about something similar."

"Yaas, I remember now. When I mentioned it I had just come from the g.p. It was a case of catalepsy. Could you use that?"

"Hardly. Too much of an *hors d'œuvre*. The public wants roast beef and boiled potatoes. But though I can't feed out catalepsy, I'll take a bite of it myself."

"Sorry. Impossible to serve it today. It will keep though. Let me see. If you are still hungry, look in on Sunday."

But a man capable of that cigar trick was capable of anything, and I shied, little thinking how soon and how desperately I was to rush to him for aid.

XXIII

I FELT quite the loafer when, after leaving tricky little Cally, I entered the club where other chaps looked as I felt. Mainly polo men, they were healthy, innocent-minded young animals to whom a purveyor of cheap fiction was one of the literati, a being to be treated with respect and avoided with care. None the less, at the window where they sat, they made room for me, swapped stories with each other, stories as innocent as themselves, and yet told with such a flourish of By George! and I tell you! with such shrieks of laughter and such unfathomable good fellowship, that I will be shot if I did not begin to feel as innocent as they and went with them on and up to dinner, a noisy catch-as-catch-can sort of an affair, at which some of them became a bit superhilarious, but where I kept my head.

I can truthfully testify to that because of subsequent events which even now I vividly recall. The polo chaps were all to be off on the morrow, for a match somewhere or other, at Point Judith I think, but, for the evening, they had planned to go to a roof and as in the interim I had talked not shop but horses, their respect for the literati had so measurably diminished that they were for having me chip in. I agreed of course and then managed to lose them, after which I went on and up to the temporary temple of Beelzebub.

Beelzebub or, more exactly, Baal Zebub, a Syrian demon, was lord of flies and, I remember thinking at the time, possibly lord of fireflies also. For the temple, previously dark, was bright. Through curtains at the windows came the gleam of electric bulbs and it occurred to me that in the great dining-hall a feast was in progress, an infernal orgy, at which to the right and left of Satan's legate, sat the quick and the dead; that there, with that saffron monster of a magus, were bride and groom; Nelly Chilton summoned from her grave and Bradish conjecturing the chill raptures of her bloodless lips, the frigid emptiness of her ghostly arms, the renewed and spectral wedding.

I thought of that, of more too I dare say, as I stood on the stoop. But at once the door opened. Gedney was there. Beyond was Peters. On the stair was Bradish.

"Hey!" he threw at me.

Gedney took my hat and stick. He seemed catlike as ever. From Peters the Chinese mask had been lifted. His face was as dumb as before. But on that stair, Bradish had an air and an expression so reassuring that it upset me.

"Gedney, take Mr. Poole's orders."

In the Park I had dreamed that Marguerite de Navarre addressed me. On the stair, Bradish seemed equally unaccountable. What I had really expected, I do not remember but I suppose it was the unexpected. Well, there it was. Instead of odours of the black mass and savours of a satanic feast, the normal confronted me and such was my mental somersault, such rather are the abysses of human nature, that finding the banal where I had awaited the demoniac, I strangled an oath.

"Come on in here," Bradish was saying.

Vacating the stair, he indicated the library. There again I looked at him. The evil that had been in his eyes, the ugly twist about his mouth, the suggestions of an alien and obsessing entity that he had exhaled, these malignities had gone. Even the spider had diminished. It was no longer crimson but dull, lifeless as, in the old days, it used to be.

Reassured as to that, but vastly perplexed, I let fly.

"I was here at noon and could not get in. You were closeted with that rat I suppose. Where is he?"

He half raised a hand. "I don't know. I don't care. But I can tell you this, he did it."

Now, though, Gedney, with his catlike tread, was coming in.

In my bewilderment, not at him, but at what Bradish had said, I flopped in a chair.

"It cost me a pretty penny, I can tell you that also, but I can tell you, too, it was uncommonly cheap."

Gedney had gone and I reached for one of the serenades he had brought.

"Then the door was opened?"

"Well," he surprisingly replied, "that depends on how you look at it."

"But as yet," I angrily protested, "I don't know how to look or what to look at. Either the Satanism succeeded or it did not. Which was it?"

"It did both."

At that, and feeling perhaps that only spirit forces could sustain me, I emptied my glass.

He was still standing, but coming to the table he poured out a little gin, watered it discreetly, sat down and sipped. He sipped with the comfortable air of an old woman drinking tea.

I do not know why that should have angered me further, but he seemed so entirely at his ease that I barked.

"See here. I hate rows unless I make them myself."

He looked over his glass at me. "Yes?"

I nodded at him. "I can promise you this, there will be one unless you stop beating about the bush."

"There was a bush, but it's gone. She's alive."

"Alive! What are you talking about?"

He put down the glass. "About Nelly of course and I always knew it. From the start I knew it. From the moment I woke up and saw that nurse looking at me, I did not believe that anything had happened at all. Afterward I realised that I had been hurt and that Mike was dead and I was sorry enough about that. But, as for Nelly, I never believed it. All gammon and spinach, that's what I thought it. I have told you so time and again."

I had it at last. Long since overstrained, the Satanism had unhinged him. The man was demented, therefore to be humoured and I nodded again, this time pleasantly enough and soothingly answered, "Of course, of course."

He sipped again. "Yes, today the magus confirmed it. He and I and an occultist that he had in, engaged in an enterprise that was frankly revolting. In that room across the hall things were done that made my flesh creep. There were others that nauseated me. There was a sort of double shuffle, the crapulous and the sanguinary heel-and-toeing with the invisible. I throw a veil over it and all the more readily because I swore I would. Apart from that, there were influences about, influences that had come or been loosed there. What they were is beyond me. I could not see them, but I felt them. It was as though a lot of bats were swarming about me in the dark. It was ignoble and it was horrible. But there was nothing more, or rather there was nothing else. The fact that there was nothing more threw the old cock in a fury. He spluttered at me like a hellcat. I got it out of him then. Nelly did not appear because she could not appear and could not appear because she is alive."

I smiled and said nothing. What was there to say? But in smiling I revised my inexpert diagnosis. Bradish was not mad; he was far worse, he was silly.

"Yes," he resumed, "how could she materialise when she was material already? But the old cock did not stop there. He cursed and swore that I had inveigled him into attempting to evoke a spirit that was not a spirit, that I knew was not a spirit and I had done it out of vulgar curiosity, to see what could be evoked, an act, he said, that might have been mortally disastrous to all concerned. His adjutant was as spluttery as he."

And that was the way he wriggled out of it, I thought. But I said, "I don't suppose they fell on you tooth and nail."

As Bradish could have knocked their heads together, knocked the heads of a dozen like them, the supposition was extravagant. He took it gravely.

"They were viperish enough for anything and though I paid them what I had promised, they reviled me in terms that at least had the merit of being new. I naturally protested that——"

"I dare say you did," I interrupted. "But not that you had been rooked. You were plucked like a pigeon. Those rats knew beforehand that there would be no materialisation and worked on your credulity after planning to put the failure and the burden of it on you."

"No, not at all. Their rage was not feigned. Rats they may be. They are not Salvinis. When I protested that it had been formally certified to me that my wife was dead and that she had been put in a vault at Chilton Manor, the magus spat at me, 'Go and look.' "

"The only sensible thing that has come from him. I wish you would. Go tomorrow. The day after, loan me Peters for an hour and we can start for Spain."

"I shall go tomorrow and you will go with me."

"Nothing of the kind. I have had enough of this tomfoolery. Take Peters, or take Gedney, or take both. They can help you shift things about but I won't. Besides, you won't need to shift anything. The coffin is at the entrance, on the right. Get the door open and you will find it."

"There is always a door, isn't there? Well, I will open this one."

"You have not opened any yet and when you do open this one you won't want to open any more. But for the Lord's sake get it over tomorrow. Then, hurrah for Spain!"

"I am not going to Spain. I shall look for Nelly."

"Well then, after looking in Hades, you can hunt through heaven."

"I shall go about," he unheedingly continued, "I shall——"

"Meet Miss Fellowes," I put in.

"What?" he put back.

"Mrs. Chilton's niece. Ever hear of her?"

"What are you bringing her in for?"

"The other day Brevoort said he had seen her somewhere. In a shop, I think."

"He was drunk. She has not been in this country for years."

"She might have returned."

"When she was quite young she ran away with a green-grocer, or was it a groom? I have forgotten. Anyway she ran away from him, ran over to Europe where she has been running ever since. Mrs. Chilton told me."

"Did she say she looked like her daughter?"

"Like Nelly? No. Why do you ask?"

"I thought she might be the lady of the steps."

"That was Nelly herself."

"I won't argue over it. But hadn't she any other cousins? There must be other Fellowes hereabouts."

"A lot of bores also. If you have anything up your sleeve, out with it, but don't sit there asking stupid questions. You make me nervous."

I gave it to him then about Aly's little adventure, about her, "This is Mrs. Bradish?" and of the vexed, "No, I am Miss Fellowes."

I could see him taking it in, see him turning it over and I capped it.

"You may be sure that some Miss Fellowes or other is the lady of the steps."

But in turning it, he must have seen something else. He threw it back at me.

"No, all that is sheer nonsense."

He lifted his glass and I looked in mine. In it floated the earlier surprises, the amazement I had experienced when, on entering the house, I had been met, not by the sound of shaken bells, the muffled riot of a Satanic orgy and the spectacle of the spectre bride, but by the numbing fingers of the commonplace.

From the infernal to the banal, how brief the bridge! At that platitude, the memory of a verse from the one American writer who could have adequately pictured the episode recurred to me and I misquoted it.

> " 'Is all we feel or think or seem,
> But a dream within a dream?' "

"What are you mumbling?" he asked.

But I had had enough. I left him to his morrow, little suspecting that there also Poe would have been of use.

XXIV

In and out of the hall when, on that morrow, I returned there, were wiry, aproned men whom Peters directed in the task of re-establishing the black and yellow room as it had been before the parlour game of hide and go seek.

Mr. Bradish, he told me, was motoring and would I wait, sir? Of his experiences and presumable emotions since he unburdened himself in the area, not a word. An automaton was before me. The man had gone.

It was after six then and in the library I renewed my acquaintance with Hugo's *Oriéntales,* in which to the hum of mandolins, the poet leads you through the Andalusia that he knew and sang.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Poole is in the library. Thank you, sir."

In the silent house, deserted now by those aproned men, Granada had been before me. I saw the Plaza de Toros, heard the shouts. Then, suddenly the Alhambra faded, the bullring crumbled, the shouts were stilled.

"She is not there!"

Bradish, a cap on, took it off, dropped it, removed his gloves.

"Just as I told you."

Astonishment is dumb. I said nothing. I could not say anything. Then it occurred to me that I had not heard him aright.

"What's all that?"

"The coffin is open and empty. Empty! And there is nothing emptier than an empty coffin."

He had sat down on that chair from Delatour and was folding and refolding his gloves which presently he put on the table.

"It is just as I told you."

The repetition of any remark weakens it. Besides he had told me nothing of the kind. In addition, and although I hate the word, I knew it was impossible. A corpse cannot rise from a coffin. I doubt if even a live Hercules could open one from within. Then I had it.

"Look here! You promised those rats a fortune. No doubt you gave them something on account."

He leaned over, took a cigarette. "What I paid has nothing to do with it."

"Everything. To guard against any Stop thief on your part, they arranged matters before the tea-party was given, then when it fizzled, as they knew it would fizzle, they cried Cheat at you. You protested. At that they told you to go and look. Well, you have looked. You found nothing because what there was had been removed."

He twirled the cigarette. "The grass before the vault was a foot high. If within the last few days they had been there, if anyone had been there, the grass could not have looked as it did."

I turned it around at him. "Did you ever hear of Heraclitus? Heraclitus died of laughing, literally of laughing, at the stupidity of his friends."

Bradish lit the cigarette. "I am not one of them then. Perhaps you are. I know what you are going to say, that they got fresh sods of grass and planted them for me. They did nothing of the kind. I looked into that also."

Drinking the smoke, he resumed: "Nelly never was there at all. I felt that from the start and what I felt the magus confirmed. Now where is she?"

"Ask that rat. If he can raise the dead, raising grass must be easy for him. If it were I, I would prosecute him, not for bilking me, I would not want it known what a bloody fool I had been, but for rifling a sepulchre."

He flicked his ashes. "You need not talk the way you write. Rifling a sepulchre! The dust on the coffin was an inch thick. Perhaps you will say they planted that also."

"It would be only artistic of them and on a par with everything else. The confidence game with which they gulled you, I cannot but admire. You are swallowing it still and crying for more."

My shots, such as they were, may have told. He seemed to be weakening and I gave him another.

"See here! Send for that rat, offer him a release in full and another cheque if he will tell you what he did with the remains."

"If he were the crook you think him, he would accept the offer and say he dumped them in the river. I admit he is a queer fish. But he is not a crook. He does not need to be one. The man is a conjurer and he knows his trade. The other night, after you had gone, I had him in here again. He sat at this end of the table. At the farther end was that inkstand. It must weigh five pounds. He beckoned, said something, I don't know what, and the inkstand slid of itself the length of the table to him."

"So you think. It did not slide of itself. It was moved by elementals. That night I could have sworn they were crawling all over him. I have thought since then that some of them must have crawled on you. You looked it. I don't mean to compliment you, but you looked like a fiend."

At that, or at something else, a memory perhaps, he shifted, uneasily I thought, turned away and then to me.

"We are wandering all over the grounds."

"Yes, we would be much better off in Spain."

"Leave me in the lurch then. I am going to find Nelly."

The faith that moved mountains! Instead of my incredulity weakening him, his confidence was weakening me. That confidence, irrational, illogical, utterly insane, had been superb. When he heard the girl was dead he did not believe it. That disbelief the sight of some damsel in the Park had confirmed. When the young person reiterated what others had asserted, he had tried sorcery to get the girl back. That failing he had looked for her in her coffin. In its emptiness his confidence was renewed. Now he was going to find her! Among the living he was going to hunt for the dead! What could you do, what could anyone do with a chap like that? I saw but one course and I took it.

"Jim, you are sublime!"

He must have thought I was guying him. He shook his head.

"I can see it all from your angle. I do not blame you because you cannot see it from mine. It would be phenomenal if you could. It is not a thing I can analyse. It is not an idea, it is a sensation, like joy or like dread, which one experiences and cannot describe, no, nor share."

I dressed it a bit and gave it back.

"It is the inner voice, the voice that makes the hero, makes the martyr."

"And the fool," he put in. "I may be one. You think so and Cally would. If Cally knew what you know he would want to lock me up. But a fool may be wise in his folly and time alone can show whether I am an imbecile in mine."

He was taking it then so sagely that a recompense was due and lightly I produced it.

"Spain can go hang. I'll see you through."

I made the promise as one promises the moon. His quick and rapid fire in defence of the Eblian rat had confused, it had not converted me. The girl was dead. That her tomb had opened and her remains had flown were matters temporarily inexplicable but eternally subordinate. The girl was dead. Yet that fact, which was the cardinal fact, Bradish could not and would not accept. Readily I might promise to see him through. But see him through to what?"

"And there I am," he was saying, "I am up a tree."

That tree, how well I knew it! I was as high up in it as he and my perch was more rickety. He had faith to sustain him and I had none. What I did have was a range of vision superior to his, because impersonal, and along it I looked. The horizon was dark. Not a sign of help. Not the hope of a ladder.

"Dinner is served, sir."

In the old days of the grand manner, before the battle began the young officer put on his gloves. He put on the white gloves that tradition required. In the great crises of life one should always dress for dinner. Evening clothes have a steadying effect. At the announcement, I regretted I was in flannels.

At table I forgot them. Very thoughtfully, Peters had provided a cru from the Garonne, which while not summery, had an amplitude that was majestic. In its red kisses were art, literature, the hum of lutes, and all of them enchanting the palate, caressing it with combined enthrallments. The sorceries of the red magic brightened the horizon. Afar was a gleam that looked like a sail or, more serviceably, a ladder.

Yet, not being Archimedes, I omitted to cry Eureka!

Instead I said and casually enough: "How did you get in?"

The red necromancies may have lowered Bradish from that tree. They may have lifted him higher. In any event he was not at the moment where he had been. Vaguely he looked at me.

Ordinarily the fact that Peters and Gedney were present would have prevented any intimate conversation. But as they knew about the visit to the tomb, I reconstructed it.

"The vault was locked, was it not?"

"Oh! Yes! Well, I sent Fletcher for a man to open it. It took some time."

"Afterward, you locked it again?"

"Naturally."

"What did you do with the key?"

He turned. "What did I do with the key, Gedney?"

"You left it in the padlock, sir."

"Who is at the manor?" I asked.

"Nobody. It is boarded up. Mrs. Chilton wanted to rent it. I had my lawyers take a lease of it from her. Why do you ask?"

"I shall be going there tomorrow."

He sat back. "That's mighty nice of you. You may find something that I missed. Take Fletcher and the car."

I stood up. "There are one or two things I have to do beforehand. Send the car to my shop at noon and if I find anything——"

"Fetch it straight here."

He turned again. "Gedney, a cab for Mr. Poole."

XXV

The cab took me to a noble mansion, an exalting lift to a door.

In the sorceries of the red wine from the blue river, it was Aly Bolton I had seen with the ladder. Aly assisting and we might all climb down, though what lay at the foot of the tree was enigmatic as the mysteries of Eleusis. Theories I had had. One after another they had come. One after another they had gone. If Aly balked and refused then, until we were all dead, it might be that only the tree would remain.

In looking back at it now, I realise, what I should have realised then, that there are mysteries it is wiser to ignore than to elucidate. In the greenroom of the future where the hours fall in line, there are many that wound, there are some that console. Time, that stages the hours which inform our lives, had sent Bradish many charged with darts and might have sent him others that would have dulled their pain. The grave of all things has its violet. Yet, for that lessened mourning to replace the blacker trappings of one's woe, a grave there must be. To the ineluctable, the strongest yield. It is suspense that daunts us all.

In looking back now I see that clearly enough, yet more clearly still I see that instead of helping, I harmed. The fact that my intentions were good only aggravates the offence. The best intentioned people are the most insupportable. *"Pas de zèle,"* said Talleyrand. Why did I need to show any?

But though now with riper years, I ask myself these things, I know that whatever happens, happens because it had to happen and because it could not happen otherwise. There is consolation in that, there always is in philosophy and one can find consolation nowhere else except, as a poet said, in the dictionary.

"Yes, sir."

Moonfaced, a little maid was looking at me. How long she had been looking it is awkward to conjecture. After reaching the door, the possibilities of the ladder had swarmed about me. In considering them I had forgotten I had knocked. I had not seen the door open or the moonfaced maid. I was in the condition of a chess player who answers a question minutes after it has been put.

But even as the absent player awakes so did I awake and in awakening I smiled.

Was Miss Bolton visible?

Then presently I was tickling a gentleman who resented it so little that he scaled me, perched on my shoulder and was purring ostentatiously when graciously, as she did everything, the lady of the ladder appeared.

Then I also purred. "I love your cat. I love your flat. I love—lalage. *Dulce ridentem, dulce loquentem, Lalagen amabo.* Horace said that, or something like it. Lalage was a young woman who charmed his leisures. I am sure you are much better looking. But sweetly you smile, as she smiled. Sweetly you talk, as she talked. If sweetly you do not blush, as sweetly she must have blushed, it is because I headed myself off in time. Yes, thank you, I will sit down and thank you, yes, I will smoke."

"You are thinking of something else than that improper young woman."

Before I answered I took and lighted a cigarette. Even then I could not go at it like that, all of a sudden. The art of life, as of literature, consists in easy transitions and I fell back on Bil Sayers.

"Yes, *The Dawn.* Recently I was looking it over again. A very admirable performance."

I coughed and resumed: "Bil Sayers writes his books as the Moslems built their mosques, mixing musk with mortar that the whole structure should be perfumed."

I did not improvise that, or rather it was my usual improvisation, one that I had played many a time and oft to the tune of other works, other poems. But, though she had not blushed before, she flushed a little then and I knew my hackneyed performance had the merit of pleasing her, as the picturesque always does please the artist.

She shook a tapering finger at me. "That is not what you have in mind."

How lovely she looked! Adorably constructed and constructed too to be adored, as she sat there, her fair face slightly flushed, one bare arm on the table, the other supporting her head, I wished I were Greuze.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Well, you see, you know, after I left here the other evening, a problem occurred to me. Why is it when a man is in love he talks like a fool?"

"That is not it either," she said, and I thought the flush deepened.

That annoyed me. She knew perfectly well that I wanted her. There was no news in that. But it was vexatious of her to accept my own estimate of myself. It was an estimate which she should have returned to me corrected and revised. But that was not Aly's way and in my annoyance I let go.

"Why do you ask what I am thinking when you know without being told? I am thinking of you and a ladder. I am up a tree and I want to climb down."

"Is the tree on the Hudson?"

Then, as I nodded, she added: "You brought it in with you. But whether it is an oak or an aspen, the tree of knowledge or the tree of the golden fruit, you must tell before I can say whether anything I may do will be of use."

I put the whole thing before her; the *danse macabre,* the rat's assertion that the girl was alive, the visit to the vault, the empty coffin, the profundities of Bradish's prodigious faith.

"And I thought him mad," I concluded. "He may be saner than I. But you can see now the tree on which we sit. Barring a miracle, he alone or I alone or both together cannot, whatever we contrive, get behind the puzzle of what became of the corpse. It is true, he will have it that there was no corpse and there is his amazing faith. Of course, without a crystal or even with one, I cannot make him see and hear what I did. I cannot make him hear the physician, as I heard him, pronounce the girl dead. I cannot make him see her, as I saw her, in her coffin. It is not that he doubts my word, he prefers the testimony of his own intuitions and what is one to do with a chap like that? Between us, one or the other is wrong. He thinks I am, I know he is. For assuming what has happened time and again, that the girl was in a trance and was buried alive, assuming all that, then, if after being put in the vault, consciousness returned, she would have died of suffocation in the coffin. She could not have got from it. But assuming even that she did, she could not have got out of the vault. No one would have heard her calls for help. Moreover if anyone did hear, it is quite on the cards that they would have shrieked and run away. The problem therefore is just this: I want to know what became of the body, Bradish wants to know what became of the girl."

Aly looked up. "To solve the problem, you spoke of a miracle. What did you mean?"

I shook my head. "You don't need to ask, you know. The miracle is you, Aly Bolton. You are a living, breathing miracle, a miracle of beauty in a miracle of flesh."

"Also, there is a Mr. Chandos Poole, who is a highly lyrical young man."

"Yes," I told her, "and a trifle vatic to boot. For he can tell you one thing which you cannot foresee. He intends to be far more lyric than he is. He intends to be so lyric that seraphs will take up the burden of his lay and strum it at you from their golden harps."

That was an improvisation and poor as every improvisation is that has not been practised and rehearsed in advance. Conscious of which, I coughed again and took another cigarette.

With an indifference so vividly incandescent that I could have caught and kissed her until she swooned and died, she stood up, left the room, followed by her ostentatious cat. Then almost at once she returned with a wicker-covered gourd of glass which she said, and which I did not believe, she had given herself, and which contains the liquid *sol bémol* that mortals—mortals who know—call mandarin liqueur.

She gave me a thimble. I lapped it, poured a drop on my forefinger and offered it to Signor Matouchi. He sniffed and bit me. Any kindness is repaid in pain.

Aly, who had had half a thimble, put down her little glass.

"Who was at the manor the night of the funeral?"

Nursing the bite, I told her. "Bradish, who was unconscious, a nurse who was dumb, a servant who was deaf and a mechanician who was dead."

For a moment she considered the picture. Then she tried to frame it.

"It would fit in your ghost story."

I shook my head.

She smiled and smoothed her hair. "You do not think so now. You will later. At present you are too near it. It lacks perspective for you. But let me ask. Why not make a scenario of it?"

"For whom?"

"Well," she said, still smiling, still smoothing her hair. "There is Bil Sayers. You seem to like his work."

The manner in which it afterward came about has nothing to do with the present document, but later a novel of Bil Sayers appeared which I have already cited. Entitled *The Halls of Eblis,* it presents many of the incidents that are given here. Otherwise it is superiorly dramatic, the dénouement being totally different from what actually occurred. That is as it should be. The climaxes of fiction are logical, those of life are not. In fiction matters turn out as they ought to. In life it is just the reverse.

I throw that in now to get rid of it. At the time I was not thinking of fiction but of a corpse that had assumed a fictional aspect of life. I wanted to be rid of that also. I wanted it safely reburied. Meanwhile, nursing the ungrateful bite, I looked over at Aly. She seemed to be nursing the scenario which she had suggested.

I brought her back. "I have shown you the tree. Will you supply the ladder?"

She looked up. "A descent is always possible, but is it wise?"

"Why do you say that? Do you see anything?"

"No, I am in the tree with you. But you want to climb down and I do not."

Surprisedly I stared. "Why don't you want to?"

"I might disturb things."

"Things!" I amazedly repeated. "What things?"

"The things at the bottom. They are so quiet. It is wrong to disturb them. It is always wrong to stir the silent things that do not speak. The world is full of noise and sin. The silent things only wish for silence. It is wicked to go down and harm them where they hide."

"But," I protested, "you move me to tears."

I said it jestingly, but at once I could have said it in earnest. Her eyes had filled. I saw her tears. None the less she smiled. It was very curious. She was both smiling and crying, crying because she could not help it and smiling that I might not be distressed. It was not only curious, it was affecting. I leaned toward her.

"What was it that you saw—down there?"

She brushed her eyes. "Nothing. I have not looked. It is what I fear to see."

"And what is that?"

"I do not know. I only know I dread it."

"But you want to help. You said so."

"Yes, I said that."

"Then will you?"

"I will help, but I will not harm."

"Aly Bolton, listen to me. You will harm if you do not help."

"How will I harm?"

"Banality kills. Suspense is more treacherous. It may drive Bradish insane."

At that she made a little pathetic motion and I added: "Will you go there with me tomorrow?"

She pressed her hands together almost as though she were wringing them. I loosened and kissed them and looked up at her.

"Will you?" I repeated.

"Yes," she said longly. "I will go."

Her eyes were still wet and why were they? Though I asked she did not tell, perhaps she could not. But they were still wet when, our simple plans simply made, she saw me to the door.

XXVI

I AWOKE to the crash of worlds, to the trumpets of the last judgment. In the sarabands of lightning there was an expansiveness, a continuity and a glory that made the black sky gold. A picture torn from the mythologies, the war of titans and of gods, I went to the roof to enjoy it. The lightning there was raspberry, the sky when not a gold field was a tent of crêpe. Between was scudding lingerie, and I held my hair on as I stood, like a valkyr I hope, in the howling and deluvian rain.

The night before, the vibrance of Aly's sensitiveness had affected me. I dreamed of undergrass grown overgreen where, in bogs of leprous scum, devils danced and ghouls were coldly crouching. Ordinarily I would have taken them straight to the workshop. The crashing worlds interfered. When, over the Palisades, a curtain had risen, when the lightning had rescaled the sky, when gods and titans had slunk back to the classical dictionaries, and the air aquiver with their surge and rout was wholly divine, I could only rush down, dry my hair and change my clothes. It was high noon and Aly waited.

The flight through the suburbs, the shoot up the Hudson, pictures that I did not see, incidents that did not occur, the antiquarian will set forth in Bil Sayers' novel. He is the poet of this matter of which I am but the clerk. For the dull-as-ditchwater effect of the present account I offer therefore no apologies. On the contrary. The effect has its value. Every scrupulous critic knows that no history can be reliable unless it is packed with yawns.

Among the simple plans of the night before, luncheon at the village inn had been included. Since then, Aly had otherwise ordered. When the exquisite girl got with me in the car, there got with us a basket in which were sandwiches and a thermos bottle of coffee and water, and a very good drink I have always found it,—though, to take the taste from my mouth of one or two of the surprises that awaited us, I would have said Thank you to a glass of brandy.

Meanwhile, as Aly entered the car, I looked in her eyes. The rain had dried them. They were blue as the sky and bluer. On her face the slight flush of the night before persisted, maintained there perhaps by the consciousness of the ladder. But, as the car flew on, these delicacies lost themselves behind a motor veil and it was not until we reached the manor that I could feast again upon them.

The house, which had had an ugly, comfortable air, exhaled then the more penetrating atmosphere of emptiness and desertion. The front door was walled, the candid windows were barred and the grounds which on the funeral day had seemed none too smart, were the unkempt. Desolation brooded there. Only the vault was unaltered. In the days of the landed gentry, the Chiltons had been a high-handed, high-headed lot. What remained of them that vault contained.

We had left Fletcher, the car, the basket and the veil on the road beyond and, as we approached the vault, I heard her say, perhaps to me, perhaps to herself:

"There it is, exactly as I saw it."

There, too, was the long grass of which Bradish had told, a bit trampled since his own excursion, and in the padlock was the key concerning which Gedney had informed him. Whether the downpour of the morning had already rusted it is now immaterial but it would not turn. As, at the time, I could crack a hickory nut with my fingers, I knew that where I failed Fletcher would do no better and I was for sending him for the man of the day before, when Aly tried it. The key turned, the hasp loosened, the padlock fell and through the then opened door the chill breath of the dead came at us.

From before it Aly retreated. The flush then had gone, but though at the moment she was pale she must have been resolute for she rallied and entered. The back of the vault was dark, the north side was dim but on the south side, on the lower slab, where I had seen the coffin put, light entered with her and I saw again that bier. But not as I had seen it when I followed it there. It was open, it was empty, and back to me swam the remark that Bradish had made:

"There is nothing emptier than an empty coffin."

Aly, who needed no guidance, no prompting, no word from me, removed a glove, put her bare hand on the coffin and looked away, looked up. At what? What did she see? Her lips moved, but they may have gone dry. She moistened them and so absent was her expression that I am sure she did it unconsciously. Her upper teeth were pressed on her lower lip. I could see the edges, see too the facial muscles contracting the corners of her mouth. Still she looked up, but through eyelids that had closed. Hers was the rapt look I had read of and never seen. Then presently, with an intake of the breath, her eyes opened, she turned, left the vault, but stood by me while I recovered the padlock and fastened it again.

Finishing with it, I turned to her. She was putting on her glove and she finished with that before she spoke, preluding what she did say with a little motion, a gesture slight, perhaps involuntary, as though either expressing regret for what she was about to tell, or else disclaiming responsibility for it, a little gesture that I could interpret as I pleased.

"There is a man, tall, slim, handsome, with the brave air of a young prince marching past lifted swords out from a tapestry of the renaissance. Who is he?"

"Go on."

"He went to the coffin, swept heaped flowers from it, raised the top. He lifted it so readily it could not have been closed. She lay there white, motionless, dead. He bent over her, bent closer, kissed her, straightened, moved aside, moved back, bent to her again, put his arms about her, lifted her from the coffin, carried her out, carried her into the night. I saw no more. Who is he?"

"Austen."

"The man who was in love with her?"

"And with whom she was in love."

But I did not ask were she sure. I did not ask whether there were the chance of error. On the morning when she awoke in my workshop, I brought her coffee, and a cup. From that cup she had evolved a picture of me as a child, of my grandfather who was living then, of the room in which he sat. No, I did not ask were she sure. Nor did I marvel at the psychometry with which I was familiar. It was the ladder. It was for that I had brought her there. I merely exploded.

"So that is it then! But why did he carry her away? Where did he carry her? What did he do with her when he got her there? He could only have buried her again and not that it can make the slightest difference to her now, but when she lived, had she thought of herself as a corpse, an idea I am sure that never entered her head, but if it had she would have said: Put me with my people. Why then did he carry her away? Why did he profane her with kisses? What Bradish did was sacrilege. What Austen did seems to me worse. Why did he do it?"

"The magus said she was alive."

"But I saw her dead. You saw her dead. I remember your very words 'There she lay, white, motionless, dead.' "

She made another little gesture, just a motion with her hand.

"But because I can sometimes see things, it does not follow that I can explain them."

"No, of course not. Besides, in asking a string of imbecile questions, I was putting them to myself. I was trying to clarify my own ideas and I cannot, I'll be shot if I can."

She got away from it. "Don't you think we might give that poor man a sandwich or two? He drove so well."

In exploding the questions, I had been too full of them to notice, but I saw then that she looked completely fagged, as one must I suppose after such an expenditure of nervous force.

"We might have a few ourselves. I know I would say Thank you for a glass of brandy. But I would say it for you, you look utterly done."

None the less and however exhausted, she saw to it that Fletcher had his sandwiches and, with them, a glass of coffee and water.

Then, for a while, the basket between us, we sat on the steps of the house where she tormented a bit of bread. She was not hungry she said, except for cigarettes and as she sat and smoked I saw about her that air of languor I had noticed the first time I was at her flat and where she may have been psychometrising also.

In watching her, I stuffed and, at the same time, reviewed the picture series revealed by her latest *tour de force.* Charged with surmises, with hypotheses, with interrogations, the pictures passed before me. For my own edification I tried to imagine what had occurred before they were taken and what had happened afterward. Considered in the ensemble they were illustrations for an unwritten tale of Hoffman, etchings for some story lost or strayed from the portfolio of Villiers de l'Isle Adam, vignettes for an unpublished manuscript of Poe.

From them, I turned to her.

"Last night I dreamed of dancing devils and crouching ghouls. I don't wonder now. Austen cannot be plural but he is certainly singular. Singular! He is epic. The imagination reels from before him. For what lethean farewells, for what plutonian embraces, for what lemurianisms did he go to the vault that night? What drew him there and what having drawn him there, induced him to take her away? Barring the old tales of mediæval monasteries, there is nothing like it anywhere. Austen is not epic merely, he is unique. I should like to have a word with him. Bradish certainly will."

The sibyl sighed. "Poor man, his path has been hard and is to be harder yet. Heretofore it has been a path, a very uncertain path, but still a path on which there was light. Now it is a blind alley."

She paused, sighed again and stood up. "How wrong it is to stir the silent things that do not wish to speak."

Through the long green afternoon, back to the sordid city, back from sepulchral visions to the trivialities of the everyday, on we flew. We flew whirlingly, noisily and yet silent as the things that should not stir. Aly could not talk. One of the rare beings that never complain and always console, her head must have been splitting, but she said nothing of it. Only, she could not talk and, at her house, I thought her hand trembled when she reached it to tell me goodbye.

The white staring house came next. In the library there, Bradish resembled a great caged beast of the jungle, a wounded lion, with nothing for his mind to chew on, nothing except the marvel of the empty bier.

"Well?" he threw at me. "Find anything?"

"Everything. But before you can grasp it, I must tell you that Miss Bolton——"

"Damn Miss Bolton. What do you mean by everything?"

For that damn, ordinarily I would have damned him, but on the top branch of the tree where he prowled he needed indulgence. I let it go therefore and gave it to him.

"Austen took her."

Open-mouthed he fell back and clutched first at a chair, then at the table, all the hate, all the virulence, all the murderous jealousy of the male mounting and flaming in that spider on his face. Instantly hideous, he shook. Yet then, one has to recognise, that in beasts, in men, in women, jealousy, the most primitive of emotions, is the most blinding of all. At that moment, Bradish, mentally, was trampling Austen beneath his heels, gouging his eyes out with them, trampling him to death.

That sweet surcease not being practicable, at all events not then, he gave a sort of yelp, looked at me, I dare say without seeing me, and disdaining the bell, called mightily.

"Hey! Peters! Gedney!"

From the hall beyond, both hastened, Gedney with his catlike tread, Peters with his mask of wood.

Pointing a finger like a pistol at the latter,

"Er-er," he stuttered, "a Mr. Austen, he called here, left a card. Find it."

"Yes, sir," said the mask. "Thank you, sir."

"And Gedney," he called at the catman. "Fletcher waiting? Tell him to wait."

"I say, old chap," I put in, threshing about for what I could say. "You rather left this business to me. Now don't you think——"

"Think!" he roared. "I have done nothing but think. Now I shall act."

I ran a spoke in at him. "He won't be at home."

"I'll damn soon find out."

"If you please, sir."

Peters with a card on a tray, was presenting it.

Bradish snapped it up, snapped it back.

"Look him up in the telephone book. Say I am coming. Say James Bradish is coming at once. Say——"

"Yes," I threw in. "Tell him to clear the decks and prepare for action."

Fiercely he turned on me. "I wish——"

"So do I. I wish you had some sense. Can't you see that to get him, there will have to be a surprise attack. Have Peters tell him to call to quarters and he will be ready for you. Take him off his guard, you idiot."

The strategy was a douche. From before it he backed. He did not like it. I could see that. I could see that what he wanted was to sail right in, flags flying, trumpets blowing, batteries unmasked, fair play and be hanged to you. But into his dislike for any strategy the idea must have filtered that Austen himself was not playing fair, for suddenly he rounded and turned to Peters who had stood before us precisely as though he were waiting to hear whether he were to fetch sherry and bitters or tea and toast.

"Find out when he will be in."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now that is more like it," I said as the man withdrew, "and I'll go with you."

He turned again. "No you won't. He would think I had brought a husky along. I'll show him. I'll settle this business myself."

"But see here," I said, sparring for wind. "You know nothing about it. Hadn't you better have a few facts to go on first?"

"You said he took her. Did he or did he not?"

"Yes, but——"

"That's all I need."

"Except a gun."

The shot confused him. Ardently I wished that with chloroform I could dull the confusion into inaction.

Yet the chloroform I lacked, Peters serviceably, if metaphorically, produced.

"The gentleman is not at home, sir."

"Then find out when he will be."

"Yes, sir. I asked, sir. Mr. Austen's man said that Mr. Austen was expected at seven."

Bradish sat down and tapped at his teeth. The chloroform was acting and, in a moment, when the anæsthetist had gone, I took his place.

"It seems unfortunate, but you never can tell. If all of a sudden he marched in here, what could you do, what could you say? You could only shout, 'Where's my wife?' and have him shout, 'What do you mean?' There you would be. You couldn't tell him. You don't know. Don't you have any tea in the house? I have been at it for you all night and all day. I am starving and you lack the decency to offer me a crust. What a curse it is to have a friend like you."

He muttered and moved. Anæsthesia was not complete. But confusion was departing. The assassin was slinking away. Presently the normal being would return. Even then he was showing his head.

He touched a bell. "Tea!"

When presently it came, he drank two cups, with a drop of brandy in them. I was glad to see him at it. Tea clarifies, brandy strengthens, and force, though not too much of it, and sense, though not too much of that either, was what he needed most.

He put down the cup. "Suppose you tell me."

At that, I outlined Aly's grand act on the triple psychic trapese, omitting only the Stygian kiss which she had beheld there. The rest I gave him. The feat itself, the palpitant gyrations, may, or may not, have surprised him. He said nothing on the subject, nor, in regard to the abduction, did he say—and I thought it singularly heroic of him—that he had always suspected it. Quite the contrary. His first comment was that he had thought of everything but that.

His second comment seemed to me less commendable.

"Nelly was the lady of the steps. It was she whom Brevoort saw and to whom Miss Bolton spoke. She has taken her mother's name."

"But see here——" I began.

He checked me. "Do drop all that. It is the old song. I am sick of it, sick and tired of it and the variations. You were about to tell me she is dead. She is not dead. She is alive. I knew it from the start."

"But see here," I again began, renewing to him the objections to any such possibility which I had advanced to Aly at the manor.

He treated them like cobwebs. "That is not the point. The point is where did he hide her? Where has he been hiding her ever since?"

"You will have to ask him. But I doubt that she is hidden. The lady of the steps was not hidden, Brevoort's lady of the shop could come and go and Miss Fellowes had the freedom of the city. Then also Miss Fellowes had a man in tow, an old man. If Austen had her hidden she would not be about, nor would she be roaming the streets with any man, young or old. Besides this Miss Fellowes is probably alive, whereas——"

Impatiently Bradish shoved at his cup. "There you go again. But no matter. I'll know tonight."

"Yes, but softly does it. The stupidest thing you can do is to make a row."

"Ah, there at last you are right! When I first heard of the abduction, there might have been one, there would have been one, there could not have been anything else. But there will be none now. All the same, I'll make him disgorge."

That was reasonable enough. Anæsthesia had had its proper effect. I could safely leave him and, as I had troubles of my own, I got up to go.

He motioned at me. "I don't know but that——"

It broke off. In a moment he put it together again.

"See here. I don't care a tinker's curse what Austen thinks. This is a ticklish business. I may need a witness."

I sat down again.

"All right. Here he is. I'll go you. I wanted to from the start."

He looked at his watch.

"I can't sit here and twirl my thumbs. Suppose we start now. If he isn't in, we can camp on his doorstep."

I jumped up.

"Comeonski."

XXVII

At the house where, long since, before anything at all had happened, Austen had buttonholed me, I led the way up the stair to the floor where he lived and on which, facing the head of the stair, were two parallel flats.

Uncertainly before them I hesitated. Was Austen's the one on the left or at the right? In the one which was not his I had, on that remote visit, seen a scrubwoman. She may have eloped. She was no longer there. Both doors were closed. Moreover dusk had come. The landing was dark. If there were names on the doors, the names were invisible.

I turned to Bradish. "I don't know which is his."

He shoved me aside. "Potluck then."

Already he was feeling for the button. Whether he found it or not I do not know. Yet, instantly, the door swung back. There, his hat on, a stick in one hand, the other still on the knob, was the abductor.

From behind, a light in the hall showed Bradish's face without showing Austen's and whether he were surprised or not I could not tell. I am sure though he must have been. In any case, he did not betray it. He had himself in hand at once and devilish cool he was about it.

"Hello! Was it you that telephoned?"

That was his greeting, offhand as you please. But even as he spoke, Bradish was speaking to him.

"I want a word with you."

Austen stood aside. "How de do, Poole? Come in. That room there, if you don't mind."

Bradish went on. As I followed I saw a head poked suddenly through a doorway farther down the hall. It was Austen's gnome I thought. But now we were all in the sitting-room where I had been before. Apparently, nothing had happened to it. It had the same careless air. On the sideboard were decanters. On the table was the drooping green cover. As before, the cupboard door stood open.

Austen closed it. He had entered with us and, after closing the cupboard, indicated the decanters.

"Have a drink?"

Bradish took off his hat.

"Austen, where is my wife?"

Austen motioned.

"Do sit down."

I did. Bradish remained standing. He stood on one side of the table, Austen at the other. On the table was an ivory paper-cutter. Austen reached for it and said:

"I don't know why you ask me that."

Bradish pulled at his gloves. "You know perfectly and I will thank you to tell me."

Austen looked at the ivory knife, then at me. From me he looked at Bradish.

"Your wife is dead."

Bradish had removed a glove. He struck the table with it.

"See here, I have reason to believe that after the funeral you entered the vault and abducted her."

Austen threw down the knife and turned again to me. It was as though he were saying: "You hear that! He's crazy."

Bradish may have so interpreted it. Resting one hand on the table, he leaned forward.

"I propose to get at the bottom of this. I don't mean to be more disagreeable than I can help, but——"

Austen interrupted. "You needn't apologise. Besides, the only place I know where you can get the information you ask is the bureau of vital statistics."

Impatiently Bradish straightened.

"That has nothing to do with it."

Austen smiled, or affected to smile. "Come now. You ought to see that it has everything to do with it. If you take a look, you will find there, entered and filed, the certificate of your wife's decease."

Bradish flushed. I could see he was trying to hold in and I could see too he was having a job of it.

"I don't want that. What I want is to know what became of her after you abducted her."

Austen took up the paper-cutter again. I thought he was stumped but he wasn't.

"Whom do you mean by her?" he surprisingly asked.

For the first time Bradish raised his voice.

"Here! Don't quibble. You know I mean my wife."

Austen made a pass with the knife.

"It is hardly a quibble to repeat that she is dead."

Bradish was looking him straight in the eyes, he was looking straight at Bradish and he added:

"I can tell you nothing else."

At that Bradish sort of nodded. "Very good then. If you won't answer me as man to man, you will answer me as defendant to plaintiff."

Austen raised his eyebrows. Perhaps he did not understand. I am sure that I did not.

"You may not know it," Bradish continued, "but I have leased the manor. The vault is my property and you effected a felonious entry into it."

It was a false move. A threat is always that. Besides how was any action possible? The jury were yet to be born that would accept Aly's story. At once I started to interrupt but, before I could, Austen was shrugging his shoulders.

"The sooner I have your complaint, the sooner you will have my answer."

Bradish put on his hat. "Is that your last word?"

Austen turned to me.

"Can't you help a bit, Poole? You were at the funeral. You saw Mrs. Bradish in her coffin."

"Yes," I answered, "but I have seen her since, or at least——"

I was about to qualify it and say if I had not seen her I had seen her ghost, instead of which I screamed. I saw something else and, at what I saw, it may be that my hair stood on end for I could feel my flesh creep.

There, before me, before Bradish, but not before Austen whose back was turned, was Nelly Chilton.

I say Nelly Chilton. It was she or her ghost. The door of the cupboard had opened and there she stood.

A second only. Clothed sepulchrally in white, instantly she vanished.

In screaming, I jumped and so violently that I overturned the chair. Stupidly, I stopped to raise it. It took but a moment, yet as I started and screamed, Bradish cleared the table, swung himself clear over it and dashed into the cupboard in which she—or it—had disappeared.

I had just a glimpse of Austen turning and looking amazedly after him. He had not seen the phantom but I had and, with no conscious motive, yet propelled, I now think, by sheer nervous excitement, I bolted, flung myself in the cupboard.

There was no one there!

I heard, or thought I heard something, the sound of an object that had fallen, but I was too rattled to locate it, too confused to be sure.

On either side coats were hanging. At the back there were more, but of Bradish not a sign, of the phantom, not a trace. Save for myself and the hanging garments in which feverishly I felt, save too for the ceiling and floor, save these things and myself, the cupboard was empty. There was no one. Together the quick and the dead had gone.

My forehead was wet, my hands were moist. I got out my handkerchief and reentered the room.

That also was empty.

"Well," I nervously mumbled, "I'll be damned!"

XXVIII

On the table was the paper-cutter. It was not very helpful and I got down and looked under the table. For all I found I might as well have looked out of the window. Besides it was a bit awkward. While I was still on my knees and before I could rise, the door, not of the cupboard but of the room, opened and Austen's man came in.

"I am taking a walk," I told him.

"Exactly, sir."

He spoke as though crawling about on all fours was perfectly natural and I stood up.

"I was looking for Mr. Austen. I will thank you to tell him I am still here."

Civilly he considered me.

"I will see, sir, but I think Mr. Austen just went out."

"Out!" I repeated.

But he too had gone.

I sat down and tried to pull myself together. In spite of the ease with which I had invented a promenade, I was unstrung, nervous as a witch, dripping with perspiration, and, as I raised my hand to wipe my face, it did what no hand of mine had ever done, it shook.

I got up, went to the sideboard, helped myself from a decanter, spilling a little of the contents, and heard the glass click against my teeth.

This won't do, I reflected.

To steady my nerves, I evolved a few platitudes, among others that, if I had seen a ghost, I ought to applaud my luck instead of being alarmed by it.

The comfort of that was mediocre. For, admitting the ghost, what had become of Bradish? His dematerialisation was a phenomenon for which nothing in occultism had prepared me. I was necessarily aware, as everyone else is, that, by virtue of certain austerities, an adept can disentangle himself from the body and swim into the astral, but, even so, he has to leave his body behind and, so far as I could discover, Bradish had not left so much as his hat. On the other hand there are, or there used to be, stories of people that had the gift of becoming invisible. But the precedent helped me no more than the paper-cutter. Bradish had no such gift.

I peered at the cupboard. For all I knew to the contrary there might be some power there, a power of which I had never heard, some force unimaginable and inexplicable that had whisked him away. But whisked him where? It would have to land him somewhere. It could not gobble him up.

These platitudes, however long in the telling, came at me in flashes. They occupied but a moment and in peering at the cupboard I approached it and reached in a tentative hand, bracing myself to snatch it back at any snatching forward. Then, conscious presently that it was unmolested, that there was no attempt to whisk me, I put a foot in.

Except for such light as came from the window behind me, it was dark and I lit a match. I could see then that on either side were wooden bars from which, on hangers, the coats hung. At the back there were hooks and more coats. As for the floor, I could feel it. It was unyielding as rock. I looked up. The ceiling, obviously there, was out of reach. Then the match burned my fingers. I dropped it and felt behind the coats, not to find Bradish, I knew he was not there, but with some imbecile idea of testifying afterward that I had done so.

By this time I was relatively collected, reasonably cool, yet conscious of an odd feeling in my head. It was as though a little top were spinning there. With that consciousness, memory raised a latch. I was back in Mayfair, where a woman was telling me of some friend, a typical Englishman who, for a bet, had passed the night in a house said to be haunted, and who, the next morning, was taken from it raving mad. Then at once logic raised another latch. I realised that for that Englishman to go mad he must have been confronted by some unimaginable horror. Confronting me were coats. The deduction followed. Nothing very horrifying there. On the other hand there was something so baffling that it amounted nearly to the same thing and in view of that top I wondered if my brain was about to tip. Before it could, I jumped. I jumped as a cat does at the unexpected. I had heard somebody, or something, and in jumping I wheeled. Another awkward moment. There again was that gnome.

"I was looking for Mr. Bradish," I told him.

"Exactly, sir."

On this occasion he spoke as though his master's friends invariably played hide and seek whenever they came to see him.

"Where is he?" I added.

Respectfully he considered me. "Where is who, sir?"

"Mr. Bradish?"

"I don't think I know the gentleman, sir."

"You were in the hall when I came in here with Mr. Austen, weren't you?"

"In the hall, yes, sir."

"There was nother man with us. That was Mr. Bradish. Have you any idea where he is?"

He wiped his civil mouth. "Excuse me, sir, I didn't see any other gentleman."

I had abandoned the cupboard. I was standing by the table and I had taken up the paper-cutter which I was trying to use as a fan. But at that I dropped it.

"Look here," I said. "I am speaking of a man who came in here a few minutes ago with Mr. Austen and myself. Mr. Austen opened the door for us. You must have seen him."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Austen was going out."

"I am not speaking of Mr. Austen. I am speaking of the man who came in with me. You saw him."

"I can't rightly say I did, sir."

"But you saw me come in?"

"Yes, sir. I saw you, sir. You are the gentleman that was under the table."

"Then do you mean to stand there and tell me that apart from Mr. Austen and myself, you saw no one come in?"

"Yes, sir; no, sir."

I snapped at him, "What do you mean by no, sir; yes, sir?"

But his civility remained unaffected.

"I don't mean nothing, sir. You asked me about another gentleman. I didn't see no other gentleman."

He is an idiot, I hopelessly decided. But at once, catching myself up, I smiled at him.

"Have you ever seen a—er—a ghost here?"

He backed. His mouth twitched. But he was still civil.

"Will you be waiting for Mr. Austen, sir?" In backing, he turned. At the door he turned again.

"If you don't mind, sir, I have work to do."

The hall took him. Once more I was alone in this room in which a vision had appeared and a mortal had disintegrated, a room from which, in fear of me, a gnome had fled.

I sat down. That top must have doubled itself. It seemed to me that two of them were spinning just beneath the pineal gland. Joined to that was the sensation which one has after a white night, the sensation that the brain won't act. I told myself that I if could put my head under a shower, it would help. But I did not want to go ferreting about for the bathroom. I knew the gnome would find me at it and, however accustomed he might be to the vagaries of Austen's guests, few of them I imagined could come there to bathe. None the less I rather fancied that if when stripped and in the tub I had told him I was expecting my grandmother, his "Exactly, sir" would be as prompt and as civil as before.

At the picture, nervously I laughed. I had laughed at nothing and what better reason can one have? Then again I laughed, this time at the little gnome for running away. He must have thought me cracked, that is if he thought at all. But perhaps I am, I immediately reflected. Perhaps everything that has occurred has only seemed to occur. Even so, I told myself, people are not mad because they see things that do not exist, they are only mad if they believe in them and I won't. Yet how vain that resolution was! I could not make myself believe that Bradish had not come with me. I could not pretend that I had not seen him disappear. The vision that had evaporated with him might be a phantom and I was willing to let it go at that. But there was nothing phantasmal about Bradish. None the less the gnome had not seen him at all!

But that is impossible. I told myself. Either he lied or Austen coached him or——

My mind shot back. I reconstructed our entry. Bradish, lordly as usual, had marched in first. I had followed. In following I had seen the servant's head poked from a doorway farther down the hall. Probably, a moment earlier, he had seen his master about to leave. Then, hearing voices, he had looked out again, but not until Bradish had entered this room.

This is it, I reflected, but, I had to ask myself, what did it matter? The complex problem remained. How and where had Bradish gone?

Clearly he was not under the table, or secreted in the cupboard, and I wondered whether he could have levitated himself through the ceiling. There was a medium — whom Browning threw rhymes at — who could perform that little trick, or at all events something similar. But, I had to realise, Bradish was no more capable of anything of the kind than he was of composing a ballet. Even otherwise, what object could he have had? He had come with me to this shop, solely that he might bully Austen. In that he had failed, or been about to fail, when he flung himself over the table and jumped into the fourth dimension.

What kind of behavior was that? Patently, it had amazed Austen, as well it might, and the memory of it so angered me that if, at that moment, Bradish had popped back, I would have up and struck him.

No such luck, however, and for the time being at any rate, no possibility of it.

As that conclusion reached me, a query followed. If there were no chance of his popping then, when would he pop and would he ever? Had he definitely deserted this world?

"But that is madness!" I exclaimed aloud.

At once, to put an accent on it, if one were needed, I saw that gnome peering in at me from the door. A moment only. The door closed. More frightened perhaps than before, again the harmless wretch had fled.

I could not blame him. First he had found me on all fours; afterward in the cupboard. On the first occasion I told him I was taking a walk. On the second, I had insisted he had seen what he had not seen and I had enquired about a ghost. Now, a moment since, he had heard me talking to myself, talking of the madness which he must have suspected. Instantly, I could hear the clanging ambulance, feel the strait-jacket, see the psychopathic ward!

Unstrung as I was, it alarmed me. I sprang up, grabbed my hat and stick and with the idea of doing something, of going somewhere, of enlisting somebody's aid, I hurried on and out and down the stair to the street where, comfortably, Fletcher waited.

I had forgotten him utterly and said as much.

"Thank heaven you are here! Have you seen Mr. Bradish?"

He touched his cap. "Why no, sir. Not since he went in with you."

"You are sure he hasn't come out?"

"Positive, sir."

"Fletcher, look here. He has disappeared."

His eyes bulged. "Mr. Bradish has?"

"We went in to see a man and while Mr. Bradish was talking to him all of a sudden he wasn't there. I don't know what to do."

Fletcher's eyes bulged wider. But any hypothesis save one, that I was drunk, was clearly beyond him. I saw it and motioned.

"Here, let's go to Dr. Cally. He may tell us how to act."

On the way, I thought of Aly and wondered whether what she had seen, or thought she had seen, were true, feeling, as I wondered, that it were better if it was not; though better still, better far it would be if, when Bradish entered the vault, he had found his bride there, found her lover with her, found him dead, found her dead, found them dead together, and when, ragingly, he had tried to tear them apart, they had crumbled to dust before him. A climax such as that would, it seemed to me, be more fatefully poetic than the melodrama which Aly had related.

But now we were at Cally's, who, it appeared, was out. It was that nigger of his who told me and surly enough he was about it. He did not know where Dr. Cally was, he knew nothing and he looked ready and eager to slam the door in my face.

Fortunately, I know just how to tame a brute of that kind and, quick as a wink, I pulled a roll of bills straight at him.

"Throw out your hand."

The effect was magical. Instantly a sullen lout became all teeth and eyes. In his erebean face I could even detect gleams of intelligence.

"Find him. Tell him it is a matter of life and death. I will be at the Buck Club."

Confident then, that unless Cally had also evaporated, he would shortly materialise, I flew down the steps, hopped in the car and told Fletcher to drive to the club where, when presently I entered it, I ran around like a chicken with its head off.

In the main room I saw no one to whom I could turn and, leaving it, I did what I rarely do, I looked in my letter box. There was a chance, slim enough in all conscience, yet still a chance that from some recondite region, Bradish might be trying to communicate with me.

The box was tolerably stuffed, but mainly with circulars from among which I sifted two letters, one of which contained a request for my autograph. I dropped it. Immediately a boy in a slashed waistcoat sprang from nowhere, picked it up and gave it back to me. I dropped it again and put my foot on it. The other letter was from my publishers who said that five thousand was offered for the picture rights of my last iniquity and would I see them about it?

Mere starvation wages, I thought and thought no more about it, for the time being that is, and hurried on through the billiard room to the bar where there were two men whose names I might have remembered but whose faces were blanks.

One of them had the agreeable air of having just stepped from a bandbox. He invited me to drink.

I ordered vichy.

The other man, who reeked of polo, addressed me in a throaty voice.

"Whatcher up to now, Poole? Writin' somethin' noo?"

I barked at him. "Writing something? I am living something, something that would bowl you over, bore holes in you and stuff you full of nightmare. Do you know Bradish?"

"The spider chap? What of him?"

I gulped the vichy. "He was with me one moment and vanished the next. Is Brevoort here?"

Lightly, with a forefinger, the other man motioned. "There's a boy trying to speak to you."

I looked about. The slashed waistcoat had approached.

"Dr. Kelly, sir. He's in the hall."

Without one of the amenities of life, I abandoned those men and hurried on and out to where Cally stood.

He plucked at his beard. "You've been corrupting my servant. He says you gave him thirty dollars."

"See here! Bradish has disappeared. You and I have got to find him."

He adjusted his glasses. "Disappearances are deceptive. How did it happen?"

"I went with him to call on a man and, while there, a ghost appeared and Bradish jumped into the fourth dimension."

"Where did these commonplace incidents occur?"

"At Austen's."

"Was Bradish acquainted with the ghost?"

"It was Nelly Chilton's."

Mephistophelianly he eyed me, not as though he were questioning my sanity, but rather as though he had always thought me demented.

"You saw it too then? Where did it come from?"

"A cupboard, and look here, no sooner did it appear than it disappeared and Bradish disappeared also."

"In the cupboard?"

"Didn't you hear me? I dashed in there the next instant. There was nobody there, nobody, nothing, coats only."

He lit one of his vile cigars.

"Poole, always I have admired you. But never before have you been as brilliant. Personally, fool that I am, I have regarded the fourth dimension as an example of mathemathical hysterics. But to you it is a cupboard full of old clothes. That is what I call originality. Now——"

I grabbed him by the arm. "Stow all that. We have got to get back there and——"

He shook me off. "If you take my advice, you will leave things as they are."

I could have torn my hair, torn his. Again I grabbed him.

"I don't want your advice. If I had elephantiasis I wouldn't take it. I want your help."

"Why don't you knock me down?"

He said it with a hateful affection of patience, the resigned patience of the long suffering, and it infuriated me.

"I'll be shot if I don't, if you won't come along."

"A lamb led by a lion," I heard him protest at the doorkeeper who regarded us both with professional stolidity.

But at last I had him in the car and after directing Fletcher, I went over it again, but this time in full.

"What do you make of it?" I concluded. "To me it is a nightmare."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes.

"Well, I can't. Your nightmare is a mare's nest."

"How a mare's nest?"

"You are a novelist, I believe."

"You mean I have invented all this?"

"No, that would require ability. You have merely twisted things crooked and then frightened yourself with them."

"Yes," I admitted. "That is only commonsense. The whole affair has rattled me so that I can't think straight."

"Totally unnecessary to tell me that, Poole. Moreover, if I were you, I wouldn't talk of commonsense. It might seem boastful."

I found no adequate retort. Besides, what he said was natural enough. He did not believe me. How could he? How could anyone believe my cock-and-bull story? How for that matter could I prove it? I had no witness except Austen, who might deny everything, and that gnome who had not seen Bradish at all.

But now the car was veering. Into the street of obscure calamities it swam and, at the Leah-like house, we alighted.

XXIX

In the hall, on the way up, Cally looked at his watch and blandly, with his abominable unconcern, remarked that he had an appointment at nine.

"At nine!" I exclaimed. "It must be midnight now."

"Two minutes after eight precisely."

I stared. It was my turn. I did not believe him. It was incredible that all that had happened could have been comprised into an hour's space.

"Seeing more ghosts?" he obligingly enquired.

But now we were on the landing above. It was darker than before, yet, without apparent effort, he found the button.

The gnome opened. Cally said something, asking for Austen I think, and I went on with him into the sitting-room where the evaporation had occurred.

Previously, it had not been lighted. It was then and Cally indicated the cupboard of which the door had been closed.

"Is that your fourth dimension?"

Suddenly I felt very tired. Joined to the fatigue was a sense of helplessness. I felt that Cally would be of no use whatever and I cursed myself for not having thought to subvention Aly. She could have psychometrised the cupboard and told me what happened when Bradish disappeared.

From the chair on which I had dropped, I looked about. Cally had opened the cupboard and I saw him go in. Then I lost sight of him and I wondered—though with that indifference which lassitude brings—whether he too had been whisked away.

Yet almost at once he showed himself and beckoned. I got up and went to him. Preceding me, he re-entered the cupboard and pushed at the back. Silently it parted. An unimagined door had opened. I was looking into another room.

A foot or two beyond was a trunk and beside it a hat. I saw that, saw too something else. Across the room was another door. As I looked it also opened.

From behind it a face, ageless and sexless, peered and I heard a sexless and ageless voice.

"In Christian charity, will you go?"

But the voice, however unearthly, was human. The room into which I looked was real. Then at once I was in darkness. Cally had withdrawn his hand. Instantly the cupboard's back exit had closed and I realised how it was that when Bradish dashed in there, I had missed him by not more than a hair.

"There is your fourth dimension. Take a jump in yourself. If you don't find Bradish, it is because he has gone. I am going too. Some folks have their living to make."

It was Cally of course. I had no answer for him, nor any surprise at his familiarity with the lay of the land. I took it that he had stumbled on it by accident, as I might have, if I had been less rattled when Bradish disappeared. Then, at once, with a push of my own, I passed through.

At the right was a sofa, behind it a window. Opposite the sofa, a yard or two away, was a table. On it was a book and above it a light. Nearby were two chairs. Save for a small rug, that trunk and the hat, the floor was bare. These things I absorbed at a glance. What alone among them detained me was the sofa.

There sat Bradish. He was holding his leg as though it were a guitar.

The attitude exasperated me. If a last straw were needed there it was and I yelped.

"What are you doing?"

He motioned at the opposite wall. "Nelly is in there. I would have had her, I nearly had her, she was just ahead of me, making for that door, when I tripped and fell."

It was too much and I let go.

"You are always tumbling over yourself and always at the wrong moment. It is a pity you did not break your neck."

He grimaced. "I nearly did. I fell over that trunk and twisted my bad ankle. The pain must have knocked me. When I came to, I was on the floor."

I gave it to him again.

"I thought you were dead, confound you. When I saw what you saw, I sprang in the air and screamed like an octopus, but you dashed in here and fainted from sheer bravado. Come along out of this."

"Not till I see Nelly."

"You intend to stay here for the rest of your born days?"

"I intend to get at Nelly if I have to break down every door in the place."

"Nice blackguardly program."

He threw out his chin. "Kid gloves, eh? I have worn them too long."

As he spoke, he lowered his leg, got to his feet, winced visibly and as visibly stared, not at me, at something or someone behind me.

I turned. In the doorway, through which that unearthly face had peered, stood a man whom I remembered having seen at the funeral. Obviously a man of the world and not of its neighbourhood, as some worldly men are, he had that air of extreme distinction which certain New Yorkers used to possess and which now is gone forever. Another lost art.

He bowed to Bradish. "My name is Chilton. He turned to me. "Mr. Poole, I believe. Won't you both be seated?"

There could be but one Chilton—Nelly's father. There he stood. Bradish sank back on the sofa. I took a chair. There were but two chairs. He took the other.

"Mr. Bradish," he resumed. "It was my intention to call on you tomorrow, for in returning here, I hardly expected to find you. Austen, who went in search of me, told me of your visit. He told me also what you said. In what manner you discovered what you did discover is incomprehensible. It is also unfortunate. He paused and continued: "What I have to say to you intimately concerns my daughter."

I made for the door. "Mr. Chilton, I am your very obedient servant."

At once he protested. "No, no, I beg of you. Please do not go. At least for a moment. I——"

"Your daughter," Bradish heatedly cut in, "is in the next room. She——"

"My daughter is dead," the old man interrupted.

At that the lion roared. "She isn't! She can't be! She never has been! I don't believe it. I've seen her."

Cheerlessly the old man eyed him. "When you saw her she told you she was dead. She spoke the truth. Civilly she has no existence."

"What do you mean, sir?" Bradish cried at him.

The old man's right hand had been ungloved. Slowly he removed the other glove.

"What the law is here I do not know, but I do know that on the Continent a death certificate, properly entered, is incapable of revision."

The spider then seemed to be digging into Bradish's face.

"It cannot be that you propose to stand on that?"

The old man turned to me. "I stand on nothing." He turned to Bradish. "None the less——"

"What?"

"I ask you to relinquish her."

Bradish glared. The expression is cheap. I can think of none other that is as adequate.

"Not to her lover!" The five syllables he tore from his mouth and flung them so violently that the spider seemed about to fling itself with them. Nor had he done. With the same violence he gestured at the cupboard. "In that room in there I surprised her going to him."

But the violence served only to heighten that air of distinction.

"Mr. Bradish, no man should speak, as you have spoken, to a girl's father. Yet I do not venture to reprove you. Presently you will reprove yourself. Meanwhile you will allow me to correct you. When you surprised my daughter in the adjoining room, it was in search of me she was going. Since Austen first took this apartment for me, very often I have sat there, usually with him, but also with Dr. Cally, who has been attending her."

And that, I reflected, is how tricky little Cally knew the lay of the land.

"As Dr. Cally is aware, though you are not, she is dying. The dying, Mr. Bradish, do not act in the manner which you have asserted."

Again the wounded lion roared.

"Dying! It is impossible. Only a while ago, she——"

Protestingly the old man had motioned. "I must ask you to hear me. For some time I was abroad. It was only a few days before my daughter's marriage that I returned to this country. She was then interested in Austen as she always had been. To my knowledge she had never looked, as the phrase is, at another man. Her marriage to you was therefore a surprise to me. She has since told me that her mother so represented matters with which you are familiar, that she had no other recourse. Mr. Poole, will you care to smoke?"

In speaking he produced a cigarette case, which he offered to me, offered to Bradish, who shook his head. I thanked him and took one. He also took one and resumed.

"You will appreciate in a moment why I enter into circumstances which, without reflecting in any way on you, are painful to us both. But then the whole matter is painful, far more so than you know. Have you a match, Mr. Poole?"

I struck one which I gave him. He thanked me, lighted his cigarette and motioned at Bradish.

"I love Nelly. She is the one human being I do love. A sacrifice for her would not be a sacrifice, it would be a joy. I can make none. There is none to be made. You ask if I proposed to stand on the death certificate. I can only stand and look on, stand and wring my hands."

The gloves which he held he dropped, bent over and recovered them.

"Mr. Bradish, you married a girl whom you have lost through no fault of yours, through no fault of hers. Be good enough to keep that in mind. But you have lost her as I have, as we all have, for we have lost her forever."

Then again the wounded lion roared.

"It is preposterous! I don't believe it!"

The atmosphere was stifling. Charged with grief, with anger, with suspense, it had us all by the throat. I was about to go and throw open the window, but the old man was speaking.

"Civilly she is dead and nominally——"

He broke off. For a moment, resolutely he closed his mouth. Then at once, with a gesture of excuse, he looked at Bradish.

"I again ask you to relinquish her."

Again Bradish flung it at him. "And I repeat, I will not relinquish my wife to her lover."

Mr. Chilton looked at me and though years have gone by since then, that look seems to me still the most despairful that I ever saw. But precisely as he had mastered himself a moment earlier, he mastered himself then. The air of extreme distinction returned and it was actually with a smile, the smile of a man of the world to whom nothing is important, that he turned anew to Bradish.

"I fear you will have to relinquish her to her lover, for her lover is Christ."

Even then I did not get it. Nor did Bradish. He blazed.

"Either you are insane, sir, or I am."

"No, not that," the old man still with that smile replied. "But you are wretched and angry and I am wretched and sad. Let me tell you. During the funeral, my daughter's consciousness returned. But with that consciousness was another, perhaps the most pitiful and perhaps, too, the most horrible that a mortal can experience. She heard the service, smelt the tuberoses, knew where she was, knew that she was assisting at her own funeral and she could not speak, she could not stir. Catalepsy in paralysing the nerve centres had made her rigid. She was unable to move an eyelid. Perhaps you can imagine how she felt. I do not want to."

The smile had gone. Cheerlessly he continued.

"That night, as you have since discovered, Austen rescued her. But the rescue itself was entirely fortuitous. He had previously arranged that the coffin should not be closed and that arrangement, which had in view a last visit to her, was merely one of sentiment. But when he saw her, when he touched her, it seemed to him that she could not be dead and he brought her to me here and sent for Dr. Cally."

"Yes," I said, and I said it only for the sake of saying something. "Cally told me of a case of catalepsy. He did not tell me whose."

"We begged him not to. Meanwhile, after he had revived her, she said she saw the light. She——"

He broke off. Again the room was being invaded, this time by Austen, who nodded at us and seated himself on the trunk.

The old man glanced at him, turned, straightened and looked at Bradish, and what a look!

"Legally my daughter is dead. Nominally she is dying. A Sister of Mercy is with her now."

The face in the doorway, I thought.

With that look, he was adding: "Yesterday my daughter was received in the Catholic Church. Shortly, so far as the world is concerned, she will be buried from us all. Will you say, for your saying it may give her an added peace, will you say you relinquish her now before she begins the novitiate that ends with the veil?"

It was too suffocating. On the table at my elbow was a book, a breviary as I then discovered. But the lines were blurred. I could not see them. What I did see was that girl, the cited beauty, bidding farewell to love, to life; taking the black veil which is a white shroud. The picture was the most desolate I had ever seen. Yet, at once, beneath it, those words, which are so curiously radiant, shimmered like thin flames: "Behold, I make all things new!"

For her, yes; not in this life certainly, but in the next and probably in her lives to follow, all things broken would be made complete and she would find again things vanished.

But for Bradish, what could life hold except the tantalian torture of knowing her alive and yet dead to him? Again I wondered what sin, enigmatic, anterior, unknown, could have thrust him in those halls where expiation would walk ever at his side, sit with him when he sat and, in sleep, lie with him when sleep he could.

I turned to look at him. He was no longer where he had been. He had gone to the window where he stood, his back turned, looking out, but at what? What did he see there? It must have been something very penetrant for in a moment, when he turned, the spider that had been digging and tearing at his face had yellowed and the face itself was drawn and grey.

From the night, age may have reached and touched him. Yet also, another presence may have touched not him alone but his soul. So I thought. I was entirely in error. At the moment I did not realise that, only that he was saying something, saying it in a voice that rang.

"All right, I will, and I am glad of the chance."

What on earth did he mean, I wondered. In the interim I had lost the connection. I think the others had also. They were looking at him, as I was, in vague surmise.

But at once and to my disgust he became sententious.

"The world is very narrow."

Martin Tupper, I thought.

Immediately he retrieved himself. "Let the world be her convent."

Where did he get that? I asked myself. It is too good for him.

"I shall ask," he was adding, "that we be divorced."

"You will ask in vain then," I called at him. "Yesterday, as I understood from Mr. Chilton, Mrs. Bradish joined the Church. The Church does not recognise divorce."

Impatiently he gestured. "The Church can grant an annulment."

Austen sprang up, "Bradish——"

"We have been man and wife in name only," he uninterruptedly continued. "In the existing circumstances that might not be enough. But there are antecedent circumstances that will be."

"Bradish——" Austen again began.

"I married her under false pretences."

"Jim!" I protested.

"Not intentionally. I was unaware they were false. But the fact remains that she became my wife because of conditions which she was unaware had ceased to exist; that is, if they ever existed. If only for that I cannot do otherwise than release her. But there is another reason, a personal reason which, when Mr. Chilton entered here, I meant to state but which is superfluous now. As it is she can have the marriage annulled and return, not to death, but to life. I wish her joy."

"Bradish," Austen began anew and this time succeeded in saying it, "it is what I expected of you."

He might, I thought, have said less. But I thought, too, he could not have said more.

Bradish made no reply. He did not even look at him. He ignored him completely and that attitude, it seemed to me—and how erroneously!—was induced neither by jealousy nor callousness, but by that detachment which is part of the higher faith, and a line, less radiant than that other but more beautiful came back to me: "Near to renunciation, very near, dwelleth eternal peace."

"Now, I'll go," he abruptly added.

Mr. Chilton had stood up.

"Goodnight," he rather cavalierly concluded.

I had gone on to the trunk where I got his hat which I gave him and, Mr. Chilton preceding us, we went on to the door of this flat where the old man, as he opened it, bowed gravely.

In the car, Bradish turned to me.

"I will go to Spain with you next week."

"You will go as a grandee then. You have done a noble act."

He twisted his eyebrows at me. "Rubbish! When I came to in that ghastly room I determined to get at that girl if I broke down every door in the place."

"So you said."

"And I meant it. But it was not to carry her off. It was to tell her what I thought of her. I would have told Chilton, told him to tell her, told him when he came in the room, if he had not infuriated me at the very start."

He broke off and angrily continued, "When I keeled over, she never turned, she never stopped. For all of her I might have died there. Afterward, when I sat on that confounded sofa, I realised what must have been unconsciously germinating in me ever since that day in the Park when she said she was dead."

Surprisedly I looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I hate her. It was that that I wanted to say."

Well, after all, it was only natural. His torture had been excessive. The screws had been turned too tight. Besides, hatred is but love reversed.

Before I could say so, up again ran the Spanish flag.

"Yes," I said. "But you will have to loan me Peters for an hour."

That hour never came.

XXX

THE morrow was amazing as every morrow should be, but, in the instance, shuttled with a vast surprise which I, who had promenaded from the unexpected to the unawaited, had entirely omitted to foresee.

The surprise, which battened on me in a lift and multiplied itself elsewhere, began, after the manner of great events, in a commonplace fashion.

I was on my way to sign the picture contract at my publishers when I ran into Aly. As I had all that had occurred to tell her, I asked her to come with me and go afterward to the sorcerer's for his brews.

But though, good sort that she was, she consented, she did not see her dear Mr. Delmonico that day, while I beheld what is far rarer than any sorcerer, the complex phenomenon of dual personality.

Meanwhile, we had entered the junior partner's office. At the moment, he was elsewhere. But Miss Judson, his secretary, was there, and there also was a lanky young man, the portrait on foot of a greenhorn.

Then, as Aly and I waited, he addressed me, asking whether Broadway were uptown or down, and I was informing him when the junior member entered behind me with a "Ha!"

To which he added, "I see you know Bil Sayers."

The depth of the sanctuary is the place for idols. Invisible, secreted from vulgar eyes, there they should remain. The same may be true of authors. Yet, while I do not recall that I had evolved any particular image of Bil Sayers, I am sure I never imagined he would resemble a lout. I glanced at Aly. She also seemed perplexed. There goes her idol, too, I thought, when another incident occurred.

The junior member was old and stout. The senior member was young and slim. At that moment, his hat on, a cigar in his mouth, in he marched. In all the vanishing acts that prestidigitateurs perform, I have seen nothing more instantaneous than the manner in which that cigar disappeared. No dancing master

I ever heard of could have been quicker with his hat.

It was not for me of course, nor even for the lanky genius, that these immediate feats of *haute école* were performed. He was not looking at either of us. He was looking at Aly, and a proper tribute to her beauty it was.

But Miss Judson had come to me with the contracts and I went forward to a desk where, with the junior member facing me, I sat down.

"Our London house has particularly requested the autograph. It is for the Queen. I will have a *Dawn* in at once. Miss Judson!"

It was the senior member's voice and Ho! I thought, how tickled the Queen would be if she could see the lovely lad.

Then Aly's voice reached me, though occupied as I at once became with a tortuous clause of the contract, what she said I did not hear, and subconsciously I fancied she must be expressing—yet how far more graciously!—precisely what I thought.

Then I signed and the old junior member told me the cheque would be mailed that night.

The entire transaction had not taken more than a moment or so, but when I got up the young senior member had disappeared, as his cigar had, gone, I took it, for the book. In the window the genius stood on one foot, picking his teeth. I thought the attitude excessive and Aly must have thought so also. She was pink.

Nodding at the junior member, I passed out with her to the hall where, while waiting for the lift, I condoled.

"Sorry I saw him, aren't you?"

At that moment Miss Judson flew up.

"Shall I mail it to you, mem?"

Of all the gentle people I ever met, Aly Bolton is, I think, the gentlest. Yet instantly, for some undivinable reason, she assumed the expression of a tigress.

But a descending cage has stopped and into it we got, while Miss Judson called:

"It's for the Queen, mem, did they tell you?"

The steel door slammed. Down we sank.

"What the dickens do you care?" I muttered at her. Pink before, she was pinker then.

Nor could she have heard me, for as we reached the street she said and said it, too, with flashing eyes:

"It is outrageous. They promised no one should know."

Imbecile that I was, not until that moment had it dawned upon me. But in that moment, dawn came, dawn went. It was day. With its full light in my eyes, I blinked. Then I laughed.

"You're a sneaky little thing."

A vagabond cab was passing and I raised my stick.

But no. She did not want to drive. She did not want elixirs. As for the old junior member and the young senior, never would she put her foot in their shop again, while, as for the Queen, well, I was glad Broadway was not Pall Mall.

Never had I seen her angry before. Never have I seen her angry since. Vexed, yes; annoyed also, but angry, no, and I have regretted it. An exquisite girl in a tempest—what more appetising sight would you have?

"And I am not a sneaky little thing," she snapped at me. "And it is none of your business anyway."

I have found it politic to agree with anyone, no matter whom, about anything, no matter what, and I applied that myrrh and cassia.

"Of course it is none of my business. Moreover, decent people never hear anything that was not intended for them. It was sneaky of me to listen. But never mind. Your shameful secret is safe. No one shall know from me that you are the great Bil Sayers. I won't have the chance to tell. I am leaving this part of the planet."

She cocked the seashell of an ear. "What?"

In the tumult of the jostling street, it was not possible to go into it then, nor did I attempt to until we reached her flat where her "Oh! Oh's!" at my account of all that had happened continued until the account was ended when, clapping her hands, she cried:

"Those two will be happy ever after."

That, I think, set the tune.

What I said, what she said, what afterward occurred when the brave, foolish words, Forever, Never, were uttered by us both, all that has nothing to do with the present document except, that in enabling me to build an immediate castle in Spain, it withheld me from the Alhambra.

The fairy castle metamorphosed itself into a Riverside flat.

But that also is irrelevant. What alone imports is Bradish, who accepted my infection with such passivity that I could not but see he thought it better so and preferred to be alone.

That is years ago. For a while he wrote. He wrote from Avignon. He wrote from Vallombrosa. Then his letters ceased. During the war he fought for Italy and died for her in the Alps. There he was delivered from the sweep and loneliness of things. If the great renunciation did not bring him peace, he found it there. There at last he was free and forever from those halls hung with enigmas, tapestried with tears, before which the sphinx in flight gallops like a jackal.

THE END.

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THE PACE THAT KILLS

A Chronicle

EDGAR SALTUS

"*Pourquoi la mort? Dites, plutôt, pourquoi la vie?*"
—RABUSSON

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TO

JOHN A. RUTHERFURD

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PART I.

THE PACE THAT KILLS.

I.

"I wish you a happy New Year, sir."

It was the servant, green of livery, the yellow waistcoat slashed with black, bearing the coffee and fruit.

"Put it there, please," Roland answered. And then, in recognition of the salutation, he added, "Thanks: the same to you."

"H'm," he mused, as the man withdrew, "I ought to have tipped him, I suppose."

He leaned from the bed, poured some milk into a cup, and for a second nibbled at a slice of iced orange. Through the transom came a faint odor of home-made bread, and with it the rustle of a gown and a girl's clear laugh. The room itself was small. It was furnished in a fashion which was unsuggestive of an hotel, and yet did not resemble that of a private house. The curtain had been already drawn. Beyond was a lake, very blue in the sunlight, bulwarked by undulant hills. Below, on the road, a dogcart fronted by a groom was awaiting somebody's pleasure.

"It is late," he reflected, and raised a napkin to his lips. As he did so he noticed a package of letters which the napkin must have concealed. He took up the topmost and eyed it. It had been addressed to the Athenæum Club, Fifth Avenue; but the original direction was erased, and Tuxedo Park inserted in its stead. On the upper left-hand corner the impress of a firm of tailors shone in blue. Opposite was the engraving of a young woman supported by 2½*d.* He put it down again and glanced at the others. The superscriptions were characterless enough; each bore a foreign stamp, and to one as practised as was he, each bore the token of the dun.

"If they keep on bothering me like this," he muttered, "I shall certainly place the matter in the hands of my attorney." And thereat, with the air of a man who had said something insultingly original, he laughed aloud, swallowed some coffee, and dashed his head in the pillow. In and out of the corners of his mouth a smile still played; but presently his fancy must have veered, for the muscles of his lips compressed, and as he lay there, the arms clasped behind the head, the pink silk of his sleeves framing and tinting his face, and in the eyes the expression of one prepared to meet Fate and outwit it, a possible observer who could have chanced that way would have sat himself down to study and risen up perplexed.

Anyone who was at Columbia ten years ago will remember Roland Mistrial,—Roland Mistrial 3d, if you please,—and will recall the wave of bewilderment which swept the campus when that young gentleman, on the eve of graduation, popularity on one side and honors on the other, suddenly, without so much as a p. p. c., left everything where it was and betook himself to other shores. The flight was indeed erratic, and numerous were the rumors which it excited; but Commencement was at hand, other issues were to be considered, bewilderment subsided as bewilderment ever does, the college dispersed, and when it assembled again the Mistrial mystery, though unelucidated, was practically forgot.

In the neighborhood of Washington Square, however, on the northwest corner of Tenth Street and Fifth Avenue to be exact, there were others whose memories were more retentive. Among them was Roland's grandfather, himself a graduate, founder of the Mistrial fellowship, and judge of the appellate court. And there was Roland's father, a graduate too, a gentleman widely respected, all the more so perhaps because he had run for the governorship and lost it. And again there was Roland's aunt, a maiden lady of whom it is recorded that each day of her life she got down on her knees and thanked God he had made her a Mistrial. In addition to these, there were, scattered along the Hudson, certain maternal relatives—the Algaroths, the Baxters, and the Swifts; Bishop Algaroth in particular, who possessed such indomitable vigor that when at the good old age of threescore and ten he decided to depart this life, the impression prevailed that he had died very young for him. None of these people readily forgot. They were a proud family and an influential one—influential not merely in the social sense, but influential in political, legal, in church and university circles as well; a fact which may have had weight with the Faculty when it was called upon to deal with Roland Mistrial 3d. But be that as it may, the cause of the young man's disappearance was never officially given. Among the rumors which it created was one to the effect that his health was affected; in another his mind was implicated; and in a third it was his heart. Yet as not one of these rumors had enough evidential value behind it to concoct an anonymous letter on, they were suffered to go their way undetained, very much as Roland had already gone his own.

That way led him straight to the Golden Gate and out of it to Japan. Before he reached Yeddo his grandfather left the planet and a round sum of money behind. Of that round sum the grandson came in for a portion. It was not fabulous in dimensions, but in the East money goes far. In this case it might have gone on indefinitely had not the beneficiary seen fit to abandon the languors of the Orient for the breezier atmosphere of the west. The Riviera has charms of its own. So, too, have Paris and Vienna. Roland enjoyed them to the best of his ability. He even found London attractive, and became acclimated in Pall Mall. In the latter region he learned one day that his share of the round sum had departed and his father as well. The conjunction of these incidents was of such a character that he at once took ship for New York.

It was not that he was impatient to revisit the misgoverned city which he had deserted ten years before. He had left it willingly enough, and he had seldom regretted it since. The pins and needles on which he sat were those of another make. He was uninformed of the disposition of his father's property, and he felt that, were not every penny of it bequeathed to him, he would be in a tight box indeed.

He was at that time just entering his thirtieth year—that age in which a man who has led a certain life begins to be particular about the quality of his red pepper, and anxious too that the supply of it shall not tarry. Though meagre of late, the supply had been sufficient. But at present the palate was a trifle impaired. Where a ten-pound note had sufficed for its excitement, a hundred now were none too strong. Roland Mistrial—3d no longer—wanted money, and he wanted plenty of it. He had exact ideas as to its usefulness, and none at all regarding its manufacture. He held, as many have done and will continue to do, that the royal road to it leads through a testament; and it was in view of the opening vistas which that road displayed that he set sail for New York.

And now, six weeks later, on this fair noonday of a newer year, as he lay outstretched in bed, you would have likened him to one well qualified to keep a mother awake and bring her daughter dreams. Our canons of beauty may be relative, but, such as they are, his features accorded with them—disquietingly even; for they conveyed the irritating charm of things we have hoped for, striven for, failed to get, and then renounced with thanksgiving. They made you anxious about their possessor, and fearful too lest the one dearly-beloved might chance to see them, and so be subjugated by their spell. They were features that represented good stock, good breeding, good taste, good looks—every form of goodness, in fact, save, it may be, the proper one. But the possible lack of that particular characteristic was a matter over which hesitation well might be. We have all of us a trick of flattering ourselves with the fancy that, however obtuse our neighbor is, we at least are gifted with the insight of a detective—a faculty so rare and enviable that the blunders we make must be committed with a view to its concealment; yet, despite presumable shrewdness, now and then a face will appear that eludes cataloguing, and leaves the observer perplexed. Roland Mistrial's was one of these.

And now, as the pink silk of his shirt-sleeves tinted it, the expression altered, and behind his contracted brows hurried processions of shifting scenes. There was that initial catastrophe which awaited him almost on the wharf—the discovery that his father had left him nothing, and that for no other reason in the world than because he had nothing whatever to leave—nothing, in fact, save the hereditary decoration of and right of enrolment in the Society of the Cincinnati, the which, handed down since Washingtonian days from one Mistrial to another, he held, as his forefathers had before him, in trust for the Mistrials to be.

No, he could not have disposed of that, even had he so desired; but everything else, the house on Tenth Street,—built originally for a country-seat, in times when the Astor House was considered rather far up-town,—bonds, scrip, and stocks, disappeared as utterly as had they never been; for Roland's father, stricken with that form of dementia which, to the complete discouragement of virtue, battens on men that have led the chastest lives, had, at that age in which the typical rake is forced to haul his standard down, surrendered himself to senile debauchery, and in the lap of a female of uncertain attractions—of whose mere existence no one had been previously aware—placed title-deeds and certificates of stock. In a case such as this the appeal of the rightful heir is listened to with such patience that judge and jury too have been known to pass away and leave the tale unended. And Roland, when the earliest dismay had in a measure subsided, saw himself closeted with lawyers who offered modicums of hope in return for proportionate fees. Then came a run up the Hudson, the welcomeless greeting which waited him there, and the enervating imbecility of his great aunt, whose fingers, mummified by gout, were tenacious enough on the strings of her purse. That episode flitted by, leaving on memory's camera only the degrading tableau of coin burrowed for and unobtained. And through it all filtered torturesome uncertainties, the knowledge of his entire inability to make money, the sense of strength misspent, the perplexities that declined to take themselves away, forebodings of the morrow, nay of the day even as well, the unbanishable dread of want.

But that for the moment had gone. He turned on his elbow and glanced over at a card-case which lay among the silver-backed brushes beyond, and at once the shock he had resummoned fled. Ah, yes! it had gone indeed, but at the moment it had been appalling enough. The morrow at least was secure; and as he pondered over its possibilities they faded before certain episodes of the previous day—that chance encounter with Alphabet Jones, who had insisted he should pack a valise and go down with Trement Yarde and himself to Tuxedo; and at once the incidents succeeding the arrival paraded through his thoughts. There had been the late dinner to begin with; then the dance; the girl to whom some one had presented him, and with whom he had sat it out; the escape of the year, the health that was drunk to the new one, and afterwards the green baize in the card-room; the bank which Trement Yarde had held, and finally the successful operation that followed, and which consisted in cutting that cherub's throat to the tune of three thousand dollars. It was all there now in the card-case ; and though, as sums of money go, it was hardly quotable, yet in the abstract, forethought and economy aiding, it represented several months of horizons solid and real. The day was secure ; as for the future, who knew what it might contain ? A grave perhaps, and in it his aunt.

II.

"If I had been killed in a duel I couldn't be better." It was Jones the novelist describing the state of his health. "But how is my friend and brother in virtue?"

"Utterly ramollescent," Roland answered, confidingly. "What the French call *gaga*."

The mid-day meal was in progress, and the two men, seated opposite each other, were dividing a Demidorf salad. They had been schoolmates at Concord, and despite the fact that until the day before they had not met for a decennium, the happy-go-lucky intimacy of earlier days had eluded Time and still survived. Throughout the glass-enclosed piazza other people were lunching, and every now and then Jones, catching a wandering eye, would bend forward a little and smile. Though it was but the first of the year, the weather resembled that of May. One huge casement was wide open. There was sunlight everywhere, flowers too, and beyond you could see the sky, a dome of opal and sapphire blent.

"Well," Jones replied, "I can't say you have altered much. But then who does? You remember, don't you"—and Jones ran on with some anecdote of earlier days.

But Roland had ceased to listen. It was very pleasant here, he told himself. There was a freedom about it that the English country-house, however charming, lacked. There was no one to suggest things for you to do, there was no host or hostess to exact attention, and the women were prettier, better dressed, less conventional, and yet more assured in manner than any that he had encountered for years. The men, too, were a good lot; and given one or two more little surprises, such as he had found in the card-room, he felt willing to linger on indefinitely—a week at least, a month if the fare held out. His eyes roamed through the glitter of the room.

Presently, at a neighboring table, he noticed the girl with whom he had seen the old year depart: she was nodding to him; and Roland, with that courtesy that betokens the foreigner a mile away, rose from his seat as he bowed in return.

Jones, whom little escaped, glanced over his shoulder. "By the way, are you on this side for good?" he asked; and Roland answering with the vague shrug the undetermined give, he hastened to add—"or for bad?"

"That depends. I ran over to settle my father's estate, but they seem to have settled it for me. After all, this is no place for a pauper, is it?"

"The wolf's at the door, is he?"

Roland laughed shortly. "At the door? Good Lord! I wish he were! He's in the room."

"There, dear boy, never mind. Wait till spring comes and marry an heiress. There are so many hereabouts that we use them for export purposes. They are a glut in the market. There's a fair specimen. Ever meet her before?"

"Meet whom?"

"That girl you just bowed to. They call her father Honest Paul. Oh, if you ask me why, I can't tell. It's a nickname, like another. It may be because he says Amen so loud in church. A number of people have made him trustee, but whether on that account or not they never told. However, he's a big man, owns a mile or two up there near the Riverside. I should rate him at not a penny less than ten million."

"What did you say his name was?"

"Dunellen—the Hon. Paul Dunellen. At one time—"

Jones rambled on, and again Roland had ceased to listen. But it was not the present now that claimed him. At the mention of the plutocrat something from the past came back and called him there—a thing so shadowy that, when he turned to interrogate, it eluded him and disappeared.

Then at once, without conscious effort, an episode which he had long since put from him arose and detained his thought. But what on earth, he wondered, had the name of Dunellen to do with that? And for the moment dumbly perplexed, yet outwardly attentive, he puzzled over the connection and tried to find the link; yet that too was elusive: the name seemed to lose its suggestiveness, and presently it sank behind the episode it had evoked.

"Of course," Jones was saying, in reference, evidently, to what had gone before—"of course as millionaires go he is not first chop. Jerolomon could match him head or tail for all he has, and never miss it if he lost. Ten million, though, is a tidy sum—just enough to entertain on. A penny less and you are pinched. Why, you would be surprised—"

"Has he any other children?"

"Who? Dunellen? None that he has acknowledged."

"Then his daughter will come in for it all."

"That's what I said. When she does, she will probably hand it over to some man who wont know how to spend it. She's got a cousin—what's that beggar's name? However, he's a physician, makes a specialty of nervous diseases, I believe; good enough fellow in his way, but an everlasting bore—the sort of man you would avoid in a club, and trust your sister to. What the deuce *is* his name?"

"Well, what of him?"

"Ah, yes. I fancy he wants to get married, and when he does, to entertain. He is very devoted."

"But nowadays, barring royalty, no one ever marries a cousin."

"Dear boy, you forget; it isn't every cousin that has ten million. When she has, the attempt is invariable." And Jones accentuated his remark with a nod. "Now," he continued, "what do you say to a look at the library? They have a superb edition of Kirschwasser in there, and a full set of the works of Chartreuse."

The novelist had arisen; he was leaving the room, and Roland was about to follow him, when he noticed that Miss Dunellen was preparing to leave it too. Before she reached the hall he was at her side.

There is this about the New York girl—her beauty is often bewildering, yet unless a husband catch her in the nick of time the bewilderment of that beauty fades. At sixteen Justine Dunellen had been enchanting, at twenty-three she was plain. Her face still retained its oval, but from it something had evaporated and gone. Her mouth, too, had altered. In place of the volatile brilliance of earlier years, it was drawn a little; it seemed resolute, and it also seemed subdued. But one feature had not changed: her eyes, which were of the color of snuff, enchanted still. They were large and clear, and when you looked in them you saw such possibilities of tenderness and sincerity that the escape of the transient was unregretted; you forgot the girl that had been, and loved the woman that was.

And lovable she was indeed. The world is filled with charming people whom, parenthetically, many of us never meet; yet, however scant our list may be, there are moments when from Memory's gardens a vision issues we would fain detain. Who is there to whom that vision has not come? Nay, who is there that has not intercepted it, and, to the heart's perdition perhaps, suffered it to retreat? If there be any to whom such apparitions are unvouchsafed, let him evoke that woman whom he would like his sister to resemble and his wife to be. Then, if his intuitions are acute, there will appear before him one who has turned sympathy into a garment and taken refinement for a wreath; a woman just yet debonair, thoughtful of others, true to herself; a woman whose speech can weary no more than can a star, whose mind is clean as wholesome fruit, whose laugh is infrequent, and whose voice consoles; a woman who makes the boor chivalrous, and the chivalrous bend the knee. Such an one did Justine Dunellen seem. In person she was tall, slender, willowy of movement, with just that shrinking graciousness that the old masters gave to certain figures which they wished to represent as floating off the canvas into space.

And now, as Roland joined her, she smiled and greeted him. With her was a lady to whom she turned:

"Mrs. Metuchen, this is Mr. Mistrial."

And Roland found himself bowing to a little old woman elaborately dressed. She was, he presently discovered, a featherhead person, who gave herself the airs of a *princesse en couches.* But though not the rose, at least she dwelt near by. Her husband was Mr. Dunellen's partner; and to Justine, particularly since the death of her mother, she had become what the Germans, who have many a neat expression, term a *Wahlverwandtschaft*—a relation not of blood, but of choice. She was feather headed, but she was a lady; she was absurd, but she was lovable; and by Justine she was evidently beloved.

Roland got her a seat, found a footstool for her, and pleased her very much by the interest which he displayed in her family tree.

"I knew all your people," she announced at last. And when she did so, her manner was so gracious that Roland felt the hour had not been thrown away.

During the rest of the day he managed to be frequently in her vicinity. The better part of the morrow he succeeded in sharing with Justine. And in the evening, when the latter bade him good-night, it occurred to him that if what Jones had said in regard to the cousin was true, then was the cousin losing ground.

The next morning Mrs. Metuchen and her charge returned to town. Roland followed in a later train. As he crossed the ferry he told himself he had much to do; and on reaching New York he picked up his valise with the air of one who has no time to lose.

III.

In a city like New York it is not an easy task, nor is it always a profitable one, to besiege a young person that is fortressed in her father's house. And when the house has a cousin for sentinel, and that cousin is jealous, the difficulty is increased. But, time and tact aiding, what obstacle may not be removed?

Roland understood all this very thoroughly, and on the day succeeding his return from Tuxedo he examined the directory, strolled into Wall Street, and there, at the shingle of Dunellen, Metuchen, & Such, sent in a card to the senior member of the firm.

The Hon. Paul Dunellen—Honest Paul, to the world in which he moved—was a man who in his prime must have been of glad and gallant appearance; but latterly he had shrunk: his back had bent almost into a hump, he held his head lower than his shoulders, but with uplifted chin—a habit which gave him the appearance of being constantly occupied in peering at something which he could not quite discern, an appearance that was heightened by his eyes, which were restless, and by his brows, which were tormented and bushy. He had an ample mouth: when he spoke, the furrows in his cheeks moved with it. His nose was prominent; all his features, even to his ears, were larger than the average mould. When Roland was admitted to the room in which he sat, the first impression which he got from him was that of massiveness in decay.

"Mr. Mistrial, I am glad to see you. I knew your father, and I had the honor of knowing your grandfather as well. Will you not take a seat?" The old man had half risen, and in this greeting made manifest something of that courtesy which we are learning to forget.

"You are very kind," Roland answered.

"It is because of my father that I venture to call. If I interrupt you, though"—and Roland, apparently hesitant, occupied himself in a study of his host—"if I do," he continued, "I beg you will allow me to come again."

To this suggestion Mr. Dunellen refused to listen ; but during the moments that followed, as Roland succinctly one after the other enumerated the facts in the case of his lost inheritance, the lawyer did listen ; and he listened, moreover, with that air of concentrated attention which is the surest encouragement to him who has aught to say. And when Roland had completed the tale of his grievance, he nodded, and stroked his chin.

"The matter is perfectly clear," he announced, "though I can't say as much for the law. Undue influence is evident. The trouble will be to invalidate a gift made during the lifetime of the donor ; but—" And Mr. Dunellen made a gesture as who should say, It is for that that courts were established. "Yet, tell me, why is it that you have done nothing about it before?"

To this Roland made no immediate reply. He lowered his eyes. "Paralysis is written in your face," he mused. Then aloud and rather sadly: "The fairest patrimony is an honored name," he said. "It is for me to guard my father's reputation. It is only recently, stress of circumstances aiding, I have thought that without publicity some compromise might possibly be effected." He looked up again, and as he looked he assured himself that the old man would not outlast the year.

"Well, Mr. Mistrial, you must let me quote the speech a lord made to a commoner, 'You are not a noble, sir, but you are worthy of being one.'" And Mr. Dunellen reaching out caught Roland's hand and shook it in his own. "I enter thoroughly into your delicacy the more readily because I do not encounter it every day—no, nor every month. It does me good—on my word it does. Now, if a compromise can, as you suggest, be effected, and you care to leave the matter in my hands, I will do my best to serve you. It may take some little time, we must seem neither zealous nor impatient, and meanwhile — h'm — I understood you to say something about your circumstances. Now if I can be of any—"

This offer Roland interrupted. "You are truly very kind, sir," he broke in, "and I thank you with all my heart. All the more so even because I must refuse. I have been badly brought up, I know; you see, I never expected that it would be necessary for me to earn my own living; yet if it is, I cannot begin too soon: but what would the end be if I began by borrowing money?"

As Roland delivered this fine speech he was the image of Honesty arrayed in a Piccadilly coat. He rose from his seat. "I am detaining you, I am sure. Let me get the papers together and bring them to you to-morrow."

"Do so, by all means," Mr. Dunellen answered, rising too. "Do so, by all means. But wait: to-morrow I may be absent. Could you not send them to my house this evening, or better still, bring them yourself? It would give me pleasure to have my daughter meet a man who is the moral portrait of his grandfather."

"Your daughter!" Roland exclaimed. "It is not possible that she is the Miss Dunellen whom I saw the other day at Tuxedo."

"With Mrs. Metuchen: Why, of course it is." And the lawyer looked as surprised as his client. "This is indeed a coincidence. But you will come, will you not?"

"I shall consider it a privilege to do so," Roland, with a charming affectation of modesty, replied; and presently, when he found himself in the street again, he saw, stretching out into beckoning vistas, a high-road paved with promises of prompt success.

And that evening, when the papers had been delivered, and Mr. Dunellen, leaving the guest to his daughter's care, had gone with them to his study, Roland could not help but feel that on that high-road his footing was assured; for, on entering the drawing-room, Justine had greeted him as one awaited and welcome, and now that her father had gone she motioned him to a seat at her side.

"Tell me," she said, "what is it you do to people? There is Mrs. Metuchen, who pretends to abominate young men, and openly admires you. To-day you captured my father; by to-morrow you will be friends with Guy."

"With Guy?" Mechanically Roland repeated the phrase. Then at once into the very core of memory entered the lancinating pang of a nerve exposed. During the second that followed, in that tumult of visions that visits him who awakes from a swoon, there came to him the effort made in Tuxedo to recall in what manner the name of Dunellen was familiar to his ears; but that instantly departed, and in its stead came a face one blur of tears, and behind it a stripling livid with hate. Could that be Guy? If it were, then indeed would the high-road narrow into an alley, with a dead wall at the end. Yet of the inward distress he gave no outward sign. About his thin lips a smile still played, and as he repeated the phrase he looked, as he always did, confident and self-possessed.

"Yes, I am sure you will like each other," the girl answered; "all the more so perhaps because no two people could be less alike. Guy, you see, is—"

But whatever description she may have intended to give remained unexpressed. A portière had been drawn, and some one was entering the room. Roland, whose back was toward the door, turned obliquely and looked.

"Why, there he is!" he heard Justine exclaim; and in the man that stood there he saw the stripling he had just evoked. Into the palms of his hands a moisture came, yet as Justine proceeded with some form of introduction he rose to his feet. "So you are the cousin," he mused; and then, with a bow in which he put the completest indifference, he resumed his seat.

"We were just talking of you," Justine continued. "Why didn't you come in last night?"

"It is snowing," the cousin remarked, inconsequently, and sat himself down.

"Dr. Thorold, you know;" and Justine, turning to Mistrial, began to relate one of those little anecdotes which are serviceable when conversation drags.

As she ran on, Roland, apparently attentive, marked that one of Thorold's feet was moving uneasily, and divined rather than saw that the fingers of his hand were clinched. "He is working himself up," he reflected. "Well, let him; it will make it the easier for me." And as he told himself this he turned on Thorold a glance which he was prepared to instantly divert. But the physician was not looking; he sat bolt-upright, his eyes lowered, and about his mouth and forehead the creases of a scowl.

Dr. Thorold was of that class of man that women always like and never adore. He was thoughtful of others, and considerate. Physically he was well-favored, and pleasant to the eye. He was sometimes dull, but rarely selfish; by taste and training he was a scholar—gifted at that; and yet through some accident of nature he lacked that one fibre which differentiates the hero from the herd. In the way we live to-day the need of heroes is so slight that the absence of that fibre is of no moment at all—a circumstance which may account for the fact that Justine admired him very much, trusted him entirely, and had she been his sister instead of his cousin could not have appreciated him more.

And now, as Roland eyed him for one

moment, through some of those indetectable currents that bring trivialities to the mind that is most deeply engrossed he noticed that though the physician was in dress the shoes he wore were not veneered. Then at once he entered into a perfect understanding of the circumstances in which he was placed. Though he lost the game even as the cards were being dealt, at least he would lose it well. "I'll teach him a lesson," he decided; and presently, as Justine ceased speaking, he assumed his gayest air.

"Yes, yes," he exclaimed, and gave a twist to his light mustache. He had caught her ultimate words, and with them a cue.

"Yes, I remember in Nepal—"

And thereupon he carried his listener through a series of scenes and adventures which he made graphic by sheer dexterity in the use of words. His speech, colored and fluent, was of exactly that order which must be heard, not read. It was his intonation which gave it its charm; the manner in which he eluded a detail that might have wearied; the expression his face took on at the situations which he saw before describing, and which he made his auditor expect; and also the surety of his skill in transition—the art with which he would pass from one idea to another, connect them both with a gesture, and complete the subject with a smile. The *raconteur* is usually a bore. When he is not, he is a wizard. And as Roland passed from one peak of the Himalayas to another, over one of the two that listened he exerted a palpable spell. At last, the end of his tether reached, he turned to the cousin, and, without a hesitation intervening, asked of him, as though the question were one of really personal interest, "Dr. Thorold, have you ever been in the East?"

Thorold, thrown off his guard, glared for an instant, the scowl still manifest; then he stood up. "No, sir; I have not," he answered; and each of the monosyllables of his reply he seemed to propel with tongue and teeth. "Good-night, Justine." And with a nod that was rather small for two to divide, took himself from the room.

He reached the portière before Justine fully grasped the discourtesy of his conduct. She stared after him wonderingly, her lips half parted, her clear eyes dilated and amazed, the color mounted to her cheeks, and she made as though to leave her seat.

But this Roland thought it wise to prevent. "Miss Dunellen," he murmured, "I am afraid Dr. Thorold was bored. It is my fault. I had no right—"

"Bored! How could he have been? I am sure I don't see—"

"Yes, you do, my dear," thought Roland; "you think he was jealous, and you are wrong; but it is good for us that you should." And in memory of the little compliment her speech had unintentionally conveyed he gave another twist to his mustache.

The outer door closed with a jar that reached him where he sat. "Thank God!" he muttered; and divining that if he now went away the girl would regret his departure, after another word or two, and despite the protestation of her manner, he bade her good-night.

It is one of the charms of our lovely climate that the temperature can fall twenty degrees in as many minutes. When Roland entered the Dunellen house he left spring in the street; when he came out again there was snow. Across the way a lamp flickered, beneath it a man was standing, from beyond came a faint noise of passing wheels, but the chance of rescue by cab or hansom was too remote for anyone but a foreigner to entertain. Roland had omitted to provide himself with any protection against a storm, yet that omission affected him but little. He had too many things to think of to be anxious about his hat; and, his hands in his pocket, his head lowered, he descended the steps, prepared to let the snow do its worst.

As he reached the pavement the man at the lamp-post crossed the street.

"Mistrial," he called, for Roland was hurrying on—"Mistrial, I want a word with you."

In a moment he was at his side, and simultaneously Roland recognized the cousin. He was buttoned up in a loose coat faced with fur, and over his head he held an umbrella. He seemed a little out of breath.

"If," he began at once, "if I hear that you ever presume to so much as speak to Miss Dunellen again, I will break every bone in your body."

The voice in which he made this threat was gruff and aggressive. As he delivered it, he closed his umbrella and swung it like a club.

"*A nous deux, maintenant*," mused Roland.

"And not only that—if you ever dare to enter that house again I will expose you."

"Oh, will you, though?" answered Roland. The tone he assumed was affectedly civil. "Well now, my fat friend, let me tell you this: I intend to enter that house, as you call it, to-morrow at precisely five o'clock. Let me pick you up on the way, and we can go together."

"Roland Mistrial, as sure as there is a God in heaven I will have you in the Tombs."

"See here, put up your umbrella. You are not in a condition to expose yourself—let alone anyone else. You are daft, Thorold—that is what is the matter with you. If you persist in chattering Tombs at me in a snow-storm I will answer Bloomingdale to you. You frightened me once, I admit; but I am ten years older now, and ten years less easily scared. Besides, what drivel you talk! You haven't that much to go on."

As Roland spoke his accent changed

from affected suavity to open scorn. "Now stop your bluster," he continued, "and listen to me. Because you happen to find me in there, you think I have intentions on the heiress—"

"It's a lie! She—"

"There, don't be abusive. I know you want her for yourself, and I hope you get her. But please don't think that I mean to stand in your way."

"I should say not."

"In the first place, I went there on business."

"What business, I would like to know?"

"So you shall. I took some papers for Mr. Dunellen to examine—papers relative to my father's estate. To-morrow I return to learn his opinion. Next week I go abroad again. When I leave I promise you shall find your cousin still heart-whole and fancy-free."

As Roland delivered this little stab he paused a moment to note the effect. But apparently it had passed unnoticed—Thorold seemingly was engrossed in the statements that preceded it. The scowl was still on his face, but it was a scowl into which perplexity had entered, and which in entering had modified the aggressiveness that had first been there. At the moment his eyes wandered, and Roland, who was watching him, felt that he had scored a point.

"You say you are going abroad?" he said, at last.

"Yes; I have to join my wife."

At this announcement Thorold looked up at him and then down at the umbrella. Presently, with an abrupt gesture, he unfurled it and raised it above his head. As he did so, Roland smiled. For that night at least the danger had gone. Of the morrow, however, he was unassured.

"Suppose we walk along," he said, encouragingly; and before Thorold knew it, he was sharing that umbrella with his foe. "Yes," he continued, "my poor father left his affairs in a muddle, but Mr. Dunellen says he thinks he can straighten them out. You can understand that if any inkling of this thing were to reach him he would return the papers at once. You can understand that, can't you? After all, you must know that I have suffered."

"Suffered!" Thorold cried. "What's that to me? It made my mother insane."

"God knows I nearly lost my reason too. I can understand how you feel toward me: it is only what I deserve. Yet though you cannot forget, at least it can do you no good to rake this matter up."

"It is because of—" and for a second the cousin halted in his speech.

"*Voilà!*" mused Roland. "*Je te vois venir.*"

"However, if you are going abroad—"

"Most certainly I am. I never expect to see Miss Dunellen again."

"In that case I will say nothing."

They had reached Fifth Avenue, and for a moment both loitered on the curb. Thorold seemed to have something to add, but he must have had difficulty in expressing it, for he nodded as though to reiterate the promise.

"I can rely upon you then, can I?" Roland asked.

"Keep out of my way, sir, and I will try, as I have tried, to forget."

A 'bus was passing, he hailed it, and disappeared.

Roland watched the conveyance, and shook the snow-flakes from his coat. "Try, and be damned," he muttered. "I haven't done with you yet."

The disdain of a revenge at hand is accounted the uniquest possible vengeance. And it is quite possible that had Roland's monetary affairs been in a better condition, on a sound and solid basis, let us say, he would willingly have put that paradox into action. But on leaving Tuxedo he happened to be extremely hungry—hungry, first and foremost, for the possession of that wealth which in this admirably conducted country of ours lifts a man above the law, and, an adroit combination of scoundrelism and incompetence aiding, sometimes lands him high among the executives of state. By political ambition, however, it is only just to say he was uninspired. In certain assemblies he had taken the trouble to assert that our government is one at which Abyssinia might sneer, but the rôle of reformer was not one which he had any inclination to attempt. Several of his progenitors figured, and prominently too, in abridgments of history; and, if posterity were not satisfied with that, he had a very clear idea as to what posterity might do. In so far as he was personally concerned, the prominence alluded to was a thing which he accepted as a matter of course: it was an integral part of himself; he would have missed it as he would have missed a leg or the point of his nose; but otherwise it left his pulse unstirred. No, his hunger was not for preferment or place. It was for the ten million which the Hon. Paul Dunellen had gathered together, and which the laws of gravitation would prevent him from carrying away when he died. That was the nature of Roland Mistrial's hunger, and as incidental thereto was the thirst to adjust an outstanding account.

Whatever the nature of that account may have been, in a more ordinary case it might have become outlawed through sheer lapse of time. But during that lapse of time Roland had been in exile because of it; and though even now he might have been willing to let it drift back into the past where it belonged, yet when the representative of it not only loomed between him and the millions, but was even attempting to gather them in for himself, the possibility of retaliation was too complete to suffer disdain. The injury, it is true, was one of his own doing. But, curiously enough, when a man injures another the more wanton that injury is the less it incites to repentance. In certain dispositions it becomes a source of malignant hate. Deserve a man's gratitude, and he may forgive you; but let him do you a wrong, and you have an enemy for life. Such is the human heart—or such at least was Roland Mistrial's.

And now, as the conveyance rumbled off into the night, he shook the snow-flakes from his coat.

"Try, and be damned," he repeated; "I haven't done with you yet."

IV.

To the New Yorker March is the vilest month of all the year. In the South it is usually serene. Mrs. Metuchen, who gave herself the airs of an invalid, and who possessed the invalid's dislike of vile weather, was aware of this ; and while the first false promises of February were being protested she succeeded in persuading Miss Dunellen to accompany her out of snow-drifts into the sun. It was Aiken that she chose as refuge ; and when the two ladies arrived there they felt satisfied that their choice had been a proper one—a satisfaction which they did not share alone, for a few days after their arrival Roland Mistrial arrived there too.

During the intervening weeks he had seemed idle ; but it is the thinker's characteristic to appear unoccupied when he is most busily engaged, and Roland, outwardly inactive, had in reality made the most of his time.

On the morning succeeding the encounter with Thorold something kept coming and whispering that he had undertaken a task which was beyond his strength. To many of us night is apt to be more confident than are the earlier hours of the day, and the courage which Roland had exhibited spent itself and went. It is hard to feel the flutter of a bird beneath one's fingers, and, just when the fingers tighten, to discover that the bird is no longer there. Such a thing is disappointing, and the peculiarity of a disappointment consists in this—the victim of it is apt to question the validity of his own intuitions. Thus far—up to the looming of Thorold—everything had been in Roland's favor. Without appreciable effort he had achieved the impossible. In three days he had run an heiress to earth, gained her father's liking, captivated her chaperon, and, at the moment when the air was sentient with success, the highway on which he strode became suddenly tortuous and obscure. Do what he might he could not discern so much as a sign-post; and as in perplexity he twirled his thumbs, little by little he understood that he must either turn back and hunt another quarry, or stand where he was and wait. Another step on that narrowing road and he might tumble into a gully. Did he keep his word with Thorold he felt sure that Thorold would keep his word with him. But did he break it, and Thorold learn he had done so, several consequences were certain to ensue, and among them he could hear from where he stood the bang with which Mr. Dunellen's door would close. The only plank which drifted his way threatened to break into bits. He needed no one to tell him that Justine was not a girl to receive him or anyone else in the dark; and even fortune favoring, if in chance meetings he were able to fan her spark of interest for him into flame, those chance meetings would be mentioned by her to whomsoever they might concern. No, that plank was rotten ; and yet in considering it, and in considering too the possibilities to which, were it a trifle stronger, it might serve as bridge, he passed that morning, a number of subsequent mornings. A month elapsed, and still he eyed that plank.

Meanwhile he had seen Miss Dunellen but once. She happened to be driving up the Avenue, but he had passed her unobserved. Then the weather became abominable, and he knew it was useless to look for her in the Park ; and once he had visited her father's office and learned again, what he already knew, that in regard to the lost estate, eternity aiding, something might be recovered, but that the chances were vague as was it. And so February came and found his hunger unappeased. The alternate course which had suggested itself came back, and he determined to turn and hunt another quarry. During his sojourn abroad he had generally managed a team of three. There was the gerundive, as he termed the hindmost—the woman he was about to leave; there was another into whose graces he had entered; and there was a third in training for future use. This custom he had found most serviceable. Whatever might happen in less regulated establishments, his stable was full. And that custom, which had stood him in good stead abroad, had nothing in it to prevent adoption here. Indeed, he told himself it was because of his negligence in that particular that he found himself where he was. Instead of centring his attention on Miss Dunellen, it would have been far better to wander in and out of the glittering precincts of Fifth Avenue, and see what else he could find. After all, there was nothing like being properly provisioned. If one comestible ran short, there should be another to take its place. Moreover, if, as Jones had intimated, there were heiresses enough for export purposes, there must surely be enough to supply the home demand.

The alternate course alluded to he had therefore determined to adopt, when an incident occurred which materially altered his plans. One particularly detestable morning he read in public print that Mrs. Metuchen and Miss Dunellen were numbered among the visitors to South Carolina, and thereupon he proceeded to pack his valise. A few days later he was in Aiken, and on the forenoon of the third day succeeding his arrival, as he strolled down the verandah of the Mountain Glen Hotel, he felt at peace with the world and with himself.

It was a superb morning, half summer, half spring. In the distance a forest stretched indefinitely and lost itself in the haze of the horizon beyond. The sky was tenderly blue, and, beneath, a lawn green as the baize on a roulette-table was circled by a bright-red road. He had breakfasted infamously on food that might have been cooked by a butcher to whom breakfast is an odious thing. Yet its iniquity he accepted as a matter of course. He knew, as we all do, that for bad food, bad service, and for futility of complaint our country hotels are unrivalled, even in Spain. He was there not to enjoy himself, still less for the pleasures a blue ribbon can cause: he was there to fan into flame the interest which Miss Dunellen had exhibited; and as he strolled down the verandah, a crop under his arm, his trousers strapped, he had no intention of quarrelling with the fare. Quite a number of people were basking in the sunlight, and, as he passed, some of them turned and looked; for at Aiken men that have more than one lung are in demand, and, when Roland registered his historic name, to the unattached females a little flutter of anticipation came.

But Roland was not in search of flirtations: he moved by one group into another until he reached a corner of the verandah in which Mrs. Metuchen and Miss Dunellen sat. Merely by the expression on the faces of those whom he greeted it was patent to the others that the trio were on familiar terms; and when presently he accompanied Miss Dunellen off the verandah, aided her to mount a horse that waited there, mounted another himself, and cantered off with the girl, the unattached females declared that the twain must be engaged. In that they were in error. As yet Roland had not said a word to the charge he might not have said to the matron. Both of these ladies had been surprised when he reached Aiken, and both had been pleased as well. In that surprise, in that pleasure, Roland had actively collaborated; and taking on himself to answer before it was framed the question which his advent naturally prompted, he stated that in journeying from Savannah to Asheville he had stopped over at Aiken as at a half-way house, and that, too, without an idea of encountering anyone whom he knew. Thereafter for several days he managed to make himself indispensable to the matron, companionable to her charge ; but now, on this particular morning, as he rattled down the red road, the courage which had deserted him returned ; and a few hours later, when before a mirror in his bedroom he stood arranging his cravat, he caught a reflection of Hyperion, son-in-law of Crœsus.

V.

In a fortnight that reflection was framed with a promise. Justine had put her hand in his. The threads by which he succeeded in binding her to him are needless to describe. He understood that prime secret in the art of coercing affection which consists in making one's self desired. He was never inopportune. Moreover, he saw that Justine, accustomed to the devotion of other men, accepted such devotion as a matter of course; in consequence he took another tack, and bullied her—a treatment which was new to her, and, being new, attractive. He found fault with her openly, criticised the manner in which she sat her horse, contradicted her whenever the opportunity came, and jeered—civilly, it is true, but the jeer was there and all the sharper because it was blunted—at any enthusiasm she chanced to express. And then, when she expected it least, he would be enthusiastic himself, and enthusiastic over nothing at all—some mythical deed canned in history, the beauty of a child, or the flush of the arbutus which they gathered on their rides. To others whom he encountered in her presence he showed himself so self-abnegatory, so readily pleased, sweet-tempered, and indulgent, so studious even of their susceptibilities and appreciative of what they liked and what they did not, that in comparing his manner to her and his manner to them the girl grew vexed, and one evening she told him so.

They happened to be sitting alone in a corner of the verandah. From within came the rhythm of a waltz; some dance was in progress, affectioned by the few; Mrs. Metuchen was discussing family trees with a party of Philadelphians; the air was sweet with the scent of pines and of jasmines; just above and beyond, a star was circumflexed by the moon.

"I am sorry if I have offended," he made answer to her complaint. "Do you mind if I smoke?" Without waiting for her consent he drew out a cigarette and lighted it. "I have not intended to," he added. "To-morrow I will go."

"But why? You like it here. You told me so to-day."

With a fillip of forefinger and thumb Roland tossed the cigarette out into the road. "Because I admire you," he answered curtly.

"I am glad of that."

The reproof, if reproof there were, was not in her speech, but in her voice. She spoke as one does whose due is conceded only after an effort. And for a while both were mute.

"Come, children, it is time to go to bed." Mrs. Metuchen in her fantastic fashion was hailing them from the door. Already the waltz had ceased, and as Mrs. Metuchen spoke, Justine rose from her seat.

"Good-night, Don Quichotte," the old lady added; and as the girl approached she continued in an audible undertone, "I call him Don Quichotte because he looks like the Chevalier Bayard."

"Good-night, Mrs. Metuchen, and the pleasantest of dreams." But the matron, with a wave of her glove, had disappeared, and Justine turned.

"At least you will not go until the afternoon?"

"Since you wish it, I will not."

She had stretched out her hand, but Roland, affecting not to notice it, raised his hat and turned away. Presently, and although, in spite of many a vice, he was little given to drink, he found himself at the bar superintending the blending of gin, of lemon-peel, and of soda; and as he swallowed it and put the goblet down he seemed so satisfied that the barkeeper, with the affectionate familiarity of his class, nodded and smiled.

"It takes a Remsen Cooler to do the trick, don't it?" he said.

And Roland, assenting remotely, left the bar and sought his room.

The next morning, as through different groups he sought for matron and for maid, he had a crop under his arm and in his hand a paper.

"I have been settling my bill," he announced.

"But are you going?" exclaimed Mrs. Metuchen.

"I can hardly take up a permanent residence here, can I?" he replied.

"Oh, Justine," the old lady cried, and clutched the girl by the arm, "persuade him not to." And fixing him with her glittering eyes, she added, "If you go, sir, you leave an Aiken void."

The jest passed him unnoticed. He felt that something had been said which called for applause, for Mrs. Metuchen was laughing immoderately. But his eyes were in Justine's as were hers in his.

"You will ride, will you not? I see you have your habit on." And with that, Justine assenting, he led her down the steps and aided her to the saddle.

There are numberless tentative things in life, and among them an amble through green, deserted lanes, where only birds and flowers are, has witcheries of its own. However perturbed the spirit may have been, there is that in the glow of the morning and the gait of a horse that can make it wholly serene. The traveller from Sicily will, if you let him, tell of hours so fair that even the bandits are coerced. Man cannot always be centred in self; and when to the influence of nature is added the companionship of one whose presence allures, the charm is complete. And Roland, to whom such things hitherto had been as accessories, this morning felt their spell. The roomy squalor of the village had been passed long since. They had entered a road where the trees arched and nearly hid the sky, but through the branches an eager sunlight found its way. Now and then in a clearing they would happen on some shabby, silent house, the garden gay with the tender pink of blossoming peach; and at times, from behind a log or straight from the earth, a diminutive negro would start like a kobold in a dream and offer, in an abashed, uncertain way, a bunch of white violets in exchange for coin. And once an old man, trudging along, saluted them with a fine parabola of hat and hand; and once they encountered a slatternly negress, very fat and pompous, seated behind a donkey she could have carried in her arms. But practically the road was deserted, fragrant, and still.

And now, as they rode on, interchanging only haphazard remarks, Roland swung himself from his horse, and, plucking a spray of arbutus, handed it to the girl.

"Take it," he said; "it is all I have."

His horse had wandered on a step and

was nibbling at the grass, and, as he stood looking up at her, for the first time it occurred to him that she was fair. However a girl may seem in a ball-room, if she ever looks well she looks best in the saddle; and Justine, in spite of his criticism, did not sit her horse badly. Her gray habit, the high white collar and open vest, brought out the snuff-color of her eyes and hair. Her cheeks, too, this morning must have recovered some of the flush they had lost, or else the sun had been using its palette, for in them was the hue of the flower he had gathered and held.

She took it and inserted the stem in the lapel of her coat.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"What would you think of me if I remained?"

"What would I? I would think—"

As she hesitated she turned. He could see now it was not the sun alone that had been at work upon her face.

"Let *me* tell. You would think that a

man with two arms for sole income has no right to linger in the neighborhood of a girl such as you. That is what you would think, what anyone would think; and while I care little enough about the existence which I lead in the minds of other people, yet I do care for your esteem. If I stay, I lose it. I should lose, too, my own; let me keep them both and go."

"I do not yet see why?"

"You don't!" The answer was so abrupt in tone that you would have said he was irritated at her remark, judging it unnecessary and ill-timed. "You don't!" he repeated. "Go back a bit, and perhaps you will remember that after I saw you at your house I did not come back again."

"I do indeed remember."

"The next day I saw you in the Park; I was careful not to return."

"But what have I done? You said last night—"

"Why do you question? You know it is because I love you."

"Then you shall not go."

"I must."

"You shall *not*, I say."

"And I shall take with me the knowledge that the one woman I have loved is the one woman I have been forced to leave."

"Roland Mistrial, how can you bear the name you do and yet be so unjust? If you leave me now it is because you care more for yourself than you ever could for me. It is not on my account you go: it is because you fear the world. There were heroes once that faced it."

"Yes, and there were Circes then, as now."

As he made that trite reply his face relaxed, and into it came an expression of such abandonment that the girl could see the day was won.

"Tell me—you will not go?"

Roland caught her hand in his, and, drawing back the gauntlet of kid, he kissed her on the wrist. "I will never leave you now," he answered; "only promise you will not regret."

"Regret!" She smiled at the speech—or was it a smile? Her lips had moved, but it was as though they had done so in answer to some prompting of her soul. "Regret! Do you remember you asked me what I would think if you remained? Well, I thought, if you did, there were dreams which do come true."

At this avowal she was so radiant yet so troubled that Roland detained her hand. "She really loves," he mused; "and so do I." And it may be, the forest aiding, that, in the answering pressure which he gave, such heart as he had went out and mingled with her own.

"Between us now," he murmured, "it is for all of time."

"Roland, how I waited for you!"

Again her lips moved and she seemed to smile, but now her eyes were no longer in his, they were fixed on some vista visible only to herself. She looked rapt, but she looked startled as well. When a girl first stands face to face with love it allures and it frightens too.

Roland dropped her hand; he caught his horse and mounted it. In a moment he was at her side again.

"Justine!"

And the girl turning to him let her fresh lips meet and rest upon his own. Slowly he disengaged the arm with which he had steadied himself on her waist.

"If I lose you now—" he began.

"There can be no question of losing," she interrupted. "Have we not come into our own?"

"But others may dispute our right. There is your cousin, to whom I thought you were engaged; and there is your father."

"Oh, as for Guy—" and she made a gesture. "Father, it is true, may object; but let him. I am satisfied; in the end he will be satisfied also. Why, only the other day I wrote him you were here."

"H'm!" At the intelligence he wheeled abruptly.

Already Justine had turned, and lowering her crop she gave her horse a little tap. The beast was willing enough; in a moment the two were on a run, and as Roland's horse, a broncho, by-the-way, one of those eager animals that decline to remain behind, rushed forward and took the lead, "Remember!" she cried, "you are not to leave me now."

But the broncho was self-willed, and this injunction Roland found or pretended it difficult to obey; and together, through the green lane and out of it, by long, dismal fields of rice, into the roomy squalor of the village and on to the hotel, they flew as though some fate pursued. Justine never forgot that ride, nor did Roland either.

At the verandah steps Mrs. Metuchen was in waiting. "I have a telegram from your father," she called to Justine. "He wishes you to return to-morrow."

"To-morrow?" the girl exclaimed.

"Thorold has learned I am here, and has told," her lover reflected. And swinging from his saddle he aided the girl to alight.

"To-morrow," Mrs. Metuchen with large assumption of resignation replied; "and we may be thankful he did not say to-day."

And as Roland listened to the varying interpretations of the summons which, during the absence of her charge, Mrs. Metuchen's riotous imagination had found time to conceive, "Thorold has told," he repeated to himself, "but he has told too late."

After a morning such as that, an afternoon on a piazza is apt to drag. Of this Roland was conscious. Moreover, he had become aware that his opportunities were now narrowly limited; and presently, as Mrs. Metuchen's imaginings subsided and ceased, he asked the girl whether, when dinner was over, she would care to take a drive.

Protest who may, at heart every woman is a match-maker ; and Mrs. Metuchen was not an exception. In addition to this, she liked family-trees, she was in cordial sympathy with good-breeding, and Roland, who possessed both, had, through attentions which women of her age appreciate most, succeeded in detaining her regard. In conversation, whenever Justine happened to be mentioned, she had a habit of extolling that young woman—not beyond her deserts, it is true, but with the attitude of one aware that the girl had done something which she ought to be ashamed of, yet to which no one was permitted to allude. This attitude was due to the fact that she suspected her, and suspected that everyone else suspected her, of an attachment for her cousin Guy. Now Guy Thorold had never appealed to Mrs. Metuchen. He was not prompt with a chair ; when she unrolled her little spangle of resonant names he displayed no eagerness in face or look. Such things affect a woman. They ruffle her flounces and belittle her in her own esteem. As a consequence, she disliked Guy Thorold ; from the heights of that dislike she was even wont to describe him as a Poke—a word she could not have defined had she tried, but which suggested to her all the attributes of that which is stupid and underbred. Roland, on the other hand, seemed to her the embodiment of just those things which Thorold lacked, and in the hope that he might cut the cousin out she extolled him to her charge in indirect and subtle ways. You young man who read this page mind you of this : if you would succeed in love or war, be considerate of women who are no longer young. They ask but an attention, a moment of your bountiful days, some little act of deference, and in exchange they sound your praises more deftly than ever trumpeter or beat of drums could do.

But because Mrs. Metuchen had an axe of her own to grind was not to her mind a reason why she should countenance a disregard of the Satanic pomps of that which the Western press terms Etiquette. And so it happened that, when Roland asked Justine whether she would care to drive, before the girl could answer, the matron stuck her oar in :

"Surely, Mr. Mistrial, you cannot think Miss Dunellen could go with you alone. Not that *I* see any impropriety in her doing so, but there is the world."

The world at that moment consisted of a handful of sturdy consumptives impatiently waiting the opening of the dining-room doors. And as Roland considered that world, he mentally explored the stable.

"Of course not," he answered ; "if Miss Dunellen cares to go, I will have a dogcart and a groom."

With that sacrifice to conventionality Mrs. Metuchen was content. For Justine to ride unchaperoned was one thing, but driving was another matter. And later on, in the cool of the afternoon, as Roland bowled the girl over the yielding sand, straight to the sunset beyond, he began again on the duo which they had already rehearsed, and when Justine called his attention to the groom, he laughed a little, and well he might. "Don't mind him," he murmured; "he is deaf."

In earlier conversations he had rarely spoken of himself, and, when he had, it had been in that remote fashion which leaves the personal pronoun at the door. There is nothing better qualified to weary the indifferent than the speech in which the I jumps out; and knowing this, he knew too that that very self-effacement before one whose interest is aroused excites that interest to still higher degrees. The *Moi seul est haïssable* is an old maxim, one that we apprehend more or less to our cost no doubt, and after many a sin of egotism; but when it is learned by rote, few others serve us in better stead. In Roland's relations with Justine thus far it had served him well. It had filled her mind with questions which she did not feel she had the right to ask, and in so filling it had occupied her thoughts with him. It was through arts of this kind that Machiavelli earned his fame.

But at present circumstances had changed. She had placed her hand in his; she had avowed her love. The I could now appear; its welcome was assured. And as they drove along the sand-hills she told him of herself, and drew out confidences in exchange. And such confidences! Had the groom not been deaf they might have given him food for thought. But they must have satisfied Justine, for when they reached the hotel again her eyes were so full of meaning that, had Mrs. Metuchen met her in a pantry instead of on the verandah, she could have seen unspectacled that the girl was fairly intoxicated—drunk with that headiest cup of love which is brewed not by the contact of two epiderms, but through communion of spirit and unison of heart.

That evening, when supper was done, Mrs. Metuchen, to whom any breath of night was synonymous with miasmas and microbes, settled herself in the parlor, and in the company of her friends from School Lane discussed that inexhaustible topic—Who Was and Who Was Not.

But the verandah, deserted at this hour by the consumptives, had attractions for Justine, for Roland as well; and presently, in a corner of it that leaned to the south, both were seated, and, at the moment, both were dumb. On the horizon, vague now and undiscerned, the peach-blossoms and ochres of sunset had long since disappeared; but from above rained down the light and messages of other worlds; the sky was populous with stars that seemed larger and nearer than they do in the north; Venus in particular shone like a neighborly sun that had strayed afar, and in pursuit of her was a moon, a new one, so slender and yellow you would have said, a feather that a breath might blow away. In the air were the same inviting odors, the scent of heliotrope and of violets, the invocations of the woodlands, the whispers of the pines. The musicians had been hushed, or else dismissed, for no sound came from them that night.

Roland had not sought the feverish night to squander it in contemplation. His hand moved and caught Justine's. It resisted a little, then lay docile in his own. For she was new to love. Like every other girl that has passed into the twenties, she had a romance in her life, two perhaps, but romances immaterial as children's dreams, and from which she had awaked surprised, noting the rhythm yet seeking the reason in vain. They had passed from her as fancies do; and, just as she was settling down into leisurely acceptance of her cousin, Roland had appeared, and when she saw him a bird within her burst into song, and she knew that all her life she had awaited his approach. To her he was the fabulous prince that arouses the sleeper to the truth, to the meaning, of love. He had brought with him new currents, wider vistas, and horizons solid and real. He differed so from other men that her mind was pleasured with the thought he had descended from a larger sphere. She idealized him as girls untrained in life will do. He was the lover unawaited yet not wholly undivined, tender-hearted, impeccable, magnificent, incapable of wrong—the lover of whom she may never have dreamed, yet who at last had come. And into his keeping she gave her heart, and was glad, regretting only it was not more to give. She had no fears; her confidence was assured as Might, and had you or I or any other logician passed that way and demonstrated as clearly as $a = a$ that she was imbecile in her love, she would not have thanked either of us for our pains. When a woman loves—and whatever the cynic may affirm, civilization has made her monandrous—she differs from man in this: she gives either the first-fruits of her affection, or else the semblance of an after-growth. There are men, there are husbands and lovers even, who will accept that after-growth and regard it as the verdure of an enduring spring. But who, save a lover, is ever as stupid as a husband? Man, on the other hand, is constant never. Civilization has not improved him in the least. And when on his honor he swears he has never loved before, his honor goes unscathed, for he may never yet have loved a woman as he loves the one to whom he swears.

With Justine this was the primal verdure. Had she not met Roland Mistrial, she might, and in all probability would, have exhibited constancy in affection, but love would have been uncomprehended still. As it was, she had come into her own; she was confident in it and secure; and now, though by nature she was rebellious enough, as he caught her hand her being went out to him, and as it went it thrilled.

"I love you," he said; and his voice was so flexible that it would have been difficult to deny that he really did. "I will love you always, my whole life through."

The words caressed her so well she could have pointed to the sky and repeated with Dona Sol:

"Regarde: plus de feux, plus de bruit. Tout se tait.
La lune tout à l'heure à l'horizon montait:
Tandis que tu parlais, sa lumière qui tremble
Et ta voix, toutes deux m'allaient au cœur ensemble:
Je me sentais joyeuse et calme, ô mon amant!
Et j'aurais bien voulu mourir en ce moment."

But at once some premonition seemed to visit her. "Roland," she murmured, "what if we leave our happiness here?"

And Roland, bending toward her, whispered sagely: "We shall know then where to find it."

VI.

NEW YORK meanwhile, in its effeminateness, had forgotten the snow, and was listening to the sun. And the day after the return from Aiken, as Roland, in accordance with an agreement of which the *locus sigilli* had a kiss for token, went down to knock at Mr. Dunellen's office door, the sky was as fair as it had been in the South. Yet to him it was unobtrusive. His mind was occupied with fancies that had a birth, a little span of life, and which in passing away were succeeded by others as ephemeral as themselves—thoughts about nothing at all that came and went unnoticed : a man he had met in Corfu, and whom a face in the street recalled ; the glisten of silk in a window that took him back to Japan;—but beneath them was a purpose settled and dominant, a resolution to trick Fate and outwit it—one which, during the journey from Aiken, had so possessed him that, in attending to the wants of Mrs. Metuchen or in ministering to Justine, at times he had been quasi-somnambulistic, at others wholly vague. But now, as he gave his card to an office-boy, to all outward intent he was confident and at ease; he picked up a paper and affected to lose himself in its columns. Presently the boy returned, and he was ushered into the room which he had previously visited. On this occasion Mr. Dunellen was not seated, but standing, his back to the door. As Roland entered he turned, and the young man stepped forward, his hand outstretched.

To his contentment, and a little also to his surprise, in answer to that outstretched hand Honest Paul extended his, and Roland had the pleasure of holding three apparently docile fingers in his own; but in a moment they withdrew themselves, and he felt called upon to speak.

" Mr. Dunellen," he began, with that

confident air a creditor has who comes to claim his due, "Mr. Dunellen, I have ventured to interrupt you again. And again I am a suppliant. But this time it is of your daughter, not of my father, that—"

He hesitated, and well he might. Mr. Dunellen, who had remained standing, and who in so doing had prevented Roland from sitting down, now assumed the suspicious appearance of one who detects an unpleasant smell; his features contracted, and for no other reason, apparently, than that of intimidating the suppliant in his prayer.

But Roland was not to be abashed; he recovered himself, and continued glibly enough: "The matter is this. I am sincerely attached to your daughter, and I am come to ask your consent to our marriage."

"That is the purpose of your visit, is it?"

"It is."

"My daughter is aware of it, I suppose?"

"She is."

"And she consented, did she?"

"Perfectly."

"H'm! My daughter has made a mistake. I told her as much last night. There can be no question of marriage. You will do me the favor to let the matter drop."

"I am not a rich man, Mr. Dunellen, but—"

"So I am informed. But that has nothing to do with it. There are other things that I take into consideration, and in view of them I insist that this matter be dropped."

"Mr. Dunellen, I love your daughter; I have reason to believe that she cares for me. We became engaged a few days ago. I came here now to ask your consent. If you refuse it, I have at least the right to ask what your objection is."

"Rather unnecessary, don't you think?"

"I cannot imagine, sir, what you mean." And Roland, holding himself unaffectedly straight, without the symptom of a pose, looked the old man in the eyes.

That look Mr. Dunellen returned. "Take a seat," he said; and, motioning Roland to a chair, he sat down himself.

"All this is needless," he announced; "but since you are anxious for an explanation, I will give it. In the first place, when you were at my house you remember that my nephew Dr. Thorold happened in. The other day I mentioned to him that you were at Aiken. He then informed me of a certain incident in your career, one which you have not forgotten, and of which I do not care to speak. I may say, however, that it utterly precludes the possibility of any further intercourse between my daughter and yourself."

And the old man, still gazing at his guest, added: "This explanation should, it seems to me, suffice." But he made no attempt to rise, or to signify that the interview was at an end, and Roland, who was shrewd, interpreted this in his own favor. "He is not altogether positive," he reflected, "but he can be so to-morrow," and with a show of shame that did him credit he hung his head.

"I had thought the incident to which you refer was forgotten," he murmured, penitently enough.

"Forgotten? Do you suppose Thorold forgets? Do you suppose any man could forget a thing like that—a sister's death, a mother's insanity? No, you did not think it was forgotten. What you thought was this: you thought that my nephew would hesitate to speak; and indeed even to me for ten years he has kept silent. But now—there, you need not fear a criminal charge. It was that you feared once, I understand, and it was on that account you went abroad. At this date, of course, no proof is possible; and, even were it otherwise, a charge would not be brought.

Linen of that kind is better washed at home."

"Mr. Dunellen, if you could know! It is the regret of my life."

"That I can believe; but I believe also that our natures never vary. We may mould and shape them to our uses, but beneath the surface they remain unchanged. I say this parenthetically. In regard to this incident there are in one particular certain excuses you might allege—youth for instance, inexperience, common attraction, love even. If you did, I could enter into them. I have been young myself, and I have no wish to imply that through the temptations of youth I passed unscathed. The man who asserts he has reminds me of the horseman who declares he has never been thrown. Nor because your victim happened to be my niece am I actuated by retrospective indignation. I am too old for that; and, moreover, the incident is too stale. No: my reason for forbidding my daughter to receive you, as I have done, is this: the man that can seduce a girl, and then, to conceal the effect, permit her to be butchered by a quack, especially when he could have protected her by marriage—that man, Mr. Mistrial, I tell you very plainly, is a scoundrel, and being a scoundrel will never be anything else." And as Honest Paul made this assertion he stood up and nodded affirmatively at his guest.

"You are very hard, Mr. Dunellen."

"I may be, but so is justice."

"If I could tell you all. It was so sudden, so unpremeditated even, at the first idea of a possibility of a catastrophe I lost my head."

"It was your honor you lost."

"Yes, and for years I have tried to recover it."

"That I am glad to learn, and I hope you have succeeded; but—"

"And will you not aid me?"

"In my sight you can never appear an honest man."

At this reproach, Roland, who had sat like Abjection, one hand supporting his head, his eyes lowered and his body bent, sprang to his feet.

"There are several forms of honesty," he exclaimed, "and frankness I believe is counted among them. That you evidently possess. Let me emulate you in it. I intend that your daughter shall be my wife. If you don't care to come to the wedding your presence can be dispensed with." And without any show of anger, but with an inclination of the head that was insolent in its deference, he picked up his hat and left the room.

Presently he found himself in the street. "Who is ever as stupid as a wise man?" he queried, and laughed a little to himself —"unless"—and he fell to wondering whether Dunellen could have told his daughter all. On the corner a cab was loitering; he hailed and entered it. A little later he was ringing at the door of Honest Paul's abode.

Yes, Miss Dunellen was at home. And as the servant drew the portière to the drawing-room aside, Roland was visited by that emotion the gambler knows who waits the turning of a card. Another second, and the expression of the girl's face would tell him what the future held. The drawing-room, however, happened to be untenanted, and as he paced its spacious splendors he still wondered was she or was she not informed. In a corner was a landscape signed Courbet—a green ravine shut down by bluest sky. The coloring was so true, it jarred. In another was a statue—a cloaked and hooded figure of Death supporting a naked girl. As he contemplated it, he heard the tinkle of the portière rings. It was she, he knew; he turned, and at once his heart gave an exultant throb; in her eyes was an invitation; he put his arms about her, and for a moment held her so.

She does not know, he told himself, and

to her he murmured, "I have come to say good-bye."

"Wait, Roland." She led him to a seat. "Wait; I spoke to father last night; he has some objection—"

"I told you I was poor—"

"It is that, I suppose; he did not say—"

"He will never consent, unless—"

"There, Roland. I know him best." She closed her eyes, and as he gazed at her it seemed to him she had done so to shut some memory out. "It is money with him always; you do not know—" And between her parted lips she drew a breath he heard. "Last night he told me I must never see you again. Hitherto his will has ruled: it is my turn to-day."

With this there came a splendor to her he had never marked before; she looked defiant, and resolute as well. There was strength in her face, and beauty too.

"He is unjust," she added. "It was my duty to tell him, and there my duty ends. I am not a school-girl. I know my mind;

better, perhaps, than he knows his own. I have obeyed him always. It is easy to obey, but now I will act for myself."

"He will never give his consent," Roland repeated.

"He may keep it, then."

Within her something seemed to rankle; and as Roland, mindful of the slightest change in her expression, detected this, he wondered what it could portend.

"Sweetheart," he ventured, "I have these two arms; they are all in all for you."

At this Justine awoke at once. "If I did not know it—feel it; if I were not sure of it, do you think I would speak to you as I do? No, Roland. I have something of my own; when we are married, believe me, his consent will come at once."

"It is not his consent I want—you know that; it is yours."

"You have it, Roland; I gave it you among the pines."

"Where is your hat, then? Let us go."

He caught her to him again, then suffered her to leave the room. And as the portière which he had drawn that she might pass fell back into its former folds, for a moment he stood perplexed. Somewhere a screw was loose, he could have sworn. But where? Could it be that Honest Paul was supporting a separate establishment? or did Justine think he wished to mate her to some plutocrat of his choice? The first supposition was manifestly absurd; the second troubled him so little that he turned and occupied himself with the naked girl swooning in the arms of Death.

"I am ready, Roland." It was Justine, bonneted and veiled, buttoning her glove.

"I have a cab," he answered, and followed her to the door.

VII.

When Roland and Justine re-entered the drawing-room that afternoon they found Mr. Dunellen there. With him was Guy Thorold.

During the infant days of photography family groups were so much in vogue that anyone with an old album in reach can find them there in plenty. They are faded, no doubt; the cut of the garments is absurd; even the faces seem to have that antique look which is peculiar to the miniatures of people dead and departed: yet the impression they convey is admirably exalting. That gentleman in the wonderful coat must have been magnificent in every sphere of life: his mere pose, his attitude, is convincing as a memoir. And that lady in the camel's-hair shawl—how bewitchingly lovable she surely was! There is her daughter, who might be her niece, so prettily does she seem inclined to behave; and there is the son, a trifle effaced perhaps, yet with the makings of a man manifest even in that effacement. Oh, good people! let us hope you were really as amiable as you look: the picture is all we have of you; even your names are forgot; and truly it were discomforting to have the impression you convey disturbed in its slightest suggestion. We love you best as you are; we prefer you so. I, for one, will have none of that cynicism which hints that had a snap camera caught you unprepared the charm would disappear.

Yet now, in the present instance, as Mr. Dunellen and his nephew stood facing Roland and Justine, a photographer who had happened there could have taken a family group which would in no manner have resembled those which our albums hold.

"I told you last night," Mr. Dunellen was shrieking, "that I forbade you to see that man."

And Justine, raising her veil, answered, "He was not my husband then."

"Husband!" The old man stared at his daughter, his face distorted and livid with rage. "If you—"

But whatever threat he may have intended to make, Thorold interrupted.

"He is married already," he cried; "he is no more your husband than I."

At this announcement Mr. Dunellen let an arm he had outstretched fall to his side; he turned to Thorold, and Justine looked wonderingly in Roland's face.

"What does he mean?" she asked.

Roland shrugged his shoulders, "God knows," he answered. "He must be screwed."

"You *are* married," Thorold called out. "You needn't attempt to deny it here."

"I don't in the least: this lady has just done me the honor to become my wife."

"But you have another—you told me so yourself."

Roland, who had been really perplexed,

could not now conceal a smile. He remembered that he had indeed told Thorold he was married, but he had done so merely as an easy way of diverting the suspicions which that gentleman displayed.

Justine, still looking at him, caught the smile.

"Why don't you speak?" she asked.

"What is there to say?" he answered. "It is false as an obituary."

"Then tell him so."

But for that there was no time. Mr. Dunellen, trained in procedure, had already questioned Thorold, and found that save Mistrial's word he had nothing to grapple on.

"Leave the house, sir," he shouted, and pointed to the door.

"When he goes, father, I go too."

"Then go." And raising his arms above his head as though to invoke the testimony of heaven, he bawled at her, "I disown you."

"There's Christian forbearance," muttered Mistrial; and he might have asserted as much, but Justine had lowered her veil.

"Come," she said.

And as she and her husband passed from the room the old man roared impotently 'I disinherit you—you are no longer my child."

"Didn't you tell me he had been used to having his own way?" Roland asked, as he put Justine in the cab; and without waiting for an answer he told the driver to go to the Brunswick, and took a seat at her side.

In certain crises the beauty of an old adage asserts itself even to the stupidest. Roland had taken the bull by the horns and got tossed for his pains; yet even while he was in the air he kept assuring himself that he would land on his feet. The next morning the memory of the old man's anger affected him not at all. Passion, he knew, burns itself out, and its threats subside into ashes. The relentless parent was a spectacle with which the stage had made him so familiar that he needed no prompter's book to tell him that when the curtain fell it would be on a tableau of awaited forgiveness. And even though Mr. Dunellen and the traditional father might differ, yet on the subject of wills and bequests he understood that the legislature had in its wisdom prevented a testator from devising more than one-half his property to the detriment of kith and of kin. If things came to the worst Justine would get five million instead of ten ; and five million, though not elastic enough, as Jones had said, to entertain with, still represented an income that sufficed for the necessaries of life. On that score his mind was at rest. Moreover, it was manifestly impossible for Justine's father to live forever : there was an odor of fresh earth about him which to his own keen nostrils long since had betokened the grave ; and if meanwhile he chose to keep the purse-strings drawn, Justine had enough from her mother's estate to last till the strings were loosed.

Rents are high in New York, and to those bred in certain of its manors there is a choice between urban palaces and suburban flats. But Paris is less fastidious. In that lovely city a thousand-franc note need not be spent in a day; and in Italy the possibilities of the lira are great.

In view of these things, Roland and his wife one week later took ship and sailed for France.

PART II.

I.

To those that have suffered certain things there are forms of entertainment which neither amuse nor bore, but which pain. And this evening, as Justine sat in the stalls, the play which was being given, and which, as plays go, was endurable enough, caused her no pleasure, no weariness even, only a longing to get away and be alone. Now and then a shudder visited her, her hand tightened on her fan, and at times she would close her eyes, dull her hearing, and try to fancy that her girlhood was recovered, that she was free again, that she was dead, that her husband was —anything imaginable in fact, save the knowledge that she was there, side-by-side with him, and that presently they would return together to the hideousness of their uptown flat.

She had been married now a little more than two years, and during the latter portion of that time life had held for her that precise dose of misery which is just insufficient to produce uncertainties of thought in a mind naturally exalted. There had indeed been moments in which the possibility of insanity had presented itself, and there had been moments also in which she would have welcomed that possibility as a grateful release : but those moments had passed, the possibility with them ; and this evening as she sat in the stalls her outward appearance was much such as it had been two years before. But within, where her heart had been, was a cemetery.

Among our friends and acquaintances there are always those who to our knowledge have tombstones of their own. But there are others that evolve a world—one that glows, subsides, and dies away unknown to any save themselves. The solitudes of space appall; the solitudes of the heart can be as endless as they. In those which Justine concealed, a universe had had its being and its subsidence; a universe with gem-like hopes for stars—one in which the sun had been so eager its rays had made her blind. There had been comets gorgeous and tangential as aspirations ever are; there had been the colorless ether of which dreams are made; and for cosmic matter there was love. But now it was all dispersed; there was nothing left, one altar merely—the petrefaction of a prayer erected long since in the depths of her distress, and which for conscience' sake now and then she tended still.

And now, as the play at which she assisted unrolled before her unseeing eyes, one by one scenes from another drama rose unsummoned in its stead. First was the meeting with Mistrial at Tuxedo, then the episode at Aiken, the marriage that followed, and the banishment that ensued: a banishment, parenthetically, which at the time being she was powerless to understand. Her father's anger had indeed weighed on her ; but it was not wholly that—she was too much in love to let it be more than a shadow on her delight ; nor was it because of unfamiliar lands : it was that little by little, through incidents originally misunderstood and then more completely grasped, the discovery, avoided yet ever returning, came to her, stayed with her, and made her its own—that the man whom she had loved and the man whom she had married were separate and distinct.

The psychologist of woman has yet to appear, and if he keep us waiting may it not be because every woman he analyzes has a sister who differs from her ? The moment he formulates a rule it is overweighted by exceptions. Woman often varies, the old song says ; but not alone in her affections does she do so : she varies in temperament as well. And, after all, is it not the temperament that makes or mars a life? Justine, in discovering that the man she married and the man whom she loved were separate and distinct, instead of being disgusted with herself and with him, as you, madam, might have been, tried her utmost to forget the lover and love the husband that had come in his place. In this effort she had pride for an aid. The humiliation which the knowledge of self-deception brings is great, but when that knowledge becomes common property the humiliation is increased. The world—not the world that ought to be, but the world as it is—is more apt to smile than condole. There may be much joy in heaven over the sinner that repents: on earth the joy is at his downfall. And according to the canons we have made for ourselves, Justine, in listening to the dictates of her heart instead of to those of her father, had sinned, so grievously even that that father had bid her begone from his sight. She was aware of this, and in consequence felt it needful to hold her head the higher. And so for a while she made pride serve as fig-leaf to her nakedness. If abashed at heart, at least the world should be uninformed of that abashment.

This effort on her part Mistrial hindered to the best of his ability. Whether or not he loved her, whether save himself he was capable of loving anyone, who shall say? Men too are difficult to decipher. There were hours when after some *écart* he would come to her so penitent, so pleasant to the eye, and seemingly so afflicted at his own misconduct, that Justine found the strength —or the weakness, was it?—to forgive and to forget anew.

During this period they lived not sumptuously, perhaps, but in that large and liberal fashion which requires a ponderable rent-roll to support; and at that time, however Mistrial comported himself elsewhere, in her presence he had the decency to seem considerate, and affectionate as well. But meanwhile, through constant demands, the value of the letter of credit into which he had converted the better part of her mother's estate became impaired. Retrenchment was necessary, and that is never a pleasant thing. The man that passes out of poverty into wealth finds the passage so easy, so Lethean even, that he is apt to forget what poverty was ; but when, as sometimes happens, he is obliged to retrace his steps, he walks bare of foot through a path of thorns. To count gold, instead of strewing it, is irritating to anyone not a sage. And Mistrial, who was not a sage, was irritated ; and having a wife within beck and call he vented that irritation on her.

It was at this time that Justine began to feel the full force of the banishment. That her husband was, and in all probability would continue to be, unfaithful to her, was a matter which she ended by accepting with a degree of good sense which is more common than is generally supposed. At first she had been indeed indignant, and when in that indignation her anger developed into a heat that was white and sentiable, Mistrial experienced no remorse whatever, only a desire to applaud. He liked the force and splendor of her arraignment; it took him out of himself; it made him feel that he was appreciated—feared even; that a word from him, and a tempest was loosened or enchained.

But what is there to which we cannot accustom ourselves? Justine ended, not by a full understanding of the fact that man is naturally polygamous; but little by little, through channels undiscerned even by herself, the idea came to her that, if the man she loved could find pleasure in the society of other women, it was because she was less attractive than they. It was this that brought her patience, the more readily even in that, at her first paroxysm, Mistrial, a trifle alarmed lest she might leave him, had caught her in his arms, and sworn in a whisper breathed in her ear, that of all the world he loved her best.

Madam, you who do the present writer

the honor to read this page are convinced, he is sure, that your husband would rather his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth than break the vow which bound you to him. But you, madam, have married a man faithful and tried. You know very well with what dismay he tells you of Robinson's scandalous conduct, and you know also how he pities Robinson's poor little wife ; yet when, in your sorrow at what that poor little woman has to put up with, you are tempted to go and condole with her, pause, madam—Mrs. Robinson may be equally tempted to condole with You.

There are—in Brooklyn, in Boston, and in other recondite regions—a number of clever people who have been brought up with the idea that Divorce was instituted for just such a thing as this. Yet in one hundred cases out of a hundred-and-one a woman who appeals to the law never does so because her husband has broken a certain commandment. If his derelictions are confined to that particular offence she may bewail, and we all bewail with her; but if she wants the sympathy of judge, of jury, and of newspaper-public too, she must be prepared to allege other grievances. She must show that her husband is unkind, that he is sarcastic, that he is given to big words and short sentences; in brief, that he has developed traits which render life in common no longer to be endured.

It was traits of this description that Mistrial unexpectedly developed, and it was during their development that the sense of banishment visited Justine. She was unable to make further transference of her affections; the lover had disappeared; the husband she had tried to love in his place had gone as well. For sole companion she had a man who had worn a mask and dropped it; where he had been considerate, he was selfish; when he spoke, it was to find fault; now that he could no longer throw her money out of the windows, he threw his amiability in its stead. By day he was taciturn, insultingly dumb; at night he was drunk.

Mistrial had served his novitiate where the *pochard* is rare. It is we that drink, and with us the English, the Slavs, and Teutons; but in the East and among the Latins sobriety is less a matter of habit than of instinct. And in lands where man prefers to keep his head clear, Mistrial, at that age, which is one of the most impressionable of all, had seen no reason to lose his own. But presently the small irritations of enforced economy affected his manners, and his habits as well. He took to absinthe in the morning, and, as he happened to be in France, he drank at night that brutal brandy they give you there. Not continuously, it is true. There were days when the man for whom Justine had forsaken her home returned so completely she could almost fancy he had never gone. Then, without a word of warning, at the very moment when Faith was gaining fresh foothold, the tragi-comedy would be renewed; he was off again, no one knew whither, returning only when the candle had been utterly consumed.

Such things are enough to affect any woman's patience, and Justine's became wholly warped. It was unaccountable to her that he could treat her as he did. She watched the gradual transformation of the perfect lover into the perfect beast with a species of sorrow—a dual sorrow in whose component parts there was pity for herself and for him as well.

The idea that he had married her uniquely because of her father's wealth, that he was impatient to get it, and that when he got it he would squander all he could on other women, occurred to her only in the remotest ways, and then only through some expression which, in his exasperation at the diminishing bank account and the unreasonable time which it took her father to forgive her, fell from him now and then by chance. For Mistrial had indeed counted on that forgiveness. He had even counted on receiving it by cable, of finding that it had preceded and awaited them before their ship reached France. And when, to use an idiom of that land, it made itself expected, he was confident that the longer it delayed the completer it would be. At the utmost he had not dreamed that the old man would detain it more than a few months; but when twenty-four went by, and not only no forgiveness was manifest, but through his own improvidence the funds ran low,—so low, in fact, that unless forgiveness were presently forthcoming they would be in straits indeed,—he dictated a letter, penitent and humble, one in which impending poverty stood out as clearly as though it had been engraved, and which it revolted her to send. Its inspiration, however, must have been patent to Mr. Dunellen, for that gentlemen's reply, expressed in the third person, was to the effect that if his daughter returned to him he would provide for her as he had always done, but in no other circumstances could he assist.

Had Justine been anyone but herself she might have acted on the invitation: but the tone of it hurt her; she was annoyed at having permitted herself to send the letter Mistrial had dictated, and to which this was the reply. Her pride was up—all the more surely because she knew her father had been right; and there is just this about pride—as a matter of penitence it forces us to suffer those consequences of our own wrongdoing which through a simple confession it were easy to escape. To Justine such confession was impossible. She had left her father in the full certainty that he was wrong, and when she found he was not, death to her were preferable to any admission of the grievousness of her own mistake.

At this juncture Mistrial's aunt assisted at the funeral of a sister spinster, sat in a draught, caught cold in her throat, and, the glottis enlarging, strangled one night in her bed. By her will the St. Nicholas Hospital received the bulk of her property. The rest of her estate was divided among relatives; to her nephew Roland Mistrial—3d no longer—was bequeathed the princely sum of ten thousand dollars in cash. At the news of this munificence Roland swore and grit his teeth. Had his circumstances been different it is probable that the ten thousand, together with some enduring insult, he would have flung after her to the eternal purgatory where he prayed she had gone. As it was, the modicity of the bequest sobered him. Through some impalpable logic he had counted but little on any inheritance at all; he had indeed hoped vaguely that she might die and leave him what she had; and it may even be that, had he learned that her will was in his favor, and had a suitable opportunity presented itself, in some perfectly decorous manner he would have hastened his aunt's demise. But concerning her will he had no information; moreover, during his visit to the States the old lady saw as little of him as she could help; and when she did see him, in spite of gout and the ailments of advancing years there was such a rigidity in her manner that the nephew told himself she might live long enough to see him hanged. As a consequence he had expected nothing. But when the news of her death reached him, together with the intelligence that instead of the competence he might possibly have had he was mentioned merely to the tune of ten thousand dollars,—this outrage, in conjunction with Dunellen's relentlessness, sobered him to that degree, that for a day and a night he gave himself to a debauch of thought. From this orgy he issued with clearer mind. It may be—though the idea advanced is one that can only be hazarded—it may be that had his aunt disposed of her estate in his favor he would there and then have washed his hands of the job he had undertaken, and left his wife to her own devices. As it was, he saw that, to keep his head above water, the only possible plank was one that Mr. Dunellen might send in his reach; and it was with the knowledge that before the present scanty windfall disappeared some conquest of Honest Paul's affection should be attempted that he determined to return to New York. Once there again, who knew what might happen? Surely, if the preceding year Mr. Dunellen had strength for violence, to the naked eye he was even then manifestly infirm. There was no gainsaying the matter—he at least would not live very long. As to the disposition of his property after death Mistrial was still assured. Whatever his attitude might be for the present, in the end he could not wholly disinherit Justine—at least one-half the property must come to her. On that fact Mistrial would have staked his life; after all, it was the one hope he had left; and an ultimate hope, we all know, is the thing we part with last.

Thereupon he recovered himself. He

became amiable and considerate—a change of demeanor which gave Justine a chill. She consented nevertheless to the return trip, and the day after arriving called at her father's house. When she got back to the hotel where they had put up Mistrial was waiting for her. In answer to his questions she told him that her father was willing to receive her, but her alone. "You must take your choice," he had said, she repeated—"You must take your choice."

"And what is that choice?" Mistrial had asked.

"I have made it," she answered, "and by it I will abide."

But at this he had expostulated; and when, seeing at last what he meant—understanding that he would have her feign a compliance for the sake of coin which at her father's death she could come back and share with him—when, divining the infamy of his thought, she refused, he had struck her in the face.

Because a man is not Chesterfield, it does not follow he is Sykes. Mistrial had never struck a woman before, and in this initial assault it is probable that he was actuated less by a desire to punish than by that force which overmasters him who has ceased to be master of himself. By instinct he was not a gentleman; for some time past he had not even taken the trouble to appear one; yet at that moment, dancing in derision before him, he saw the letters that form the monosyllable Cad. The sense of abasement he displayed was so immediate and sincere, that Justine, who, trembling with anger and disgust, stood staring in his face, read it there and understood. Instead of separating them forever, the blow reunited their hands. During the week that followed they were nearer to each other than they had been for months before. The reconciliation was seemingly complete. Mistrial made himself the lover again, and Justine permitted herself to be wooed. They left their hotel and found a flat—a furnished apartment in the neighborhood of Central Park; and there the storm departing placed a rainbow in its stead.

A rainbow, however, is not a fixture, and this one went its way. While Justine closed her eyes Mistrial's were alert. He had no intention of suffering her to be disinherited, and though it was well enough to rely on the courts it was better still not to be forced to do so. Rather than run an avoidable risk he would have abandoned his wife, and forced her through that abandonment to return to her father's house, convinced that afterwards he could win her together with the estate back again to him. Meanwhile another interview could not in any way jeopardize the chances to which he clung. On the contrary, it might be highly serviceable. Mr. Dunellen, he had learned, was much broken; he had given up his practice, the the world even, everything in fact save perhaps the devil that was in him, and sat uncompanioned in the desolate and spacious emptiness of his house. It was only natural that he should wish to coerce his daughter into obedience; yet now that he saw she was steadfast, her pride unhumbled still, it was not improbable that he would yield; it was presumable even that he was then waiting, weak of heart, prepared at her next advance to welcome and forgive.

Of these things Mistrial made his wife aware, and it was then that the rainbow departed. His arguments were as revolting as the cynicism they exhaled. But she made no attempt to combat them. Since she had seen her father she had felt a sorrow for him that Mistrial's altered demeanor had given her time to heed. She knew that his attitude was due to her defiance of his express commands, but she had no reason to suppose that he had any other objection to her husband than such as his poverty might have caused or instinctive antipathy might bring. But now, her own experience aiding, she knew that he had been right; and, as he seemed feeble and dispassionate, in answer to Mistrial's arguments she tied her bonnet-strings and went. It was early in the afternoon when she started, it was night when she returned.

Mistrial had been waiting for her, and when she entered the room in which he sat he rose eagerly and aided her with her wrap. He was impatient, she could see; and she was impatient also.

"Why did you not tell me of Guy's sister?" she began, at once.

And as he answered nothing she continued: "Years ago I knew of what she died; it was only to-day I learned that it was you who murdered her."

"It is a lie."

"Oh, protest. I knew you would."

"From whom is it you heard this thing? Not from your father, I am sure." As Mistrial spoke he gazed at her inquisitorially with shrewd, perplexing eyes.

"What does it matter?" she answered. Her head was thrown back, her lips compressed. "What does it matter since the charge is true?"

"But it is false," he cried; "it is a wanton lie. Your father never could have stated it."

"Ah, but he did, though; and Guy was there to substantiate what he said."

"Guy!" As he pronounced her cousin's name there came into his face an expression which she knew and which she had learned to dread. "Madam, you mean your lover, I suppose. And it is his *ipse dixit* you accept in preference to mine?"

"Mistrial, you know he is not my lover."

"I know he was in love with you, and you with him."

"So he was; so he is, I think; and it was not until this night I saw my own mistake."

"*Voilà!*" said Roland, suddenly calmed. He paused a second, and after eying the polish of his finger-nails, affected to flick a speck of dust from his sleeve. "Your cousin is mad," he added.

"He is sane as—" and Justine hesitated for a simile.

"His mother, you mean. Were you never aware that insanity is hereditary? If his sister—presupposing that the accusation which he formulates against me was originally advanced by her—if his sister—whom, by the way, I never saw but once—if his sister accused me of complicity, then she suffered from the hereditary taint as well. If I was guilty of what your cousin charges, why was I not arrested, tried, and sentenced? But are you such a dolt you cannot see that Guy is mad—mad not only by nature, but crazed by jealousy as well. You say you know he loves you. You have even the candor to admit that you love him! Now ask yourself what would any impartial hearer deduce from statements such as yours?"

"My father was an impartial hearer, and he—"

"But how is it possible to be so blind? Can you not see that your cousin has prejudiced him against me? I said, impartial hearer. But let the matter drop. I tell you the charge is false; believe it or not, as you prefer. There is, however, just this in the matter: if the charge is made again, I will have your cousin under arrest. You forget that there is such a thing as libel still."

Again he paused, and strove to collect himself; there was a design in the carpet which appeared to interest him very much, but presently he looked up again.

"Now tell me," he said, "what did your father say?"

"Nothing, save what he said before."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing that you would care to hear." Her eyes roamed from the neighbourly ceiling over to him and back again. "He said," she added, "that if I persisted in living with you his money would go to my child, if I had one; if I had none, then to Guy."

"Were you alone with him when he said this, or was Guy, as you call him, there?"

"No, I was alone with him; Guy came later."

"And is he aware of this provision?"

For all response Justine shrugged her shoulders.

"Does he know it, I ask you?"

"He does not," she answered. "Father told me that he never would, until the will was read."

"H'm." And for a moment Mistrial mused. Then presently he smiled—yet was it a smile?—a look that an hallucinated monk in a medieval abbey might have seen on that imaginary demon who, flitting by him, the forefinger outstretched, whispered as he vanished through the wall, "Thou art damned, dear friend! thou art damned!" "H'm," he repeated; "and in view of the provisions of your father's will, will you tell me why is it that you are without a child?"

As he spoke he had arisen, and, smiling still, though now as were he questioning her in regard to the state of the weather, he looked into her eyes. She had drawn yet further back into the chair in which she sat ; a deadly sickness overcame her ; to her head there mounted the nausea of each one of his many misdeeds. The memory of the blow of the week before, one which, despite her seeming forbearance, had not ceased to rankle, returned to her ; and with it, one after another in swift succession, she rememorated the offences of the past. But soon she too was on her feet and fronted him. "Why is it I am without a child?" she repeated. Her voice was low and clear, and between each word she permitted a little pause to intervene. "Why is it?"

The subtlety of his reproach battening on nerves already overwrought was exciting her as nothing had done before. "It is you," she cried, "who are to blame. What have you done with your youth? What have you done with your manhood?

Look at me, Roland Mistrial! If I have borne you no child it is because monsters never engender." As she spoke, with one gesture she tore her bodice down. Her breast, palpitant with health and anger too, heaving at the sheer injustice of his reproach, confronted and confuted him. "It is there that women have their strength; tell me, if you can, what have you done with yours?"

And thereat, with a look a princess might give to a lackey who had dared to question her, she turned and left him where he stood.

The next day he tried to make his peace with her. In this he succeeded, or flattered himself he had, for subsequently she consented to accompany him to the play. And as she sat in the stalls it was of these things that she thought.

II.

THE information which Mistrial gleaned concerning the provisions of his father-in-law's will was bitter in his mouth. On the morrow he gave some time to thought —he read too a little. The taunt which Justine had flung at him, bit; and with the idea of dulling the hurt and of ministering also to his own refreshment, he consulted a book which treated of certain conditions of the nervous system, and a work on medical jurisprudence as well. But literature of that kind is notoriously unsatisfactory. It may suggest, yet the questions which it prompts remain unanswered. Roland put the volumes down: they were productions of genius, no doubt, but to him they were nothing more. From the pursuit of exact knowledge he turned and looked out into the street.

The hour then was midway in one of those green afternoons which we are apt to fancy the adjunct of lands we never see, and as he looked he saw astride a bay hunter a man ambling cautiously over the stones. From the roofs opposite a breath of lilacs came, and a breeze that was neither cool nor warm loitered on its way from the river beyond. Mistrial let the breeze, the fragrance, the fulfilment of spring, pass unnoticed. The bay hunter had caught his eye: it seemed to him that an argument with an imperative horse was just the thing he needed most, and a little later he secured a cob from a stable on the street above.

The cob was docile enough, affecting once only to regard a sewer-grating in the bridle-path as a strange, unhallowed thing which it was needful to avoid. But the initial shy was the last. The spur gave him such a nip that during the remainder of the ride, whatever distasteful object he may have encountered, he gave no outward evidence of abhorrence. He had an easy canter, a long and swinging trot ; and now on one, now on the other, they passed through and out of the Park, and on beyond the brand-new edifices that line Seventh Avenue, to that scantier outlying district where the Harlem begins and the city ends. And here as he was about to turn he noticed a gig such as physicians affect. In it was a negro driving, and at his side sat Justine's cousin, Guy.

"H'm !" mused Mistrial ; "judging by the locality, his patients must be the last people in the city." At the moment the feebleness of the jest pleasured him ; then simultaneously the unforgotten hatred crackled in his breast. At each one of the important epochs of his life that man had stood in his way. It was he that had forced him from college at the moment when honors were within his reach. It was he that had kept him from his father's side at the time when he might have saved his father's estate. It was he that had come between Dunellen and himself at the hour when he could have persuaded Justine's father to give him Justine's hand. It was he that had forced him to elope with her. It was because of him that he was now enjoying the small miseries of the shabby genteel. It was he, unless Providence now intervened, who would inherit the wealth he had toiled to make his own. And it was he who the day before had again crossed and halted in his path.

These premises, however colored, were logical enough in this—the natural deduction sprang out and greeted the eye. And, as they flashed before him, Mistrial saw himself rinsing out each one in blood squeezed from Thorold's throat. In the fury which suddenly beset him he could have found the strength, the courage it may be, to have torn him from the gig in which he sat, to have trampled on him with horse's hoofs, bent over and beat him as he writhed on the ground, and exulted and jubilated in the doing of it. Then indeed, though he swung for it, the ultimate victory would be his. If he stamped Thorold out of existence, though his own went with it, he would not have suffered wholly in vain ; in facing the gallows he would have the joy of knowing that even were he prevented from bathing in the Dunellen millions, so was Thorold too.

But when he looked out from himself his enemy had disappeared. A woman in an open landau passed and bowed. Mechanically Mistrial raised his hat. To every intent and purpose he was self-possessed—occupied, if at all, but with those threads of fancy that float in and out the mind. As he raised his hat, he smiled ; the woman might have thought herself the one it gave him the greatest pleasure to salute. Her carriage had not advanced the jump of a cat before he had forgotten that she lived. But no one can turn his brain into a stage, create for it, and feel a drama such as he had without some outward manifestation, be it merely a strangled oath. On the horse he rode his knees had tightened, he gave a dig with the spur, and went careering down the street. In that part of New York you are at liberty to cover a mile in two minutes. Roland covered thirty squares at breakneck speed.

Presently he drew the animal in and suffered him to walk. During the run he had had no time to think ; he had been occupied only in keeping the horse he rode out of the way of vehicles, and in preventing that possible cropper which comes when we expect it least. But as the cob began to walk, the present returned to him with a rush. About the animal's neck the fretting of the reins had produced a lather ; the breeze had died away. Mistrial felt overheated too, and he drew out a handkerchief and wiped his face. Even while he drew it from his pocket an idea came to him, fluttered for a second as ideas will, and before he got the handkerchief back it had gone, leaving him just a trifled dazed. But in a moment he called to it, and at his bidding it returned. It was minute, barely fledged as yet; but as the horse jogged on, little by little it expanded, and to such an extent that before he reached the park its pinions stretched from earth to sky. Whoso is visited with inspirations knows with what diabolical swifness they can enlarge and grow. When Mistrial put the horse back in the stable the idea which at first he had but dimly intercepted possessed him utterly. It succeeded even in detaining his step: he walked up the street instead of down; at a crossing he hesitated; night had come, and as he loitered there, suddenly the whole avenue was bright as day. The vengeance which not an hour before he could have wreaked on Thorold seemed now remote and paltry too. There need be no shedding of blood, no scandal, no newspaper notoriety, no police, no coroner to sit upon a corpse, no jury to bring a verdict in. There need be nothing of this: a revenge of that order was in bad taste, ill-judged as well. To make a man really suffer, sudden death was as a balm in comparison to some subtle torment that should gnaw at the springs of life, retreat a moment, and then returning make them ache again, and still again, forever his whole life through. The French woman is not so ill-advised when she pitches a cup of vitriol in her betrayer's face. In Spain, in Italy even, they stab; the deed is done; the culprit has had no chance to experience anger, pain even, or remorse. He is dead. The curtain falls. But a revenge that blasts and corrodes, one that leaves the victim living, sound in body and in limb, and yet consumed by an inextinguishable regret, burning with tortures from which he can never escape—a thing like that is the work, not of an apprentice, but of a master in crime. Yet when the victim receives that cup of vitriol, not from another's hands, but from his own; when he has been lured into devastating his own self ;—it is no longer a question of either apprentice or of master: it is the artist that has been at work. To gain the Dunellen millions was to Mistrial a matter of paramount importance; but to gain them through the instrumentality of the man whom he hated as no one ever hates to-day, particularly when that man was the one to whom those millions were provisionally bequeathed, when he was one whom Mistrial—justly or unjustly, it matters not—fancied and believed was plotting for them; to gain them, not only through him, but through his unwitting, unintentional agency, through an act which, so soon as he learned its purport, all his life through he would regret and curse ;—no, that were indeed a revenge and a reparation too. And as he thought of it there entered his eyes a look perplexing and enervating—that look which demons share with sphinxes and the damned.

III.

During the two years which Mistrial had passed in the society of his wife, opportunities of studying her there had been in plenty. He knew her to be docile and headstrong; weak, if at all, but with that weakness that comes of lassitude; violent when provoked, prone to forgive, sensitive, impulsive, yet obdurate; in brief, the type of woman that may be entreated, but never coerced. He knew her faults so well he could have enumerated them one after the other on his finger-tips: her qualities, however, had impressed him less; it may be that he had accepted them as a matter of course. He was aware that she was honest; he had noticed that she was capable of much self-sacrifice; of other characteristics he had given little heed. It goes without the telling, that in regard to what is known as jealousy he had not suffered even an evanescent disquietude. And that night and during the morning that followed, as he occupied himself in nursing the idea which had visited him on horseback, that particular fact occurred to him more than once. But one does not need to be a conspirator to understand that the steadiest virtue is as susceptible of vice as iron is of rust.

Justine had announced that her cousin was still in love with her; she had announced with equal distinctness that she recognized her own mistake; while for himself he was convinced that she no longer cared. To these things he added certain deductions which his experience of men and women permitted him to draw; and had the result they presented been made to order, it could not have fitted more perfectly into the scheme which he had devised.

It was then high noon. Through the window came the irresistible breath of a rose in bloom. As he left the house it surrounded him in the street. He smiled a greeting at it. "I have spring in my favor," he mused, and presently boarded a car.

The principles of successful enterprise may be summarized as consisting of a minute regard for details, and an apparent absence of zeal. Mistrial's many mistakes had taught him the one and trained him in the other. When the car he had taken reached the Gilsey House, he alighted, hailed a four-wheeler, stationed it in such a manner that it commanded a view of the adjacent street, coached the driver in regard to a signal he might give, entered the cab, lit a cigarette, and prepared to wait.

In that neighborhood there are four or five basement houses of the style that is affectioned by milliners, dentists, and physicians. One of these particularly claimed Mistrial's attention. He saw a woman in gray enter it, and almost simultaneously a woman come out; then a man leading a child went in; and in a little while the first woman reappeared. Mistrial glanced at his watch; it lacked a minute of one. "He has a larger practice than I thought," he reflected. The woman in gray had now nearly reached the cab in which he sat, and from sheer force of habit he was preparing to scrutinize her as she passed, when the door of the house reopened and Thorold appeared on the step. He looked up the street, then down. He had his hat on, and his every-day air. In a second Mistrial had drawn the curtain and was peering through the opening at the side. He saw Thorold leave the step and turn toward Fifth Avenue; he signalled to the driver, and the cab moved on.

At the corner Thorold turned again, the cab at his heels, and Mistrial saw that the physician was moving in the direction of Madison Square. It occurred to him that Thorold might be going to Mr. Dunellen's, and on the block below, as the latter crossed the asphalt, he made sure of it. But opposite the Brunswick the cab stopped; Thorold was entering the restaurant.

Cold chicken looks attractive in print. A minute or two later, as Mistrial examined the bill of fare, he ordered some for himself; he ordered also a Demidorf salad, —a compound of artichokes' hearts and truffles, familiarly known as Half-Mourning,—and until the waiter returned hid himself behind a paper. Thorold meanwhile, who was seated at an adjoining table, must have ordered something which required longer preparation, for Mistrial finished the salad before the physician was served. But Mistrial was in no hurry; he had a pint of claret brought him, and sipped it leisurely. Now and then he glanced over at Thorold, and twice he caught his eye. At last Thorold called for his bill. Mistrial paid his own, and presently followed him out into the street. When both reached the sidewalk, Mistrial, who was a trifle in the rear, touched him on the arm.

"Thorold," he said; and the physician turned, but there was nothing engaging in his attitude: he held his head to one side, about his lips was a compression, a contraction in his eyes; one arm was pendent, the other pressed to his waistcoat, and the shoulder of that arm was slightly raised. He looked querulous and annoyed—a trifle startled, too.

"Thorold," Mistrial repeated, "give me a moment, will you?"

The physician raised the arm that he had pressed against his waistcoat, and, with four fingers straightened and the fifth askew, stroked an imaginary whisker.

"It is about Justine," Mistrial continued. "She is out of sorts; I want you to see her."

"Ah!" And Thorold looked down and away.

"Yes, I had intended to speak to Dr. McMasters; but when by the merest chance I saw you in there I told myself that, whatever our differences might be, there was no one who would understand the case more readily than you."

As Mistrial spoke he imitated the discretion of his enemy; he looked down and away. The next moment, however, both were gazing into each other's face.

"H'm." Thorold, as he stared, seemed to muse. "I saw her the other day," he said, at last; "she looked well enough then."

"But can't a person look well and yet be out of sorts?"

Mistrial was becoming angry, and he showed it. It was evident, however, that his irritation was caused less by the man to whom he spoke than by the physician whom he was seeking to consult. This Thorold seemed to grasp, for he answered perplexedly:

"After what has happened I don't see very well how I can go to your house."

"Look here, Thorold: the past is over

and done with—ill done, you will say, and I admit it. Be that as it may, it has gone. At the same time there is no reason why any shadow of it should fall on Justine. She is really in need of some one's advice. Can you not give it to her?"

"Certainly," Thorold answered, "I can do that;" and he looked very sturdy as he said it. "Only—"

"Only what? If you can't go as a friend, at least you might go as a physician."

Thorold's hand had slid from his cheek to his chin, and he nibbled reflectively at a finger-nail.

"Very good," he said; "I will go to her. Is she to be at home this afternoon?"

"The evening would be better, I think. Unless, of course—" and Mistrial made a gesture as though to imply that, if Thorold's evening were engaged, a visit in the afternoon might be attempted.

But the suggestion presumably was acceptable. Thorold drew out a note-book, at which he glanced.

"And I say," Mistrial continued, "I

wish—you see, it is a delicate matter; Justine is very sensitive—I wish you wouldn't say you met me. Just act as though—"

"Give yourself no uneasiness, sir." Thorold had replaced the note-book and looked up again in Mistrial's face. "I never mention your name." And thereat, with a toss of the head, he dodged an omnibus and crossed the street.

For a moment Mistrial gazed after him, then he turned, and presently he was ordering a glass of brandy at the Brunswick bar.

It was late that night when he reached his home. During the days that followed he had no fixed hours at all. Several times he entered the apartment with the smallest amount of noise that was possible, and listened at the sitting-room door. At last he must have heard something that pleased him, for as he sought his own room he smiled. "*Maintenant, mon cher, je te tiens.*"

The next day he surprised Justine by informing her that he intended to pay a visit to a relative. He was gone a week.

IV.

THAT night the stars, dim and distant, were scattered like specks of frost on some wide, blue window-pane. At intervals a shiver of wheels crunching the resistant snow stirred the lethargy of the street, and at times a rumble accentuated by the chill of winter mounted gradually, and passed on in diminishing vibrations. Within, a single light, burning scantily, diffused through the room the drowsiness of a spell. In the bed was Justine, her eyes dilated, her face attenuated and pinched. One hand that lay on the coverlid was clinched so tightly that the nails must have entered the flesh. Presently she moaned, and a trim little woman issued from a corner with the noiseless wariness of a rat. As she passed before the night-light, the silhouette of a giantess, fabulously obese, jumped out and vanished from the wall. For a moment she scrutinized her charge, burrowing into her, as it were, with shrewd yet kindly eyes. Again a moan escaped the sufferer, the wail of one whose agony is lancinating—one that ascended in crescendos and terminated in a cry of such utter helplessness, and therewith of such insistent pain, that the nurse caught the hand that lay on the coverlid, and unlocking the fingers stroked and held it in her own. "There, dear heart—there, I know."

Ah, yes, she knew very well. She had not passed ten years of her existence tending women in travail for the fun of it. And as she took Justine's hand and stroked it, she knew that in a little while the agony, acuter still, would lower her charge into that vestibule of death where Life appears. Whether or not Justine was to cross that silent threshold, whether happily she would find it barred, whether it would greet and keep her and hold her there, whether indeed it would let the child go free, an hour would tell, or two at most.

But there were preparations to be made. The nurse left the bed and moved out into the hall. In a room near by, Mistrial, occupied with some advertisements in the *Post*, sat companioned by a physician who was reading a book which he had written himself. At the footfall of the nurse the latter left the room. Presently he returned. "Everything is going nicely," he announced, and placidly resumed his seat.

It was the fourth time in two hours that he had made that same remark. Mistrial said nothing. He was gazing through the paper he held at the wall opposite, and out of it into the future beyond.

Since that day, the previous spring, on which he had set out to visit a relative, many things had happened, yet but few that were of importance to him. On his return from the trip, during one fleeting second, for the first time since he had known Justine, it seemed to him that she avoided his eyes. To this, in other circumstances, he would have given no thought whatever; as matters were, it made him feel that his excursion should not be regarded as time ill-spent. Whether it had been wholly serviceable to his project, he could not at the time decide. He waited, however, very patiently, but he seldom waited within the apartment walls. At that period he developed a curious facility for renewing relations with former friends. Once he took a run to Chicago with an Englishman he had known in Japan; and once, with the brother of a lady who had married into the Baxter branch of the house of Mistrial, he went on a fishing trip to Canada. These people he did not bring to call on his wife. He seemed to act as though solitude were grateful to her. Save Mrs. Metuchen, Thorold at that time was her only visitor, and the visits of that gentleman Mistrial encouraged in every way that he could devise. Through meetings that, parenthetically, were more frequent on the stair or in the hallway than anywhere else, the two men, through sheer force of circumstances, dropped into an exchange of salutations—remarks about the weather, reciprocal inquiries on the subject of each other's health, which, wholly formal on Thorold's part, were from Mistrial always civil and aptly put. After all, was he not the host? and was it not for him to show particular courtesy to anyone whom his wife received?

To her, meanwhile, his attitude was little short of perfection itself. He was considerate, foresighted, and unobtrusive — a course of conduct which frightened her a little. Two or three months after he had struck her in the face she made—*à propos* of nothing at all—an announcement which brought a trace of color to her cheeks.

The following afternoon he happened to be entering the house as Dr. Thorold was leaving it. Instead of greeting him in the nice and amiable fashion which he had adopted, and which Thorold had ended by accepting as a matter of course, he halted and looked at the physician through half-closed eyes. Thorold nodded, cavalierly enough it is true, and was about to pass on; but this Mistrial prevented. He planted himself squarely in his way, and stuck his hands in his pockets.

"Mrs. Mistrial has no further need of you," he said. "Send your bill to me."

He spoke from the tips of his lips, with the air and manner of one dismissing a lackey. At the moment nothing pertinent could have occurred to Thorold. He stared at Mistrial, dumbly perplexed, and plucked at his cuff. Mistrial nodded as who should say, "Put that in your pipe;" and before Thorold recovered his self-possession he had passed up the stairs and on and out of sight.

It was then that season in which July has come and is going. The city was hot; torrid at noonday, sultry and enervating at night. Fifth Avenue and the adjacent precincts were empty. Each one of the brown-stone houses had a Leah-like air of desertion. The neighborhood of Madison and of Union Squares was peopled by men with large eyes and small feet, by women so deftly painted that, like Correggio, they could have exclaimed, "*Anch' io son pittore.*" In brief, the Southern invasion had begun, and New York had ceased to be habitable.

But Newport has charms of its own; and to that lovely city by the water Mistrial induced his wife; and there, until summer had departed, and autumn too, they rested and waited. During those months he was careful of her: so pleasantly so, so studious of what she did and of what she ate, that for the first time since the honeymoon she might have, had she tried, felt at ease with him again. But there were things that prevented this—faith destroyed and the regret of it. Oh, indeed she had regrets in plenty; some even for her father; and, unknown to Mistrial, once or twice she wrote him such letters as a daughter may write. She had never been in sympathy with him; as a child he had coerced her needlessly; when she was older he had preached; later, divining that lack of sympathy, he had striven through kindlier ways to counteract it. But he had failed; and Justine, aiding in the endeavor, had failed as well. When father and child do not stand hand-in-hand a fibre is wanting that should be there.

In December Mistrial and his wife returned to town. A date was approaching, and there was the *layette* to be prepared. Hour after hour Justine's fingers sped. The apartment became a magazine of swaddling-clothes. One costume in particular, a worsted sack that was not much larger than a coachman's glove, duplicated and repeated itself in varying and tender hues. Occasionally Mistrial would pick one up and examine it furtively. To his vagabond fancy it suggested a bag in which gold would be.

But now the hour was reached. And as Mistrial sat staring into the future, the goal to which he had striven kept looming nearer and ever nearer yet. Only the day before he had learned that Dunellen was failing. And what a luxury it would be to him when the old man died and the will was read! Such a luxury did it appear, that unconsciously he manifested his contentment by that sound the glutton makes at the mention of delicious food.

His companion—the physician—turned and nodded. "I know what you are thinking about," he announced; and with the rapt expression of a seer, half to Mistrial, half to the ceiling, "It is always the case," he continued; "I never knew a father yet that did not wonder what the child would be; and the mothers, oh! the mothers! Some of them know all about it beforehand: they want a girl, and a girl it will be; or they want a boy, and a boy they are to have. I remember one dear, good soul who was so positive she was to have a boy that she had all the linen marked with the name she had chosen for him. H'm. It turned out to be twins—both girls. And I remember—"

But Mistrial had ceased to listen. He was off again discounting the inheritance in advance—discounting, too, the diabolism of his revenge. The latter, indeed, was unique, and withal so grateful, that now the consummation was at hand it fluttered his pulse like wine. He had ravened when first he learned the tenour of the will, and his soul had been bitter; but no sooner had this thing occurred to him than it resolved itself into a delight. To his disordered fancy its provisions held both vitriol and opopanax—the one for Thorold, the other for himself.

The doctor meanwhile was running on as doctors do. "Yes," Mistrial heard him say, "she was most unhappy; no woman likes a rival, and when that rival is her own maid, matters are not improved. For my part, the moment I saw how delicate she was, I thought, though I didn't dare to say so, I thought her husband had acted with great forethought. The maid was strong as an ox, and in putting her in the same condition as his wife he had simply and solely supplied her with a wet-nurse. But then, at this time particularly, women are so unreasonable. Not your good lady—a sweeter disposition—"

Whatever encomium he intended to make remained unfinished. From the room beyond a cry filtered ; he turned hastily and disappeared. The cry subsided ; but presently, as though in the interval the sufferer had found new strength or new torture, it rose more stridently than before. And as the rumor of it augmented and increased, a phrase of the physician's returned to Mistrial. "Everything is going very nicely," he told himself, and began to pace the floor.

A fraction of an hour passed, a second, and a third. The cry now had changed singularly ; it had lost its penetrating volume, it had sunk into the rasping moan of one dreaming in a fever. Suddenly that ceased, the silence was complete, and Mistrial, a trifle puzzled, moved out into the hall. There he caught again the murmur of her voice. This time she was talking very rapidly, in a continuous flow of words. From where he stood Mistrial could not hear what she was saying, and he groped on tip-toe down the hall. As he reached the door of the room in which she was, the sweet and heavy odor of chloroform came out and met him there; but still the flow of words continued uninterruptedly, one after the other, with the incoherence of a nightmare monologuing in a corpse. Then, without transition, in the very middle of a word, a cry of the supremest agony rang out, drowning another, which was but a vague complaint.

"It's a boy," the nurse exclaimed.

And Justine through a rift of consciousness caught and detained the speech. "So much the better," she moaned; "he will never give birth."

V.

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

To this, Mistrial, garbed in black, responded discreetly, "Amen."

He was standing opposite the bier. At his side was Justine. Before him Dr. Gonfallon, rector of the Church of Gethsemane,—of which the deceased had been warden,—was conducting the funeral rites. To the left was Thorold. Throughout the length and breadth of the drawing-room other people stood—a sprinkling of remote connections, former constituents, members of the bar and of the church, a few politicians; these, together with a handful of the helpless to whom the dead statesman had been trustee, counsellor too, and guide, had assembled there in honor of his memory. At the door, sharpening a pencil, was a representative of the Associated Press.

For the past few days obituaries of the Hon. Paul Dunellen varied from six inches to a column in length. One journal alone had been circumspect. No mention of the deceased had appeared in its issues. But in politics that journal had differed with him — a fact which accounted sufficiently for its silence. In the others, however, through biographies more or less exact, fitting tributes had been paid. The *World* gave his picture.

Yet now, as Dr. Gonfallon, in words well calculated to impress, dwelt on the virtues of him that had gone, the tributes of the newspapers seemed perfunctory and trite. Decorously, as was his custom, he began with a platitude. Death, that is terrible to the sinner, radiant to the Christian, imposing to all, was here, he declared, but the dusk of a beautiful day which in departing disclosed cohorts of the Eternal beckoning from their glorious realm. Yet soon he warmed to his work, and eulogies of the deceased fell from him in sonorous periods, round and empty. He spoke of the nobility of his character, the loyalty he displayed, not to friends alone, but to foes as well. He spoke of that integrity in every walk of life which had won for him the title of Honest Paul—a title an emperor might crave and get not. He spoke too of the wealth he had acquired, and drew a moral from the unostentatiousness of his charities, the simplicity of his ways. He dwelt at length on the fact that, however multiple the duties of his station had been, his duty to his Maker was ever first. Then, after a momentary digression, in which he stated how great was the loss of such as he, he alluded to the daughter he had left, to that daughter's husband, sorely afflicted himself, yet, with a manliness worthy of his historic name, comforting the orphan who needed all his comfort now; and immediately from these things he lured another moral—an appeal to fortitude and courage; and winding up with the customary exordium, asked of Death where was its sting.

Where was it indeed? A day or two later Mistrial found time to think of that question and of other matters as well. It was then six weeks since the birth of the child, and Justine, fairer than ever before, was ministering to it in the adjacent room. Now and again he caught the shrill vociferation of its vague complaints. It was a feeble infant, lacking in vitality, distressingly hideous; but it lived, and though it died the next minute, its life had sufficed.

Already the will had been read—a terse document, and to the point; precisely such an one as you would have expected a jurist to make. By it the testator devised his property, real and personal, of whatever nature, kind, and description he died seized, to his former partners in trust for the eldest child of his daughter Justine, to its heirs, executors, and assigns forever. In the event of his daughter's demise without issue, then over, to Guy Thorold, M.D.

No, the sting concerning which Dr. Gonfallon had inquired was to Mistrial undiscerned. There was indeed a prick of it in the knowledge that if the old man had lasted much longer it might have been tough work to settle the bills ; but that was gone now : Honest Paul paid all his debts, and he had not shirked at Nature's due. He was safely and securely dead, six feet under ground at that, and his millions were absolute in his grandson. Yes, absolute. At the thought of it Mistrial laughed. The goal to which for years he had striven was touched and exceeded. He had thrown the vitriol, the opopanax was his.

We all of us pretend to forgive, to overlook, to condone, we pretend even to sympathize with, our enemy. Nay, in refraining from an act that could injure him who has injured us, we are quite apt to consider ourselves the superior of our foe, and not a little inclined to rise to the heights of self-laudatory quotation too. It is an antique virtue, that of forbearance; it is Biblical, nobly Arthurian, and chivalresque. But when we smile at an injury, it is for policy's sake—because we fear, rarely because we truly forgive, more rarely yet because of indifference. Our magnanimity is cowardice. It takes a brave man to wreak a brave revenge.

Mistrial made few pretensions to the virtues which you and I possess. He was relentless as a Sioux, and he was treacherous as the savage is; he had no taste for fair and open fight. However his blood had boiled at the tableau of imaginary wrongs, however fitting the opportunity might have been on the afternoon when he met his enemy at the city's fringe, he had the desire but not the courage to annihilate him there. But later, when the possibility which he had intercepted came, he fêted, he coaxed it; and now that the hour of triumph had rung, his heart was glad. In the disordered closets of his brain he saw Thorold ravening at the trap into which he had fallen, and into which, in falling, he had lost the wherewithal to call the world his own. Ten million in exchange for an embrace! Verily, mused Mistrial, he will account it exceeding dear. And at the thought of what Thorold's frenzy must be, at the picture which he drew of him cursing his own imprudence and telling himself again and again, until the repetition turned into mania, that that imprudence could never be undone, he exulted and laughed aloud.

Money,said Vespasian, has no odor. To our acuter nostrils it has: so nauseating even can it be, that we would rather be flung in the Potter's-field than catch the faintest whiff. But Mistrial, for all the sensitiveness that ancestry is supposed to bring, must have agreed with the Roman. To him it was the woof of every hope; whatever its provenance, it was an Open Sesame to the paradise of the ideal. He would have drawn it with his teeth from a dung-heap, only he would have done it at night.

There are men that can steal a fortune, yet can never cheat at cards, and Mistrial was one of their race; he could not openly dishonor himself in petty ways. Many a scoundrel has a pride of his own. It is both easy and difficult to compare a bandit to a sneak-thief, Napoleon to Cartouche. Mistrial had nothing of the Napoleon about him, and he was lacking even in the strength which Cartouche possessed. But among carpet highwaymen commend me to his peer.

And now, as he thought of the will, Gonfallon's query recurred to him, and he asked himself where was that sting? Not in the present, surely—for that from a bitterness had changed to a delight; and as for the future, each instant of it was sentient with invocations, fulfilled to the tips with the surprises of dream. The day he had claimed but a share in; the morrow was wholly his. He could have a dwelling in

Mayfair and a marble palace on the Mediterranean Sea. For a scrap of paper he would never miss there was a haunt of ghosts dozing on the Grand Canal. In spring, when Paris is at her headiest, there, near that Triumphal Arch which overlooks the Elysian Fields, stood, *entre cour et jardin*, an hôtel which he already viewed as his own. And when he wearied of the Old World, there was the larger and fuller life of the New. There was Peru, there was Mexico and Ecuador; and in those Italys of the Occident were girls whose lips said, Drink me; whose eyes were of chrysoberyl and of jade. *Ah, oui, les femmes; tant que le monde tournera il n'y aura que ça.* With blithe anticipation he hummed the air and snapped his fingers as Capoul was wont to do. At last he saw himself the Roland Mistrial that should have been, prodigal of gold, sultanesque of manner, fêted, courted, welcomed, past-master in the lore and art of love.

There were worlds still to be conquered;

and before his hair grizzled and the furrows came he felt conscious of the possession of a charm that should make those worlds his own. He had waited indeed; he had toiled and manœuvred; but now the great clock we call Opportunity had struck. Let him but ask, and it would be given. Wishes were spaniels; he had but a finger to raise, and they fawned at his feet. And then, as those vistas of which we have all caught a glimpse rose in melting splendor and swooned again through sheer excesses of their own delights, suddenly he bethought him of the multiples of one and of two.

Heretofore he had taken it for granted that if Dunellen left the estate to his grandchild the income accruing therefrom would, until the grandchild came of age, pass through his own paternal hands. And in taking this for granted he had recalled the fable that deals not of the prodigal son, but rather of the prodigal father. That income should spin. By a simple mathematical process than with which no one was more familiar, he calculated that, at five per cent, ten million would represent a rent-roll of five hundred thousand per annum. Of that amount a fraction would suffice to Justine and to her son. The rest —well, the rest he knew of what uses he could put it to.

But now, suddenly, with that abruptness with which disaster looms, there came to him a doubt. He rememorated the provisions of the will, and in them he discerned unprompted some tenet of law or of custom which, during the legal infancy of the child, might inhibit the trustees from paying over any larger amount than was needful for its maintenance and support. Then at once the fabric of his dreams dissolved. The vitriol had corroded, but the savor of the opopanax had gone. For a little while he tormented his mustache and nibbled feverishly at a finger-nail. To see one's self the dupe of one's own devices is never a pleasant sight. Again he interrogated what smattering of law he possessed; but the closer he looked, the clearer it seemed to be that in its entirety the income of the estate could not pass through his hands. From five hundred thousand the trustees might in their judgment diminish it to some such pocket-money as ten; they could even reduce it to five; and, barring an action, he might be unable to persuade them that the sum was absurd. The idea, nude and revolting as Truth ever is, raised him to an unaccustomed height of rage; he would not be balked, he declared to himself; he would have that money or—

Or what? The contingency which he then interviewed, one which issued unsummoned from some cavern in his mind, little by little assumed a definite shape. He needed no knowledge of the law to tell him that he was that brat's heir. Did it die at that very moment the estate became absolute in him. There would be no trustees then to dole the income out. The ten millions would be his own. As for the trustees, they could deduct their commission and retire with it to New Jersey—to hell if it pleased them more. But the estate would be his. That there was no gainsaying. Meanwhile, there was the brat. He was a feeble child ; yet such, Mistrial understood, had Methusaleh been. He might live forever, or die on the morrow. And why not that night?

As this query came to him, he eyed its advance. It was yet some distance away, but as it approached he considered it from every side. And of sides, parenthetically, it had many. And still it advanced : when it started, its movements were so slow they had been hardly perceptible ; nevertheless it had made some progress ; then surer on its feet it tried to run ; it succeeded in the effort ; at each step it grew sturdier, swifter in speed ; and now that it reached him it was with such a rush that he was overpowered by its force.

He rose from his seat. For a moment

he hesitated. To his forehead and about his ears a moisture had come. He drew out a handkerchief; it was of silk, he noticed—one that he brought from France. Absently he drew it across his face; its texture had detained his thought. Then on tiptoe he moved out into the corridor and peered into the room at the end of the hall.

It was dimly lighted, but soon he accustomed himself to the shadows and fumbled them with his eyes. On the bed Justine lay; sleep had overtaken her; her head was aslant on the pillow, her lips half closed; the fingers of one hand cushioned her neck; the other hand, outstretched, rested on the edge of a cradle. She had been rocking it, perhaps. From the floor above sank the sauntering tremolo of a flute, very sweet in the distance, muffled by the ceiling and wholly subdued. In the street a dray was passing, belated and clamorous on the cobblestones. But now, as Mistrial ventured in, these things must have lulled

Justine into yet deeper sleep; her breath came and went with the semibreves a leaf uses when it whispers to the night; and as he moved nearer and bent over her the whiteness of her breast rose and fell in unison with that breath. Yes, surely she slept, but it was with that wary sleep that dogs and mothers share. A movement of that child's and she might awake, alert at once, her senses wholly recovered, her mind undazed.

Mistrial, assured of her slumber, turned from the bed to the cradle, and for a minute, two perhaps, he stood, the eyebrows raised, the handkerchief pendent in his hand, contemplating the occupant. And it was this bundle of flesh and blood, this lobster-hued animal, that lacked the intelligence a sightless kitten has,—it was this that should debar him! *Allons donc!*

His face had grown livid, and his hand shook just a little; not with fear, however, though if it were it must have been the temerity of his own courage that frightened him. At the handkerchief which he held he glanced again; one twist of it round that infant's throat, a minute in which to hold it taut, and it would be back in his pocket, leaving strangulation and death behind, yet not a mark to tell the tale. One minute only he needed, two at most; he bent nearer, and as he bent he looked over at his wife; but still she slept, her breath coming and going with the same regular cadence as before, the whiteness of her breast still heaving; then very gently, with fingers that were nervously assured, he ran the handkerchief under the infant's neck: but however deftly he had done it, the chill of the silk must have troubled the child; its under lip quivered, then both compressed, the flesh about the cheekbones furrowed, the mouth relaxed, and from it issued the whimper of unconscious plaint. The call may have stirred the mother in some dream, for a smile hovered in her features; yet immediately her eyes opened, she half rose, her hand fell to her side, and, reaching out, she caught and held the infant to her.

"My darling," she murmured; and as the child, soothed already, drowsed back again into slumber, she turned to where her husband stood. "What is it?"

From above, the tremolo of the flute still descended; but the dray long since had passed, and the street now was quiet.

"What is it?" she repeated. She seemed more surprised than pleased to see him there.

Mistrial, balked in the attempt, had straightened himself; he looked annoyed and restless.

"Nothing," he answered, and thrust the handkerchief back in his pocket, as a bandit sheathes his dirk. "Nothing. I heard that bastard bawling, and I came in to make him stop."

"Bastard? Is it in that way you speak of your child?"

As she said this she made no visible movement; yet something in her attitude, the manner in which she held herself, seemed to bid him hold his peace, and this he noticed, and in noticing resented. "There," he muttered; "drop the Grand Duchess, will you? The brat is Thorold's; you know it, and so do I."

For a little space she stared as though uncertain she had heard aright, but the speech must have re-echoed in her ears; she had been sitting up, yet now as the echo reached her she drooped on the pillow and let her head fall back. In her arms the child still drowsed. And presently a tear rolled down her face, then another.

"Roland Mistrial, you have broken my heart at last."

That was all; the ultimate words even were scarcely audible; but the tears continued—the first succeeded by others, unstanched and undetained. Grief had claimed her as its own. She made no effort to rebel; she lay as though an agony had come from which no surcease can be.

And as one tear after the other passed down and seared her face there was a silence so deathly, so tangible, and so convincing, that he needed no further sign from her to tell him that the charge was false. In all his intercourse with her, whatever cause of complaint there had been, never had he seen her weep before; and now at this unawaited evidence of the injustice and ignominy of his reproach he wished she would be defiant again, that he might argue and confute. But no word came from her—barely a sob; nothing, in fact, save these tears, which he had never seen before. And while he stood there, visited by the perplexity of him to whom the unawaited comes, unconsciously he went back to the wooing of her: he saw her clear eyes lifted in confidence to his own, he heard again the sweet confession of her love, he recalled the marks and tokens of her trust, and when for him she had left her father's house; he saw her ever, sweet by nature, tender-hearted, striving at each misdeed of his to show him that in her arms there was forgiveness still. And he recalled too the affronts he had put upon her, the baseness of his calculations, the selfishness of his life; he saw the misery he had inflicted, the affection he had beguiled, the hope he had tricked, and for climax there was this supreme reproach, of which he knew now no woman in all the world was less deserving than was she. And still the tears unstanched and undetained passed down and seared her cheeks; in the mortal wound he had aimed at her womanhood all else seemingly was forgot. She did not even move, and lay, her child tight clasped, the image of Maternity inhabited by Regret.

And such regret! Mistrial, unprompted, could divine it all. The regret of love misplaced, of illusions spent, the regret of harboring a ruffian and thinking him a knight. Yes, he could divine it all; and then, as such things can be, he grieved a moment for himself.

But soon the present returned. Justine still was weeping; he no longer saw her tears, he heard them. Surely she would forgive again. It could not be that everything had gone for naught. He would speak to her, plead if need were, and in the end she would yield. She must do that, he told himself, and he groped after some falsity that should palliate the offence. He would tell her that he had been drinking again; he would deny his own words, or, if necessary, he would insist she had not heard them aright. Indeed, there was nothing that might have weight with her which he was not ready and anxious to affirm. If she would but begin, if in some splendor of indignation such as he had beheld before she would rise up and upbraid him, his task would be diminished by half. Anything, indeed, would be better than this, and nothing could be worse; it was not Justine alone that the tears were carrying from him, it was the Dunellen millions as well. Oh, abysses of the human heart! As he queried with himself, at the very moment he was experiencing his first remorse, the old self returned, and it was less of the injury he had inflicted that he thought than of the counter-effect that injury might have on him. In the attempt to throttle the child he had been balked, yet of that attempt he believed Justine to be suspicionless. Other opportunities he would have in plenty; and even were it otherwise, the child was weakly, and croup might do its work. With the future for which he had striven, there, in the very palm of his hand, how was it possible that he should have made this misstep? But he could retrieve it, he told himself; he was a good actor, it was not too late. For a little while yet he could still support the mask, and, recalling the sentimental reveries of a moment before, the forerunner of a sneer came and loitered beneath the fringes of his mustache.

"Justine!" He moved a step or two to where she lay. "Justine—"

His voice was very low and penitent, but at the sound of it she seemed to shrink. "Could she *know?*" he wondered.

Then immediately, through the scantiness of the apartment, he heard the outer bell resound. Enervated as he was, the interruption affected him like a barb. There was some one there whom he could vent his irritation on. He hurried to the hall, but a servant had preceded him. The door was open, and on the threshold Thorold stood.

Mistrial nodded—the nod of one who is about to throw his coat aside and roll his shirt-sleeves up. "Is it for your bill you come?" he asked.

Thorold hesitated, and his face grew very black. He affected, however, to ignore the taunt. He turned to the servant that still was waiting there. "Is my cousin at home?" he asked.

"She is," Mistrial announced, "but not to you."

"In that case," Thorold answered, "I must speak to someone in her stead."

Mistrial made a gesture, and the servant withdrew.

"I have to inform my cousin," Thorold continued, "that Mr. Metuchen came to me this evening and said that when my uncle died he was in debt—"

"Stuff and nonsense!"

"He asked me to come and acquaint Justine with the facts. They are here." With this Thorold produced a roll of papers. "Be good enough to explain to her," he added, "that this is the inventory of the estate." And, extending the documents to his host, he turned and disappeared.

In the cataleptic attitude of one standing to be photographed Mistrial listened to the retreating steps; he heard Thorold descend the stairs, cross the vestibule, and pass from the house. It seemed to him even that he caught the sound of his footfall on the pavement without. But presently that, too, had gone. He turned and looked down the hall. Justine's door was closed. Then at once, without seeking a seat, he fumbled through the papers that he held. The gas-jet above his head fell on the rigid lines. In the absence of collusion—and from whence should such a thing come?—in the absence of that, they were crystal in their clarity.

There were the assets. Shares in mines that did not exist, bonds of railways that were bankrupt, loans on Western swamps, the house on Madison Avenue, mortgaged to its utmost value, property on the Riverside, ditto. And so on and so forth till the eye wearied and the heart sickened of the catalogue. Then came the debit account. Amounts due to this estate, to that, and to the other, a list of items extending down an entire page of foolscap and extending over onto the next. There a balance had been struck. Instead of millions Honest Paul had left dishonor. Swindled by the living, he had swindled the dead.

"So much for trusting a man that bawls Amen in church," mused Mistrial.

As yet the completeness and amplitude of the disaster had not reached him. While he ran the papers over he feigned to himself that it was all some trick of Thorold's, one that he would presently see through and understand; and even as he grasped the fact that it was not a trick at all, that it was truth duly signed and attested, even then the disaster seemed remote, affecting him only after the manner of that wound which, received in the heat of battle, is unnoticed by the victim until its gravity makes him reel. Then at once in the distance the future on which he had counted faded and grew blank. Where it had been brilliant it was obscure, and that obscurity, increasing, walled back the horizon and reached up and extended from earth to sky. The papers fell from his nerveless hand, fright had visited him, and he wheeled like a rat surprised. Surely, he reflected, if safety there were or could be, that safety was with Justine.

In a moment he was at her door. He tried it. It was locked. He beat upon it and called aloud, "Justine."

No answer came. He bent his head and listened. Through the woodwork he could hear but the faintest rustle, and he called again, "Justine."

Then from within came the melody of her voice: "Who is it?"

"It is I," he answered, and straightened himself. It seemed odd to him she did not open the door at once. "I want a word with you," he added, after a pause. But still the door was locked.

"Justine," he called again, "do you not hear me? I want to speak to you."

Then through the slender woodwork at his side a whisper filtered, the dumb voice of one whom madness may have in charge.

"It is not to speak you come, it is to kill."

"Justine!" he cried. All the agony of his life he distilled into her name, "Justine!"

"You killed your child before, you shall not kill another now."

VI.

"City Hall!"

The brakemen were shouting the station through the emptiness of the "Elevated."

In the car in which Mistrial sat a drunken sailor lolled, and a pretty girl of the Sixth Avenue type was eating a confection. Above her, on a panel opposite, the advertisement of a cough remedy shone in blue; beyond was a particolored notice of tennis blazers: and, between them, a text from Mark, in black letters, jumped out from a background of white:

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

During the journey from his home Mistrial had contemplated that text. Not continuously, however. For a little space his eyes had grazed the retreating throngs over which the train was hurrying, and had rested on the insufferable ugliness of the Bowery. Once, too, he had found himself staring at the girl who sat opposite, and once he had detected within him some envy of the sailor sprawling at her side. But, all the while, that text was with him, and to the jar of the car he repeated for refrain a paraphrase of his own: "How shall it damage a man if he lose his own soul and gain the whole world?"

How indeed? Surely he had tried. For three years the effort had been constant. It was because of it he had married, it was for this he had sought to throttle his child. What his failure had been, Dunellen's posthumous felony and Justine's ultimate reproach indistinctly yet clearly conveyed. No, the world was not gained; he had played his best and he had lost: he could never recover it now.

And as the brakeman bawled in his face, the paraphrase of the text was with him. He rose and passed from the car. Beneath he could discern a grass-plot of the City Park. In spite of the night it was visibly green. The sky was leaden as a military uniform that has been dragged through the mud. From a window of the Tribune Building came a vomit of vapor. And above in a steeple a clock marked twelve.

The stairway led him down to the street. For a moment he hesitated; the locality was unfamiliar. But a toll-gate attracted him ; he approached it, paid a penny, and moved onto the bridge. There, he discovered that on either side of him were iron fences and iron rails ; he was on the middle of the bridge, not at the side. A train shot by. He turned again and reissued from the gate.

On the corner was another entrance, and through it he saw a carriage pass. It was that way, he knew ; and he would have followed the carriage, but a policeman touched him on the arm.

"Got a permit?"

Mistrial shook his head. Why should

he have a permit? And, moved perhaps by the mute surprise his face expressed, the policeman explained that the ordinary pedestrian was allowed to cross only through the safeguards of the middle path.

"I will get a cab," he reflected, and for his convenience he discerned one loitering across the way. This he entered, gave an order to the driver, and presently, after paying another toll, rolled off the stonework on to wood.

He craned his neck. Just beyond, a column of stone rose inordinately to the lowering sky; he could see the water-front of the city; opposite was Brooklyn, and in front the lights of Staten Island glowed distantly and dim. The cab was moving slowly. He took some coin from his pocket, placed it on the seat, opened the door, and, stepping from the moving vehicle, looked at the driver. The latter, however, had not noticed him and was continuing his way leisurely over the bridge and on and into the night. Mistrial let him go undetained.

He had work now to do, and it was necessary for him to do it quickly; at any moment another carriage might pass or some one happen that way.

Beneath, far down, a barge was moving. He could see the lights; they approached the bridge and vanished within it. The railing, now, he saw was too high to vault, and moreover there was a bar above it that might interfere. He tossed his hat aside and clambered on the iron rail.

"You'll get six months for that," some one was crying.

But to the threat Mistrial paid no heed He had crossed the rail, his hands relaxed, and just as he dropped straight down to the river below, he could see a policeman, his club uplifted, hanging over the fence, promising him the pleasures of imprisonment. Such was his last glimpse of earth. A multitude of lights danced before his eyes; every nerve in his body tingled; his ears were filled with sudden sounds; he felt himself incased in ice; then something snapped, and all was blank.

The next day a rumor of the suicide was bruited through the clubs.

"What do you think of it, Jones?" Yarde asked.

The novelist plucked at his beard. There were times when he himself did not know what he thought. In this instance, however, he had already learned of the disaster that had overtaken the Dunellen estate, and weaving two and two sagaciously together, he answered with a shrug.

"What do I think of it? I think he died like a man who knew how to live"—an epitaph which pleased him so much that he got his card-case out and wrote it down.

THE END.

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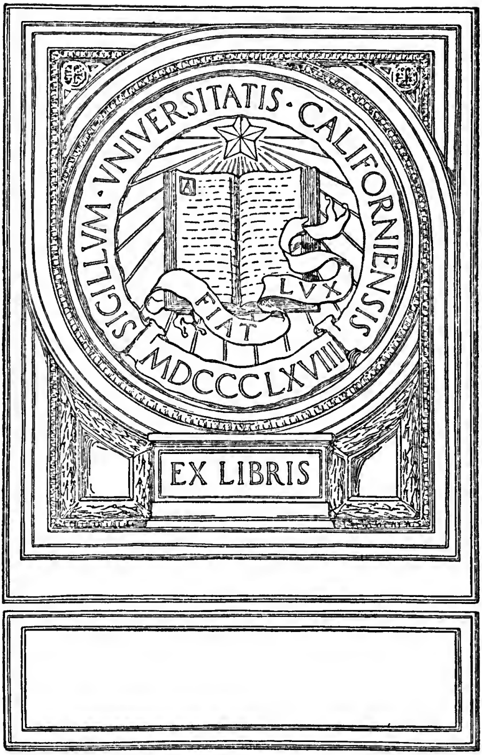

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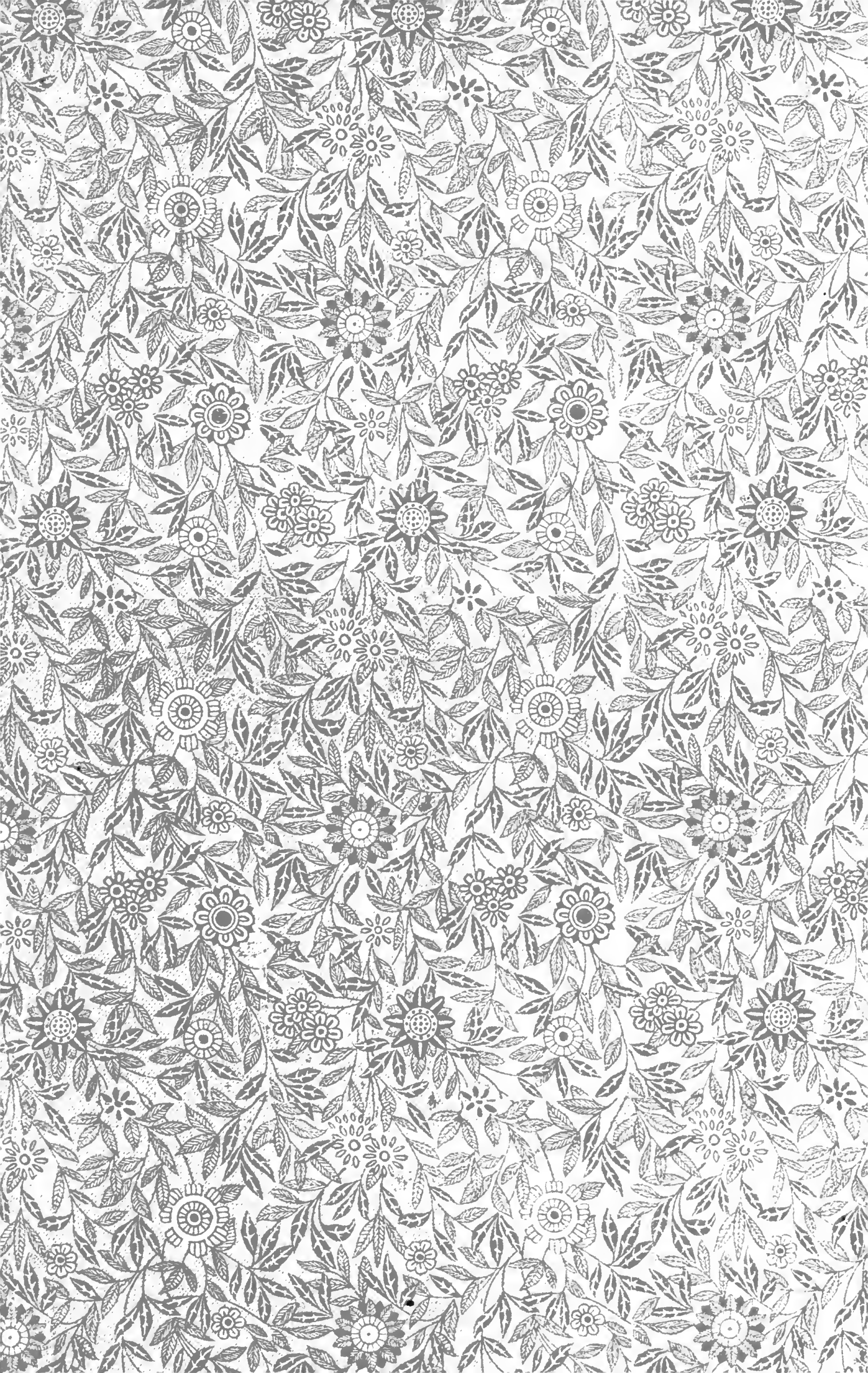

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EDEN

EDEN

AN EPISODE

BY

EDGAR SALTUS

"*Perduto è tutto il tempo che in amar non si spende.*"
—TASSO.

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AMICISSIMA

New York, 15*th May*, 1888.

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EDEN

I.

It was not until Miss Menemon's engagement to John Usselex was made public that the world in which that young lady moved manifested any interest in her future husband. Then, abruptly, a variety of rumors were circulated concerning him. It was said, for instance, that his real name was Tchurchenthaler and that his boyhood had been passed tending geese in a remote Bavarian dorf, from which, to avoid military service, he had subsequently fled. Again, it was affirmed that in Denmark he was known as Baron Varvedsen, and that he had come to this country not to avoid military service, but the death penalty, which whoso strikes a prince of the blood incurs. Others had heard that he was neither Bavarian nor Dane, but the outlawed nephew of a Flemish money-lender whose case he had rifled and whose daughter he had debauched. And there were other people who held that he had found Vienna uninhabitable owing to the number of persistent creditors which that delightful city contained.

In this conflict of gossip the real facts were as difficult of discovery as the truth about Kaspar Hauser, and in view of the divergence of rumors there were people sensible enough to maintain that as these rumors could not all be true, they might all be false. Among the latter was Usselex himself. His own account of his antecedents was to the effect that his father was a Cornishman, his mother a Swiss governess, and that he had been brought up by the latter in Bâle, from which city he had at an early age set out to make his fortune. Whether or not this statement was exact is a matter of minor moment. In any event, supposing for argument's sake that he had more names than are necessary, has not Vishnu a thousand? And as for debts, did not Cæsar owe a hundred million sesterces? But however true or untrue his own account of himself may have been, certain it was that he spoke three languages with the same accent, and that a decennary or so after landing at Castle Garden his name was familiar to everyone connected with banks and banking.

At the time contemporaneous to the episodes with which these pages have to deal John Usselex had reached that age in which men begin to take an interest in hair restorers. In his face was the pallor of a plaster-cast, his features were correct and coercive, in person he was about the average height, slim and well-preserved. He carried glasses rimmed with tortoise-shell. He wore a beard cut fan-shape and a moustache with drooping ends. Both were gray. In moments of displeasure he smiled, but behind the glasses no merriment was discernible; when they were removed his eyes glowed luminous and shrewd, and in them was a glitter that suggested a reflection caught from the handling and glare of gold. In the financial acceptation of the term he was good; he was at the head of a house that possessed the confidence of the Street, his foreign correspondents were of the best, but in the inner circles of New York life he was as unknown as Ischwanbrat.

Miss Menemon, on the other hand, had no foreign correspondents, but in the circles alluded to she was thoroughly at home. Her father, Mr. Petrus Menemon, was not accounted rich, but he came of excellent stock, and her mother, long since deceased, had been an Imryck. Now, to be an Imryck, to say nothing of being a Menemon, is to be Somebody. Miss Menemon, moreover, was not quite twenty-two years of age. To nine people out of ten she represented little else than the result of the union of an Imryck and a Menemon; but to the tenth, particularly when the tenth happened to be a man, she was as attractive a girl as New York could produce. As a child she had not been noticeably pretty, but when, as the phrase is, she came out, she was assuredly fair to see. She was slight and dark of hair, her face was like the cameo of a Neapolitan boy, but her eyes were not black, they were of that sultry blue which is observable in the ascension of tobacco-smoke through a sunbeam; and about her mouth and in the carriage of her head was something that reminded you of the alertness and expectancy of a bird. She was not innocent, if innocence be taken in the sense of ignorance, but she was clean of mind, of eye, and of tongue. She had been better instructed than the majority of society girls, or, if not better instructed, at least she had read more, and this perhaps, because on emerging from the nursery her father's first care had been to make her unafraid of books.

Petrus Menemon himself was a tall, spare man, scrupulous as to his dress, and quiet of manner. In his face was the expression of one who is not altogether satisfied, and yet wishes everyone else to be content. He had an acquired ignorance which he called agnosticism. He enjoyed the formidable reputation of being well-read; but it is only just to explain that he was well read chiefly in the archaic sense—in the bores and pedants of antiquity. Yet, if his taste was stilted, he made no effort to inculcate that taste in his daughter; he gave her the run of the library and allowed her to drag from the Valhalla of the back bookshelves what friends and relatives she chose. Indeed, his attitude to her was one of habitual indulgence. By nature she was as capricious as a day in February, a compound of sunlight, of promise, and of snow; and when she was wilful—and she was often that—he made no effort to coerce, he argued with her as one might with a grown person, seriously, and without anger. And something of that seriousness she caught from him, and with it confidence in his wisdom and trust in his love. To her thinking no one in all the world was superior to that gentle-mannered man.

When she left the nursery she was supplied with a governess, and as she grew older, with masters of different arts and tongues. But as a child she was often lonely, and the children whom she saw playing in the streets were to her objects of indignant envy. On Sunday it was her father's custom to take her to morning service, and afterward to her grandmother, a lady who lived alone in a giant house in South Washington Square, in the upper rooms of which the child was persuaded that coffins lay stored in heaps. During these visits, which were continued every Sunday until the old lady died, an invariable programme was observed: the child repeated the catechism, recited a verse from the hymnal, after which she was gratified with sponge-cake and a glass of milk, and then was permitted to look at the pictures in a large Bible, in which, by way of frontispiece, was an engraving of a man with a white beard, whom her grandmother said was God. Such, with the exception of tiresome promenades on Second Avenue, where her father's house was situated, such were her relaxations.

And so it came about that in the enforced loneliness of her childhood she ransacked a library in which the "Picara Justina" of Fray Andrs Perez stood side-by-side with the Kalevala, a library in which works stupid as the Koran and dead as Coptic touched covers with the "Idyls of the King" and the fabliaux of mediæval France. Soon she had made friends with the heroes and heroines that are the caryatides of the book-shelves. In their triumphs she exulted; by their failures she was depressed. At the age of thirteen she spoke of King Arthur as though he were her first cousin. The next year she was in love with Amadis of Gaul.

A little later she hung on the wall of her bedroom a bit of embroidery of her own manufacture, a square piece of watered silk, on which in bold relief stood the characters 60 H, a device understood by no one but herself, one which her imagination had evolved out of the aridity of a French copybook, and which each night and each morning said to her, *Sois sans tache.*

Indeed, her brain had been the haunt of many an odd conceit, the home of fays and goblins. Her imagination was always a garden to her except when it happened to be a morass. She had not only castles in Spain, she had dungeons as well; and of them she was architect, mason, and inhabitant too. It was her mood—a circumstance aiding—that dowered her fancy with wings. Now she would be transported to new horizons where multicolored suns battened on intervales of unsuspected charm, now she would be tossed into the opacity of an abyss where there would not be so much as a goaf for resting-place. Now Pleasure would lord the day, now the sceptre would be held by Pain. As often as not the intonation of a voice, the expression of a face, any incident however trivial would suffice, and at once a panorama would unroll, with no one but herself for spectator. As she grew older her mind became more staid, its changes and convolutions less frequent. The goblins were replaced by glyptodons, Perrault by Darwin. But the prismatic quality of her fancy remained unimpaired. She garmented everyone with its rays. Those who were nearest to her enjoyed the gayest hues; in others she looked steadfastly for the best.

And yet, in spite of this, or precisely on that account, no one was ever better able to distort trifles into nuclei of doubt. In brief, she was March one minute and May the next. Apropos of some misunderstanding, her father said to her jestingly one day, "Eden, did you ever hear of such a thing as hemiopia?" The girl shook her head. "Well," he continued, "there is a disease of that name which affects the eye in such a manner that only half the object looked at is seen. Don't you think you had better consult an oculist?"

Meanwhile her education had been completed by Shakspere. Love she had learned of Juliet, jealousy of Othello. But of despair Hamlet had been incompetent to teach. She was instinct with generous indignations, enthusiastic of great deeds, and through the quality of her temperament unable to reason herself into an understanding of the base. When she "came out" she found herself unable to share the excited interest which girls of her age exhibited in Delmonico balls. At the dinners and dances to which she was bidden, she was chilled at the discovery that platitude reigned. As a rule, the younger men fought shy of her. She acquired the reputation of making disquieting answers and remarks of curious inappositeness. But now and then she met people that found her singularly attractive and whose hearts went out to her at once, yet these were always people with whom she fancied herself in sympathetic rapport.

Among this class was a man who succeeded Amadis. His name was Dugald Maule; he was six or seven years her senior, and by profession an attorney and counsellor-at-law. It should be noted, however, that he did not look like one. He looked like an athlete that had taken honors, a man to be admired by women and respected by men. In private theatricals he was much applauded. He had studied law in the hope of being judge, and in being judge of pronouncing the death sentence. He could imagine no superber rôle than that. To him, after months of self-examination, Eden Menemon surrendered her heart. The surrender was indeed difficult, but as surrenders go it was complete, The threads by which he succeeded in attaching her to him it is unnecessary to describe. Suffice it to say that little by little she grew to believe that in him the impeccable resided. She had accustomed herself to consider love in the light of a plant which if rightly tended would bloom into a witherless rose. She had told him this, and together they had watched the bud expand, and when at last it was fulfilled to the tips he saw it in her eyes. That evening, when he had gone, the sense of happiness was so acute that she became quasi-hysterical. The joy of love, slowly intercepted and then wholly revealed, vibrated through the chords of her being, overwhelming her with the force of an unexperienced emotion, and throwing her for relief into a paroxysm of tears. Then followed a day of wonder, in which hallucinations of delight alternated with tremors of self-depreciation. It seemed to her that she was unworthy of such an one as he. For, to her, in her inexperience, he was perfection indeed, one unsulliable and mailed in right. And then, abruptly, as such things occur, without so much as a monition, she read in public print that he had been summoned as a co-respondent. To overwrought nerves as were hers, the announcement was rapider in its effect than a microbe. A fever came that was obliterating as the morrow of steps on the sand. For a week she was delirious, and when at last she left her room the expression of her face had altered. She felt no anger, only an immense distrust of the validity of her intuitions. Had Dugald Maule been in trouble, she would have, if need were, forsaken life for his sake; but the Dugald Maule for whom she would have been brave had existed only in her own imagination. It was this that brought the fever, and when the fever went, disgust came in its place. It was then that the expression of face altered. She looked like one who is done with love. Presently, and while she was still convalescent, her father sent her abroad with friends, and when she returned, Dugald Maule had to her the reality of a bad dream, a nightmare that she might have experienced in the broad light of an earlier day.

In the course of that winter it so happened that her father one evening brought in to dinner a man whom he introduced as Mr. Usselex. Eden had never seen him before and for the moment she did not experience any notable desire to see him again. She attended, however, with becoming grace to the duties of hostess, and as the conversation between her father and his guest circled in and over stocks, she was not called upon to contribute to the entertainment. When coffee was served she went to her own room and promptly forgot that Mr. Usselex existed.

But in a few days there was Crispin again. On this occasion Eden gave him a larger share of attention than she had previously accorded. There were certain things that she noticed, there was an atmosphere about him which differed from that which other men exhaled. In the tones of his voice were evocations of fancies. He seemed like one who had battled and had won. There was an unusualness in him which impressed and irritated her simultaneously. It was annoying to her that he should intrude, however transiently, into the precincts of her thought. And when he had gone she took her father to task: "What do you have that man to dinner for?" she asked. "Who is he?"

Mr. Menemon, who was looking out of the window, announced that it was snowing, then he turned to her. "Eden," he said, "I am sorry. If you object he need not come again. Really," he continued, after a moment, "I wish you could see your way to being civil to him."

"Surely I am that," she answered.

To this Mr. Menemon assented. "The matter is this," he said. "While you were abroad I became interested in a mine; he is trying to get me out of it. He is something of a prophet, I take it. Though, as yet," he added despondently, "his prophecies have not been realized."

"Then he is a philosopher," said Eden, with a smile; and her father, smiling too, turned again to interview the night.

Thereafter Mr. Usselex was a frequent

guest, and presently Eden discovered that her annoyance had disappeared.

The people whom we admire at first sight are rarely capable of prolonging that admiration, and when circumstances bring us into contact with those that have seemed antipathetic, it not infrequently happens that the antipathy is lost. It was much this way with Eden. Little by little, through channels unperceived, the early distaste departed. Hitherto the world had held for her but one class of individuals, the people whom she liked. All others belonged to the landscape. But this guest of her father's suggested a new category; he aroused her curiosity. He left the landscape; he became a blur on it, but a blur on which she strained her eyes. The antipathy departed, and she discovered herself taking pleasure in the speech of one who had originally affected her as a scarabæus must affect the rose.

She discerned in him unsuspected dimensions. He was at home in recondite matters, and yet capable of shedding new light on threadbare themes. During discussions between him and her father at which she assisted she gained an insight into bi-metallism, free trade even, and subjects of like import, the which hitherto she had regarded as abstract diseases created for the affliction of politicians and editorial hacks. He was at home too in larger issues, in the cunning of Ottoman tactics and the beat of drums at Kandahar. Concerning King Arthur he was vague, but he had the power to startle her with new perspectives, the possibilities of dynamics, the abolition of time, the sequestration and conquest of space. And as he spoke easily, fluently, in the ungesticulatory fashion of those that know whereof they speak, more than once she fell to wondering as to the cause of that early dislike. In such wise was Desdemona won.

It so happened that one evening she chanced to dine with a friend of hers, Mrs. Nicholas Manhattan by name, a lady whose sources of social information were large. Among other guests was Alphabet Jones, the novelist.

"Did you ever hear of Mr. Usselex?" Eden asked, over the sweets.

Mrs. Manhattan visibly drew on the invisible cap of thought. "Never heard of him," she presently exclaimed, as one who should say, "and for me not to have heard argues him unknown."

But Jones was there, and he slipped his oar in at once. "I know him," he answered. "He is the son of a shoemaker. No end of money! Some years ago a cashier of his did the embezzlement act, but Usselex declined to prosecute."

"Yes, that is like him," said Eden.

"Ah! you know him, then?" and Jones looked at her. "Well," he continued, "the cashier was sent up all the same. He had a wife, it appeared, and children. Usselex gave them enough to live on, and more too, I believe."

"He must have done it very simply."

"Why, you must know him well!" Jones exclaimed; and the conversation changed.

Meanwhile winter dragged itself along, and abruptly, as is usual with our winters, disappeared. In its stead came a spring that was languider than summer. Fifth Avenue was bright with smart bonnets and gowns of conservatory hues. During the winter months Mr. Menemon's face had been distressed as the pavements, but now it was entirely serene.

It was evident to Eden that Mr. Usselex was not a philosopher alone, but a prophet as well. Concerning him her store of information had increased.

Toward the end of May her father spoke to her about him and about his success with the mine. He seemed pleased, yet nervous. "I saw him this afternoon," he said; "he is to be here shortly. H'm! I am obliged to go to the club for a moment. Will you—would you mind seeing him in my absence?" For a moment he moved uneasily about and then left the room. Eden looked after him in wonder, and took up the *Post.* And as her eyes loitered over the columns the bell rang; her face flushed, and presently she was aware of Usselex' presence.

"What is this my father tells me?" she asked, by way of greeting.

"What is it?" he echoed; he had found a chair and sat like Thor in the court of Utgarda.

"About the mine and all that."

The man eyed her enquiringly for an instant and picked at his cuff. "Let me ask you a question," he said: "Did your father say nothing except about the mine?"

"No, not that I remember, except to imply that you—that he—no, he said nothing worth repeating."

"In finding you alone I supposed he had told you that—"

"That the mine—"

"That I love you."

In the corner of the room was a great colonial clock. Through the silence that followed it ticked sleepily, as though yawning at the avowal. Mr. Usselex had bent forward; he watched the girl. She was occupied in tearing little slips from the paper which lay in her lap. She did not seem to have heard him at all.

"Miss Menemon," he continued, "I express myself badly. Do not even take the trouble to say that you do not care for me. It is impossible that you should. You know nothing of me; you—"

"Oh, but I do though," the girl exclaimed. "The other day, a month or two ago, I have forgotten, someone said your father was a shoemaker, and what not about you beside. Oh, I know a great deal—"

"Then, Miss Menemon, you must know the penalty which is paid for success." He straightened himself, the awkwardness had left him, and he seemed taller than when he entered the room. "Yes," he continued, "the door to success is very low, and the greater is he that bends the most. Let a man succeed in any one thing, and whatever may be the factors with which that success is achieved, Envy will call a host of enemies into being as swiftly as Cadmus summoned his soldiery. And these enemies will come not alone from the outer world, but from the ranks of his nearest friends. Ruin a man's home, he may forget it. But excel him, do him a favor, show yourself in any light his superior, then indeed is the affront great. Mediocrity is unforgiving. We pretend to admire greatness, but we isolate it and call that isolation Fame. It is above us; we cannot touch it; but mud is plentiful and that we can throw. And if no mud be at hand, we can loose that active abstraction, malice, which subsists on men and things. No; had I an enemy I could wish him no greater penance than success—success prompt, vertiginous, immense! To the world, as I have found it, success is a crime, and its atonement, not death, but torture. Truly, Miss Menemon, humanity is not admirable. Men mean well enough, no doubt; but nature is against them. Libel is the tribute that failure pays to success. If I am slandered, it is because I have succeeded. But what is said of my father is wholly true. He did make shoes, God bless him! and very good shoes they were. Pardon me for not having said so before."

Eden listened as were she assisting at the soliloquy of an engastrimuth. The words he uttered seemed to come less from him than from one unknown yet not undevined. And now, as he paused for encouragement or rebuke, he saw that her eyes were in his.

"Miss Menemon," he continued, "forget my outer envelope; if you could read in my heart, you would find it full of love for you."

"Perhaps," she said, and smiled as at a vista visible only to herself. "I will tell my father what you say," she added demurely.

With that answer Mr. Usselex was fain to be content. And presently, when he had gone, she wondered how it was that she had ever cared for Dugald Maule.

A week later the engagement of Miss Menemon to John Usselex was announced. Much comment was excited, and the rumors alluded to were industriously circulated. But comment and rumors notwithstanding, the marriage took place, and after it the bride left her father's dingy little house on Second Avenue for a newer and larger one on Fifth. Many people had envied Usselex his wealth; on that day they envied him his bride.

II.

It was late in November before Eden found herself in full possession of her new home. Shortly after the ceremony she had gone to Newport, aud when summer departed she made for Lennox, which she deserted for

Tuxedo. It was therefore not until the beginning of winter that the brown hollands were removed from her town residence.

During the intervening months she had been wholly content. She had not led the existence of which at sixteen she had dreamed in the recesses of her father's library, nor yet such an one as Dugald Maule had had the ability to suggest. On the other hand, she had for her husband something that was more than love. She regarded him as one of the coefficients of the age. Among the rumors which her engagement created was one to the effect that she was to be used as Open Sesame to doors hitherto closed to him; and this rumor, like the others, some fair little demon of a friend had whispered in her ear. But the possibility of such a *quid pro quo* had left her undisturbed. If a privilege paltry as that were hers to bestow, there was indeed no reason why she should begrudge it.

It so happened, however, that she was not called upon to make the slightest effort in that direction. Everybody discussed the marriage, and at the wedding, as is usually the case, the front seats were occupied by those who had said the most in its disfavor. At Newport there was a fleeting hesitation. But the exclusion of the bride from entertainments being practically impossible, and moreover, as it is not considered seemly to invite a wife and overlook a husband, both were bidden; and to the surprise of many it was discovered that Usselex had not only as fine an air as many of the foreign noblemen that passed that way, but that he even possessed a keener appreciation of conventionalities. Added to this his wealth was reported to be fabulous. What more could Newport ask? If his origin was more or less dubious, were there not many whose origins were worse than dubious, whose origins were *known?* Indeed, not everyone was qualified to throw a stone, and gradually any thought of stone-throwing was dismissed. His opponents became his supporters, and after the *villegiatura* at Lennox and at Tuxedo no further question was raised.

In returning to town therefore, Eden was wholly content. She had married a man of whom she was proud, a man who, while subservient to her slightest wish, had taught her what love might be. Altogether, the world seemed larger, and she felt fully prepared to do her duty in that sphere of life to which God had called her.

That sphere of life, she presently discovered, was to be co-tenanted by her husband's secretary. Usselex had mentioned his existence on more than one incidental occasion, but after each mention the actuality of that existence had escaped her; and a week or so after her return to town she found herself mediocrally pleased at learning that he would probably be a frequent guest at her dinner-table.

In answer to the query which her eyebrows took on at this intelligence, Usselex explained that now and then, through stress of business, he was in Wall Street unable to provide the individual in question with his fullest instructions, and for that reason it was expedient for him to have the man of an evening at the house. Immediately Eden's fancy evoked the confidential clerk of the London stage, a withered bookkeeper, shiny of garment, awkward of manner, round of shoulder, square of nail, explosive with figures, and covered with warts, and on the evening in which the secretary was to make his initial appearance she weaponed herself with a vinaigrette.

But of the vinaigrette she had no need whatever. The secretary entered the drawing-room with the unembarrassed step of a somnambulist. His manner was that of one aware that the best manner consists in the absence of any at all. His coat might have come from Piccadilly, and when he found a seat Eden noticed that the soles of his shoes were veneered in black. In brief, he looked well-bred and well-groomed. He was young, twenty-three or twenty-four at most. His head was massive, and his features were pagan in their correctness. The jaw was a masterpiece; it gave the impression of reservoirs of interior strength, an impression which was tempered when he spoke, for his voice was low and unsonorous as a muffled bell. His eyes were of that green-gray which is caught in an icicle held over grass. And in them and about his mouth something there was that suggested that he could never be brutal and seldom tender.

At table he made no remark worthy of record. He seemed better content to watch Eden than to speak. He ate little and drank less, and when the meal was done and Eden left him to her husband and the presumable cigar, she made up her mind that he was stupid.

"He is a German," she reflected; "with such a name as Adrian Arnswald he must be. H'm. The only German I ever liked was a Frenchman, the author of the Reisebilder. Well, there seems to be no bilder of any kind in him." She picked up the *Post* and promptly lost herself in a review of the opera. "There," she mused, "I forgot Wagner. After all, as some one said of the Scotch, you can do a good deal with a German if you catch him young. Mr. Arnswald does not appear to have been caught in time." She threw the paper from her and seated herself at the piano. For a moment her fingers strayed over the keys, and then, in answer to some evoking chord, she attacked the *Ernani in-*

volami, than which few melodies are richer in appeal. Her voice was not of the bravura quality, the lower register was not full, and the staccati notes were beyond her range; a professor from a conservatory would have disapproved of her method as he would have disapproved of that of the ruiceñor. But then the ruiceñor sings out of sheer wantonness, because it cannot help it; and so did she.

And as she sang, anyone who had chanced that way would have accounted her fair to see. Her gown was black, glittered with jet, about her throat was a string of pearls, her arms were bare, the wrists unbraceleted, and in her face that beauty of youth and of fragility which refinement heightens and which eclipses the ruddier characteristics of the buxom models of the past. An artist might not have given her a second glance, a poet would have adored her at the first. And as she still sang, Arnswald entered the room and approached the piano at which she sat.

She heard his steps and turned at once expectant of Usselex. Then, seeing that he was alone, "What have you done with my husband?" she asked.

"Nothing," the young man answered. "Nothing at all. A gentleman, a customer, I fancy, sent in his card, and I left him to him." He found a seat and eyed her gravely. "If I disturb you—"

"Oh, you don't disturb me in the least. What makes you look as though you came from another planet?"

"What makes *you* look as though you were going to one?"

Mr. Arnswald is passably impertinent, thought Eden; but the expression of his face was so reassuringly devoid of any non-conventional symptom that she laughed outright at the compliment. "Do you care for music?" she asked.

"Surely, Mrs. Usselex."

"Yes, of course. I forgot. All Germans do. Tell me, how long have you been in this country? How do you come to speak German without an accent?"

"I was born here, Mrs. Usselex."

"You were born here! I thought you were a German. Why didn't you tell me?"

"You did not do me the honor to ask."

"But your father was, wasn't he?"

"No, my father was a Russian, I think."

"You think? Why do you say you think? Don't you know? I never knew anyone so absurd."

"My father died when I was very young, Mrs. Usselex. I do not remember him."

"But your mother could have told you—"

"If she didn't, Mrs. Usselex, it was because she had a good excuse."

"What was that?"

"She died also."

"Mr. Arnswald, I am sorry. I had no right to ask such thoughtless questions. My mother died too. I do not remember her either. Truly you must forgive me." And as she spoke she rose from the piano and reseated herself at the lounge which she had previously vacated. "Tell me about yourself," she added. "I am not asking out of idle curiosity."

"You are very good to express any interest, Mrs. Usselex. But really there is little to tell. I used to live in Massachusetts, in Salem, with my grandparents and my sister. You can see Salem from here, and you can understand what a boy's life in such a place must be. Afterwards I was sent to school, and later I went abroad. When I returned Mr. Usselex took me in his office. I have been there ever since. He has been very kind to me, Mr. Usselex has."

"He says—how is it he puts it?—oh, he says you have the genius of finance."

"I can only repeat that he is very kind."

To this Eden assented. "Yes, he is that," she said, and hesitated for a moment. "Tell me," she added. "You said you were fond of music. Will you go with us on Monday to the opera?"

This invitation was accepted with the same readiness as that with which it was made. And presently the young man took his leave. When the portière fell behind him, Eden felt a momentary uneasiness at the unpremeditated invitation which she had just extended. One doesn't need to be a German to be stupid, she mused, and felt sure that her husband would disapprove. But when she told him he expressed himself as well pleased.

The next day happened to be Sunday, and on that afternoon Mr. Arnswald came to pay his dinner-call. Meanwhile Eden's imagination had been at work. Now imagination is a force of which the action is as varied as that of volition. There are organizations which it affects like a dissolvent, there are others which it affects like wine. In some it needs a spur, in others a curb. Give it an incident for incubator, and according to the nature of the individual it will soar full-feathered into space or addle in its own inaction. In Eden its gestation was always abrupt. With a fact for matrix it developed as rapidly as a spark mounts into flame. The fact in this instance was Arnswald.

When he left her the night before, she had gone again to the piano, her fingers had fluttered like butterflies over the keys, then in answer to some strain, an aria from the *Regina di Golconda* had visited her—the *Bel paese, ciel ridente*, which she had hummed softly to herself, unconscious of any significance in the words. But presently she fell to wondering about the fair land, the fairer sky which the song recalled. Something there was that kept telling her that she had met Adrian before. In his voice she had caught an inflection that was not unfamiliar to her. In the polar-light of his eyes was a suggestion of earlier acquaintance. His infrequent gestures brought her the shadow of a reminiscence. And in his face there was an expression that haunted her. For a while she struggled with memory. But memory is a magician that declines to be coerced. Now and then it will pull its victim by the sleeve, as it had pulled at Eden, yet turn to interrogate and a dream is not more evanescent. But still she struggled with it. A silence, an attitude, a combination purely atmospheric had evoked a charm, and though memory declined to return and undo the spell, still she labored until at last, conscious of the futility of the effort, or else wearied by the endeavor, she consoled herself as in similar circumstances we all of us have done with the mirage of anterior life.

The possibility of recognition she then put behind her, but the man remained. There was a magnificence about him which disconcerted her, an air that appealed. In some way his evening dress had seemed an incongruity. She told herself that he would look better in a silken pourpoint, and better still in the chlamys-robe of state. She decided that he needed a dash of color, some swirling plume of red, and fell to wondering what his life had been. It was evident to her that he had been gently bred. About him the feminine influence was discernible, one no doubt which begun at the cradle had continued ever since. In the absence of a mother there had been someone else, a sister, perhaps, and a procession of sweethearts to whom he had been swain. But the latter possibility she presently dismissed. Love-making is the occupation of those that have none, and Arnswald's hours were seemingly well-filled. In Salem he might have left a combustible maiden, he might even have found one in New York, but in that case Eden felt tolerably sure that he had little time in which to apply the match. And then at once her fancy took a tangential flight; a little romance unrolled before her—the mating of Arnswald to some charming girl whom she would herself discover, and the life-long friendship that would ensue.

On the following afternoon therefore, when the young man put in an appearance, he was received with unaffected cordiality.

"I have been thinking about you," Eden announced, when he found a seat. "I am glad you came, I want you to tell me more of yourself."

"I reproached myself for having exhausted your patience last evening," he answered.

"Then you deserve to be punished. You go with us to the opera to-morrow, do you not? Very good, you must dine with us first. There is a friend of mine whom you will meet there. I want you to like her."

"If she resembles you in any way that will not be difficult."

"He begins well," mused Eden, and a layer of cordiality dropped from her. But presently she recovered it. Arnswald had been looking in her face, and the change in its expression had not passed unobserved.

"I mean," he continued, "that there are people that make you like them at first sight and you, Mrs. Usselex, are one of those people. When I left you last evening I told myself that you exhaled a sympathy which is as rare as it is delightful. I have met few such as you. As a rule the people I have been brought in contact with have been hard and self-engrossed. You are among the exceptions, and it is the exception ——"

Eden interrupted him. "Now that is nonsense," she said severely. "The people whom we can like are not as infrequent as all that. Do you mean to tell me that there is no one for whom you really care?"

Arnswald shook his head and smiled. "No, Mrs. Usselex," he answered, "I don't mean to say that. There are some for whom I care very much. There is even one for whom were it necessary I would lay down life itself."

At this Eden experienced a mental start. The possibility of mating him to some charming girl whom she was herself to discover had suddenly become remote. But she nodded encouragingly to the confidence.

"Yes," he continued, and into his polar-eyes came a sudden flicker. "Yes, there is one whom I have recently come to know and who is to me as a prayer fulfilled. Were I called upon to make a sacrifice for her, no matter what the nature of that sacrifice might be, the mere doing of it would constitute a well-spring of delight."

Eden smiled at the dithyramb as were she listening to some fay she did not see. Arnswald had been looking at her, but now, as though ashamed of the outburst, he affected a little laugh and dropped back into the conventional. Presently he rose and took his polar-eyes away. When he had gone Eden smiled again. "He may have the genius of finance," she mused, "but he has the genius of love as well."

III.

Eden had but recently returned to town and the claims of mantua-makers and milliners were oppressive. They took her time, they came to her in the morning, and she, with the courtesy of kings, returned the visit in the afternoon. But to little purpose. They were vexatious people, she discovered. They deceived her wantonly. They promised and did not fulfill. The live-long day they had iritated her, they had obtained her confidence by false pretences, and now, after a round of interviews each more profitless than the last, on reaching her house the dust of shops was on her mantle, and she could have gone in a corner and sworn.

Moreover it was late, dinner would presently be served. Arnswald, she learned, had already arrived, he was in the parlor with her husband, and as she hurried to her room she told herself that she would have to dress in haste, an operation which to her was always fertile in annoyance. An entire hour was never too much. But her maid was agile, dexterous of hand, and before the clock marked seven she was fully equipped, arrayed for dinner and the opera as well.

On leaving the room, Eden left her vexation qehind her. It had been fleeting and inoffensive as the anger of a canary. And now, on descending the stairs, she was in great good spirits again, the crimes of mantua-makers and milliners were forgotten, and she prepared to meet her husband and her guest. Half-way on her journey to the drawing-room, however, she discovered that she was empty-handed; she had omitted to take a fan and she called to her maid to bring her one. And as she called the front door-bell rang. She hesitated a second, and called again. But presumably the maid did not hear. Thereupon Eden re-ascended the stairs and went back to her room.

The maid was busying herself in a closet and the fan was on the table; Eden picked it up, and as she did so she noticed that one of the sticks was broken. It took several minutes to find another which suited her gown, and when she again descended the stair some little time had intervened.

On reaching the parlor she drew the portière aside and peered into the room. At the furthermost end stood Arnswald, his back turned to her, and near him in a low arm-chair was her husband. He seemed to be reading something, and it was evident that her entrance had been unobserved either by him or by his guest.

For a second's space Eden stood very still. There was much of the child in her nature, and during that second she meditated on the feasibility of giving them both some little surprise. Then at once, as though impelled by invisible springs, she crossed the room very swiftly, very noiselessly, her fan and the fold of her dress in one hand, the other free for mischief, and just when she reached the chair in which her husband sat, she bent over him, from his unwarned fingers she snatched a note, and with a rippling laugh that was like the shiver of sound on the strings of a guitar, she waved it exultingly in the air.

Mr. Usselex looked up at once, but he had looked too late; the note had gone from him. He started, he made a movement to repossess himself of it, but Eden, with the ripple still in her voice, stepped back, laughed again, and nodded to Arnswald, who had turned and bowed.

"What is it?" she cried; "what have you two been concocting? No, you don't," she continued. Her voice was unsteady with merriment, her eyes wickedly jubilant. Usselex had made another attempt to recapture the letter, and flaunting it, Tantalus-fashion, above her head, she defied and eluded him, gliding backwards, her head held like a swan's, a trifle to one side. "No, you don't," she repeated, and still the laughter rippled from her.

"Eden!" her husband expostulated, "Eden—"

"You shall not have it, sir; you shall not." And with a pirouette she fluttered yet further away, the bit of paper held daintily and aloft between forefinger and thumb. "Tell me this instant what you have been doing all day. There, you needn't look at Mr. Arnswald. He won't help you. Will you, Mr. Arnswald? Of course you won't."

Usselex, conscious of the futility of pursuit, made no further effort. In his face was an anxiety which his fair tormentor did not see. Once he turned to Arnswald, and Arnswald gave him an answering glance, and once his lips moved, but whatever he may have intended to say the words must have stuck in his throat. And Eden, woman-like, seeing that she was no longer pursued, advanced to a spot just beyond his reach, where she hovered tauntingly, yet wary of his slightest movement and prepared at the first suspicion of reprisal to spread her wings in flight.

"And who do you suppose was here at lunch to-day? You must guess or you shan't have your letter back. I'll give you just one minute. Oh! I saw Laura Manhattan at Fantasia's. Don't forget that we are to dine with her to-morrow. She came in to row about a dress. I was rowing, too. You have no idea what a day I have had. You will have to give Fantasia a talking to. Look at the frippery I have on. And she promised that I should have something for to-night. There ought to be some punishment for such people. Don't you think so, Mr. Arnswald? When people in Wall Street don't keep their promises, they are put in jail, aren't they? Well, jail is too good for that horrid old Frenchwoman of a dressmaker, she ought to have the thumb-screws, the rack, and the hot side of the fagot. I will never believe her again, no, not even when I know she is telling the truth. She is the most ornamental liar I ever encountered. It is my opinion she would rather lie than not. Laura told me—but here, the minute's up—you must guess, you must guess rightly, and you can only guess once."

And Eden waved the letter again and laughed in her husband's beard.

The gown which she wore, and which she had characterized as frippery, was an artful combination of tulle and of silk; it was colorless, yet silvery, and in it Eden, bare of arm and of neck, looked a water nymph garmented in sheen and foam. From her hair came an odor of distant oases. In her eyes were evocations of summer, and beneath them, on her cheeks and on the lobes of her ears, health had placed its token in pink. The corners of her mouth were upraised like the ends of the Greek bow, and now that she was laughing her lips suggested a red fruit cut in twain. She was the personification of caprice, adorably constructed, and constructed to be adored. Arnswald evidently found her appearance alluring, for his eyes followed her every movement.

"Hurry up," she continued, as merrily as before; "the minute's gone."

Usselex may have been annoyed, but he affected to enter into the jest. "Your father—" he hazarded, and stretched his hand for the note.

But Eden again retreated. "You have lost," she cried; "no one was here." And finding herself at a safe distance, "I am a better guesser than you," she added, "I can tell what is in this letter without reading it. Now answer me, what will you give me if I do? What ought he to give me, Mr. Arnswald? Prompt him, can't you? I have never seen anyone so stupid."

"Give it to me, Eden; you shall make your own terms ——"

"Ah! you capitulate, do you? It's too late! It's too late!" she repeated in ringing crescendo. "You ought to have guessed;" and for greater safety she held the letter behind her. "It's about stocks, Kansas-back bonds, seven sights offered and nothing bid—I have guessed right, have I not?"

"Eden —"

"Answer me; I have guessed right, I know I have." And laughing still, she whisked the letter from behind her and held it to her eyes. "Why, it's from a woman," she cried. "What is this? 'You have filled my life with living springs.' Whose life have you filled?"

The merriment had deserted her lips, the color had gone from her cheeks. The hand which held the letter fell with it to her side. In her face was the contraction of pain. She looked at her husband. "Whose life is it that you have filled?" she asked, and her voice, that had rippled with laughter a moment before, became suddenly chill and subdued.

In the doorway before her the butler appeared in silent announcement that dinner was served.

Arnswald made a step forward. "The

letter is mine, Mrs. Usselex," he said, "I —"

"Oh," she murmured, with a sigh that might have been accounted one of relief. "Oh, it is yours, is it?" And eying him inquisitorially for a second's space, she placed the letter in his hand.

"We may as well go in to dinner," she added at once, and with a glance at her husband she led the way.

IV.

In Dogian days there was a Libro d'Oro in which the First Families of Venice were inscribed in illuminated script. In New York there is also a Golden Book, unwritten, yet voiced, and whoso's name appears thereon has earned the cataloguing not from the idlesse of imbecile forefathers, but from shrewdness in coping with the public, forethought in the Stock Exchange, and prescience in the values of land and grain.

At the opera that night the aristocrats of the New World were in full force. Among them were men who could not alone have wedded the Adriatic but have dowered her as well. Venice in her greatest splendor had never dreamed such wealth as theirs. There was Jabez Robinson, his wife and children, familiarly known as the Swiss Family Robinson, the founder of their dynasty having emigrated from some Helvetian vale. A lightning calculator might have passed a week in the summing up of their possessions. There was old Jerolomon, who through the manipulation of monopolies exhaled an odor of Sing-Sing, the which had been so attractive to the nostrils of an English peer that he had taken his daughter as wife. There was Madden, who controlled an entire state. There was Bucholz, who declared himself Above the Law, and who had erupted in New York three decades before with the seven sins for sole capital. There was Bleecker Bleecker, who each year gave away a pope's ransom to charity and pursued his debtors to the grave. There was Dunwoodie, whose coat smelled of benzine and whose signature was potent as a king's. There was Forbush, who lunched furtively on an apple and had given a private establishment to each one of his twelve children. There was Gwathmeys, who had twice ruined himself for his enemies and made a fortune from his friends. There was Attersol, who could have bought the White House and whose sole pleasures were window-gardening and the accord of violins.

On the grand-tier was Mrs. Besalul, on whom society had shut its door because she had omitted to close her own. In an adjoining box was Mrs. Smithwick, the bride of a month, fairer than that queen whose face was worth the world to kiss, and who the previous winter had written a novel of such impropriety that when it was published her mother forbade her to read it. There was Miss Pickett, a débutante, who possessed the disquieting ugliness of a monkey and who had announced that there was nothing so immoral as ennui. There was Mrs. Bouvery, who claimed connection with every one whose name began with Van. Mrs. Hackensack, one of the few surviving Knickerbockers. The Coenties twins, known as Dry and Extra Mumm. And there were others less interesting. Mrs. Ponder, for instance, famous for her musicales, which no one could be bribed to attend. Mrs. Skolfield, who was so icy in her manner that a poet who had once ventured her way, had caught a cold in his head which lasted a week. Mrs. Nevers, mailed in diamonds; Mrs. Goodloe, mailed in pearls; and a senator's wife in a bonnet.

The only empty box in the house was owned by Mr. Incoul, then abroad on his honeymoon.

And in and out through these boxes there there sauntered a contingent of men, well-groomed, white of glove, and flowered as to their button-holes. Among them was Harry Tandem, who had inaugurated silver studs. Brewster, who had invented a new figure for the cotillon, and with him Harrison Felton, the maëstro of that decadent dance. There was George Rerick, who stuttered to the débutantes as he had stuttered to their mothers before them. Furman Fellowes, who told fairy tales to impressionable young girls, and who would presently get drunk in Sixth

Avenue. Jack Rodney, M. F. H., and Alphabet Jones, the novelist, in search of points.

As Eden entered the vestibule of her box the curtain had parted on the second act. A Miss Bolten and her mother whom she had invited had already arrived, and Arnswald, she noticed, went immediately forward to salute them; then returning, he assisted her with her wrap. In a moment the vestibule was invaded by Jones; and Eden, after a word or two to her guests, settled herself in the front of the box and promenaded her opera-glass about the house. The promenade completed, she lowered it to the stalls. Near the orchestra a woman sat gazing fixedly at her. There was nothing remarkable about the woman. She was as well dressed, as young, and as pretty as were the majority of those present; it was the singularity of her attitude that arrested Eden's attention. But that attention she was not permitted to prolong. The adjoining box, the occupants of which she had not yet noticed, was tenanted by Mrs. Manhattan, who now claimed her recognition with some little feminine word of greeting.

On one side of Mrs. Manhattan was an elderly man whom Eden did not remember to have seen before, and behind her stood Dugald Maule.

"Eden," whispered Mrs. Manhattan, "I want you to know Mr. Maule's uncle; he has been minister abroad you know;" and so saying, with a motion of her head, she designated the elderly man at her side. "He says," she added, "that you are the most appetizing thing he has seen."

At the brusqueness of the remark Eden started as from a sting. The old gentleman leaned forward.

"Don't be annoyed, my dear," he mumbled; "I was in love with your mother."

Then with an amiable commonplace the old beau bowed and moved back.

Maule bowed also, and presently, taking advantage of a *recitative*, he left Mrs. Manhattan and entered Eden's box. He seemed at home at once. He shook Mr. Usselex by the hand, saluted Miss Bolten and her mother, ignored Jones, and dislodging Arnswald, took his seat.

"The season promises well," he whispered confidentially to Eden.

Jones, who had not accorded the slightest attention to Maule, was discoursing in an animated fashion with Miss Bolten. On the stage in a canvas forest a man stood, open-mouthed, raising and lowering his right arm at regular intervals; and next to her Eden caught the motion of Mrs. Manhattan's fan.

"No," she heard Jones say, "I have every reason to doubt that Shakspere was the author of Hamlet. In the first place—"

"Ah!" murmured Miss Bolten. She did not appear particularly interested in Jones or in the man on the stage. She was occupied in scrutinizing the occupants of the different boxes. "And whom do you suspect?" she asked, her eyes foraging an opposite *baignoire*

"Another man with the same name," Jones answered, and laughed a little to himself.

Eden tapped him on the sleeve. "Mr. Jones."

"Yes, Mrs. Usselex."

"Look in the orchestra, in the third row, the aisle seat on the left."

"Yes, Mrs. Usselex."

"There is a woman looking up here. She has just turned her head. Do you see her?"

"That woman with the blonde hair?"

"Yes; do you know her?"

"No, I can't say I know her. But I know who she is—"

"Who is she?"

"She has an apartment at the Ranleigh. Her name is Mrs. Feverill. She is a grass widow; rather fly, I fancy——"

"H'm;" said Eden, "I am sure I don't know what you mean by 'fly.' There, it isn't necessary to explain——" She turned her head—"Mr. Arnswald, would you mind getting me my cloak, there seems to be a draught."

Arnswald, who had been loitering in the rear of the box, went back into the vestibule in search of the garment.

On the stage the tenor in green and gold was still gesticulating, open-mouthed as before, and presently there came a blare of trumpets, a shudder of brass, dominated by the cry of violins, and abruptly the curtain fell.

Arnswald advanced with the cloak, and

Jones stood up. The latter said some parting word to Miss Bolten and to her mother, bent over Eden's, hand and left the box. Arnswald dropped in the seat which he had vacated. It was evident at once that he and Miss Bolten had met before. He had leaned forward, and was whispering in her ear.

"Eden," Maule began, "do you remember that ring you gave me?"

"Mr. Maule, you forget many things ——"

"Why do you call me Mr. Maule? there was a time ——"

"Yes, there was a time, as you say; but that time is no longer."

"You have something against me."

"I? Nothing in the world."

"Ah, but Eden, you have, though; that is evident: when I last saw you ——"

"The next day I learned your reputation. It is deplorable."

"When I last saw you you gave me a ring. A serpent with its tail in its mouth. You said it meant eternity."

"Yes, I know I did; but ——"

"Did it mean nothing as well?"

"A circle represents zero, does it not?

"Eden, Eden, how cruel you can be! Will you not let me see you?"

"Certainly, I am at home on Saturdays."

"Yes, I know—Saturday is Fifth Avenue day. Eden, tell me, do you remember Second Avenue?"

From the orchestra came a murmur, a consonance of harps and of flutes. The curtain had parted again.

"No," she answered; "I have forgotten."

"Surely ——"

"Yes, I have forgotten. It is good to forget. This is the last act, is it not?"

"No, it is the prologue."

The speech was as significant as her own. For a second he was silent, and bit his under lip. Then, as Jones had done before, he stood up.

"I will come," he muttered in her ear, "but not on Saturday."

"Good-night, Mr. Maule."

"Good-night, Mrs. Usselex."

With a circular salute to the other occupants, Maule left the box. Presently it was invaded by other visitors of whom no particular mention is necessary. At last there was a wail and final crash in the orchestra. The opera was done.

On the way home Usselex questioned his wife. " Who is that man Maule ?" he asked.

" Miss Bolten is interested in him, I believe."

" I hope not," Usselex returned; " he has a bad face."

V.

The next morning Eden awoke in her great room that overlooked Fifth Avenue. The night had been constellated with dreams, and now as they faded from her there was one that lingered behind. Through a rift of consciousness she had seen herself talking with feverish animation to Arnswald, on some subject of vital importance, the which, however, she was unable to recall; it had gone with the night, leaving on the camera of memory only the tableau behind. For a little space she groped after it unavailingly, and then dismissed it from her. But still the tableau lingered until it became obscured by her own vexation, She felt annoyed as at an impertinence. What right had Arnswald to trespass in her dreams?

She rang the bell, and when in answer to the summons her maid appeared, she gave herself up to the woman's ministrations. The annoyance faded as the dream had done, and she fell to thinking of the day and of her husband. At one there was a luncheon at which she was expected, and in the evening there was a dinner at Mrs. Manhattan's. Her husband, she knew, had gone to his office hours ago and would not return until late. It had occurred to her before that he worked harder than his clerks; even Arnswald seemed to have more leisure than he. But on this particular forenoon, when her equipment was completed, but one idea channeled her ruminations, and that was that if her husband worked harder than his clerks, it was because of her.

She smiled a little at the thought, and then at herself in the mirror. Truly the guests at the luncheon might have been recruited from the four quarters of the globe, and few could be fairer than she. She was contented with her appearance, not in any sense because it might eclipse that of other women, but because he was proud of it, and because his pride and laborious days were all in all for her. She gave to her gown and to the arrangement of her hair that *coup de maître* which no maid, however expert, is able to administer, and presently had herself driven up the avenue to the house at which she was to be entertained.

The luncheon, as the phrase is, went off very well. Made up of fresh gossip and new dishes, it was stupid yet agreeable, as women's luncheons are apt to be. But on leaving it Eden felt depressed. It was the first of the kind which in her quality of married woman she had attended, and as her carriage rolled down the avenue again, she wondered were it possible that such things as she heard could be true, the story that had been told about Viola Raritan, for instance, and the general agreement following it that married men were the worst*. Surely, she told herself, they might be, all of them indeed save one, who was above reproach. As for her recent companions, they discredited virtue in seeming to possess it. At the memory of things they had implied, the color mounted to her cheeks.

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* The reader is referred to *The truth about Tristrem Varick*.

On the opposite sidewalk a girl was loitering. For a second, Eden, through the open window, eyed her gown. She raised some flowers to her face, and when she put them down again her face was white. Through the window she had seen a cab pass, and in the cab her husband and a woman.

In a conflict of emotions such as visit those who learn the dishonor and the death of one they cherished most, Eden reached her door. She left the carriage before the groom had descended from the box, and hurried into the house. There she entered the drawing-room and sought for a moment to collect her thoughts. It was impossible, she kept telling herself, that such a thing could be. She had been mistaken; it was not her husband that she had seen, and if it were her husband then was he on some errand as innocent as her own. But it was her husband. The effort she was making to deceive herself was useless as broken glass. And as for the woman with whom he was driving, what had he to do with her or she with him? She was certain she had seen her face before.

In her nervousness she rose from her seat and paced the room, tearing her gloves off and tossing them from her as she walked.

In the lives of most of us there are hours of such distress that in search of a palliative we strive as best we may to cheat ourselves into thinking that the distress is but a phase of our own individual imagination, close-locked therein, barred out of real existence, and unimportant and delusive as the creations of dream. And as Eden paced the room she tried to feel that her distress was but a figment of fancy, an illusory representation evoked out of nothing. She had been enervated by the gossip of the lunch-table; a child startled by the possible horrors of a dark closet was never more absurd than she. It was nonsense to suppose that a man such as her husband could be capable of a vulgar intrigue.

On the mantel a clock ticked dolently, as though in sympathy with her woe, and presently to her inattentive ears, it rang out four times. In an hour, she reflected, in two hours at most, he would return. She would ask him where he had been, and everything would be explained. It was nonsense for her to torment herself. Of course it would be explained, and meanwhile ——

And as she determined that meanwhile she would give the matter no further thought the butler entered the room, bearing a note on a salver, which he gave to her and withdrew. The superscription was in her husband's handwriting and she pulled the envelope apart, confident that the explanation for which she sought was contained therein. But in it no explanation was visible. It was dated from Wall Street. "Dearest Eden," it ran, "I am detained on business. Send excuses to Mrs. Manhattan. In haste, as ever, J. U."

"Detained on business," she repeated aloud very firmly and pressed her hand to her head. She was calm, less agitated than she had been before. It behooved her to determine what she should do. Seemingly, but one course was open to her, and suddenly she perceived that she had stopped thinking. Night had seized and surrounded her ; it was of this, perhaps, that she had spoken to Arnswald in her dream.

In the morning her faith had been unobscured, confident as a flower at dawn. Then doubt had come,and now, as the afternoon departed, so did all belief as well. It was no more hers to recall than the promise of an earlier day. She had done her best to detain it, she had clutched it; but she had questioned, and faith is impatient of coercion and restless if examined. Save its own fair face it brings no letter of introduction; welcome it for that, and it is at once at home; but look askance, and it dissolves into a memory and a reproach. Eden had startled it, unwittingly perhaps; but she had startled it none the less. It had watched its opportunity as a guest illy treated may watch for his; and when suspicion, like the lackey that it is, had held the door ajar, it had eluded her and gone.

Automatically, as though others than herself guided her movement, Eden touched a bell. "Harris," she said, when the man appeared, "go to Mrs. Manhattan's and say that Mr. Usselex and myself are unavoidably prevented from dining with her to-night. That will do." And this order delivered, she resumed her former seat. Down the street she marked advancing dusk. The sun had sunk in cataracts of champagne. Westward the sky was like the apotheosis in Faust, green-barred and crimson, with background of oscillant yellow. The east was already grey. Overhead was a shade of salmon which presently disappeared. Then dusk came, and with it a colorless vapor through which Night, cautious at first as misers are, displayed one sequin, then another, till taking heart it unbarred all its treasury to the world.

For some time after the man had gone Eden remained in the drawing-room. She found her gloves and drew one on again, but the other she tormented abstractedly in her hand. In her enforced inaction she fell to consoling herself as children do, arguing with discomfiture as though its shadow was ineffectual, as though trouble and she were face to face, and yet too far removed one from another to ever really meet. An hour passed, and still she sat unassured, restless of thought and conscious only that an encroaching darkness had obscured a vista on which her eyes had loved to dwell.

Truly the heart has logic that logic does not know, and as Eden let the incidents of the afternoon and of the previous evening parade in dumb show before her, something there was that kept whispering that she was taking appearances for facts. She strove to listen to the whisper, but the fantoches were froward and insistent; the sturdier her effort to dispel them the closer they swarmed. Sometimes of their own accord they would leave her, she would think herself done with them, her eyes filled in testimony to her deliverance, and abruptly back they came. But still the whisper persisted, it was growing potent, and its voice was clear. It kept exhorting to patience, it exorcised appearances, and advanced little pleas of its own.

Eden was only too willing to be guided. "I am impatient," she mused, "but I will wait."

Another hour limped away, and though an hour limps it may leave a balm behind. The lamps in the drawing-room had been lighted,but the servant had come and gone unobserved. Eden was still closeted in herself. "Surely, by eleven at the latest he will return," she reflected, "and then all will be explained. It is a thankless task this of building imaginary dungeons. There are hours in which I let fancies resolve themselves into facts and the facts fossilize into skeletons." An episode of her girlhood came back to her and she smiled. "Perhaps father was right; I may have hemiopia, after all."

She stood up from her seat and was about to leave the room when she heard the front door open, and in a second her husband's step.

Eden drew the portiére aside and looked out in the hall. Usselex had his back to her. He was taking off his overcoat. She spoke to him and he turned at once, one arm still unreleased. At last he freed himself and came to her.

"You got my note, did you not?" he began. "I am sorry about this evening. Could you not go to Mrs. Manhattan's without me? Something always seems to turn up at the last moment."

"I hardly expected you so early," Eden answered. "I sent word to Laura." She was looking at her husband, but her husband was not looking at her. He seemed preoccupied and nodded his head abstractedly.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, with singular inappositeness. "Yes, of course. But there," he added and turned again to the door, "I must hurry."

"Whom were you with this afternoon?" Eden asked.

It was as though she had checked him with a rein. He stopped at once and glanced at her.

"Did you see me?" he inquired; and accepting her silence for answer he continued at once: "It's a long story; I have hardly time to tell it now."

Eden put her hand on his sleeve. "Tell it me," she pleaded.

For the moment he stood irresolute. "Tell me," she repeated, and moved back, motioning him to a chair.

Usselex took out his watch. "I must hurry," he said again. "But there," he added tenderly, "since you wish it, a moment lost is small matter, after all."

Again he glanced at her and hesitated as though expectant of a respite. Eden had her everyday air; outwardly she was calm, but something in her appearance, the twitch of an eyelid, the quiver of a nostril perhaps, revealed her impatience.

Usselex shrugged his shoulders, and for a second, with a gesture that was habitual to him, he plucked at his beard. "No," he repeated, "a moment is small matter, after all. H'm. Eden, some years ago I went abroad. During my absence a cashier whom I trusted, and whom I would trust again, speculated with money that passed through his hands. It was not until my return that I learned of the affair. But meanwhile, as is usual in such cases, he was on the wrong side of the market. The money which he had taken had to be accounted for. I had a partner then, and the cashier confessed the defalcation to him; it was the only thing he could do, and he promised, I believe, that if time were given him he would make good the loss. The amount after all was not large—fifteen thousand perhaps, or twenty at the outside. But my partner was not lenient. He came of a line of New England divines, and had, if I remember rightly, at one time contemplated studying for the ministry. In any event he was then an elder in some up-town Presbyterian church. But virtue is not amiable. Without so much as communicating with me he put the matter in the hands of the authorities, and when I returned the cashier was in Sing-Sing. Eden, you will hardly understand how sorry I was. He had a wife dependent on him—he had children. He had been with me longer than my partner had, and I liked him. Of the two I liked him the better. What he took I have never been able to view as a theft. It was what might be called a forced loan. Had I been here it would have been different; but my partner was obdurate. You see, the fault, if fault there were, was mine. The salary I gave him was small, and each day I allowed temptation to pass between his hands. People say that we should resist temptation. I agree with them; temptation should be resisted; but when a rich man preaches that sermon to the poor, he forgets that where temptation is vague to him it may be potent to his hearer. Oh, I don't mean to uphold derelictions, but to my thinking Charity is the New Testament told in a word. I think that forgiveness is the essence of the teaching of every founder of an enduring creed. However, that is not to the point. The fact remained, the cashier was sent to Sing-Sing, and since then I have done what I could to get him out. It was his wife that I was with to-day. Poor girl! I have been sorry for her; she is but little older than you, and she has had trials to bear such as might have sent another to worse than the grave." He paused, and plucking again at his beard, he looked down at the rug. Eden needed no assurance to feel that his words were heart-whole and sincere. She moved to where he stood and touched him on the arm.

"Don't tell me any more," she said, and as she spoke there came to her voice a tremulousness that was as unusual as it was sweet. "You must let me help her, too."

"Yes, Eden, that I will. It is good of you to speak that way. It is not only good, it is Edenesque. But let me tell you the rest. Governor Blanchford is in town. I went yesterday to the Buckingham, where he is stopping. He could only see me for a moment then, and this afternoon I went again with her. I am to dine with him this evening. When he returns to Albany I think the pardon will be signed." Again he paused and looked at his watch. "I must dress," he added; "will you forgive me—?"

"Forgive you!" she cried, "it is your turn, now: forgive me.'

Usselex moved from her, her hand still in his, and when their arms were fully outstretched, he turned and holding her to him he kissed her on either cheek.

As he left the room Eden could have

danced with delight. She ran to the piano and with one hand still gloved she struck out clear notes of joy. Presently, she too left the room, and prepared for dinner. When the meal was served she ate it in solitude, but the solitude was not irksome to her; it was populous with recovered dreams. Among the dishes that were brought her was one of terrapin, which she partook of with an art of her own; and subsequently, in a manner which it must have been a pleasure to behold, she nibbled at a peach—peaches and terrapin representing, as everyone knows, the two articles of food which are the most difficult to eat with grace.

Later, when the meal was done, Eden returned to the drawing-room. Mrs. Manhattan was unregretted. The summer had been fertile enough in entertainments to satiate her for a twelve-month. She had come and gone, eaten and fasted, danced and driven, with no other result than the discovery that the companionship of her husband was better than anything else. To her thinking he needed only an incentive to conquer the ballot.

There was no reason why he should not leave Wall Street for broader spheres. She had met senators by the dozen, and he was wiser than them all. He might be Treasurer of State if he so willed, or failing that, minister to the Court of St. James. Even an inferior mission such as that to the Hague or to Brussels would be better than the Street. It was inane, she told herself, to pass one's life in going down town and coming up again merely that another million might be put aside. An existence such as that might be alluring to Jerolomon or Bleecker Bleecker, but for her husband there were other summits to be scaled.

And as Eden, prettily flushed by the possibilities which her imagination disclosed spectacular-wise for her own delight, sat companioned by fancies, determining, if incentive were necessary, that incentive should come from her, the portiére was drawn aside and the butler announced Mr. Arnswald.

" I ventured to come in," he said, apologetically, "although I knew Mr. Usselex was not at home. I wanted ——"

"One might have thought your evenings were otherwise occupied," Eden interrupted, a little fiercely. The intercepted note of the preceding evening rankled still. That the young man should receive a letter from a strange woman was, she admitted to herself, a matter which did not concern her in the slightest. But it was impertinent on his part to suffer that letter to be sent to him at her house.

"This evening, however, as you see ——" he began blandly enough, but Eden interrupted him again.

"What did you think of it last night?" she asked, with the inappositeness that was peculiar to her.

"You are clairvoyant enough, Mrs. Usselex, to know untold what I thought. It was of that I wished to speak to you. It is rare that such an opportunity is given me."

"To hear Wagner?"

"No, not to hear Wagner particularly." He hesitated and looked down at his pointed shoes, and at the moment Eden for the life of her could not help thinking of a dissolute young god arrayed in modern guise. After all, she reflected, it is probably the woman's fault.

"No, not that," he continued, and looked up at her again, his polar-eyes ablaze with unexpected auroras. "Not that; but think what it is for a man to love a woman, to divine that that love is returned, and yet to feel himself as far from her as death is from life. Think what it must be for him to love that woman so well that he would not haggle over ten years, no, nor ten hundred years of years, could he pass an hour with her, and then by way of contrast to find himself suddenly side by side with her, listening to such music as we heard last night."

"Mr. Arnswald, you are out of your senses," Eden exclaimed. A suspicion had entered her mind and declined to be dismissed.

"Am I not?" he answered. "Tell me that I am. I need to be told it. Yet last night, for the first time, it seemed to me that perhaps all might still be well. It was hope that I found with you, Mrs. Usselex; it was more than hope, it was life."

And as his eyes rekindled, Eden told herself that his attitude could have but one signification.

"I'll not play Guinevere to your Lancelot," she murmured. And turning her back on him she left the room.

VI.

THE following day was unstarred by any particular luncheon, or at least by none at which Eden was expected. Her own repast she consumed in solitude, and as she rose again from the table, Mrs. Manhattan was announced.

Mrs. Manhattan was a woman of that class which grows rarer with the days. She was very clever and knew how to appear absolutely stupid. According to the circumstances in which she was placed, she could be frivolous or sagacious, worldly, and sensible. In fact, all things to all men. Born in Virginia, a Leigh of Leighton, she had married a rich and popular New Yorker. After marriage, and on removing to Fifth Avenue, she had the tact to leave her accent and her family tree behind. Her husband's great-grandfather was lost in the magnificence of myth; her own figured in Burke. If Nicholas Manhattan had been a snob—which he was not—that fact would have constituted his sole grievance against her. But from Laura Leigh, of a North country descent and a feudal castle in Northumberland, never an allusion could be wrung. In marrying a New Yorker she espoused all New York, its customs, its prejudices, its morals, its vices, everything, even to the high pitch of its voice; and so well did she succeed in identifying herself with it and with its narrow localisms, that in a few years after her arrival, not to visit and be visited by Mrs. Nicholas Manhattan was to argue one's self out into the nethermost limbo of insignificance.

Had Mrs. Manhattan been any other than herself, Eden would have sent back some femininely prevaricatory excuse. She was enervated still by the emotions of the preceding day, and her desire for companionship was slight. But Mrs. Manhattan was not only Mrs. Manhattan, she was a woman for whom Eden entertained a quasi-filial, quasi-sororal affection. She went forward therefore at once, her hands outstretched to greet.

On ordinary occasions it was Mrs. Manhattan's custom to salute Eden with a kiss, but on this particular afternoon she contented herself with taking the outstretched hands in her own, holding Eden, as it were, at arms length.

"You abominable little beauty," she began, "what did you mean by leaving me in the lurch last night? I came here expecting to find you in bed with the doctor. *Mais pas du tout. Madame s'embellit à vu d'œil.*"

"Laura, dear," Eden answered, when they had found seats, "don't be annoyed at me. I wanted very much to come. But you know the proverb: man proposes——"

"—And woman accepts. Yes, I know; go on."

"Well, I simply couldn't help it."

"Couldn't help it! What do you mean by saying you couldn't help it? Don't sit there with your back to the light; I want to look at you. Eden, as sure as my name is Laura Leigh, something has gone wrong with you.

What business have you, at your age, to have circles under your eyes?"

"Presumably because I was unable to get to your dinner. I am really sorry, Laura. Did you have many people?"

"Of course I didn't. Nicholas won't let me give large dinners. There were only eighteen of us. I suppose I could have got the Boltens to come and take your place. But then you know how people are. Unless you invite them a fortnight in advance they think they are asked to fill up—as they are. H'm! I was mad enough. Nicholas was to have taken you in, and by way of compensation you were to have had your old flame, Dugald Maule, on the other side of you. Parenthetically, it is my opinion that he loves you still—beyond the tomb, as they love in Germany. However, that is not to the point; the dinner was a failure. Afterwards we all went to the Amsterdams; all of us, that is, except Jones, who said he had an engagement, which meant I suppose, that he was not expected."

"Jones, the novelist?"

"Yes, Alphabet Jones. Personally he is as inoffensive as a glass of lemonade, but I can't bear his books. He uses words I don't understand, and tells of things that I don't want to. Nicholas, however, will have him."

And at the thought of her husband's tyranny, Mrs. Manhattan shrugged her shoulders and gazed complacently in her lap.

"Laura, I dont believe your dinner was a failure."

"Well, not exactly a failure perhaps, but it is always upsetting to have people at the last moment send word that they can't come. It is not only upsetting, it's dangerous. It takes the flavor of the soup away. It makes everything taste bad." And as Mrs. Manhattan said this she glared at Eden with the ferocity of an irritated Madonna. "Now tell me," she continued, "what was the matter with you?"

"Really, Laura, it was nothing. I can't tell you." She hesitated a second and into the corners of her exquisite mouth there passed a smile. "I saw my husband in a cab with—with——"

"A woman?"

Eden stared at her friend with the astonishment of a gomeril at a contortionist. The smile left her lips.

"Did you see him too?" she asked.

"Why, no, you little simpleton, I didn't see him; but I haven't got a husband of my own for nothing."

"Do you mean that your husband deceives you?"

"Deceives me? no, not a bit of it. He only thinks he does. Is that what has been the matter with you?"

"Laura ——"

"And was it because you caught your husband in a cab that you couldn't come to dinner? But, heavens and earth! if other women were to act like you no one would even dare to attempt to entertain. As it is," Mrs. Manhattan grumbled to herself, "the Mayor ought to pass an ordinance on the subject. He has little enough to do in return for his double lamp-posts."

"No, Laura, how absurd you are!" Eden exclaimed. "John was detained on business."

"Ah ! I see." And Mrs. Manhattan looked at her in a gingerly fashion out of the corner of one eye.

"Yes, he sent me word that he was detained on business and for me to send word to you."

"That was most thoughtful of him. And it was after you got the note that the cab episode occurred ?"

"No, it was just before."

"Yes, yes, I can understand." Mrs. Manhattan paused a moment. To anyone else save Eden the pause would have been significant. "H'm," she went on, "business may mean other men's money, or it may mean other men's wives. I do hope, though, you were sensible enough not to mention anything about the lady and the cab."

"Oh, but indeed, I did. He explained the whole thing at once."

"From the cab window ?"

"When he came back, I mean — in the evening."

"Some little time must have intervened."

"Yes, two hours, I should judge."

Mrs. Manhattan nodded. "Well," she said, with an air of profound sapience, "no man ever talks to a woman for two hours unless he keeps saying the same thing all the time."

"Laura, that is not like you. You know perfectly well that friendship can exist between a man and a woman without there being any thought of love-making."

"Oh, I know what you are going to say. But there is the difference between love and friendship. To those who have witnessed a bull-fight, the circus I hear is commonplace."

"You mean to imply that my husband was enjoying a bull-fight?"

"I dont mean anything of the sort. But what a way you have of reducing generalities to particulars! No, I don't mean that at all. I am speaking in the air. What I meant to imply was that love has consolations which friendship does not possess."

"Laura, you don't understand. It is not a question of that. This woman's husband has got into trouble and John was trying to get him out."

Mrs. Manhattan eyed her again in the same gingerly fashion as before. "He said that, did he?"

Eden nodded.

"I hope you pretended to believe him."

"Pretended! Why, I did believe him. I believed him at once."

"Yes, that's a good way." Mrs. Manhattan tormented the point of her nose reflectively. "I used to too," she added. "Now I simply don't see. That I find even better. It makes everything go so smoothly. No arguments, no recriminations, perfect peace. Nicholas, as you know, is the most delightful man in the world. I have the highest respect for him. If he took it into his head to leave the planet and me behind, I should feel it my duty as a Christian woman to see that the trappings of my woe were becoming to his memory. But—but, well, I should feel that I had been vaccinated. I should feel that a minor evil had protected me from a greater one. In other words, I would not marry again. It is my opinion, an opinion I believe which is shared by a good many other people, that a woman who marries a second time does not deserve to have lost her first husband. Now, as I say of Nicholas, I have the greatest respect for him. He is charming. I haven't the vaguest idea how he would get along without me. I do everything for him, but I am careful not to exact the impossible. We get along splendidly together. He makes the most elaborate efforts to throw dust in my eyes, and I aid him to the best of my ability, but I always know what he is up to. I can tell at a glance where he is in any affair. The moment he gives up his after-dinner cigar I can hear the fifes in the distance—he is making himself agreeable to someone with whom he intends to pass the evening. The second stage is when he comes in of an afternoon with a rose in his button-hole. That means that he has been sending flowers and that the siege is progressing. The third stage is when he begins to smoke again. That means that the castle has capitulated and further diplomacy is unnecessary. The fourth and final stage is when he says in an off-hand way, 'Laura, I saw some stones this afternoon at Tiffany's.' That means remorse and reward — remorse at his own wickedness, and reward for my non-interference. There is nothing in the world that a man appreciates more than that. Yes, I certainly do my duty. Nicholas, as you know, was a widower when I married him. By his first wife he had one child and a great deal to put up with. Whereas, now—why, Eden, what are you crying about?"

"I am not crying." In a moment Eden had choked back a sob. Her eyes flashed the more brilliant for their tears, but her voice had lost its former gentleness, it had grown vibrant and resolute. "Laura, if he has deceived me, I will leave him."

"If who has deceived you? Surely Nicholas ——"

"Laura, I am in no mood for jest. Last night I believed my husband, to-day I do not. If I can get proof, I leave him."

"That is what we all say, but we don't."

"If he has deceived me ——"

"Eden, how foolish you are! No, but, Eden, you are simply childish. You are sunshine one minute and tornado the next. Why, I haven't a doubt in the world but that Mr. Usselex was trying to get the cab-lady's husband out of trouble. I haven't the faintest doubt of it."

"Nor had I before you came."

"Oh, Eden, forgive me. What I said was idle chatter. There, do be your old sweet self again."

Eden stood up and pinioned her forehead with her hands. "I wonder," she exclaimed, "I wonder—Laura, do you know that it is of a thing like this that hatred comes?"

"My dear, I had no idea that you were so much in love."

But as she spoke there came into Eden s face an expression so new and unlike her own, that Mrs. Manhattan started. "Sit down," she said coaxingly. "Do sit down." She took the girl's hands in hers and drew her gently to the lounge on which she was seated. "Eden," she continued, after a moment, "between ourselves, I think you are—how shall I say?—a little —" And Mrs. Manhattan touched her forehead and nodded significantly.

"I? Not a bit."

"So much the worse, then. It would be an excuse. Now listen to me. They say that when a woman gets to be thirty the first thing she does is to ignore her age, and that by the time she is forty it has escaped her memory entirely. I am not forty yet, but I am old enough—well, I am old enough to be wiser than you, and I say this—you can contradict it as much as you please, but I will say it all the same—you have more pride in yourself than love for your husband."

"Which means?"

"I mean this, that when pride gets the upper hand, love is bound to be throttled. In some, pride is a screen; behind it they rage at their ease: in others it is a bag of wind; prick it and behold, a tempest. With you, just at present, it is a screen; haven't I seen you torment your rings ever since I came in? Well, torment them, but for goodness sake don't change the screen into a balloon. There is nothing as bad form as that, and nothing as ineffectual. My dear, if you want to keep your husband, think of yourself not first, but last, or, if you can't think in that way, act as though you did."

"And be a hypocrite."

"Eden, you are impossible. Be a hypocrite? Why, of course you must be a hypocrite. Hypocrisy is Christianity's most admirable invention. Banish it, and what do you find? Not skeletons in the closet, but catacombs of distasteful things. No, Eden, be a hypocrite. We all are; everyone prefers it. There was a man once who got up in the morning with the idea of telling everybody the truth. By sunset he was safe in an asylum. People don't want the truth; they content themselves with sighing for it; they know very well that when they get in its way, it bites. It is vicious, truth is. It makes us froth at the mouth. If you haven't had the forethought to cuirass yourself with indifference, truth can cause a hydrophobia for which the only Pasteur is time. No, hypocrisy has had the sanction of pope and prelate. Let us hold to it; let us hold to what we may and not try to prove anything."

"What are you talking about then?"

"How irritating you are, Eden! I am talking about you. I am trying to give you some advice. No one gave me any. I had to gather it on the way. I come here, and finding you melancholy as a comic paper, I try to offer the fruit of two decades of worldly experience, and instead of thanking me, you ask what I am talking about." Mrs. Manhattan sank back in her ample folds and laughed. "Don't you have any tea in this house?"

"You are right, Laura; I am irritating, I am absurd." As she spoke, she left the lounge. The tragedy-air had departed. She rang the bell, gave the order for tea, and during the remainder of Mrs. Manhattan's visit, comported herself so sagaciously that she succeeded in casting dust in that lady's eyes in a manner which would have thrown that lady's husband into stupors of admiration.

When her friend at last decided to take herself and her experience away, Eden remained in the drawing-room. Down the adjacent corner she saw the sun decline. On the horizon it left an aigrette of gold. Then that disappeared. Day closed its window, and

Night, that queen who reigns only when she falls, shook out the shroud she wears for gown.

How long Eden sat alone with her thoughts she could not afterwards recall. For some time she was conscious only of a speck of dust which Mrs. Manhattan had brought from the outer world and forgotten to remove. It was such a little speck that at first Eden had pretended not to see it, but when Mrs. Manhattan had been gone a few minutes it insisted on her attention. She could not help eying it, and the more closely she eyed it, the larger it grew. From dust it turned to dirt, from minim into mountain. And presently it obscured her sight and veiled her mind with shadows.

Strive as she might, she could not argue it away. She tried to reason with herself, as a neurosthene, aware of his infirmity, may reason with the phantasm which he himself has evoked. But this was a phantasm that no argument could coerce. Did she say, You are unreal, it answered, I am Doubt. At each effort she made to rout it, it loomed to greater heights.

In the tremor that beset her she groped in memory for a talisman. She recalled her husband's wooing of her, his attitude and indulgent strength. Yet had not Mrs. Manhattan implied that men are double-faced? She thought of his laborious days, yet had not Mrs. Manhattan defined business as often synonymous with other men's wives? She recalled his excuse and was mindful of Mrs. Manhattan's interpretation.

At each new effort the doubt increased, and still she kept arguing with herself, until suddenly she perceived that she had stopped thinking. Doubt was pushing her down into an abyss where all was dark, and still she struggled, and still she struggled in vain; she was sinking; strength was leaving her, for doubt is masterful, till with a start she felt that she was safe. It was not in memory she found a talisman, but in her heart. It was her love that worked the spell. Love, and confidence in him whose name she bore. The mountain dissolved into minim, the dirt into dust, and she took the speck and blew it back into the shadows from which it had come.

VII.

THAT evening Eden and her husband dined alone. But it was not till coffee was served and the servants left the room that either of them had an opportunity of exchanging speech on matters other than such as were of passing interest. For the rout which both were to attend that night Eden had already prepared. It was the initial Matriarch's of the season, and rumor had it that it was to be a very smart affair. On this occasion the waiters, it was understood, were to be in livery; and an attempt had been made to give the rooms something of the aspect and aroma which appertains to a private house. As a consequence those of the gentler sex who were bidden had given some thought to their frocks, while those who were not had garmented themselves in their stoutest mantles of indifference.

On receiving the large bit of cardboard on which the invitation was engraved, Eden had at first determined to word and dispatch a regret. Entertainments of that kind had ceased to appeal to her. At gatherings of similar nature which she attended she had long since divided the male element into the youths who wished to seem older than they looked, and the mature individuals who wished to appear younger than they were ; while as for the women, they reminded her of Diogenes looking for a man. On receiving the invitation she had, therefore, determined to send a regret, but on mentioning the circumstance to her husband he had expressed the desire that she should accept. He liked to have her admired, and moreover, though the function itself might be tiresome, still she owed some duty to society, and there were few easier ways in which that duty could be performed. Accordingly an acceptance was sent, and as a reward of that heroism Usselex had brought her a plastron of opals.

That plastron she now wore. Her gown, which was cut a trifle lower on the back than on the neck, was of a hue that suggested the blending of sulphur and of salmon. Her arms were cased in *Suède*, into which she had rolled that part of the glove which covers the hand. Save for the wedding-token her fingers were ringless. She had nothing about her throat. But from shoulder to shoulder, from breast to girdle, was a cuirass of gems, flecked with absinthe and oscillant with flame. It was barbaric in splendor, Roman in beauty; it startled and captivated. And in it Eden looked the personified spirit of Bysance, a dream that had taken form. Her husband let his eyes have all their will of her. Even the butler was dazzled.

During the progress of the meal the presence of that person and of his underlings prevented any conversation of reportable interest. But while the courses were being served Eden noticed that her husband was in an unusually sprightly mood. He touched on one topic of the day, presently on another, and left that for a third. To each he gave a new aspect. It was as though he were tossing crystal balls. Now, when an educated man is not a pedant he can in discoursing about nothing at all exert a very palpable influence.

Mr. Usselex talked like a philosopher who has seen the world. To many a woman there is nothing more wearisome than the conversation of a man who has nothing to desire and nothing to fear. That man is usually her husband. But with Eden it was different. She listened with the pleasure of a convalescent. She was just issuing from the little nightmare of the afternoon, and as he spoke, now and then she interrupted with some fancy of her own; but all the while deep down in the fibres of her being she felt a smart of self-reproach that mingled with exultation. Her suspicions had vanished. They had been born of the dusk and creatures of it. And she looked down through the opals into her heart and over at her husband and smiled.

The butler and his underlings had departed. The meal was done. Usselex smiled too. He left his seat and went behind her. He drew her head back, bent over, and kissed her on the lips; then mirroring his eyes in hers, he kissed her again, drew a chair to her side, and took her hand in his.

" Look at me, Eden," he said. " I love your eyes. Speak to me. I love your voice. They say that at twenty a man loves best. They are wrong. Youth is inconstant. It is with age a man learns what love can be. Do you not think I know? Look at me and tell me. Eden, joy frightens. Sometimes I wonder that I had the courage to ask you to be my wife. Sometimes I fear you think me too old. Sometimes I fear you may regret. But you must never regret. Any man you might have met could be more attractive than I, but no one could care for you more; no one. Tell me; you believe that, do you not?"

And Eden, turning her head with the motion of a swan, answered, "I know it."

"Eden," he continued, "my life has not been pleasant. I have told you little of it. In the lives of everyone there are incidents that are best left buried. If I have been reticent it has not been from lack of confidence; it has been because I feared to distress you. For years I did not understand; the reason of pain is seldom clear. At times I thought my strength overtaxed. I accused fate; it had been wilful to me. It had beckoned me to pleasant places; when I reached them the meadows disappeared, the intervales were quagmires, and the palace I had espied was a prison, with a sword for bolt. I accused justice as I had accused fate. Eden, men are not always sincere. There are people who do wrong, who injure, wantonly, in sport. And so I accused justice: I had expected it to be human; but justice is straight as a bayonet, and her breasts are of stone. It was long before I understood, but when I saw you I did. What I had suffered was needful; it was a preparation for you. No, justice is never human, but sometimes it is divine."

He had been speaking in a monotone, his voice sinking at times into a whisper, as though he feared some other than herself might hear his words. Eden's hand still lay within his own, and now he stood up and led her, waist-encircled, to the outer room. There they found other seats, and for a moment both were silent.

"If I have not questioned you," Eden said, at last, "it has been for a woman's reason. I am content. Had you a grief, I would demand to share it with you. It would be my right, would it not? But of what has gone before I prefer to remain in ignorance. It is not that I am incurious. It is that I prefer to think of your life as I think of my own, that its beginning was our wedding-day. I too am some times afraid. There are things of which I also have been reticent. I remember once thinking that to be happy was a verb that had no present tense. I do not think so now," she added, after a moment; and to her exquisite lips the smile returned. "There are so many things I want to tell," she continued. "Before I met you I thought myself in love. Oh, but I did, though. And it was not until after I had known you that I found that which I had taken for love was not love at all. How did I know? Well—you see, because that is not love which goes. And that went. It was for the man I cared, not the individual. At the time I did not understand, nor did I until you came. Truly I don't see why I should speak of this. Every girl, I fancy, experiences the same thing. But when you came life seemed larger. You brought with you new currents. Do you know what I thought? People said I married you for money. I married you because—what do you suppose, now? Because I loved you? But at that time I told myself I had done with love. No, it was not so much for that as because I was ambitious for us both. It was because I thought Wall Street too small for such as you. It was because I discerned in you that power which coerces men. It was because I believed in the future; it was because I trusted you. Yes, it was for that, and yet this afternoon—What is it, Harris?"

A servant had entered the room, bearing a letter on a tray.

"A letter for you, sir" he said.

Usselex took the note, opened the envelope, which he tossed on the table, and possessed himself of the contents.

"Is the messenger waiting?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Say I will be there immediately."

The man bowed and left the room.

"I am sorry, Eden—"

"What is it?"

"Nothing of any moment—a matter of business to which I must attend." He glanced at the clock. "It is after ten," he added. "You will not want to leave for Delmonico's before half-past eleven, will you? Very good; I will be back long before then." He had risen from his seat, and now he bent over and took her hand in his. "I am sorry I have to go. It is so seldom we have an evening together. And I had counted on this."

Eden raised a finger warningly. "If you are not back in time," she said, "I will send for Arnswald and go with him."

"I can trust him with you," he answered, and left the room. In a moment he returned, hat in hand. "By the way, Eden, I forgot to ask—you have sent out cards, have you not?"

"Yes, the world is informed that Mrs. John Usselex is at home on Saturdays."

"Would you mind sending that announcement to some one whom you don't know? It's just for the civility of the thing."

"Certainly. Who is it?"

"A Mrs. Feverill."

"Feverill? Mrs. Feverill." Eden contracted her eyebrows. "Where have I heard that name before?"

"I don't think you have ever heard it."

Eden laughed. "She wears blue velvet, I am sure; but I will send the card. Where does she live?"

Usselex bent over and touched her forehead with his lips. "That is good of you," he said. "She will take it very kindly." And with that he moved to the door.

"But what is the address?" Eden called after him.

"The Ranleigh," he answered; and from the hall he added, in a louder tone, "I will be back in less than an hour."

"The Ranleigh," she repeated to herself. "The Ranleigh!" And then suddenly the wall of the room parted like a curtain; to her ears came a cry of violins, dominated and accentuated by a blare of brass. Mrs. Manhattan was at her elbow. Behind her was Jones; beneath was a woman, her face turned to hers. She caught the motion of Mrs. Manhattan's fan. Beyond, in a canvas forest, stood a man, open-mouthed, raising and lowering his right arm at regular intervals. And between the shiver of violins and the shudder of trumpets, she heard some one saying, "Mrs. Feverill, that is—rather fly. Stops at the Ranleigh." At once the music swooned. The opera-house dissolved into mist, and Eden was in a carriage, eying through the open window the cut of a passer's gown. In her lap were some flowers ; she raised them to her face, and as she put them down again, a cab drove past, bearing her husband and the woman who was considered fly. And this was the woman he wished her to receive! She caught and pinioned her forehead in her hands. In the distance the shadow of the afternoon loomed again, but this time more monstrous and potent than before And nearer and nearer it came—blacker than hate and more appalling than shame; in a moment it would be on her; she would be shrouded in it for evermore, and no defense—not one.

"No, no," she murmured. Her hands left her forehead. She clutched her throat as though to tear some invisible grasp away. "No, no," she murmured, "it cannot be."

"Look at me, Eden," some one was saying; "look at me; I love your eyes. Youth is inconstant. It is with age—"

It was her husband reassuring her even in his absence. "Speak to me; I love your voice." And memory, continuing its office of mercy, served as ægis and exorcised advancing night. In her nervousness at the parried attack, she left her seat and paced the room, the opals glittering on her waist. "But he told me," she mused, "he told me that the woman's husband was in trouble—that he was endeavoring to aid them both. What did I hear when I first met him? There was a clerk or someone in his office, a man whom he trusted who deceived him, who was imprisoned, and to whose people he then furnished means for support. It is criminal for me to doubt him as I have. Do I not know him to be generous? have I not found him sincere?"

She shook out a fold of her frock impatiently. "A child frightened at momentary solitude was never more absurd than I." For a little space she continued her promenade up and down the room, leaving at each turn some fringe of suspicion behind. And presently the entire fabric seemed to leave her. To the corners of her mouth the smile returned. She went back to the sofa and was about to resume her former seat when her eyes fell on the envelope which her husband had tossed on the table. Mechanically she picked it up and glanced at the superscription. The writing was thin as hair, but the lettering was larger than is usual, abrupt and angular. To anyone else it would have suggested nothing particular, save, perhaps, the idea that it had been formed with the point of a tack; but to Eden it was luminous with intimations. Into the palms of her hands came a sudden moisture, the color left her cheeks, for a second she stood irresolute, the envelope in her trembling hold, then, as though coerced by another than herself, she ran to a bell and rang it.

In a moment the butler appeared. To conceal her agitation Eden had gone to the piano. There were some loose sheets of music on the lid and these she pretended to examine. "Is that you, Harris?" she asked, without turning her head. "Harris, that man that brought the note for Mr. Usselex this evening was the one that came on Monday with the note for Mr. Arnswald, was it not?"

"I beg pardon, ma'am."

Eden reconstructed the question and repeated it.

"It was a young person, ma'am," Harris answered. "A lady's maid, most likely. She was here before on Monday evening, just before dinner, ma'am. She brought a letter and said there was no answer. I gave it to Mr. Usselex."

"To Mr. Arnswald, you mean."

"No, ma'am; it was for Mr. Usselex."

Eden clutched at the piano. Through the sheet of music which she held she saw that note again. The handwriting was identical with the one on the envelope. But each word it contained was a separate flame, and each flame was burning little round holes in her heart and eating it away. It was very evident to her now. She had been tricked from the first. She had been lied to and deceived. It behooved her now to be very cool. It was on business indeed that he had left her! Unconsciously she recalled Mrs. Manhattan's aphorism about business and other men's wives, and to her mouth, which the smile had deserted, came a sneer.

He is with her now, she told herself; well, let him be. In a sudden gust of anger she tore the sheet of music in two, and tossing it from her, turned.

At the door the butler still stood, awaiting her commands.

"You may go," she said, shortly. The shadow which twice that day she had eluded was before her. But she made no effort now to escape. It was welcome. She eyed it a moment, Her teeth were set, her muscles contracted. Then grasping it as Vulcan did, she forged it into steel.

About her on either side were wastes of black, and in the goaf, by way of clearing, but one thing was discernible, the fealty of Adrian. To save her from pain he had taken the letter on himself; he had accepted her contempt that he might assure her peace of mind. Through the dismal farce which had been played at her expense his loyalty constituted the one situation which was deserving of praise. With a gesture she dismissed her husband ; it was as though he had ceased to exist. It was not him that she had espoused; it was a figure garbed in fine words. She had detected the travesty, the mask had fallen, with the actor she was done. She had never been mated, and now she was divorced. And as she stood, her hands clenched and pendant, the currents of her thought veering from master to clerk, the portière furthermost from her was drawn aside, the butler appeared an instant in the doorway, he mumbled a name, Dugald Maule entered the room, and the portière fell back.

"I made sure of finding you," he announced jauntily, as he approached.

He took her hand in his and raised it to his lips. In his button-hole was a flower, and in his breath the odor of *Crême de Menthe.* It was evident that he had just dined. "Your man tells me that Mr. Usselex is not at home," he continued. "I fancied he might be going to the assembly too. I see that you are. You look like a queen of old time. No, but you are simply stunning."

He stepped back that he might the better enjoy the effect. Eden had sunk on the lounge again. In and out from her skirt a white slipper, butterflied with gold, moved restlessly.

"But you are pale," he added. "What is it?" He had scanned her face—its pallor was significant to him; but it was the nervousness of the slipper that prompted the question. To his thinking there was nothing more talkative than the foot of a pretty woman.

Eden shrugged her shoulders. "I didn't expect you," she said; "I am sure that I wouldn't have received you if I had."

"Ah, that is hardly gracious now."

"Besides, your reputation is deplorable."

"No one has any reputation, nowadays," Maule answered, with the air of a man describing the state of the weather. "You hear the most scandalous things about everyone.

Who has been talking against me? A woman, I wager. Do you know what hell is paved with?"

"Not with your good intentions, I am positive."

"It is paved with women's tongues. That is what it is paved with. What am I accused of now?"

"As if I knew or cared. In my opinion you are depraved, and that is sufficient."

"Why do you call me depraved? You are not fair. Depravity is synonymous with the unnatural. Girls in short frocks don't interest me. Never yet have I loitered in the boudoir of a cocotte. Corydon was not a gentleman whom I would imitate. Neither was Narcissus. On the other hand, I like refined women. I have an unquestionable admiration for a pretty face. What man whose health is good has not? If capacity for such admiration constitutes depravity, then depraved I am." He paused. "H'm," he muttered to himself, "there's nothing of the Joseph about me."

But he might have continued his speech

aloud. Eden had ceased to hear, her thoughts were far away. He looked at her inquiringly.

"Something is the matter," he said at last. "What has happened?"

Eden aroused herself ever so little from her reverie. "Nothing," she answered. "I wish you would go away."

"Something *is* the matter," he insisted. "Tell me what is troubling you. Who is there to whom you can turn more readily than to me? Eden, you forget so easily. For months I was at your side. And abruptly, a rumor, a whisper, a wind that passes took you from me. Eden, *I* have not changed. Nor have you ceased to preside over my life. It is idle and useless enough, I know. With your aid it would have been less valueless, I think; but such as it is, it is wholly yours. Tell me, what it is that troubles you."

And Eden, influenced either by the caress of the words or that longing which in moments of mental anguish forces us to voice the affliction, though it be but to a wall, looked in his face and answered:

"A hole has been dug in my heart, and in that hole is hate."

"Hate? Why, hate is a mediæval emotion; you don't know what it means." And as he spoke he told himself she was mad.

"Do I not? Ah, do I not?" She beat a measure on her knee with her fingers, and her eyes roamed from Maule to the ceiling and then far into space. "There is one whom I think of now; could I see him smitten with agony such as no mortal ever felt before, his eyes filled with spectres, his brain aflame—could I see that and know it to be my work, I should lie down glad and willing, and die of delight."

She stood up and turned to him again. "Do I not know what hatred means?"

"Eden, you understand it so well that your conception of love must be clearer still."

"Love, indeed!" She laughed disdainfully. "Why, love is a fever that ends with a yawn. Love! Why, men used to die of love. Now they buy it as they buy their hats, ready-made."

"Then I am in that fever now—Hush! here

is your husband. The tenor wasn't half bad, I admit. Mr. Usselex, I am glad to see you."

Maule had risen at Usselex's entrance and made a step forward to greet him. "I stopped on my way to Delmonico's," he added, lightly. "I made sure you were both going."

"Yes," Usselex answered. "The carriage is at the door now. We can give you a lift if you care to."

He turned to Eden. "Shall I ring for your wrap?"

For one second Eden looked her husband straight in the eyes. And for one second she stood dumb, impenetrable as Fate, then gathering the folds of her dress in one hand, she answered in a tone which was perfectly self-possessed, "I have changed my mind," and swept from the room.

VIII.

On reaching her room Eden bolted the door. The maid rapped, but she gave no answer. Without was a whistling wind that parodied her anger. For a moment she looked through the darkness for that lighthouse which is Hope, but presumably she looked in vain. Then there came another rap, and she heard her husband's voice. Misery had offered her its arm, and she was silent. Her husband rapped again, entreating speech with her, and still she made no answer. Presently she caught the sound of retreating footsteps. She removed the opals, disrobed, undid her hair, and accepting the proffered arm, she took Misery for bedfellow.

It was hours before she slept. But at last sleep came. In its beneficence it remained until the morning had gone; then at noon-day it left her, and she started with a tremor like to that which besets one who awakes from a debauch. The incidents of the preceding days paraded with flying standards before her. They were victors indeed. "*Væ soli!*" they seemed to shout. They had been pitiless in their assault, and now they exulted at her defeat. They jeered at their captive; and Eden, with that obsession which captives know, thought only of release. In all the chartless future, freedom was the one thing for which she longed. Her wounds were many; they had depleted her strength; but in freedom is a balm that cures. Her strength might be irrevocable and the cicatrices not to be effaced, yet give her that balm, and come what sorrow could. As for resignation, the idea of it did not so much as visit her. Resignation is a daily suicide, and she had not enough to outlast the night.

The hours limped. The afternoon was on the wane, and still she toyed with sorrow until suddenly she bethought herself of the need of immediate action. Usselex would presently return, but when he came again to her room, he should find it empty. At once, then, she made her preparations, and telling the startled maid to complete them, and to follow with the boxes to her father's house, she started out on foot, her wardrobe packed, and ready for removal.

As Eden hurried through the streets, she was conscious only that freedom was her goal. Everything else she put from her. It was to her father she turned; it was through him that freedom would be obtained; and as she hurried she pictured the indignation with which he would hear her tale. He, indeed, was one on whom she could lean. Whatever other men might be, he, at least was above reproach. Had he not for twenty years been faithful to a memory. Surely her mother when she lived must have enjoyed that gift of gifts, perfect confidence and trust.

So far back in the past as her memory extended she saw him always considerate, gentle of manner, courteous to inferiors, deferential to women, unassuming, and exemplary of life. In very truth there was none other in the world like him. And when at last she entered his house she told herself she was safe, and when the door closed, that she was free.

She knew without inquiry where to find him, and hastened at once to the library, breathless when she reached his chair. He had been dozing over a book, but at the rustle of her gown, he started and rubbed his eyes.

"It's good of you to come," he said, by way of greeting. "Why, Eden, I haven't seen you for two days. Sit down there and let me look at you. It's odd; I was going to you after the funeral. You know about General Meredith, don't you? He went off like that. He is to be buried this afternoon."

Mr. Menemon stood up and hunted for a match with which to light a lamp. "Yes," he continued, "he was only ill for twenty-four hours. Think of that, now! To tell you the truth, I haven't been very bright myself. I wanted to speak to you about it. All last winter I was more or less under the weather, and for some time I have been planning a trip abroad. Now that you have an establishment of your own, Eden, you won't want me." And as he said this, he smiled.

"Father, I have more need of you than ever."

"Yes," he answered, "I was jesting. I know you will miss me; but I will come back with the violets."

He had succeeded in lighting the lamp and, still smiling, he turned and looked at her. "The father-in-law element," he continued, and then stopped abruptly, amazed at the expression of his daughter's face. "What is it, Eden?" he asked at last.

"If you go abroad, I go with you."

For a moment he eyed her, as though seeking, untold, to divine the meaning of her words.

"Nothing has gone wrong, has it?" he asked.

"He has deceived me."

"Usselex?"

"Who else is there whose deception I would notice?"

"You are mistaken, Eden; it is my fault; he consulted me in the matter ——"

"He consulted *you?* But how is such a thing possible. He never could have consulted you, and if he had you would not have listened."

"Ah! but I did though. Between ourselves I thought it not uninteresting. After all, it was not his fault. I thought it unadvisable that you should learn of it before marriage, and afterwards, well, afterwards, it was immaterial whether you did or whether you didn't."

"Father, either it is not you that speak, or I am demented."

"There, my dear, don't take it so seriously. I can't call it an every-day matter, of course, but such things do happen, and as I said before, a man's a man for all of that. If he said nothing it was because—well, Eden, how could he? Ask yourself, how could he?"

"You knew of this before my marriage and you permitted the marriage to take place?"

"Well—er, yes, Eden. Frankly now, it was a difficult matter to discuss with you. You see, it was this way: a young girl like yourself, brought up as you have been, is apt to have prejudices which men and women of the world do not always share. And this is a case in point. Even now that you are married I can understand your disapproval, but ——"

"Disapproval! Is that what you call it? Have you no other term? Father, it seems to me that you are worse than he. Had anyone told me that you could countenance such a thing I would have denied his sanity." She hid her face in her hands and moaned dumbly to herself. "I am desolate," she murmured, "I am desolate, indeed."

"No, Eden, not that, not that. Eden, listen to me; there, if you only listen to me a moment. Eden, it is not a thing that I countenance, nor is it one of which I approve. But the fault is not his. It is in the nature of some women that such things should be. It is a thing to be deplored, to be overlooked. The old law held that the sins of the father should be visited on the son; but we are more liberal now. Besides, it is part of the past; what use is there ——"

"Part of the past? I saw him with her the day before yesterday, and ——"

"Why, she is dead."

"Father, of whom are you speaking?"

"Of his mother, of course; and you?"

"I am speaking of his mistress, whom he wishes your daughter to entertain."

"Eden, it is impossible. I misunderstood you. What you say is absurd. Usselex is incapable of such infamy."

"He is, then, and he has the capacity to have me share it too."

"But tell me, what grounds have you for saying ——"

"On Monday I was at the opera. In the stalls was a woman that stared at me ——"

"Many another I am sure did that."

"And the next afternoon I saw him with her. He sent me a note saying he was detained on business. When he returned he made some lame excuse, which I, poor fool, believed. Previously I had intercepted a letter ——"

"A letter?"

"Yes, a letter such as those women write. He pretended it was not for him, and for the moment I believed that too. Oh, I have been credulous enough."

"Eden, you must let it pass."

"Not I."

"Ah, but Eden, you must; you must let it pass. I will speak to Usselex."

"That you may, of course; but as for me, I never will."

"My child, you are so wrong. What can I say to you? Eden—"

"Father, he has deceived me, Wantonly,

grossly, and without excuse. Speak to him again, I never will—"

"Eden—"

"—And if I ever see him it will be in court. It was for victims like myself that courts were invented."

At this speech Mr. Menemon stood up again, and paced the room; his head was bent, and he had the appearance of one in deep perplexity. From time to time he raised his hand and stroked his back hair. And as he walked Eden continued, but her tone was gentler than before:

"Father, you can never know. As you say, there are things of which it is not well to speak. But let me tell you: In marrying I thought my husband like yourself, one whom I could believe, whom I could honor, and of whom I should be proud. He was too old for me, people said. But my fear was that I should seem too young for him. Others insisted that I knew nothing of him, and all the while I hoped that he would not find me lacking. I wanted to aid, to assist. I was ambitious. He seemed possessed of the fibres of which greatness is the crown. I saw before him a future, a career which history might note. I dreamed that with the wealth which he had acquired and the power that was in him, he could win recognition of men and fame of time. It would be pleasant, I thought, to be the helpmate of such an one. How did it matter that he was an alien if I were at home with him? Father, I was proud of him. I was glad to be younger than he. What better guide could I find? Yes, I was glad of his years, for I had brought myself to think that when two people equally young and equally favored fall in love, it is nature that is acting in them. Whereas I loved not the man, but the individual, and that, I told myself, that is the divine. That is what I thought before marriage, and now I detect him in a vulgar intrigue. Is it not hideous? It took him six months to walk through my illusions, and one hour to dispel them. See, I have nothing left. Nothing," she added pensively, "except regret."

She remained silent a little space, then some visitation of that renegade Yesterday that calls himself To-morrow, seemed to stir her pulse.

"Father," she pleaded, "tell me; I can be free of him, can I not? You will keep him from me? you will get me back my liberty again?"

Mr. Menemon had resumed his former place at the table, and sat there, his head still bent. But at this appeal he looked up and nodded abstractedly, as though his attention were divided between her and someone whom he did not see.

"You are overwrought," he said. "Were you yourself, you would not speak in this fashion about nothing."

A sting could not have been more sudden in its effect. She gasped; a returning gust of anger enveloped her. She sprang from her seat as though impelled by hidden springs. "Nothing?" she cried. "You call it nothing to unearth a falsehood where you awaited truth, treachery where honesty should be, deceit instead of candor! You call it nothing to harbor a knight and discover him a knave, to give your trust unfalteringly and find that it has reposed on lies! Nothing to be jockied of your love, cozened of your faith! To wage a war with blacklegs and mistake that war for peace! Do you call it nothing to drown a soul, to make it a sponge of shadows that can no longer receive the light? Is it nothing to hold out your arms and be embraced by Judas? Is it nothing to be loyal and be gammoned for your innocence? Is it nothing to be juggled with, to be gulled, cheated, and decoyed? Is it nothing to grasp a hawser and find it a rope of sand? To pursue the real and watch it turn into delusion? Nothing to see the promise vanish in the hope? Is it nothing to take a mirage for a landscape, nothing to be hoodwinked of your confidence, to see high noon dissolve into obscurest night, a diamond into pinchbeck? Tell me, is it nothing to have trust, sincerity, and love for heritage, and wake to find that you have pawned them to a Jew? Do you think it nothing to be mated to a living perjury, a felony in flesh and blood? Is this what you call nothing? Is this it? Then tell me what something is."

For a moment she stared at her father, her lips still moving, her small hands clenched, then, exhausted by the vehemence of her speech, she sank back again into the chair which she had vacated.

"No, Eden, not that," her father answered; but he spoke despondently, with the air of a man battling against a stream, and conscious of the futility of the effort. "No, not that; you misunderstand. I mean this: you have confounded suspicion with proof. Whoever this woman is, Usselex's relations with her may be irreproachable. Mind you, I don't say they are; I say they may be. I will question him, and he will answer truthfully."

"Truthfully? You expect him to answer truthfully. In him nothing is true, not even his lies."

"Eden, I will question him. If it is as you expect, he will tell me and you will forgive."

"Forgive? yes, it is easy to forgive, but forget, never! Besides, he will not tell the truth; he will deceive you, as he has deceived me."

"No, Eden," Mr. Menemon answered, "you are wrong.' For a moment he hesitated and glanced at her. "I suppose," he continued, "I may tell you now. Perhaps it will help to strengthen your confidence."

Again he hesitated; but presently something of his former serenity seemed to return. "H'm," he went on, "it's a long story and an odd one. Previous to your engagement, Meredith was here. I wish, instead of lying across the square in a coffin, he could be here now. However, he came to see me one day. I happened to mention Usselex's name, and he told me certain rumors about him. The next afternoon I went to Usselex on the subject. 'I have already written to you on the matter,' he said; and sure enough, when I got back here, I found the letter waiting. Would you like to see it?"

Eden tossed her head. What had the letter to do with her?

"I will read it to you, then."

Mr. Menemon left his chair, went to a safe that stood in a corner, unlocked it, and after a fumble of a moment, drew out a manuscript, which he unfolded, and then resumed his former seat.

"It is not very long," he said, apologetically, and he was about to begin to read it aloud when Eden interrupted him.

"Tell me what is in it, if you must! "she exclaimed; "but spare me his phrases."

She had risen again and was moving restlessly about the room. Her father coughed in sheer despair.

"Well, I will tell it to you," he said. "But Eden, do sit down. Do wait at least until I can give you the gist of what he wrote."

"Go on; go on. Nothing matters now."

Hesitatingly and unencouraged, half to his daughter, and half to some invisible schoolmaster, whose lesson he might have learned by rote, Mr. Menemon fluttered the letter and sought some prefatory word.

"You see, Eden," he began, "this was sent me just before he spoke to you, and just after he had acquainted me of his intentions. You understand that, do you not?"

"Go on," she repeated.

"Well, from what I had heard, and what he practically substantiates here, Usselex is a trifle out of the common run. His earliest recollections are of Cornwall, some manufacturing town there; let me see—" and the old man fumbled with the letter and with his glasses. "Yes, yes; Market Dipborough, to be sure. Well, he was brought up there by his mother, who was of Swiss extraction, and by his father, who was at the head of a large shoe factory. I say his father and mother; but—However, he was brought up there. Well, to make a long story short, it appears that he was given a very good education; his people evidently were people of some means, and it was expected that he would study for the bar. He was put at some public school or other, the name is immaterial, and when he was on the point of entering Oxford, the Swiss lady or her husband, I forget which—at any rate, somebody died. Do you follow me, Eden? Well, he then learned that instead of being the son of the people by whom he had been brought up, he was not their son at all. And now comes the curious part of it. It seems that the Swiss lady had been, in years gone by, companion or governess, or something of that sort, to the Grand-Duchess Thyra of

Gothland, who, as you know, became the wife of the King of Suabia. She died, by the way, a year or two ago. However, the Swiss lady was her companion or something of the kind, and in consequence was placed in close relations with her. In fact, she was, I suppose, what you might call a confidante. In any event, the Grand-Duchess happened to have for music-teacher a good-looking young German who took her fancy. The result of it all was that the Swiss lady agreed to pretend that the offspring was her own, and was handsomely rewarded for her pains. She left Gothland with the child, and it was not until she died that Usselex learned that instead of being her son, he was grandson of the Emperor. He had the bar-sinister, of course, but the ancestry was there all the same. I don't know that I or any other man would envy him it; but perhaps it is better than none. However, as soon as Usselex learned the facts, he packed up and came over here. Now you have that part of his existence in a nutshell. What do you say to it?" And Mr. Menemon coughed again, and glanced inquiringly at his daughter.

"I say he is so base I might have known he was of royal blood."

"Eden, you are singularly unjust."

"But what does his birth matter to me?" she cried. "It was not for the presence or absence of forefathers that I put my hand in his. It was for the man himself, for what he seemed to me, and when I find that I have been mistaken in him, when in return for my love I get deceit, when he leaves me for another woman, and has the infamy to ask me to receive that woman, then I say, that whether he be the son of a serf or the son of a king, our ways divide—"

"Eden—"

"Yes, our ways divide."

Urged by her irritation, she still paced the room, graceful as a leopard is, and every whit as unconstrained. But now, abruptly she halted before a portrait that hung from the wall. For a moment she gazed at it, then pointing to it with arm outstretched, she turned.

"Tell me," she asked, her sultry eyes flashing with vistas of victory. "Tell me how my mother would have acted, had such an indignity been put on her. Tell me," she repeated, "and through your knowledge of her, so will I act. Yes," she added, and then paused, amazed at the expression of her father's face. It was as though some unseen hand had stabbed him from behind. The mouth twiched in the contraction of sudden pain, the nostrils quivered, and he bowed his head; then, his eyes lowered and turned from her, he answered in a voice that trembled just a little and yet was perfectly distinct:

"It was such a thing as this that marred your mother's life; let it not mar your own."

For the moment Eden could not credit her hearing. The words seemed meaningless. She had caught them in a crescendo of stupor. "It is impossible," she murmured. She stared at her father, her eyes dilated, her heart throbbing, and every sense alert. "It is impossible," she repeated, beneath her breath. And as she stared, her father's attitude accentuated the words, reiterating that the avowal which had been wrung from him was not the impossible, but the truth. No, there was no mistake. She had heard aright, and presently, as the understanding of it reached her, she moved back and away from him. For the first time that day the tears came to her eyes "I have drunk of shame," she sobbed; "now let me drink of death."

IX.

FOR some time father and daughter were silent. Eden suppressed her sob, and Mr. Menemon fidgeted nervously in his chair. The funeral across the way, he told himself, would be gayer than this, and for the moment he regretted that he had not taken time by its bang and gone to other lands. Grief was always distressing to him, and the grief of his daughter was torment. The idea that Usselex had been derelict, he put from him. He had an interpretation of his own for the incidents on which he had been called to sit in judgment. Trivialties such as they left him unaffected. His enervation came of an inability to cope with Eden. She treated an argument like a cobweb. And besides, had he not in a spasm of discouragement disclosed a secret which for two decades he had kept close-locked and secure?

Truly, if Eden had come to him with a valid complaint, he would have taken arms in an instant. He was by no means one to suffer a child of his to be treated with contumely. The bit of lignum vitæ which served him for a heart was all in all for her. A real grievance would have enraged him more than anyone else. In spite of his apparent indifference there was much of the she-wolf in his nature. He would have fought for Eden, he would have growled over her, and shown his false teeth at any assailant that might happen that way. But of danger there was not a trace. Listen as he might he could not catch the faintest rumor of advancing foes. And because she had met her husband in the street, because a woman had stared at her and some idiotic note had come into her hands, high-noon must change to night, and laughter into tears.

"She is her mother all over again," the old gentleman muttered. And in his discomfiture he regretted the funeral, the confidence that he had made, and fidgeted nervously in his chair.

And as he fidgeted, glancing obliquely the while at his daughter, and engrossed in the torturing pursuit of some plea that should show her she erred, and bring her to her senses again, Eden's earlier griefs crackled like last year's leaves. In this new revelation they seemed dead indeed. Of her mother she had not the faintest recollection; but there had been moments when a breath, a perfume, something which she had just read, a sudden strain, the intoning of a litany, an interior harmony perhaps, or an emotion, had brought to her a whisper, the sound of her own name; and with it for one second would come the shadowy reminiscence of an anterior caress. For a second only would it remain with her, departing as abruptly as it had come, but leaving her to stroll for hours thereafter through lands where dreams come true. And at such times she was wont to feel that could she but clutch that fleeting second and detain it long enough to catch one further glimpse of the past, the key of memory would be in it, and the past unlocked. But that second was never to be detained; it was from her father only that she was able to learn something of that which was nearest to her heart, and again and again she had sat with him listening to anecdotes, absorbing repetitions and familiar details with a renascent interest and a delight that no other chronicles could arouse. On the subject of her mother she had indeed been insatiable; she had wished to know everything, even to the gowns she preferred and the manner in which she had arranged her hair; and her father had taken evident pleasure in telling of one who had been wife to him and mother to her, and whose life she now learned for the first time he had marred.

Mr. Menemon meanwhile was still in pursuit of the plea; but nothing of any cogency presented itself. In truth he had builded better than he knew. Anger burns itself out; already its force was spent, and the revelation he had made had affected his daughter like a douche. In his ignorance, however, the safest and surest course that occurred to him was to hold his tongue, send for Usselex, and leave him to settle the matter as best he might. This course he was about to adopt, and he got out some paper preparatory to wording the message when a servant appeared with a card on a tray.

He picked it up, glanced at it, and then over at his daughter. She was still leaning against the book-case, her back was turned, and her face hidden in her arms. It seemed probable to him that she was unaware of the servant's presence.

"Very good," he murmured, and motioned the man away. Again he glanced at his daughter, but she had not moved, and noiselessly, that he might not disturb her, he left the room.

Eden indeed had heard nothing. The revelation had been benumbing in its unexpectedness, and as she leaned against the book-case, an immense pity enveloped her, and she forgot her sorrow and herself. Her own distress was trivial perhaps in comparison to what her mother had suffered, and yet surely her father had repented. As she entered the house had she not told herself that for twenty years he had been faithful to a memory. So far back as she could remember, she had seen him compassionate of others, striving, it may be, through the exercise of indulgence to earn some little of it for himself. And should she refuse it now? He had grieved; the stamp of it was on his face. She needed no one to remind her of that, and that grief perhaps had effaced the fault. And if his fault was effaceable, might not her husband's be effaceable as well? If he would but come to her and let her feel that this misstep was one that he regretted, she might yet forgive. It was as good to forgive as it was to forget; and how beautiful the future still might be!

The indignation which had glowed so fiercely subsided; one by one the sparks turned grey; the last one wavered a little and then disappeared. She turned, her sultry eyes still wet, to where her father had sat. And as she turned Mr. Menemon reëntered the room. She made no effort to account for his absence; she was all in all in her present idea, and she went forward to him at once.

"Did she forgive you?" she asked.

"Who?"

"My mother."

Mr. Menemon made no answer, but his face spoke for him.

"Then I will," she cried, and wound her arms about his neck. "I will forgive you for her."

"There is another whom you must forgive as well," he answered, gently.

"But you assured me he had done no wrong."

"Nor has he, I think." He hesitated a second. "Come down-stairs,' he added; "we can discuss it better there." And taking her hand in his he led her from the room.

On reaching the parlor below, he drew the portière aside that she might pass, and then, as they say in France, he eclipsed himself. Eden entered unattended. Her father, she supposed, was following her, and she was about to address some remark to him, when before her, in the dim light of twin candelabras, she perceived her husband.

Usselex was standing bolt upright, in the position of one who has come not to render accounts, but to demand them. In his attitude there was nothing of the repentant sinner, and at sight of him Eden felt herself tricked. She turned in search of her father, but he had gone. Then, seeing herself deserted, and yet disdaining retreat, she summoned the princess air which was ever at her bidding, and crossed the room.

"Why have you left the house?" he began, abruptly.

To this Eden made no answer. She lowered the yellow shade of one candle and busied herself with another.

"Why did you leave me last night?" he continued. And as she made no reply, "Why," he asked, "why are you here?"

But still she was silent. To his questions she was dumb. It was as though she had shut some door between him and her.

"Will you not speak?" he muttered.

And then, for the first time, she looked up at him, measuring him as it were with one chill glance from head to heel. "If I remember rightly," she said, from the tips of her lips, "you left me for your mistress."

"It is false ——" Usselex exclaimed. Presumably he was about to make further protest, but the portière was drawn aside and he was interrupted.

X.

As it afterwards appeared, Dugald Maule, on leaving the Usselex house the preceding evening, had gone directly to the Assembly. On arriving, he went up through the ferns to the vestiary, left his coat and hat, and while putting on his gloves, gazed down from the balcony which Lander occupies to the ballroom below.

A quadrille was in progress; a stream of willowy girls, fresh for the better part, well-dressed and exceptionally plain, were moving about the floor. They seemed serene and stupid, chattering amiably through pauses of the dance; and beneath, on the dais, Maule divined the presence of Mrs. Manhattan, Mrs. Hackensack, Mrs. Bouvery, the Coenties, and other ladies of maturer years. He was sure they were smiling and fanning themselves. They always were. And presently, when his gloves were buttoned, he fell to wondering what he was doing there. The incidents of the evening had supplied him with a quantum of thought which he had no desire to dispense in platitude. He was not at all in a mood to mingle with those whose chiefest ambition was to be ornate. In another minute he recovered his coat, and to the surprise of the door-keeper went down through the ferns again. In the memory of man no one before had ever come to a subscription-ball and deserted it two minutes later. He must be ill, Johnson reflected, and went on collecting tickets.

Maule, however, was not in any sense indisposed, and as evidence of it he walked far up Fifth Avenue, and on through the outskirts of the Park. It was his intention, self-avowed and dominant, that he would come to some decision in regard to Eden before that walk was done.

Like many another before and since, he

found his brain most active when his legs were in motion. In working up a case for a client, many a time during an entire day he had reviewed dust-bound books of yellow hue, but the one point, the clinching argument that was to arrest attention and win the cause, came to him in the exhilaration of the open air. The inspiration that was to coördinate conflicting data rarely visited him at his desk. It was in the fatigue of the flesh that his mind became clairvoyant. It was then that he found the logic for his brief. And on this particular evening, as he strode along he kept telling himself that in all his practice there had been nothing to him as important as this. It was his own case that he was preparing; and did it result in failure, how could he venture to undertake one in which the interest would be feigned and the recompense coin? If he could not plead his own case and win, then might he take his shingle down.

The facts, such, at least, as they appeared to him, were evangelical in their simplicity. Here was a girl who had given him her heart's first love, a girl who had exalted him into an ideal, and then, suspecting him of infidelity to her, had married the next comer out of pique. No sooner did he have a chance of exchanging speech with her than she confessed that she hated her husband.

"Now," he reflected, "when a woman takes a man sufficiently into her confidence to admit that she hates her husband, that admission is tantamount to an avowal of love for him. Such admission she has made to me. Nothing conceivable could have been more explicit than her words." And at the memory of them he nodded sagaciously to himself. "No other girl," he continued, "no other in all the world, is as desirable as she. St. Denis would have hypothecated his aureole to possess her. As I sat with her to-night I felt mediæval from ears to heel. If our age were a century or two younger I would have carried her off to a crenelated castle, let down the drawbridge, and defied the law. But my apartment in the Cumberland is hardly a donjon; a hansom is not a vehicle suited to an elopement; Lochinvar is out of fashion; and besides, she would not have gone. No, she would not have gone; so the other objections are immaterial. But then, there are girls who will not go at the asking, but who will come without instigation. And Eden, I take it, is one of them. It was six months before she would so much as let me touch the tips of her fingers; she was afraid of a kiss as of a bee; and at the very moment when I had given her up she threw herself in my arms: it is true, she never repeated the performance, which was a pity; though had it not been for that little affair of mine, we should in all probability be man and wife to-night. After all, it is for the best, I suppose." And again he nodded sagaciously.

"Yes," he repeated, "it is for the best. Someone—Shakspere, Martin Luther, Tupper, or Chauncey Depew—said that there were some good marriages, but none that were delicious; and I daresay that whoever said it was right. Yes, certainly it is for the best. It may be sweet and decorous, as I used to write in my copy-book, to die for one's native land; but I will be shot if it is sweet and decorous to marry for it. And practically that is what it amounts to. Men marry for the sake of others, rarely for their own, and as for women, whatever their reasons may be, *plaudite sed cavite, cives!* Eden, I am positive, married out of pique. It is nonsense to think that she could have any large affection for a man twice her age; and now that she is not only tired of him, but hates him to boot, he ought to be gentlemanly enough not to play the dog in the manger. No, it isn't that. I will admit that he is well enough in his way, provided that way is out of mine. The difficulty is that he doesn't seem to keep out of hers. Major premiss, then—Eden hates Usselex. Minor premiss—Usselex keeps her from me. Ergo. Eliminate Usselex, and she is mine. The logic of that is admirable; the only fault with it is that it doesn't give a hint as to the manner in which Usselex is to be eliminated. He may eliminate himself, it is true; but that is a possibility that it is hardly worth while to count on. And, meanwhile, I know Eden well enough to be aware that until he does she will decline to listen to me."

Maule had reached the upper part of the

Avenue. The night was chill and clear as our December nights are apt to be. There was a foretaste of snow in the air, and in that foretaste a tonic. And suddenly the cathedral loomed, huge, yet unsteepled, as though the designers had lost heart in its carcass and faith as well. The sky seemed remote and unneighborly. In the background the moon glinted in derision, and directly overhead was a splatter of callous stars.

The scene did not divert the channel of his thoughts. He walked steadily on, leaving behind him the dogma that time had fossilized and man had forgot. He was indifferent to creeds. The apathy of the stars told him nothing of worlds to which our own is unknown. In the derision of the moon he did not see the sneer of a sphere that is dead The foretaste of snow in the air brought him no memory of the summer that had gone, and when he reached the park the leafless trees that spring would regarment left him unimpressed. The identity of birth and death, the aimlessness of all we undertake, were matters to which he had never given a thought. And had the beggar who presently accosted him been a thinker capable of explaining that life is an exhalation, that we respire, aspire, and expire, unconscious as is the tree of the futility of it all, Dugald Maule would have dismissed him with the same indifferent shrug. He was instinct with aims that end with self. His mind was centered on Eden, and until he solved the problem she had suggested, he had no thought of time that life devours or of time that devours life.

And as he tried to devise some form of campaign, suddenly he was visited by an idea which he grasped and detained. It was, that if Eden hated her husband a cause for that hatred must exist, and could he but discover it he would then have something tangible wherewith to work. Certainly, he told himself, it could not be money; nor did Usselex look like a man that drank. "I wonder," he mused, "whether it can be that he treats her badly. H'm. I know very little about Usselex. He may be Chesterfield one hour and Sykes the next. There are plenty of men of that stamp. If he is, that poor little thing deserves consolation. No, it can hardly be that—Eden is too high-spirited to submit to brutality. She would leave him at once, and everyone would approve. Whereas, if Usselex has got himself entangled by some woman, Eden, out of sheer pride, would remain where she is. Nothing can be more galling than the pity which is manifested for a woman whose husband disports himself abroad. It is shameful, the world says; and inwardly the world thinks, when a woman wins a man and fails to hold him, the fault is not his, but hers. Eden understands that, of course, and if there is a woman in the matter, that is the reason why she continues to reside on the sunnyside of Fifth Avenue. But then, it may not be that. I may be miles away. Though if it is, nothing could be more favorable. It would be becoming of Eden to keep her misfortune to herself, but it would be unwomanly on her part not to desire revenge ; and what better revenge could she have against the man whom she married out of pique than in the arms of the man by whom that pique was excited ? But, bah ! All this is pure conjecture. I haven't a fact to go on. I know little or nothing of Usselex, and I doubt very much whether Eden would be willing to supply me with any information. The only thing for me to do is to cull a few facts, season them to suit her taste, and serve hot. At this stage a false step would be fatal. I must be careful of my cookery. To-morrow, in the absence of facts, I will see what I can do in the way of condiments; *et alors, en route pour Cythère.*"

So mused Mr. Maule; then, having reached the end of his tether, he turned back again in the direction of his home.

The next morning, however, the plan of campaign which he had been devising was not a whit more tangible to him than it had been during his midnight stroll. He drank some coffee hopefully, and tried to lose himself in a damp copy of the *Times*. But in vain. The coffee brought him no comfort, and through the columns of the paper came the sultriness of Eden's eyes. The obituary of a famous general failed to detain his attention. The intelligence that an emperor was moribund lent no zest to the day. Mechanically his eyes scanned the Court Calendar; a case in which he was to appear was numbered therein, but he let it pass unnoticed. And presently, finding himself occupied in memorizing the advertisement of a new soap, he tossed the paper from him and started on his way down town.

It was late when he reached his office. In the corner of the room a fat little man sat patiently twirling his thumbs, and on a desk were a number of letters.

"What do you want?" Maule asked. His voice was gruff and inhospitable.

The fat little man started, and then fumbled in a pocket. "Dere was dot morhgige——" he began.

"Come again, then," Maule interrupted; "I am busy."

"Dot morhgige—" the little man persisted.

"Go to hell with your mortgage," Maule shouted, and slammed a door in his face.

This rite accomplished, he felt better. The brutality which he had displayed to the corpulent dwarf pleasured him. He only regretted that the man had not insisted further, that he might have kicked him down the stairs. What was a mortgage to him, forsooth, when he had Eden for a goal ? The episode, trivial though it was, had stirred his pulse and left the effect of a tonic. He smiled, and opened his letters. As he read them his clerk appeared. With him he consulted for a minute and then started for court. On his return there was the little fat man again, and beating a tatoo on the window was Reginald Maule, ex-Minister to France.

"Well, Uncle Regy," he exclaimed, "how are you ? Mr. Driscoll," he called out to the clerk, "attend to that Dutch beast, will you ? Uncle Regy, step this way."

He led Mr. Maule into the inner office and graciously accepted a cigar. He was in great good-humor again. While in court a luminous idea had visited him, a plan of campaign which he proposed to elaborate at his ease. It was alluring as spring, and instinct with promises of success. Already he roamed in dreams forecast.

"Dugald," the uncle began, "I did not see you at the Matriarch's, last night."

Until recently Maule had not seen his uncle for several years. But during these years the uncle had not changed. He had the same agreeable manner, the same way of seating himself, the same sarcastic fold about his lips which Maule remembered of old. Even the cut of his waistcoat was unaltered. Apparently nothing had happened to him; he had contented himself with continuing to be.

"No," the nephew answered, and flicked the ashes from his cigar. "No, something else turned up and ——"

"Exactly. If I had met you there I should not have come here. Now, I want a word with you in regard to the estate. Are you busy?" And the ex-Minister settled himself in his chair with the air of a man confident that, whatever else might demand attention, his own affairs would take precedence.

Thereupon, for some little time, nephew and uncle discussed matters of personal and common interest; and when at last these matters had been satisfactorily determined, the afternoon had begun to wane. At last the ex-Minister stood up to go.

"By the way," he said, his hand on the door, "who was it that Petrus Menemon's daughter married? I looked for her last night. When I saw her at the opera I could have sworn it was her mother. Same type, same eyes, same carriage of the head. She made me feel twenty years younger, I give you my word she did."

"She is pretty," Maule answered, negligently.

"Pretty? She is more intoxicating than the dream of a fallen angel. She is better looking than her mother. Hum, hum. You don't see such women in France. What did you say her name is?"

"She married a man named Usselex."

"Usselex? What Usselex?"

"What Usselex I can't tell you. But there seems to be only one, and she caught him. He has more money than Incoul, Jerolomon, and Bleecker Bleecker put together.'

"You don't mean John Usselex, the banker?"

"Oh, but I do, though."

The ex-Minister opened the door and

looked out into the outer room, then, assured that no one was listening, he resumed his former seat, crossed his legs, and meditatively beat his knee. In his face was an expression which a psychologist would have admired, a commingling of the vatic and the amused, accentuated by sarcasm.

"Well, what of it?" Maule asked shortly, perplexed at the mummery.

The ex-Minister leaned forward and for four or five minutes addressed his nephew in a monotone. As he spoke Maule's perplexity changed to surprise, then to bewilderment, and ultimately into jubilation. "Are you positive of this?" he exclaimed. "Tell me that you are. You must be positive!"

"I give you the facts—"

"I am off, then;" and he sprang from his seat. "I haven't a minute to lose," he added; and taking his uncle by the arm he led him from the office.

In the outer room the corpulent dwarf still sat. "Dere was dot morhgige—' he stammered.

"Accepted,' Maule shouted, and turned to the clerk. "Look over the papers, will you? If they are right, get a check ready. As for you, my slim friend," he said to the German, "remember that business men have business hours." And laughing as though he had said something insultingly original, he hurried down the stairs, and jumping into a hansom, he presently rolled up town.

In a trifle over half an hour he was at Eden's door. "There is no time like the present," he told himself, as he rang the bell. But when, in answer to his ring, a servant appeared, he learned that Eden was not at home.

"Does Mrs. Usselex dine out, do you know?" Maule asked.

"I don't think Mrs. Usselex is coming back, sir," was the answer.

"You mean that Mrs. Usselex will not return until late, I suppose."

To this the man made no reply; he scratched the end of his nose reflectively. In his face was an expression that arrested Maule's attention.

"What do you mean?" he asked, a sudden suspicion entering his mind.

But still the man made no answer. He raised his arms, the elbows crooked, and assumed the appearance of an idiot.

"It is worth five dollars," Maule continued. "Here they are;" and with that he extended a bill of the nation, which the servant took, and then, glancing over his shoulder, whispered:

"Mrs. Usselex has gone to her father's, sir. I distrust something's hup."

"That man ought to be dismissed," Maule decided, as he hurried down the steps. "I say, cabby," he called to the hansom; "Second Avenue and Stuyvesant Square."

"Damn it all," he muttered, as he seated himself in the vehicle. "I am afraid I am late for the ball."

It took the hansom but a few minutes to reach its destination, and presently the door of Mr. Menemon's house was opened. As Maule entered he caught the sound of Eden's voice. "I want to see Mrs. Usselex," he said, and without waiting for a reply, he pushed the portière aside.

"It is false," he heard Usselex exclaim.

For a second Maule hesitated. He would have preferred to have found Eden alone. Indeed, the possibility of encountering her husband had not occurred to him; but he felt that it was too late to recede, and visited by that prescience which comes to the alert, he divined that the blow which he intended to strike must be struck then or never. He let the portière fall, and taking his courage in both hands, he stepped forward. As he did so, Eden, in annoyance at the intrusion, moved back, and Usselex, with a query on his tongue, turned to him. But before the latter could frame his words, Maule had spoken.

"Mr. Usselex," he said, with the air of one ventilating a conventional platitude, "are you aware that a man who insults a woman is a coward?"

At this speech Eden's hands fluttered like falling leaves; she made as would she speak, but Usselex motioned to her to be silent, and flicking a speck of dust from his sleeve as though the speck represented the reproof, he answered in a tone as conventional as Maule's. "And are you aware, sir, that a man who permits himself to interfere between husband and wife is—"

But whatever he may have intended to say, the sentence remained unfinished. Maule did not wait for its completion. He advanced yet nearer to where Usselex stood, he looked him in the face, and without raising his voice, he said: "This lady, Mr. Usselex, is not your wife, nor are you her husband." Then, turning to Eden, he added with the grace of a knight-errant, "Miss Menemon, allow me to present my congratulations."

The old legends tell of disputants ossified by one glance of Jove's avenging stare; and when Maule made his melodramatic announcement, both Usselex and Eden stood transfixed and motionless with surprise. Of the little group Maule alone preserved any semblance of animation. The palms of his hands were moist, and he felt unable to control one of the muscles of his face. But his emotion was not apparent. Outwardly he was perfectly self-possessed, and admonished by that instinct which at times warns us that every trace of feeling should be disguised, he succeeded in heightening the illusion by means of his moustache, to which he proceeded to give a negligent twirl.

And as he twirled it Eden seemed to recover from her stupor. To her face, which had been blanched, the color returned. In her eyes came a gleam as from a reflection caught from without. Her lips moved, and she glanced from accuser to accused. And as she glanced, dumb and ineffectual of speech, Mr. Menemon crossed the room.

"What is it you say?" he asked.

It was evident at once that of the scene—which if long in the telling had in reality not outlasted a moment—he had stood as witness.

"What is it you say?" he repeated.

"I say that this man is a bigamist." And as Maule spoke he tossed his head as though inviting possible contradiction. "I say," he continued, "that Mr. John Usselex has a wife living in Paris."

Mr. Menemon smoothed the back of his

head reflectively. "Dear me!" he said; "that may all be. I daresay there are hundreds of John Usselexes. You don't expect them to remain bachelors because one of their namesake gets married, do you?" And with that he nodded and turned with a smile to his daughter. "He can't expect that, Eden, can he?"

But Eden's eyes were fixed on Usselex. Her attention was wholly centered in him. Seemingly her father's words were unheeded. And the old gentleman turned again to Maule.

"What evidence have you that this John Usselex is the John Usselex of whom you speak?" he asked; and with the hand with which he had smoothed the back of his head, he now began to caress his chin.

But before Maule could answer, Eden caught her father by the arm. "His face!" she whispered quickly. "You can see it in his face.' She pointed to him; in her eyes was conviction, and in her voice no tremor of doubt. "Look at him," she cried; "it is he."

Usselex turned to her in a manner which to those present was uninterpretable, then his eyes sought Mr. Menemon's, and finally he lowered them to the ground. His attitude was tantamount to admission, and as such Eden construed it.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed. "O God! I thank you. I am free." She still clutched her father's arm, and Maule made a movement toward her.

"Yes," he said, as he did so, "yes, Miss Menemon ——"

But before he could reach her, Usselex barred the way. "By what right, sir—" he began, very firmly, but Eden interrupted him.

"I told you once that I thought Miss Bolten was interested in him. Let me tell you now he is in love with me."

"Eden, Eden—" her father murmured, reprovingly. Into Usselex' face came an expression that a demon might have envied. For a second he fronted Maule, his hand clenched. Then the fingers loosened again. The demon was transformed into a quiet, self-possessed man, that looked like a monk, a trifle valetudinarian at that.

"Madam," he said, "when a woman speaks in that way to the man whose name she bears, there is but one thing for him to do, and that is to withdraw." He bowed, and without further comment left the room.

"I don't bear your name," Eden called after him, but he had gone. "I don't bear your name; I throw it to the mud from which it sprang."

"And you are right, Miss Menemon," Maule echoed. "You are right to do so." And again he moved to her.

"Don't touch me," the girl cried; she was trembling. Evidently the excitement had been too much for her. "Don't touch me," she repeated; and drawing from him as from a distasteful thing, she added, with a look of scorn that an insulted princess might have exhibited: "Though you have not a lackey's livery, you have a lackey's heart."

"Eden, I beg of you —" Mr. Menemon began. But the girl had turned her back, and divining the uselessness of any admonition, the old gentleman addressed himself to Maule. "You will permit me to say, sir," he continued, "that whatever your motive may have been, and whatever evidence you may have, your announcement might have been conveyed a trifle less unceremoniously. I bid you good afternoon."

"But ——"

"I bid you good afternoon."

Maule twirled his moustache for a second, and then, with a glance at Eden, he too left the room.

Hardly had he gone, when Eden threw herself on a lounge. In her ears was the roar of water displaced. The flooring turned from red to black. Then all was still; she had fainted.

XI.

As Eden, through thunderclaps, and zigzagged flames of light, groped back to consciousness again, it was with the intuition that some calamity was waiting to greet her. Into the depths of her being, a voice which refused to be hushed had been whispering, "Come." And Eden, clinging to the fringes of night, strove to still the call. But the phantom of things that were persisted and overcame her;

it loomed abruptly, with arms outstretched, forcing her against her will, to reason with that in which no reason was.

For the moment she was benumbed, outwearied with effort and enervated by the strain and depletion of force. She wished herself unconscious again, and looked back into the absence of sentiency from which she had issued, as a pilgrim reëntering the desert may recall the groves of Mekka and the silence of the Khạbian tomb. It had been less a swoon to her than a foretaste of peace, the antithesis of life compressed into a second; and she longed for a repetition of the sudden suffocation of its embrace. But memory had got its baton back, and the incidents of the hour trooped before her gaze. She could not be free of them; they beat at her heart, filling her thoughts to fulfillment itself. In their onslaught they brought her new strength, the courage that comes to the oppressed; and rising from the lounge on which she had fallen, she left her father and his ministrations, and redescended into the past with anger for aigrette and hatred for spur.

It was the room that she had occupied during her girlhood to which she then went, and in the presence of the familiar walls, something reminded her of the days in which she had believed that the ignoble bore a stigma on their brow, that infamy of thought or deed left a visible sign. She recalled the old legends with which her childhood had been charmed, the combats of heroes with monsters, the struggles of lords with lies. In those days indeed, evil had been to her an abstraction, a figure of speech beckoned out of the remotest past, and unencounterable as the giant bat that darkened the nights of prehistoric time. Then had come a nearer acquaintance with it, the shudders that chronicles brought, and the intimations of the fabliaux; but still it had been distant, a belonging of the past incompetent of survival. And it was not until within recent years that she learned that it had indeed survived. Even then the tidings that reached her had as much consistency to her mind as the news of cholera in Singapore. She could not picture that Orient port, and the cholera she was sure would never attack her in her father's house.

And now suddenly she was contaminated. She felt as one may feel who had been lured into a lazar of lepers. Turn which way she might she could never wash herself clean. She was degraded in her own sight, and tricked by those whom she had trusted best. And no issue, not one. The dishonor into which she had been trapped was a thing that clamored for redress, and to that clamoring of her heart no answer was vouchsafed. "O God," she moaned, "is justice dead? Where are the thunderbolts you used to wield? Have you wearied of vengeance? have you left it, Jehovah, to us?"

Her forehead was throbbing as it had never throbbed before. Above it each individual hair seemed to be turning red. Her sultry eyes were dilated; she was quivering from shoulder to heel. And as in her restless anger she paced the room, before her on the wall glowed the device her own hands had made—*Keep Yourself Pure.* For a second she stared at it, the color mounting and retreating from her cheeks, and suddenly she tore it down and trampled it under foot.

"Vengeance is there," she cried; and without even the hesitation of a hesitation she bent over a table, and finding a sheet of paper, she scrawled across it—*In telling you of Maule's love for me I omitted to tell you of my own for Adrian.* This she addressed and then rang the bell.

And as she stood waiting for a servant to come, there was a rap on the door and her father entered. He looked at her for an instant and rubbed his hands. "It is chilly here, Eden," he said; "had you not better come down-stairs?"

"Is it worth while? It must be late. Where is Parker? has she not come with my things?"

"Yes; it is almost six o'clock. Parker—"

"Six! I thought it was midnight. How long have I been here?"

"Three or four minutes at most. I had a note to write. So soon as I could do so I followed you at once. You are quite yourself again, Eden, are you not?"

"I can understand," mused Eden, "that there are years that count double when there are moments that prolong themselves as have these." "Yes," she answered, aloud. "I am better. I will come with you."

She picked up the message she had written and left the room. In the hallway was the servant for whom she had rung. "Take this to Fifth Avenue," she said. "There is no answer, but see that it is delivered in person."

XII.

"It is pleasanter here, is it not, Eden?" Mr. Menemon asked, when they reached the sitting-room. "It makes one think of old times, doesn't it? Do you remember—" And Mr. Menemon rambled on with some anecdote of days long past.

Eden gazed at him wonderingly. His words passed her by unheeded. It was bewildering to her that he could accept the tragedy so lightly, and as he spoke she kept repeating to herself that Virginius was part of a world long dead and derided. Truly, she could not understand. He seemed conscious of no wrong doing. The position in which she was placed excited him so little that he was able to discourse in platitudes. She was not wife nor maid nor widow, and for the man who had taken her from her home and inflicted on her a wrong that merited the penitentiary, her father expressed no indignation, no sorrow even. He did not even attempt to condole with her. And it was to him she had turned. Truly, she was helpless indeed. Yet still she gazed at him, expectant of some sudden outbreak, some storm of anger which, though it parodied her own, would at least be in unison with it. Her fingers were restless and her mouth was parched, a handkerchief which she held she twisted into coils, it seemed to her that were no word of sympathy forthcoming she would suffocate, as the traveler in the desert gasps beneath the oppression of fair and purple skies.

And still Mr. Menemon rambled on. "I should have gone to his funeral," he said, "had you not come in. He is to be buried in Washington I hear. Well, well! he was a brave man and a staunch friend. Yes, he was all of that. Really, Eden, I ought to have gone. I suppose they will escort the body to the station. Did you hear the drums when you went up-stairs? It makes a man of my age feel that his turn may be next."

Mr. Menemon crossed the room and looked out of the window. "See, Eden," he continued; "there must be a whole regiment. Not his own, though. The better part of that went down at Gettysburg. You remember, don't you ——"

With this Mr. Menemon turned with a haste he strove to conceal. "It's almost dinner time," he added, inconsequently. "I will just change my coat." And immediately he left the room.

For a moment Eden thought she heard his voice in the hall. Then all was still again. She was wholly alone. She envied her father's friend who lay in some catafalque across the square. And presently the sense of desolation grew so acute that she threw herself prostrate on the lounge, and clasping a cushion in her arms, she buried her face in its silk.

From the square beyond came a muffled roll, and on her shoulder the touch of a hand. It was her father, she was sure. She half turned, her cheeks wet with tears. "What is it?" she sobbed. "Father——"

"It is I, Eden." And through a rift of understanding there filtered the sound of Usselex's voice. With the flutter of a bird surprised, she looked up. She started, and would have risen, but the hand weighed her down. She tried to move, and raising her arm as though to shield her eyes from some distasteful sight, suddenly she extended it, and motioned him back.

"Eden," he began.

"Don't speak to me!" she cried; "and shaking herself from his hold, she stood up and dashed the tears away. "Don't speak to me!" she repeated; "and if anywhere within the purlieus of your being there is a spark of shame, leave me, and never——"

"Eden, you are unjust."

"Ah, I am unjust, am I not? I am unjust, because I believed in you. I am unjust, because I discover you in some coarse intrigue, I am unjust, because I thought myself your wife. I am unjust, am I? Did you get my note? Is it for that that you are here?"

"Eden, if you will listen a moment ——"

"I have listened too long. Where is my father? Why is it you pursue me here? Are you not satisfied with your work? You meet a girl who only wishes to trust, and before her eyes you unroll a panorama of deceit. Oh! you chose her well ——"

"It cannot be that you believe that man, Eden ——"

"The man I believed was you. What matters the testimony of others when I find myself deceived ——"

"Eden, you have deceived yourself. Last night I told you there were things I had not wished to tell, not from lack of confidence, but because ——"

"Because you knew that did I hear them I would go."

"No, not that; but because I did not wish to cause you pain."

"Yes, protest. My father said you would.

But the protest comes too late. Besides, I do not care to listen."

And thereat she made a movement as though to leave the room. But this Usselex prevented. He planted himself very firmly before her, His attitude was arrestive as an obelisk and uncircuitable as a labyrinth. Attention was his to command, and he claimed it with a gesture.

"You shall not go," he said; "you shall hear me."

She stepped back to elude him, but he caught her by the wrist.

"Look at me," he continued. "It took fifty years to make my hair gray; one day has made it white."

Eden succeeded in disengaging herself from his grasp, and she succeeded the more easily in that a servant unobserved by her, yet seen by Usselex, had entered the room. He loosed his hold at once and glanced at the man.

"What is it?" he asked. "No one rang."

"A letter, sir," the man answered; "it was to be delivered to you."

Usselex took the note and held it unexamined in his hand. Eden caught a glimpse of the superscription. The writing was her own. It was, she knew, the note which she had dispatched a half hour before. Meanwhile the servant had withdrawn.

"When I came home this afternoon," Usselex continued, "and found that you had gone, I could not understand ——"

"You might have gone to the Ranleigh for information. Let me pass!"

"Why to the Ranleigh? surely ——"

"To Mrs. Feverill, then, since you wish me to be explicit. Let me pass, I say."

"It was of her I wished to tell you ——"

"Was it, indeed? You were considerate enough, however, not to do so."

"Let me tell you now?"

"Rather let me go. I prefer your reticence to your confidence."

"Eden ——"

"No, I have no need to learn more of your mistress ——"

Usselex stepped aside. "She is my daughter," he said, sadly. "Go, since you wish to."

—"Nor of your wife,' she added, as he spoke.

"I have no other wife than you," he answered, and with the note which he held in his hand he toyed despondently. As yet he had not so much as glanced at the address.

Something, a light, an intonation, and influence undiscerned yet sentiable, stayed her steps. She halted in passing and looked him in the face. And he, seeing that she hesitated, repeated with an accent sincere as that which is heard in the voice of the moribund, "No other wife than you."

"You say that Mrs. Feverill is your daughter?" she exclaimed. It may be that the average woman, conscious of her own mobility, is more inattentive of the past than of the present. But however that may be, the assurance which Eden had just received seemed to affect her less than the preceding announcement. "You say that she is your daughter," she repeated. "Why, you told me— You said—"

"I have told you nothing. Will you sit a moment and let me tell you now?"

Coerced and magnetized, the girl moved back and sank down again on the lounge. Usselex still toyed absently with the note, and as he too found a seat, for the first time she recalled its contents. Then a shudder beset her.

"I ought perhaps," he began, "to have been franker in this matter. But my excuse, if it be one, is that I was dissuaded by your father. Before I ventured to ask you to marry me, I told my story to him, and he counselled silence. What I say to you now he will substantiate. Shall I ring and ask him to come here?"

His words reached her from inordinate distances, across preceding days, and out of and through the note which he held in his hand; and with them came the acutest pain. "He is telling the truth," she reflected, "and I deserve to die."

"Shall I ring?" he repeated.

She started and shook her head. "No, no," she replied. "Go on."

"I thank you," Usselex returned. "I can understand that enough has occurred to shake your confidence. In the circumstances, it is good of you to be willing to receive my unsupported word. But bear with me a moment. You will see, I think, that I have done no wrong."

As he spoke she had but one thought, to repossess herself of the note. Could she but get it and tear it and set it aflame, out of the cinders life might re-arise.

"You may remember," he continued, "what I said of myself, 'things have not always been pleasant with me.' You knew as a child what it is to lose a mother, but think what it must be to have a mother and have that mother ignore your existence. Such a thing is hard, is it not? But of her I will not speak; she is dead, poor woman; I hope she never suffered as have I. The people by whom I was brought up I looked upon as my parents. They had been paid to adopt me. When I discovered that, I was old enough to make my own living. With that view I came to this country. New York was different then. I should not care to land here now and attempt to make a fortune without a penny to start with. But it is true, I was young. I was a fair linguist, a rarity in those days, and it was not long before I found a situation. When I had a little money put by, I learned of an opening in Boston, and started in business there for myself. Shortly after I became acquainted with a girl. She was very beautiful; more so, I thought, than anyone I had ever seen. So soon as I was in a position to marry she became my wife. We lived together for three years. During that time I thought her affection as unwavering as my own. She was an excellent musician, and much sought after, not alone because of her talent, but because of her beauty as well. The entertainments which she frequented I was often unable to attend. But I was glad to have her go without me. I was proud of the admiration which she aroused. One evening she left me, and did not return. For some time her disappearance was unexplained. Ultimately I discovered that she was in New York. She had deserted me for another man. I followed her and obtained a divorce. Afterwards the man deserted her as she had deserted me. Then she went abroad. Of her life there I can only judge by hearsay. I believe that at one time she figured in an opera troupe. Now and then she wrote, asking for money; but latterly she has ceased. It is a surprise to me that she calls herself by my name. Perhaps she has done so because she heard that I had prospered. The reflection of that prosperity may have been of advantage to her. That, however, can easily be stopped. But I am sorry, Eden, that you should have learned of it. Even the children do not know; they think her dead. When she deserted me, I left them with their grandparents. In so doing I sought to separate myself from everything connected with her, and I stipulated that I would provide for their maintenance on condition that they were kept in ignorance of their mother's existence and of mine. Some years ago, however, first the grandfather, then the grandmother, died. I was obliged to appear more prominently. My daughter had married; I took her husband into my employ. It was of him I spoke the other day."

He hesitated and paused, his eyes fixed in hers. The phrases had come from him haltingly, one by one, but each he had dowered with an accent that carried conviction with it With the note which he held in his hand, he still toyed abstractedly.

"You understand now, do you not?" he asked. "You understand and forgive?"

And Eden, as one who has weathered a storm and sees shipwreck imminent in port bowed her head. "It is truth," she told her-, self. "If he reads that note, he will kill me."

"You understand now, do you not?" he repeated. His voice was sonorous and caressing as an anthem, and he bent nearer that he might see her face.

"Too late!" she answered.

"No, Eden, not that. Look at me. You must not hide your eyes. In all the world there are none as fair as they. Look at me, Eden. Tell me that you forgive. I have pained you, I know; I have been stupid; but the pain has been unwitting and the stupidity born of love. Look at me, Eden. See," he continued, and bent at her side, "See, I ask forgiveness on my knees. Can you not give it me?"

"To you, yes, but never to myself." She spoke hoarsely, in a voice unlike her own; her eyes were not in his, they were staring at something in his hand, and as she stared, she seemed to shrink. The muscles of her face were rigid. And Usselex, perplexed at the fixidity of her gaze, followed the direction which her eyes had taken and saw that they rested on the note which he still held, crumpled and forgotten. For a second he looked at it wonderingly, "Why, it is from you," he exclaimed.

In that second, Eden, with the prescience that is said to visit those that drown, went forward and back, into the past and into the future as well. Amid her scattered yesterdays she groped for a promise. Of the unanswering morrows she called for release, and as her husband stood up, preparing to read what she had written, she felt herself the depository of shame.

The next instant she was at his side. "Give it me," she murmured. Her voice trembled a little, but she strove to render it assured. "Give it me," she pleaded.

Ussslex turned to her at once. "Certainly, if you wish it," he said. "What is it about?"

He held the note to her, and she, with an affected air of indifference, took it from him and tossed it into the grate.

"Nothing," she answered, and then, as though ashamed of the falsehood, she looked him bravely in the face. "It was about your clerk."

"Adrian?" he asked. And as she nodded, tremulous still and unprepared for further questions, he added, "I hope you like him."

"You hope I like him?"

"Yes, he is my son."

Eden's hands went to her throat and her eyes to the grate. The note was already in a blaze.

"Yes," Usselex continued, "I have a bit of news for you. He is engaged to Miss Bolton. For a long time her parents objected, but last night they consented. It may be because he was at the opera with you. How small people can be!" he added. "She is a nice girl, though. Adrian told me this morning that he tried to speak to you about her the night I dined with Governor Blanchford, but that you did not seem interested."

"God in Heaven!" gasped Eden, beneath her breath. "If these are your punishments, what then are your rewards?"

Usselex had led her to a seat and taken her unresisting hand in his. For some little time he talked to her, very gently, as it behooves the strong to address the weak. And as he spoke, Mr. Menemon entered, and seeing them hand-locked and side-by-side, he smiled cheerily to himself with the air of a man who learns that all is well.

Usselex stood up at once, but for a little space Eden sat very still, surprised as February at a violet, then rising, she went forward to the window and looked out at the night. From the square beyond came the beat of drums, and on the breeze was borne to her the shrill treble of retreating fifes. And as she loitered at the window, conscious only of a sense of happiness such as she had never known before, her father called to her. She turned at his bidding. In the opposite doorway a servant stood.

"Dinner is served," he said.

And presently Mr. Menemon, as was his custom, mumbled a grace and thanksgiving to God.

THE END.

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· EDGAR SALTUS ·

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Daughters of the Rich

PART I

(Entr'acte)

I

WHITE PEACOCKS

"Nearly a crumpler," said a fat-faced man to Welden, whose horse, stumbling in the main street of Santa Barbara, had almost sat down.

Welden, pulling him together, dismounted. Supple and vigorous, he had an attractive face, laughing eyes and the air of being some one. Moreover, if this street in Southern California had been Rotten Row, he could not have been more studiously attired. His breeches were perfect. His boots had been marrowboned into blonde mirrors. From one of them he flicked a speck with his crop.

"What shall I do with the brute, Wicks?" he asked. "And, by the way, if you expect me to buy him also, I will chuck the whole thing."

Wicks, standing fat-faced and bare-headed in the sunshine, reddened with emotion. The fish was landed, he told himself, and none too soon.

Wicks was in real estate, with signs—signs which described him as the Alert and Indefatigable Wicks—strewn through Santa Barbara, strewn, too, through the adjacent suburbs of Montecito and Miramar. It had been a bad year, however. Of nibbles there had been few, of bites none at all. Instead of the usual regiment of opulent Easterners, so eager for a residence in the perfumery and sunshine of the Slope, that they took anything at any price, there had been but a handful of paupers, considering penurious bungalows.

Wicks, himself, had a bungalow, one unfortunately mortgaged. Also, he had his office before which, fat-faced and bareheaded, he stood. The rent was due and back, toward the Sierra Madre, in that bungalow, was Mrs. Wicks, two little Wickses, and a hired girl.

These luxuries mean money, and to Wicks money had become a haunting and elusive thing. Then, suddenly, by special grace, in the nick of time, just as the grocer was turning ugly, Welden, with all the aroma of wealth about him, had dropped from the cars, demanding something fit and on the sea.

"Something," a woman who accompanied this providence melodiously interluded, "in which one, if one liked, could have a little frisk."

As she spoke she had smiled, very infectiously, for Welden smiled too, and Wicks, who had not an idea what a little frisk might be, unless their visit could be so catalogued, smiled also. But the woman's smile was not merely infectious, there was in it and about her a charm that was absolutely relaxing. She exhaled ease and an atmosphere indefinably foreign.

"Is she pretty?" the wife of Wicks' bosom inquired that evening when, on the porch of the mortgaged bungalow, he told her the incidents of the day.

"Yes, and better. I should say she was—she was—" Here the Alert and Indefatigable groped mentally after a term which suddenly he nailed. "I should say she was princessly."

"Princessly!" Mrs. Wicks dubiously repeated. "How was she dressed?"

But the question was beyond Wicks, as it is also beside the issue, which was in effect that these luminous people had concluded to consider White Peacocks, a house at Miramar, which an Englishman had leisurely built and then, on acceding to a title, had actively vacated, leaving it to Wicks to sell for a hundred thousand dollars. "Not a ha'-penny less," the Englishman had enjoined, "and more if possible." "Certainly, my lord," Wicks had replied, "I will try for a hundred and fifty."

Then, simultaneously with the Englishman's departure, there had occurred in Wall street a panic from which germinated a nightmare that sullenly overspread the entire land, and, until Welden appeared, no one had come that would consider at any price the purchase of the property.

But, on the first day, when in a motor, hired by the hour, Wicks had taken the Weldens there, he had felt that it was probably a go. At the start, that is, once the main street of Santa Barbara was behind them, and they were rolling along the ocean boulevard which leads to Miramar, he had mentioned, casually, as though it were an unimportant detail, the top price, adding immediately and mechanically, after a habit of his: "And such a bargain!" Then, mechanically also, he had played the flute to its charms.

White Peacocks needed no aria from him It breathed for itself. The grounds, full of palms, of lilies, of masses and draperies of purple and scarlet blooms, were like an unglassed conservatory open to the air. They had the sea before them, the mountains behind, and the house with its thirty rooms, every one of which was scented the year around with geranium, with heliotrope and with brine, was agreeably furnished, comfortably arranged. Beyond, for servants, was another house; a stable, a garage; and in front of the main dwelling, on a lawn of vivid green, a dove-coloured peacock moved gingerly, almost moodily, but, at sight of them, expanded slowly yet demeasurably the fan of its extravagant tail.

It was the finishing touch.

Wicks, conscious of the impression produced, had been about to play the flute again, when Welden, who had been talking in French with his wife, turned to him.

"I will try it for a month; then, if it still pleases Mrs. Welden, I will make an offer."

Wicks, the Alert, the Indefatigable, sighed and looked down. Actually at the moment he was in agony. The unexpected and magnificent fish that had so providentially come into his net was wriggling unarrestably away. The commission on a month's rental was all on which he could surely count.

Conscious, however, that he must make some reply, with an effort he rallied.

"I don't know," he said, "that the owner would care to rent the property. But if price seems—"

Welden, standing there supple and smiling, cut him short.

"I never argue."

After all, Wicks had immediately reflected, the property was worth certainly a thousand a month—to any one who could be induced to pay it. At ten per cent. that meant a hundred for him, with the chance still of the bigger commission.

"Very good, sir," he had replied. "I will assume the responsibility."

In this manner the business had been temporarily concluded. On the premises was a lame ostler, who was Irish; a minute gardener, who was Japanese; a half-breed man of all work and an obese negro cook. These the Weldens retained, reinforcing them with servants of their own and with others recruited from Los Angeles—preparations which seemed to postulate permanency if signs and portents might. But Wicks could be sure of nothing, nor was he, until this radiant forenoon, when the crumpler nearly occurred, and Welden, damning the brute, dismounted.

It was then, reddening with emotion, that these anterior events were recalled, for now, at last, the fish, the magnificent fish, was landed.

"No, certainly not, we won't burden you with him," he replied in answer to Welden's protest. "If you will take a seat in my office for a moment, I will leave him at the livery across the way."

Pleasurably, a hand on the bridle, he led the horse off. The netting of the fish meant —at seven and a half per cent., which was the commission agreed—in the event of the top figure being reached—eleven hundred and twenty-five dollars. It was certainly a very radiant forenoon.

Welden, meanwhile, flicking still at his boots, strolled into the office and sat down on one of the three chairs which the place contained. On the wall was a map. Beneath was a pulpit desk, high and narrow. On it were documents, a china cat, other things as well, but most noticeably, a telephone, which, as Welden seated himself, began ringing.

Welden, still flicking at his boots, stared aimlessly about. On one of the other chairs was the local sheet; he reached for it and was looking over the news of the day when Wicks reappeared.

"Excuse me," said the agent, who went to the telephone, which had continued to ring.

Welden but glanced at him. He had just read that the New York Central had decreased its dividend. The item was of interest; he happened to be a stockholder and mentally he began on a calculation which Wicks, his hand on the receiver, interrupted.

"It's for you. Your man, I think. He wants to speak to you."

Absently Welden looked up. "Nonsense," he presently remarked. "Harris knows better than that. If there is any message, though, tell them to give it to you."

Then, after fumbling in a pocket, he got out a gold pencil with which he jotted figures on the margin of the paper that he held. But the operation did not prevent him from hearing.

"Yes," Wicks was saying. "Mr. Welden is here. Mr. Welden says you are to tell me for him. He—What!"

At the "What," which was not a query, but an exclamation, Welden replaced the gold top on the pencil and putting it back in his pocket, turned again to the news.

Before him Wicks stood, the receiver at his ear, a hand pendent at his side. It was shaking a little.

The motion, odd in itself, attracted Welden. His eyes roamed slowly upward from it to the agent's face. Wicks was standing now, his mouth half open, looking limply at him.

Welden tossed the paper aside.

"Are you ill?"

Wicks closed his mouth, shook his head, then partly opened his mouth again. But still he did not speak.

Welden stood up. "Are you?" he repeated.

Then finally Wicks did speak. "Your wife!" he said slowly, and hanging the receiver up, flopped into a chair.

The nightmare that had overspread the land was battening individually on him. Through it the face of the grocer peered. With the grocer was the mortgagee. Both were throwing him and his out on the country road. That indeed might yet occur. At the moment, however, he was but being shaken, not roughly, but authoritatively, from a form of mental swoon.

"What is this about Mrs. Welden? Why the devil don't you tell me? Is she ill?"

Wicks, the Alert and Indefatigable, could but nod in reply.

"Very?" Welden persisted. "Come, damnation, don't keep me questioning you like this. What did they say?"

The winded Wicks now had got his breath. He straightened himself, and rising from the chair, put a hand on Welden's arm.

"She is—" And Wicks raised his eyes.

"Not dead!" cried Welden, starting back.

Wicks moved nearer and with that sympathy which, in certain crises, one human being will always show to another, said lowly:

"Mr. Welden, they tell me that this lady has been killed."

"Killed!" Welden, again starting back, repeated; "but how?"

Then the detail, passably gruesome, was produced.

"They found her in bed, her throat cut from ear to ear."

II

THE INQUEST

Astride the brute on which ten minutes before the crumpler had nearly occurred, Welden tore down the street, galloped along the ocean boulevard, and on. into a scarlet lane, at the end of which stood White Peacocks.

The entrance was a bit beyond. Rather than make the brief circuit, he cleared a hedge, raced through the grounds and flung himself off at the steps of the verandah.

In the hall, through the open door, he had a glimpse of servants huddled together, and of a woman, her face to the wall, whimpering like a frightened cur.

On the floor above, at the head of the stairs, a man of the unmistakable domestic type stood uncertainly.

Welden pointed below. "Send those people where they belong."

Hurrying by, he wrenched open a door which he closed behind him. When presently that door reopened, he looked older; not white, but worn.

As before, at the head of the stair, the man was standing. Welden motioned him into another room, one wainscotted with bookless bookcases, from which two windows gave on the sea.

Through one of them Welden looked, though certainly it was not the sea that he saw. After a moment he turned. The man was standing by a table, his hands hanging at his sides. In and out of the palms the fingers moved, regularly, mechanically, perhaps unconsciously.

"Harris, close the door."

The man obeyed.

Welden added: "Tell me everything."

"It was my wife, sir, Perkins. She was

taking in the tray with the breakfast things, and when she saw, she let it fall and ran out and called to me, and I telephoned to Mr. Wickses."

"Have any of you any idea who did it?"

"No, sir, but—"

"But what?"

"Thinking as how you would wish it, I telephoned to the police."

Welden nodded. "I told Wicks to. They will be here shortly. Fetch some brandy and soda."

Harris turned. He was reopening the door when, through the windows, came the whirr of a motor, the sound of voices, the shuffle of feet.

"If that is the police," said Welden, "send them here."

From an oblong silver box that lay on the table he took a cigarette. While he was lighting it Harris reappeared. Accompanying him was a large man with small eyes, a deformed stomach and a red moustache. As he entered he looked Welden over.

"I'm Chief of Police," he announced. "Right off I want—"

But Welden, accustomed to give orders and not at all to receive them, cut him short.

"Harris, show the way. Do whatever is required. The brandy and soda can wait."

In a little, however, the liquor was forthcoming.

"There are two of them, sir, besides the chief," Harris volunteered, placing, as he spoke, the bottles on the table. "And the coroner is here."

Welden, who had seated himself, took another cigarette. Through the windows came the savour of salt, the scent of flowers; there came, too, the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated. The forenoon was departing in perfect clarity and, save for an occasional footfall, save, too, for an indistinct murmur of voices, in a peace that was perfect as well.

Shortly the silence was stirred. There came a rap at the door. Before Welden could answer, it opened. The chief entered. With him was a little man, with smoke-coloured glasses and a suit of leprous brown.

Closing the door, the officer indicated his companion. "This here is Dr. Quizenberry, the coroner. We're goin' to ask some questions."

"Sit down," said Welden. "Will you drink anything?"

The chief accepted, but the coroner refused. Welden filled a tumbler which he gave to the former.

He drank it noisily. "Nasty business," he muttered. "Damn nasty." Wiping his mouth and drawing a chair, he seated himself in front of Welden. "When did you last see yer wife?"

"A moment before you got here. You

probably mean, though, when did I last see her alive. That was at midnight."

"Nothin' unusual been goin' on?"

"Nothing."

The chief gnawed moodily at a finger nail. His thoughts were few and slow. He was assisting at their laborious accouchement. Presently, delivered of one, he looked suspiciously at it and from it to Welden.

"You and yer wife had separate rooms?"

Welden nodded.

"The man out there showed me yours, it's on the other side of the house."

Again Welden nodded.

"Durin' the night you heard nothin'?"

"Nothing whatever. But in regard to my domestic arrangements you may have noticed that in this house there are but two sleeping porches, one abutting from my room, the other from Mrs. Welden's. I have been in California before and when here I prefer to sleep in the open air. Mrs. Welden had not accustomed herself to it, though naturally she slept with the windows open."

"That's right," said Dr. Quizenberry, "and with the screen door to the porch unfastened. Anybody could have climbed in."

"Anythin' missin'?" the chief inquired.

"I do not know," Welden answered. "Usually Mrs. Welden did not appear much before noon. This morning, long before she would ordinarily have been up, I was in Santa Barbara. Since I got back I have had no time to look."

Under the steady gaze of Welden's eyes, and the prompt and rapid fire of his speech, the chief's laboriously accouched suspicion died. Burying it decently, he asked: "Had yer wife any enemies?"

"Probably," Welden, with an uplift of the chin, replied. "But hardly among such people."

At that the chief leaned forward. The

coroner cocked an eye. The possibility that the statement had not been understood, occurred to Welden.

"I mean," he resumed, "that such enemies as Mrs. Welden may have had were of her own class, and assuming the impossible, assuming, that is, that their enmity could have been murderous, they would hardly have gone about it in this way."

"Hey?" the chief, groping still in darkness, threw out.

But the coroner had got it. "That's right," he threw in. "It's not the crime of an educated person; more like some Jack the Ripper business."

"Or the Roo Morgue," the now enlightened chief insinuated, indicating by the insinuation that he, at any rate, was educated. "You've a greaser here," he continued. "I don't care for him, or for the Jap either."

"They were here before I came," Welden answered. "There is also an Irishman, a negro and some servants we got from Los Angeles. I know nothing about any of them. But Harris, the man who showed you about, and Perkins, his wife, came with us from Europe. I have every confidence in them. Perkins always took care of Mrs. Welden's jewelry."

"Had she much?"

For a moment Welden's long thin fingers beat a tattoo on the arm of his chair. "Quite a lot," he finally replied. "But the majority of it is at our bankers' in Paris. Here Mrs. Welden had with her a string of pearls, a few pins and some rather valuable rings which she got recently in India."

"There are no rings on her hands. Did she sleep with 'em?"

"Really," said Welden, "I am not sure. My impression is that she did not."

"What were they, dimons?"

Welden drummed for a moment again. "There were two table-cut diamonds, two tallow drop emeralds, an inch-long sapphire and a double ruby, a ruby set on a ruby, one on top of the other."

The chief sat up. "What would yer say they were worth?"

Welden, running his fingers through his thick, bright hair, looked at the ceiling and then back at the officer. "At Delhi, in our money, the rubies cost forty-five thousand, altogether the others cost as much more. Here, of course, they would come higher."

The chief whistled. It was his welcome to the light, clear, direct, unequivocal, which then broke fully upon him. He jumped to his feet.

"If they're gone," he exclaimed, "there's the motive. Let's see if they've been pinched."

"That's right," said Dr. Quizenberry, rising too.

"Chief," said Welden, rising also, "I was in that room before you came. It may give you a poor opinion of me, but it will be a little before I care to return."

"Poor opinion! Lord! If my wife had been done up as yours has, I'll be jiggered if I could show your nerve. It's grit yer got, real grit."

"That's right," the coroner repeated. "That's right."

But Welden had rung for Harris. As the authorities passed from the room he went again to the window.

Before him the Pacific stretched, a syrupy blue. Over it he looked and far beyond, to another ocean, one that beat against the coast of France. Above it a vision mounted, the picture of a pillowed head. That picture, photographed on the mind's encephalic films, became a negative on which developed others. At Deauville, in the hall of a villa, he saw—

"Mr. Welden," some one was saying.

He turned. The authorities were before

him, the chief nodding significantly while the other grimly smiled.

"Won't you have another drink?" Welden asked.

"Yes, I will," said the chief.

"That's right," said the coroner, "I will too."

Then, as they helped themselves and stood there, the one large, the other small, both ludicrous and equally imbecile, they reminded Welden of some scene, in some play, that he had seen somewhere long before.

"The pearls and pins are safe," the big man began. "They were locked in a bag, and they're there now. But the rings are gone. The maid says they were on the dressin' table last night, when she was gettin' yer wife ready for bed. Since which they've been cribbed. Whoever pinched 'em did it, and I'll bet yer now I know who that is, for though they're gone, somethin' has turned up. Can yer guess what?"

But Welden could not.

"The instrument! When there's any funny business, that's what we look for; that and the motive. When we've both, we've only to show the opportunity to nail the man. Well, we have. It's the Irishman. The knife was in the barn. The motive—and motive enough—was the rings; the opportunity—"

"But," Welden protested, "the poor devil is lame. He could not have climbed to the porch."

"Oho! You don't know how spry a lame man can be. Besides, how do we know that he did climb? In a house like this, unless the boss sees to it himself, yer never sure about the doors and windows. Anyhow, what did he have a carving knife stuck in his hay for? That's no place for a bleeder. Lord! And an alibi rollin' right out of him. That's the way with these vermin. Whenever they do anythin' crooked, they always have an alibi and more vermin to back 'em up. It's my sworn duty to protect the bastard, but, if it wasn't, Lord! I'd say lynch him. I wasn't raised here, I came from the South."

"That's right," the coroner remarked, and meditatively finished his glass.

"Well, anyhow, he's on his way to the lock-up," the chief continued, putting down his own.

"When's the inquest?" he asked, turning to Dr. Quizenberry.

"To-morrow noon."

Turning to Welden he added: "I can count on yer to be there?"

"Naturally," Welden answered, and the authorities withdrew.

When they had gone, Welden took from his pocket a letter, one already opened, which he re-read, tore slowly to bits, and then poured out a glass of brandy. Before he had finished it, Harris reappeared.

"Will you have luncheon, sir?"

Welden nodded. "You and Perkins must get everything in order. You must also find an undertaker. Say that he is to arrange about a plot and that he is also to arrange with an Episcopal clergyman to hold services here and at the grave. Afterward, I shall not require Perkins, and as I cannot expect you to leave her, I will give you each six months' wages, and your expenses home."

"Thank you, sir, I am sure we are both very grateful. Will you have luncheon here, sir, or in the breakfast room?"

"I will have it here. By the way, Mrs. Welden is to be in ball gown. The canary one, Perkins will know, with a lace scarf about the neck, high up. If the scarf is insufficient, use an opera cloak, the violet and gold one. Perkins will know about that also."

"Yes, sir. It will be attended to. Shall I fetch the luncheon now, sir?"

Welden nodded.

In a little while the man returned with a tray. When he had arranged it, he said:

"Begging your pardon, sir, I was to ask would you wish the hair marcelled?"

"Whatever is necessary. And, Harris—"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell the undertaker that before the coffin is closed, he is to notify me. I wish to go there."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir. Luncheon is served."

For hours Welden sat, looking at the sea, looking, too, at the pictures that developed on the mind's encephalic films.

Toward sunset, other pictures developed. On the horizon clouds, sinister and malignant, shaped themselves into the resemblance of enormous centaurs, combating with each other for mountains of gold and of flame. The sky was dyed with their wounds, flooded with the hemorrhages of the monstrous massacre. Sometimes masses of flesh were torn and hurled into craters. Sometimes others were tossed like shawls across the bleeding sky.

Eastward, from over the Sierra Madre, titans trooped to the fight. It was as though they had sprung suddenly across the ages from their fabulous dream, and just as they menaced the world, abruptly they vanished. Before them an immense arc had been flung. Within the rainbow, throughout its entire semi-circumference, a vapour floated, thick, glistening and mauve.

Presently, as if a curtain had risen, that passed, banished by the sudden sun. From the west the centaurs had fled, and now, throughout the heavens, stretched archipelagoes, deliciously pink, that seemed like lands of love.

Coerced by the splendour of the spectacle, Welden had gone out on the lawn. The fair beauty of the sky detained him. It seemed inaugural of larger life.

III

THE CLUE

To the vulgar any indecency is amusing, the greater the shamelessness of it the more thorough the mirth; and, on the morrow, there was thrown into this tenebrous drama, a quick note hilarious and obscene, one that, with the usual attentuations, went reverberating through the press. For the case, already famous, entered at once into that high spectacular class which invites people, previously unacquainted, to discuss and surmise.

In the trains, on the boats, in smoking compartments, wherever men are penned together, individuals who had never seen each other before, and who, ordinarily, would not much wish to again, found in it a subject of common concern.

Perhaps nothing excites the imagination

quite so thoroughly as mystery does, and here was one graduated to every taste, a story equally absorbing to high and low, and not locally merely, for, as it was immediately recognised, the Weldens were people of position, both at home and abroad.

According to statements telegraphed to the California press, from New York, Welden's family had been identified with that city since its incorporation, and even before, at a time when it was Nieuw Orange, and not yet New York. While, as for the murdered woman, born a Kandy, and affiliated with quite Manhattan's best, she had married Welden after divorcing her first husband, a foreigner, the Duc de Malakoff.

To these outlines, details were added. Prior to the marriage, Welden, who was a man of inherited wealth, had been engaged to Miss Barhyte, a New York girl of the ultra-fashionable set. But, coincidentally with the divorce, the engagement had been broken, and Welden and Malakoff had gone out together, though, after the French fashion, without appreciable damage.

But why had they gone out? Why had the engagement been broken, and why the divorce?

Here were pleasurable mysteries superposing themselves on the denser darkness of the crime, and suggesting to the detectives of the breakfast table that it was assassins of the duke who had done it; if not, then emissaries of the girl.

For by the time the foregoing and very incorrect details, together with bogus presentments of all concerned, had been journalistically set forth, by that time, the lame ostler had been released.

Amid great hilarity and to the satisfaction of everybody—save of one policeman only—he had demonstrated that if at the hour, two A. M., at which time it had been shown the crime was committed, he were illegally occupied, the illegality had been effected at Santa Barbara with the privity, connivance and in the society of that policeman's wife. The woman, immediately summoned, had at first hotly denied, but prodded with questions at once circumstantial and deplorably intimate, finally yielded, and admitted the fact.

Thereupon, no one else being under suspicion, and no further evidence having been adduced, verdict was rendered that the deceased had come to her death at the hands of some person or persons unknown.

Then, for the bono publicanism of it—which, being interpreted, meant little more than the coin of affluent Easterners, who, already scarce, might become scarcer—it was felt that town and county ought to make the apprehension of the person or persons definitely worth while. But before the matter could be put into an inviting shape, provided, that is, there was any real intention of so putting it, Welden offered a reward of $25,000 for such information as would lead to their arrest and conviction; $5,000 additional for the recovery of the rings.

The gross amount, a small fortune to some, a large one to many, fevered a number of people and, among them, Wicks particularly.

In those days, Wicks was an unhappy man. Only a fortnight had intervened between the renting of White Peacocks and the morning on which Welden had intimated his intention of buying the property. Then this thing had occurred, and from his hand, from his lips even, the cup had been torn. The cup, or more exactly its contents, the compensation, would have sufficed until January, when the Eastern influx of affluence was usually due. But this was April. January was many moons away, and things looked very bleak in the mortgaged bungalow, on the porch of which, endlessly he went over them all. It was, though, a distressed and weary Wicks who did it, and weary and distressed was the woman whom he forced to hear and rehear the tale.

Then, into the bleakness of things, there tumbled the announcement of the rewards. They inflamed Wicks, who, though he lacked the gift of divination, was at least alert and indefatigable, or at least, so claimed to be, and these were attributes which, chance facilitating, might aid him to secure the portentous sum. In his favour moreover was his superior quality of agent of the estate. Strangers might hover about there, detectives, whether amateur or professional, might prowl there as well, and against these the guilty would be on their guard, whereas his presence would be taken as a matter of course. In the mere exercise of his functions he was free to roam at will.

These considerations, natural in themselves, had for basis an assumption, which Wicks by no means reached alone, that the murder was the work of someone directly associated with the estate. Possibly it might have been done by a passing bandit. Possibly, also, the criminal might be a pirate come in from the sea. But in that case it were necessary to assume on the part of an outsider, an entire familiarity with the locale, and a knowledge not only of the jewels, but of the intimate fact that the dead woman slept alone. Acquaintance with these matters was of course possible, for the reason that anything and everything is. But, at least, it was not probable.

Eliminating, therefore, the outsider, the murder was necessarily the work of some of those within. From the latter the adulterous ostler was already excluded. The others, the half-breed, the negro, the Japanese, together with the laundress, a scullion and a housemaid, recruited from Los Angeles, were all quartered in a separate building. The fact had been brought out at the inquest, where it had been also shown that during the Weldens' tenancy, none of them, except the housemaid, the scullion and the cook, had ever entered the house; and into the main part of it, as distinct from the kitchen and its offices, the cook and the scullion had not once, except on the morning when the murder was discovered, been known or permitted to come.

The housemaid had necessarily the run of it, but by day only, and while information concerning the rings might have been conveyed by her to other parties, she would not have been aware that they were unprotected at night, unless she had been so informed by Perkins, or by Harris, who as Perkins' husband, probably knew as much as she did.

On the other hand, information of this character would hardly be supplied by upper servants, who lived apart from the others, particularly as one might say, on an acquaintance so brief. You never can tell, however, yet accepting the facts as they appeared, the matter narrowed down to those who slept in the house, that is to say, to Harris and Perkins.

For clearly Welden was out of it, if for no other reason than because, had he wished to be rid of the lady, a brief sojourn in neighbourly Nevada would suffice to set him legally free. Or, if divorce seemed circuitous, a slight shove from the bluff, a tarantula put nesting in her bed, and, without inconvenience, the thing was done. But anything of the kind was beyond peradventure, in addition to being absurd. Men of the world do not kill an obnoxious wife. They find it simpler to detest her. Moreover, such men as do murder their wives, do not first steal the lady's jewels and then offer a reward for their own apprehension, another for the recovery of the gems. They do not, that is, unless they are lunatics, and anyone saner than Welden it were difficult to meet.

These deductions Wicks did not reach unaided or even as they are here set forth. On the contrary, they were prompted in part by the press, partly by the wife of his bosom. As a consequence, they were superficial and, therefore, unsound. But they satisfied, so fully even that he kept an alert eye on Harris, an indefatigable one on Perkins.

In spite of which he saw nothing suspicious. At the time being he was not, however, as close to them as he could have wished, and that defect he artfully remedied. After the funeral, Welden, leaving for address the Plaza, New York, boarded a train and was taken away. But these two remained in situations luringly procured at wages—California wages!—such as they had never known, never heard of or even dreamed.

Then for a while mention of the murder,

dropped by the press, faded from Miramar. But not from Santa Barbara. There the Alert and Indefatigable, after rehearsing it endlessly to his weary wife, happened suddenly on a clue.

PART II

THE DAUGHTERS

I

SALLY'S DUKE

To go back a little.

Sally Malakoff was twenty. She was rich, good looking, and a duchess, yet she described herself as a miserable woman and the world believed her. But though the world believed it did not sympathise. It was felt that she had not acted as she should have. For that there were excuses.

A little while before she had married a brute. Though a New York girl, she was at the time very ignorant. In the way we live now that is exceptional. Married women discuss matters before the young person with a clarity which leaves her nothing to guess about. Through some miracle, Sally had been left in the dark. A contributory cause may have been her mentality which was shallow, but, as she was naturally sly, the miracle was none the less marvellous. Otherwise, in appearance and manner that is, she was a typically sweet young thing. She talked nicely about nothing. Her features were dainty and delicate. Her hair was dark and she had mauve eyes, which, oblique and half closed, gave her an aspect faintly Chinese. Born a Kandy, and known generally as Sugar Candy, she quite lived up to the name.

Heat sugar and abruptly it boils. Sally did boil, not long, and not effervescently, but with a sort of contained rage, Marriage she had seen somewhere defined as an association for the pursuit of things human and divine, and it was with angry amazement that she discovered what, in her case, was the derisive falsity of the definition.

During the honeymoon, or more exactly during Malakoff's, for the girl was but an indignant participator in it, the man approached her after the fashion of a pasha who has acquired a slave. The girl loathed him for it, and it was that loathing perhaps which directly precipitated this drama. On the other hand, if, as it has been affirmed, one's destiny is preordered, it may be that even otherwise the result would have been the same. Admitting fatality, one's moods cannot alter it. But the fault of it, in so far at least as is humanly discernible, rested, primarily, not with Sally's husband, but with her mother, never more than a relative to this girl, whose father had been but an acquaintance.

The latter, Sam Kandy, could have had but three objects in life; to marry, have a child and make a fortune; for these things accomplished, he concluded to die, and did so, after the fine New York fashion, with no fuss whatever, and in a manner which Mrs. Kandy, who had no affection for him, or for anyone save herself, described as most gentlemanly.

That, though, was only an amiable commonplace. In New York it is a man's mere duty to leave a lot of money. Sam Kandy bequeathed to his daughter one million for life, with reversion to her issue, failing which, the principal passed to his nephews. To his widow he left six million absolutely.

The provisions of the will enabled Mrs. Kandy to bear the testator's loss with a fortitude eminently Christian. She was a large, fair woman, with a large, fair wig, and the purplish complexion which internal disturbances when combined with poudre de riz will impart, and when through a jewelled lorgnette, she surveyed the trappings of her woe, she declared in the shrill voice which was habitual to her, that black is not becoming.

Nor is it. But the lady must have preferred colours. Shortly she resumed them, and, with Sally, betook herself to Paris.

It was in Paris that Malakoff was encountered, and the marriage ensued.

Jean-René-Marie, Duc de Malakoff, Prince de l'Alma, had, from adolescence, been trained like a colt for the Grand Prix in the international steeplechase of marriage. "Duchesse de Malakoff," his mother, ceaselessly, had dinged in his ears. "That, at the lowest, is worth ten million francs." The poor woman knew. Five million francs was what her people had paid—five million thrown in the gutter—and since then prices had doubled. But her son, thus far, when not outclassed, had been outpaced. There was Miss Murray, the American heiress, welshed from him by Solférino. There was Miss Beux, laden down with brewery guineas, whom d'Ostende had won by a nose. There was Mlle. Moses, the pearl of the Ghetto, whom d'Eylau had jockeyed away. There was Señorita Lopez y Montez, sole child of the Chilean Crœsus, whom Cambacères had filched from his hand.

These misadventures diminished the lustre of a title that, while obviously Second Empire, was yet a trifle heavy for one who has nothing, which, barring debts—the floating debt of the duchy—and an assortment of vices—the traditional vices of the French nobility —constituted the sole possessions of this man, who was not bad looking.

Malakoff had blue-black hair, blue-black eyes, a thin, straight nose, and a retreating chin, which a pointed beard concealed. Without being tall, he was not short, but, since the misadventures, perhaps out of training, for he had ceased to give in at the waist. He dressed less abominably than the majority of Frenchmen, got his clothes from London, and with them displayed an air of being surrounded by lackeys ready at a gesture from him to shut the door in anyone's face, that air of indisputable superiority which, at an earlier epoch, when the nobility had been divested of other insignia, persisted, and so exasperated that the one remedy for its arrogance was the austere guillotine.

Though seigneurial—in appearance—he could—when it suited him—unbend. On such occasions he was affable or merely canaille.

Mrs. Kandy, who met him on the stalking ground which the American embassy is, thought him simply fascinating. To Sally, he was part of the landscape, and that not from any democratic disdain—she had none, the New York girl never does have any—but for the more intimate reason that in the neighbourhood of Fifth Avenue there was a man with laughing eyes, with whom she fancied herself in love.

Sally, quoted currently at ten million francs, flattered Malakoff's eye. He had trained for more, but latterly he felt that he had trained in vain.

Mrs. Kandy, who had trained also, but only in social values, for which she had a naïve and inexact appreciation, encouraged him to make up to the girl, when she saw that he had no intention of making up to the girl's mamma, which he certainly would have, had he known the terms of Sam Kandy's will.

He did not know, however, nor, at the moment, was there any one that could acquaint him with them, except Mrs. Kandy, who, in telling the truth, which she sometimes did, sometimes found it advantageous not to tell all of it.

"And so you wish to have my little girl for your wife," she shrilly resumed, when, in the elaborate suite which she occupied at the Elysée Hôtel, the formal and unleisurely demand had been made.

"Partly that," he replied in the passable English which he had acquired in preparation for the Prix. "Partly that, but partly also, that I may have you for mother-in-law."

No duke had ever talked in such a fashion to Mrs. Kandy. Barring the Duke of Kincardine, who, the previous winter, had lounged about New York, no duke had ever talked to her at all, and, as for Kincardine, he had, on meeting her, only said; "Hello," after which he had lounged away. Malakoff's treatment was at least more gracious, and graciousness to herself was Mrs. Kandy's forte.

"If you are good to her, I shall feel that I can die in peace," remarked the lady, who, whatever happened, had no intention of doing anything of the kind.

Malakoff, with equal sincerity, replied: "The dear angel, I will refuse her nothing."

"Sally has a million dollars," Mrs. Kandy threw in, omitting, however, to fill it up with the fact that the million was for life.

"Devilish thin," thought Malakoff, who thought, too, of backing out. But a million dollars spells five million francs, and that amount he doubted his ability to duplicate.

"At my death," Mrs. Kandy added, with a candour which she afterward tearfully regretted, "Sally will have six million more."

But the contingency, remote to him, lugubrious to her, neither chose to consider further, and presently, after Sally had been summoned, and the non-existent duchy had been placed at her feet, Malakoff took himself off.

Not far, however, around the corner merely to the rue Galilée, where dwelled a Mme. Oppensheim who was his mistress, and who had supported him for years.

Giselle Oppensheim, born de Beaupré, had been married into the high finance by her people, who were very noble, prodigiously proud, and equally poor. Giselle de Beaupré accepted Oppensheim for money in the same measure that he sought her for place. That was ten years before. Since then, Oppensheim had paid for his aspirations, and, from an Anglo-Saxon standpoint, perhaps most notably in Malakoff, with whom, none the less, he was on the best terms in the world and to whom not infrequently he complained when the third party of this unholy trinity became, as she often did become, particularly waspish. For the lady, imperious to Oppensheim, was wax in the hands of Malakoff, whom she loved with a love that was at once violent, sensual and tender.

On this evening, after leaving the Kandys', he told her of his venture.

"It is not the Peru," she swiftly summarised, when he had cited the dower. "Enfin!" she consoling continued, "you might have done worse. Besides, in marrying an American, there can be no question of mésalliance."

That sentiment her race dictated. Oddly, it had never reproached her with the left-handed mésalliance that she had contracted with this man, whose grandfather had been a cheesemonger. But love has its own extenuations. Moreover, while, from the standpoint of the old nobility, Malakoff was nobody, he yet managed to appear as though the spirit of that nobility were incarnated in him.

"Tell me," Mme. Oppensheim continued. "In appearance is she better than I?"

Is the lily fairer than the rose? Sally had the ephemeral charm of the former. She was a book bound in muslin, with all the pages blank. What time and fate would scrawl there, fate and time would tell. As yet they were white. As yet the girl was a lily. Mme. Oppensheim was the rose, large, colourful, majestic.

At the question, Malakoff looked at her. Her eyes, like his own, were dark. There the resemblance ended. For while he was almost typically Latin, the fainter umber of her skin, and the rich orange of her hair, suggested an alien race. It had been said that she was the souvenir of a caprice which her mother had entertained for an Austrian prince, and as, at the question, Malakoff looked at her, he recalled the story.

"Bah!" he replied.

The exclamation sufficed. Besides, Mme. Oppensheim was otherwise assured. Between Malakoff and herself subsisted what is called the *collage*, that glueing of two natures together which is the result of a long liaison and which, when effected, is the strongest of life's fragile ties. The lady was, therefore, unvisited by any vulgar sense of jealousy. In addition, in spite of the *collage*, or more precisely, because of it, it was necessary that Malakoff should establish himself in a manner befitting his rank. The anterior misadventures of the steeplechase had disappointed her almost as thoroughly as they had him.

"Very good," she resumed. "I will call on her to-morrow."

Around the corner, meanwhile, the poetry of the engagement was also being discussed.

"Of course, my dear," Mrs. Kandy remarked, "some mothers prefer Englishmen for their daughters, but where can they get a duke?"

Meditatively Sally helped herself from a sac of bon-bons. "I don't see," she replied, "why they should want one at all."

Mrs. Kandy waved her lorgnette. "That only shows how foolish you are. A duke makes a duchess, and wherever a duchess goes she is It."

"And I don't love him."

"On such a short acquaintance it would be most improper if you did. For that matter, when I married your father, I did not love him, either, but I admired him, and any girl can admire a duke."

Sally shook her head. She was thinking of the man with laughing eyes. Thinking, too, of his attentions to Maud Barhyte, a New York girl whom she also knew, and whom she envied greatly.

"I don't know," she answered at last.

"But I do," retorted Mrs. Kandy. "Now ring for Perkins and go to bed."

Sally did ring. A wooden-faced maid appeared. Later, when the woman was brushing the girl's hair, Sally said to her:

"I am engaged to a duke."

"Yes, mem."

Had Sally said she was engaged to a baboon, the reply would have been the same. Perkins knew her business. It was not for her to manifest any interest in anything concerning her employers. It was for her to attend to her duties. She did attend to them, and attended to them well.

"But I will keep you, Perkins."

"Thank you, mem."

The brushing continued. Presently Perkins said: "If you please, mem, I'm to be married too."

In the mirror before her Sally looked at the woman in whose face there was not a vestige of expression.

"His name is 'Arris, mem. He's butler and valet, mem, and been only in the best 'ouses."

"Harris!" Sally repeated. "Well, perhaps, I may take him when I have a house of my own, but you will be Perkins just the same."

"Thank you, mem."

Such was Sally's wooing. The marriage was equally enchanting.

Before it occurred, Malakoff, apprised by his avoué of the terms of Sam Kandy's will, laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh. Had Mrs. Kandy seen him at that moment, she would have been alarmed. Could she have read his thoughts, she would have known that her alarm was justified.

There was the Duc de Chose, who had bagged the booty of despoiled Venezuela: de la Dèche, who had got the loot of the wreckage of the railways of the United States; Prince Eugène, the most obscure of the obscurest Napoléonides, who had gobbled the heiress of Monte Carlo's perfumed hell; Solférino, who had pocketed the prize American dot; d'Ostende, who had received with his bride a ton of brewery guineas; and he, Malakoff, who was as good as any of them, was done, done again, and out a beggarly million at that!

He could still desist, and would have, but an idea occurred to him. It was then that he laughed.

In accordance with local usage, the civil ceremony, which precedes the religious rites, took place at the Mairie of the precinct in which Malakoff resided. The formalities, brief in themselves, became exasperating by reason of a long delay which intervened.

Afterward, at the Elysée Hôtel, Malakoff requested a word with Mrs. Kandy.

"Madam," he began, when Sally had gone, "in asking the hand of your daughter, I said it was not merely that I might have her for wife, but in order, also, that I might have you for mother-in-law. Do you recall it?"

Mrs. Kandy, laced to the point of suffocation, wished that he would hurry and go. But, manfully, from a red and gilt armchair in which she squirmed, she smiled.

"I do, indeed. I thought it very gracious."

Malakoff smiled also—that smile in which the eyes have no part, and which consists in showing the teeth.

"You are most amiable. But at the time

I hardly supposed you would leave me in the cold."

"In the cold!" Mrs. Kandy, shifting uneasily, repeated.

"In the street, if you prefer. For that is what it amounts to. You told me that your daughter has a million. It is true. But the income only. That is insufficient."

Mrs. Kandy raised her lorgnette. "But you knew this before. Mr. Ridgeway—"

Malakoff bowed. "That is also true. This Ridgeway, your lawyer, acquainted my man of business with the facts. But enamoured as I was, and am of your daughter, I did not sufficiently consider them. This morning, during the delay which I regret you should have experienced at the Mairie, I had the fullest opportunity to do so, and I have concluded to proceed no further."

"What!"

Malakoff plucked at his beard. "I have concluded not to marry your daughter."

At the outrageousness of that, Mrs. Kandy forgot her stays. She realised only that she was the mother of a duchess, the potential grandmother of a prince, and dismissing grammar, she cried: "But you are; you have."

Malakoff looked at her much as though she were a wriggling worm, and it was with utter indifference to her anguish that he answered: "Not by the Church, and in my world it is only the religious ceremony that counts."

"And you mean to say!" Mrs. Kandy screamed. Then, English failing, she soared into French. "Mais, c'est indigne! You leave my child neither fish, flesh nor fowl."

Malakoff caught the statement and with a shrug of his shoulders tossed it back.

"It is only what you leave me. In the Americas, I am aware, matters arrange themselves otherwise. There a man may work. I believe a man is even expected to.

Here it is different. A man, such as I am at least, not only is not expected to work, but would not be tolerated if he tried. Imagine to yourself the Duc de Malakoff, grocer, stockbroker even! Alors, quoi?"

From purple, Mrs. Kandy turned livid.

"I shall appeal to the embassy. I will send for my lawyer!"

Malakoff took up his hat. "I earnestly recommend you to do both. Meanwhile favour me by conveying my homage to your daughter. I have had the honour to bid you good-day."

But when he had gone, and Mrs. Kandy had loosened her stays, she felt better and thought better, at least of one of her threats. The embassy could do nothing. To appeal there would be but to bill the whole ridiculous story to all the cynical world. She telephoned instead to Ridgeway, who shortly was announced.

Mr. Ridgeway's mouth was full of gold

teeth. While listening to her tale, he exhibited them very freely. He was thinking what an amazing fool she was.

"Of course," he said at last, placing as he spoke a forefinger in the middle of his forehead, "the marriage has not been consummated, and an action to nullify the contract can be brought. Even otherwise, the attitude of this gentleman has been foreseen. It constitutes what the Code terms a *sévice grave,* and a divorce can be had. But any proceedings in the matter will cause a scandal, one that unfortunately will reflect on your daughter. Now it is evident that this gentleman wants money. They all do, the majority of the aristos that is, and they rarely marry unless they get it. My advice is, give it to him. Probably a hundred thousand francs will suffice. I will see his avoué and let you know."

"It is outrageous," said Mrs. Kandy, sniffling and snuffing at a vinaigrette. "No lady was ever so treated."

Mrs. Kandy was then in a loose flowing robe, tenderly pink, which lace befluttered. In spite of her plaint, she felt better.

The relief was transient. Mr. Ridgeway on visiting Malakoff's attorney found that a hundred thousand was a mere fraction of the amount required. Malakoff demanded five million francs.

When these figures were recited to Mrs. Kandy, instantly the woman in that tender gown was ousted by a female. She grimaced queerly. Epilepsy of the epiglottis attacked her. Instead of employing the language of the ornate, she dropped into that of the fishwife.

"Pay a man a million dollars to sleep with my daughter! Never!"

Never is a long word. Before the interview was concluded, she decided to do so.

"I am ruining myself," she sobbed.

"It is very noble of you," said Mr. Ridgeway, who, for that remark of his, and for that other of hers, charged extra.

II

A LITTLE TOKEN

When the five million francs had been paid and Sally Kandy became definitely Sally Malakoff, an act interrelated with the drama of her life was occurring in New York.

There in the library of a large house, situated in that part of Madison avenue, which, with Gramercy Park, still represents what residential New York used to be, a man was talking to a girl.

The man was Welden, the girl was Maud Barhyte. She was standing. He was seated.

Beside him was a table on which was an Oxford edition, in Greek, of the old Sicilian poets. At the moment, it was the only book that the library contained. Opposite was a mantel, above it, a mirror. To the right was a piano, at the left a sofa. On the walls were pictures of former Barhytes, women with pointed bodices and powdered hair; men in vermilion with swords and lace jabots. In addition to the book, the table had on it a buvard, an elaborate service for writing, and a jewelled bag of gold mesh, which the girl had put down.

A little before, letting herself in with a latch-key, as was her custom, she had come from a drive. She wore a costume of light cloth, faintly blue, exquisitely embroidered. Beneath was silk and mousseline de soie, less durable, and more costly than the garment. On her head was a hat for which she had been charged eighty dollars. She had worn it once before, and might wear it once again.

The girl was not on that account a fool. She read Plato in the original, and what is less lovely and more difficult, she read Kant.

What is unusual, she thought; what is exceptional, she meditated; what is remarkable, she prayed.

She prayed that she might do nothing that should not charm, say nothing that should not please.

Generally the prayer was granted, and sometimes more fully than she wished. Men on first meeting her forgot that they were conventional beings, and remembered that they were men.

"That ought not to be allowed," the wit of a ball-room had remarked, when in shimmering white, this girl had passed. For in her eyes that were violet, in the rich orange of her hair, in the contour of her lips, that seemed meeting for love, in the oval of her perfect face, and in her figure that pulsated with health and with life, there was a charm too alluring, almost aphrodisiac.

Of the emotions that it aroused, the girl was aware. It mortified her extremely, and through her demeanour she tried to attenuate it. But from her voice, which was naturally low, she could not always banish caresses. She could not always eliminate the incandescence from her eyes. The more demure she tried to appear, the more desirable she became. Her prayer was, perhaps, only too fully granted.

Now, on this late mid-April afternoon, there came through the open windows the surrenders of spring, and the metallic roar of the city.

"If you won't marry me, tell me why?" Welden was saying.

With that air of being somebody which certain New Yorkers occasionally attain, he sat, supple and vigorous, looking hungrily at her. The hunger, a hunger for her, for a year and a day he had tried to appease, but hitherto quite vainly.

In and about the girl's lips a smile hovered deliciously.

"Supposing you wearied of me, what then?"

Welden laughed. "I never could."

The hovering smile fluttered and fled. "Supposing, then, I wearied of you!"

Welden laughed again. "I would not let you."

To that, the girl, with a movement of her head, assented.

"Perhaps. But does it not rather seem that affection is a thing which cannot be commanded? It seems so to me. It seems to me that it commands us. It seems to me too, that, the quantity being limited, some day it must give out. When it does, love ends. No effort can prevent it."

Welden nodded. "Some day, yes. But a hundred years with you would be insufficient for me. I could love you all through this life, and all through another."

The smile which momentarily had gone from the girl, rejoined her.

"'In æternum te adorabo,'" she quoted. "I know. I have heard it before. I have heard it said by people who, when I next heard of them, were applying for a divorce. I heard Rivers swear it to Beatrix Leroy. Where are they now?"

"In the hands of their lawyers, I believe."

"Yet, almost the day before yesterday, they were apparently mad about each other, quite as much as we are, and probably more. Now, as you put it, they are in the hands of their lawyers. Then there are, or were, the Cottings, the Colvilles, the Methuens, the Lennox Joneses. Where are they?"

"In the same box, I suppose. But what of it? What have their various deviltries to do with us?"

"Everything. We might get in the same box ourselves."

"Ce n'est pas la mer à boire," Welden lapsing into French, as certain New Yorkers sometimes will, replied.

Again the girl assented. "For a man, certainly not. But for a woman, it rather proclaims the fact that she has put her love and life into the hands of an individual who has destroyed the one and ruined the other. Women endure much, and I could endure that on condition, however, that I alone were aware of it. But, to have it known, printed, discussed; to have my private misfortunes public property, no, I would rather—"

The girl hesitated as though at loss for a simile. Before she could find one, provided, that is, she wanted to, Welden cut in.

"But, Maud, are you not putting the tilbury before the tandem? That people do get divorces is obvious and in the majority of cases the reason is obvious also. Men here, as a rule, marry too young. They marry because they cannot decently get the girl otherwise, and as they afterward discover, it is not the girl, but a girl that they have got. To me, you are not a girl; you are the girl, the one girl in the whole wide world."

Maud looked the matter over as it reached her, and indicated the flaw in it with a smile.

"We are taught that experience teaches, and I may suppose that you have had yours, many experiences, I dare say. In that case, you have had a liberal education, which I have lacked. Your experiences have qualified you as an expert, and it is as such that you are able to decide that I am the one girl in the world for you. That is very gratifying. But what is there to enable me to determine that you are the one man? You may be. Probably you are. But how can I tell? How can I?"

Sagaciously Welden answered: "Try me."

Maud turned away, and with her two hands made a pass in the air. It was as though in some rite known but to herself, she were interrogating the invisible lap of the indifferent gods.

Then, looking suddenly at him, she exclaimed: "I have a great mind to."

In spite of a gesture meant to stay him, Welden sprang at the girl, caught her in his arms, and pressing his lips to hers, so bent her with the embrace, that she fell backward on the sofa.

At once, freeing herself, she pushed him away.

"Oblige me by sitting where you were."

As she spoke, she went to the mirror, readjusted her hat, patted her frock. These operations concluded, she turned again.

"We may as well say that we are engaged. In that manner we can be together whenever we like. Come to dinner to-morrow. I will speak to my father to-night,you can speak to him then."

She moved back. "Don't kiss me here. Don't. Now you must go. I have to dress."

Welden passed from the library into a reception room which adjoined it, and from there to the marble flagging of the hall.

Near the entrance stood a man, an old family servant who had known Welden throughout the year and the day of the siege and who now handed him his hat and stick.

Welden, considering him with laughing eyes, fumbled in his waistcoat and said:

"William, put that in your pocket and don't be surprised if you hear any news."

"Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Welden," the man answered knowingly. "I shan't be surprised; no, sir."

Opening the door, he held it open until Welden reached the street.

That night, when some guests had gone, Maud spoke, as she said she would speak, to her father. They were in the drawing-room which, after a New York fashion of long ago, was frescoed, furnished in yellow and black, fitted with enormous mirrors and with chandeliers almost as big, equally ancient.

"I am engaged to Gerard Welden."

General Barhyte, who had taken up an evening paper, put it down and removed his glasses. He had bushy white hair, a white cavalry moustache, and a fierce red face which suddenly could become indulgent.

It became so then. The Weldens had been identified with New York as long as the Barhytes, possibly longer. Welden himself represented all that was locally desirable in addition to the fact that he was personally agreeable, pleasant to the eye, liked by men, admired by women, a man of means, an M. F. H., President of the Swordsmen Club.

These items considered, the general replaced his glasses and looked up at his daughter.

"He is not in business, is he?"

Maud, who had been standing, seated herself on an S in upholstery.

"Well? And you? You are not either."

For a moment the general considered the point. "That's another story. I think nowadays a man should have some occupation."

Maud smiled, displaying the nacre of her teeth. "So do I. He will have me. It will be enough for him."

"Or for anybody," laughed the general. "When is it to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"Why, God bless my soul, the wedding, of course."

From under the girl's skirt a white slipper, butterflied with gold, moved in and out.

"Oh, not for a long time yet."

"Why?"

"Because."

The general laughed again. "That is the best reason in the world. Well, puss, you have my consent and your mother's money. You have been a good girl and I hope to God that you will be happy. He means to say a word to me, doesn't he?"

Maud stood up. "To-morrow. I have asked him to dinner."

General Barhyte, gathering again the evening paper, nodded. The match was everything he could wish. The more he considered it, the more he was pleased.

The following evening, when Maud had left the table and Welden had said the promised word, that pleasure he expressed.

"I hope," he added, "that after you are married you will be willing to live here. Why, God bless my soul, the house is big enough for a dozen of you. I always breakfast in my rooms, usually I have luncheon at the Athenæum, and I have always wanted to dine there."

"You are very kind, General," Welden, sitting, smiling and supple, before him, replied. "Personally I shall like nothing better, particularly as my own house has gone the way the rest of New York will go—engulfed by office buildings and department stores."

"Yes, yes. They are making the town impossible. God bless my soul, if I did not know better, I should think I was in Chicago. But there is Maud looking in. Don't let me detain you."

Welden stood up, shook hands with the old gentleman, thanked him again, and followed the girl into the faded splendours of the drawing-room.

"I have something for you," she announced.

From a little box she took a sapphire, flat and oblong. About it was a thin gold band and at one end a clasp. On the band was engraved: *Aultre n'auray.*

"'None but you,'" she translated as he examined the device which, long ago, a girl wove for a king.

"Now," she resumed, "if you will put that on the stem of your watch, it will not be offensive, will it?"

"On the contrary. But how odd!"

"I meant it to be. It is a token between us. If you ever change your mind, do not let me see that you have and do not tell me. Send this to me."

"It will go with me to my grave," Welden answered.

Drawing her to him, he kissed her, longly at first, then so penetratingly that the least pulses of her being shook.

Slowly, in her low, caressing voice, the girl said to him: "Dearest, I adore you."

III

A LITTLE LOVE

In the way we live now, the income derived from two million dollars is better than nothing, but, for a duke and a duchess, it is little more. Yet in Paris, provided one know, money may be made to do double the duty that it can effect elsewhere.

Malakoff did know. The last price of anything, the real value of no matter what, he thoroughly understood. It was a boast of his that no one could do him, and apart from the welshings in the steeplechase, it is probable that he had never been jockeyed in his life. On the perhaps meagre income he succeeded, consequently, in setting up an establishment which, if not princely, was not bourgeois. He succeeded even in setting up two of them, one at Deauville for the villégiatura, another for town life in the Avenue Malakoff—"my avenue," as he, with what perhaps was pardonable pride, described it.

The house there or, to speak French, the hôtel, had been obtained at a rental relatively low. Situated between court and garden, it had a vanilla frontage, variegated at the windows by a touch of green, at the balcony by another of pink, which gave it vaguely the appearance of a Neapolitan ice.

Sally did not take to it nor did she take to her existence there. In the unholy rites of the marriage, each one of which had set a separate mark upon her, she felt cheated of her girlhood and, in this house, she felt cheated, too, of happiness and love. Many are without suspecting it, many others cheat themselves. But Sally had been thrown blindfolded into the arms of a man who did not care for her, who did not want to care for her, and she had been so thrown for no other earthly reason than that a stupid woman might be related to a duke. Sally hated her mother for it with a hatred which equalled, when it did not exceed, the loathing which she felt for her husband.

Ordinarily the results of a husband's inconsiderateness are but temporary. Given but time and the bride forgets and forgives, and Sally, who was not only shallow, but, like all shallow people, impulsive, might have ended by loving the man whom she loathed, had not his inconsiderateness been succeeded by defection. Barely a wife, she ceased to be one, and that, while distinctly a blessing, aborted the possibility of anything further between them, anything, that is, except indifference on his part and antipathy on hers.

Her thoughts at this time were not, therefore, very gay, and their lack of gaiety was complicated by the fact that she had not many of them. But she found compensations, among these a curious one in Mme. Oppensheim, who, for obvious reasons, had determined that Sally should like her, and who succeeded in that which, other things being equal, would have been an impossible task. Sally did like her, or perhaps it will be more exact to say that she relished the attentions shown her by this woman of the world, who, not content with being merely gracious to an inexperienced American, took the trouble to form her, to teach her the tone, the ways and manners of the Parisian, in particular that *désir de plaire* which gives to the speech and bearing of the mondaine her untranslatable charm.

Sally at first was necessarily unaware of the relations that existed between this woman and Malakoff. When she was better informed, as she promptly became, she felt grateful to her for standing between them.

The gratitude was very feline. Though

Sally purred, she could scratch. But meanwhile discovering, moreover, as she also did, that in the special world in which she moved, the situation, far from being exceptional, was the reverse, she felt not merely grateful but Parisian, and in that state of advancement, dispensed both with the sense of dignity which should be natural to the married woman, and with the sense of morality which usually is instinctive in the young.

Incidentally it amused her to be duchess. She was glad to be rid of her mother. She liked to drive without her, and view landscapes of modes. Moreover, in the Avenue Malakoff, she received detachments from what is called All-Paris—the glittering and rakish ship of fashion, in which the distaff-side of the Faubourg Saint-Germain does not always deign to sail. But though the feminine portion of the old nobility has its reserves, the men are less punctilious and even otherwise there are always others quite as agreeable and frequently more so, the cosmopolitan leaders of life and sport, who nowhere else are as enterprising. Of these, many made up to her, a circumstance of which, quaintly enough, she complained to Mme. Oppensheim.

"But, ma toute belle," the latter remonstrated. "When a man delays more than fifteen minutes in making up to me, I regard him as insulting."

"You are so beautiful," Sally replied. But she thought her simply fantastic, and that not through any straight-lacedness, but because she did not yet understand how a woman can permit any man, save the man of all men, to attempt an approach however circuitous, to the heart's tender places. In that respect, Malakoff's treatment of her had been beneficial, and while in the antipathy incited, it had necessarily failed to reveal what love may be, none the less it had suggested possibilities which were then accentuated by Welden's presence in Paris.

Prior to her marriage, she had fancied herself in love with him. Now, in looking back, she realised that she had not known the meaning of the word. It still held its secrets, mysteries unrevealed, the esoteric love of a doctrine which only life can impart, only life and a lover. But the latter term had also its shadings, between which Sally wavered, not through any loyalty to Malakoff, she owed him none; nor through any loyalty to herself, she was unaware that she owed any, but because Welden was an inaccessible person.

At a five-o'clock in that amiable region which is known as the American colony, Sally made him such little tentative advances as a woman may. Agilely he extracted himself from her ambuscades. Ordinarily, he might have stormed them. That would have been only civil. But what ordinarily would have been civil, in this instance, would have been base. He was bound by bonds that to certain natures are the strongest of all. Apart from which he had no desire to encourage Sally. Maud left him none.

A fortnight after the episode of the little token, the girl and her father sailed for Paris. Welden accompanied them and it was in Paris that the consummation of the agreement occurred.

Previously the matter was somewhat debated. Maud Barhyte knew many things, among others, that once upon a time it had been heretical to think, heretical, also, to love. She knew, furthermore, that since then progress had liberated thought without, however, completely emancipating the heart. But, she had argued, the right to think and the right to love being both fundamental in human nature, one is as clear as the other, and while, to the bigot, any freedom in love may be heretical still, none the less, such liberty is permissible, provided the appearances are preserved, and no one else is injured.

These views she put before Welden. Their fallacy was patent to him. For while the whole moral value of marriage may subsist in a union which is contracted solely in the consciences of those who enter into it, and while such a union may not only present but preserve the entire and eternal law of Right, yet, when such a union is contracted in conditions such as theirs, there is an injury to others. There is an injury, though it be but potential, to the unborn. There is a further injury, and a grave one, to the woman, often, also, to the man. A woman is never completely woman except in the family, and there can be no family once certain conventions are contravened. These conventions, which jurists did not invent, or codes originate, are exterior to woman, superior to man, and, when disregarded, inimical to both of them.

But, though the fallacy of the girl's views was patent to Welden, the fallacy of refuting them was patent as well. The rare gifts of the gods should be piously accepted, never refused. Apart from which, in the way we live now, men of the world do not recite moral maxims after the manner of Confucius. Welden was too modern for that, and incidentally too hungry. But he saved his conscience.

"Your views," he declared, "are as adorable as they are advanced; but they would be still more adorable were they antiquated enough to induce you to marry me."

"Dearest," she replied, "have we not been all over that?"

They had indeed. At the time they were in New York. In the after joy which love and life in Paris brought, neither, between them, could have discovered a regret, the vain desire merely that it should never end, never! and in a world where all things must and do.

Meanwhile felicity was theirs, one so full, so absorbing, so intense and eager that sometimes from their commingled breath, rose the deceiving image of felicities larger and more fair. Sometimes, from the fountain of delight, a clear jet falling in drizzling sheaves, shook stars in their eyes and ears. Sometimes the pulsations of love swept over them like tides. Sometimes the waters lifted them, sank them, lowered them deeper, caught, carried and drifted them, hour long, unappeasably, from night to dawn. Once, from the mysterious affinities that similarise the flesh and spirit, a fear seemed to mount and warn of a catastrophe unknown, yet near.

The latter impression, wholly momentary and immediately forgot, came later. At the time being, their clear sky was cloudless. Intermediately, for general convenience, they were but another engaged couple, and it was by the simple expedient of announcing the engagement that Welden, at a five-o'clock in the Avenue Marceau, extricated himself from Sally's ambuscades.

"To Maud Barhyte!" exclaimed Sally, who certainly took her defeat very well, "how perfectly dear! I was thinking of her only the other day."

Sally, like her mother, sometimes spoke truly. In this instance, what she said was exact. She had been thinking of a resemblance that existed between Mme. Oppensheim and Maud.

"Where is she?" she continued. "And where are you? I want you both to dinner."

"Thank you," Welden replied. "Maud is at the Mirifique, in the rue de la Paix, and I am across the street."

"How nice and convenient that is. Well, tell her with my love, that I am coming to see her at once."

Sally smiled and nodded and turned. "Bonjour, Madame de Chose!" she said to a woman. "Bonjour, Prince!" she repeated to a man. "How sweet you look, Pinkey!" she added to a girl. "Bonjour! Bonjour!"

Sally certainly took her defeat very well. In the crowded salons of Mrs. Cawtree, her hostess, a New Yorker who had lived so long in Paris, that she was unaware how Parisian New York has become; in the spacious and peopled rooms she looked far more victorious than vanquished, and incidentally very sweet. "But too animated," Mrs. Cawtree, to whom such attenuations were pleasing, afterward declared.

Welden fell back and away. Presently in a motor-cab he was sailing down the Champs Elysées, and on to the Cercle de l'Escrime, a fencing club, of which he was a member, where, when in Paris, he usually went for a bout each day.

The bout served a double purpose. It combined practice and pleasure. It did more. It helped to keep him in that condition of supple vigour which it is the mere duty of an idler and particularly of a lover to maintain. To this condition other causes were contributory. He had a hack for the Bois and near Longchamp he kept a hunter, one that he had bought, not indeed for any immediate sport, but for future runs on Long Island. This horse, Irish by birth, and Blazes by name, was strong enough to carry a house. He had short legs, a short back, prodigious quarters, shoulders like the top of a haystack, and an impudent eye. He had cost a pretty figure, but Welden, who knew as much about horses as any one can, except a vet., felt that he had got him cheap, and to his Longchamp groom, a middle-aged, weasel-faced man, he gave these simple and sound instructions: "Mind you, now, plenty of oats and plenty of work."

On this afternoon, in the salle d'armes, he found, among other members, Louis Le Hillel, a Franco-American, to whom, through his grandmother, he was vaguely related, and with whom he had long been on terms of agreeable, though not oppressive, intimacy. Le Hillel had the face of a prelate, the manners of a débutante, and a wildcat's fearless agility.

After a bout with him, after a shower bath, and after dressing for the evening in the club, as is customary there, Welden sailed away in another cab to dine with Maud and her father.

The Mirifique, where they lodged, had been considered smart in the days of Balzac's beaux, and that distinction it had contrived to maintain. But then it had not succumbed to the general teutonising of such places. The management was not German, the servants were not Swiss, the chef was a chef. Though situated on that most cosmopolitan of streets, which the rue de la Paix is, it remained really Parisian. Guests there were not considered fit merely to be robbed, but patrons to be pleased. Mainly these patrons were Russians, than which, in the managerial eye, there is nothing superior, save only those appertaining to some grrande famille Américaine, for that is the ideal, and that is what the Barhytes were.

The suite which they occupied was on what Italians call the noble floor, and which the French, less translatably, describe as the first above. It gave on the street, and consisted of a vestibule, a frescoed salon, a tapestried dining-hall, and the usual sleeping rooms. The general's quarters, and those of his daughter, were separated by the dining room and salon. But Maud's had that which the general's lacked, a private entrance. It gave on a stairway at the rear, and though it was supposed to be used only by Maud's maid, Maud herself made use of it when returning unduly from Welden.

When he entered that evening, there was mounting from the street its odour of verbena and absinthe. Following that, were the cries of the hawkers who are never still. Then at once there was a waiter announcing dinner.

Already Welden had been greeted by the general. For a moment he had held Maud's hand in his. Slender, white and very cool, it burned him. The contour of her figure and her too alluring looks, burned him still more. At the pressure of his hand on hers, she, too, must have burned. A faint flame leaped to her face, coloured it charmingly, and sank slowly away.

"And where, may one inquire, have you been?" she asked, with that clinging intonation of hers, which was a caress in itself, and which lent to her simplest words the effect of a kiss. "We rather fancied that we should see you."

"So we did," said the general. "But dinner appears to be ready. Welden, will you take Maud out?"

"I have been talking to a friend of yours," Welden presently remarked, unfolding, as he spoke, a beautifully folded napkin. "Sugar Candy, she wants us to dine."

"That is Sam Kandy's daughter, isn't it?" the general interjected. "Let me see, she married—"

"A very good looking man, I hear," Maud answered. "Have you met him?" she asked, turning to Welden.

"That reminds me, Maud," the general ran on. "At the Visitors' Club to-day, a Frenchman, a painter, was introduced to me. It appears that he has seen you somewhere. God bless my soul! What an extravagant mood you put him in! He wants to paint your portrait and he says that if he may, it will be the clou—what do you call it in English—the success? Yes, the success of the Salon. A most extravagant chap. It was Colonel Floyd who introduced him. By the way, Floyd wants us to go to Frascati's. He is to be there for July and he says—"

"Frascati's at Hâvre?" said Maud.

"Yes, where else should it be? Now how devilish good that fish is, isn't it? They do do you well here, don't they? Floyd says—"

The general rambled on. Dishes perfectly cooked, perfectly served, succeeded each other. Coffee came. Finally the general stood up.

"Welden," he said, "don't let me disturb you. Stop and keep Maud company."

He turned to the girl. "I have an engagement with Floyd. Shall you be up when I return?"

"Ah! that depends."

"God bless my soul! Of course it does. I hardly believe I shall be late, though. Good night, Welden."

The old gentleman passed on and out, wondering a little, as he occasionally did, why, as yet, no date had been set for the wedding. Had he known, apoplexy would have seized him. But he did not know, and fortunately never learned. Fortunately for us all there are mysteries that we never elucidate. In its inscrutable ways the Inscrutable is beneficent.

IV

A LITTLE FRISK

The multiple brilliancies of the table were punctuated by goblets which lackeys in silk stockings, knee breeches and the saffron liveries of the Malakoffs replenished with gloved hands. A maître d'hôtel, after presenting a sturgeon from the Volga, was supervising its service. Through the hum of talk, the tinkle of silver on Sèvres, above the glittering table, rose the rich voice of the duke.

At his right was Mme. de Solférino, gorgeous and golden. At his left was Mme. de Cérisy, a massive brunette, outwardly attentive, but inwardly blaspheming. Next to her was de Dol, a sportsman with racing stables at Chantilly. Farther down was

Welden. Opposite de Dol was Aquaviva, an Italian, master of the Roman hunt. At his right sat Maud. Beyond, at the other end of the table, was Sally, a Turkish legate on one side, a Russian prince on the other.

Between Sally and Malakoff, were eight other guests, or sixteen in all, a number relatively restricted, but, afterward, there was to be a sauterie, a little frisk, to which a hundred more were coming.

Mme. de Cérisy, outwardly smiling, but inwardly cursing her couturière, wore a confection that matched her name. It did not do and the consciousness that it did not was increased doubly, first by the glitter of Mme. de Solférino, again by the picture presented by Maud, who, with the ivory of her neck and arms, the rich orange of her hair, her incandescent eyes and too alluring looks, seemed a dream and a despair.

Malakoff, turning from Mme. de Cérisy to her, moistened his lips.

To annoy him, Mme. de Cérisy remarked: "Giselle Oppensheim is not with us tonight."

"Unfortunately no," he answered. "She was awaited elsewhere."

It was a fortnight after the episode at Mrs. Cawtree's. On the afternoon that followed the little skirmish, Sally called at the Mirifique, and finding Maud at home, embraced her, congratulated her, and asked her and Welden to dinner, an invitation which she later reinforced by another, begging both to come to her at Deauville, from the third to the tenth of July. The two bids had been jointly accepted, and it was in response to the first, that Maud and Welden were then dining at her house.

At the moment, Malakoff was addressing himself to Maud. Welden could not hear what he said, but in spite of intervening candelabra, he could see the girl's face. She was smiling, apparently amused.

Welden felt no jealousy, nothing but the calm of invincible possession, and, as he ate of farcied truffles, which had just been served, and drank the blonde wine with which his glass was constantly replenished, he told himself that in a few hours the girl would be in his arms.

Some vibration of the thought must have reached Sally. Leaning forward, she called at him.

"Isn't she radiant? In New York she was exquisite, here she is exquisite and radiant besides. What has done it? Is it love? Is it? Ah, alors! Qui donc m'apprendra ce que c'est que l'amour?"

With that, a nod and a ripple of laughter, Sally turned to Cantire, an under secretary of the British Embassy, a boy with pink cheeks and fair hair.

The dinner proceeded. Courses succeeded each other. Sweets came and went. Solemnly the butler approached Sally and muttered at her.

But Sally, her attention diverted, had not heard. Presently she looked up.

"Well, Harris, what is it?"

The man muttered again.

"On arrive!" cried Sally, rising. "The others are coming! They are here!"

From beyond floated a kiss of harps that were marrying violins to the strain of a waltz; Malakoff, rising also, bent to Mme. de Solférino, and, her hand on his arm, led the way from the brilliant room, to rooms more brilliant.

In a little, though, marshalled by him, Welden, Cantire, Aquaviva and de Dol returned to the table, where cigars and liqueurs were being served, and where other men joined them.

"Monsieur Welden," Malakoff called from where he stood. "You know the Marquis Aquaviva de Santamarta, the Comte de Dol and M. Cantire."

Then as the men nodded, collectively he added:

"Messieurs, this gentleman, a compatriot of the duchess, is a renowned sportsman. Should he consent to enter, in all conscience, I may say, have a care."

"Thank you," said Welden, biting the end from a cigar. "But enter what?"

"A little run over the sticks at de Dol's," Cantire, in English, replied.

"Permit me," said the count, approaching. He had honest eyes, a slight moustache, and a careful manner. "Monsieur," he continued to Welden, "at Chantilly, I have some stables, oh, nothing to speak of, but a little stretch which is, perhaps, sufficient, and these gentlemen, with Kara Saraguine, whom I do not see at this moment, have been arranging a hurdle-race for the sixth. If now you, monsieur, will be amiable enough to enter, it will become truly an international run. Prince Kara is Russian, the Marquis Aquaviva is—"

"I should like nothing better," Welden cut in. "But on the sixth, I have arranged to be at M. de Malakoff's."

"And most amiable it is of you," Malakoff exclaimed. "I thank you infinitely, but—"

"I have also," Cantire, in English, interrupted. "We can send our horses to Chantilly before we go, and run up from Deauville together."

"Voyons!" said Malakoff. "Shall we not talk French? De Dol does not understand, or Aquaviva either."

"Pardon, yes, a very little," the count softly interposed. Then lapsing serenely into French he added: "As a baby, I studied it with my nurse."

"It is arranged then?" said Aquaviva to Welden. He had a full beard, pursed lips, and an air of being very much pleased with everything. "You will join us, is it not so?"

Welden, turning to him, with his laughing eyes, nodded. "Yes, thanks, it ought to be very good fun."

"Well, then, what would a little cut at baccarat say to you, messieurs?" Malakoff in his rich voice inquired. "Ah! behold Cantire, who abandons us now."

For Cantire, rightly preferring the nobler possibilities of captivating women, to the more sordid chance of winning gold, was then making for the frisk.

"A hundred louis," Malakoff resumed. "It is I who am banker. If you please, this way."

He motioned at a footman and a door was opened to a fumoir where an oval table was set, and where presently Welden, to whom he dealt practically nothing but eights and nines, relieved him of a major portion of the money.

Malakoff laughed and got up. "Bah! Another time it will be my turn."

But now Aquaviva took the bank. Other men, drifting in, staked against him. Welden continued to play and continued to win. Meanwhile Malakoff had gone. De Dol, too, had disappeared. Of the original party only Aquaviva and Welden remained. Finally Welden himself stood up, and, guided by the harps, entered the room that served for the frisk.

It was large and luminous. The polished floor was swept by trains undulant and glistening. There were black coats from the lapels of which hung clusters of minute decorations; white shirts which the broad ribbons of higher orders enhanced. Bare shoulders and jewelled necks emerged from pearl embroidered corsages. Coils of hair, bitten by combs, gleamed with hereditary gems. There was the sheen of silk, of diamonds and of flesh. There was, too, an aroma of orris and flowers which, while a trifle voluptuous, was also a little heavy. But over it, above everything, there mounted that atmosphere which is the marked characteristic of such assemblies, the vaporisation of a sentiment shared by all, that of being among oneselves, and of being thereby generally and solidly united by nothing whatever.

In the centre of the room, couples were turning. Beyond, in a doorway that led to other salons, Sally stood talking to Cantire. Opposite, on the other side of the room, high windows that descended to the floor, opened on a balcony.

Welden moved on. He did not see Maud, and in search of her, he went to the nearest of these windows. In front of it, her back to the balustrade, the girl stood talking to Malakoff. She was looking down and did not see him, and Malakoff, who was facing her, did not either.

Tranquilly and courteously he approached.

"Without indiscretion, if I am not interrupting—"

Maud looked up, and Malakoff looked around.

"I beg of you," said the latter.

"Would you care for a turn?" asked Welden, who, as he spoke, nodded and smiled at both of them.

"Voilà!" Malakoff exclaimed. "You remind me. I also have my duties. Mademoiselle!" Moving aside, he bowed.

"Sans adieu," Maud called to him over her shoulder, and accompanied by Welden passed on and in.

There Welden put an arm about her and together they began gliding and reversing with that ease, which, in all the cosmopolitan world of fashion, Americans best display. As they floated over the floor, others, who were also waltzing, stopped to observe them, noticing which they stopped themselves.

"Let us go in there," said Welden, indicating the door at which, a moment before, Sally had stood.

It led to a smaller room, delicately fitted, where, however, they were not alone. Other people, Parisians with whom they were unacquainted, were seated or standing about. But, near the entrance, was an unoccupied sofa, on which Maud sank and Welden dropped.

The girl unfurled a fan. "Dearest, do you know, Malakoff talks really rather well."

Welden nodded. "He isn't such a bad sort. I won a pot of money of him to-night. By the way, I am in for a race. It is to be on the sixth—"

Further confidences were interrupted. In the doorway Cantire appeared, looking eagerly about.

"Oh, Miss Barhyte," he cried, as he spotted the girl. "Won't you give me this dance, or at least, what's left of it?"

Maud, rising, took the boy's arm, and Welden, who had also risen, dropped back.

The pot of money which he had won, while inconsequential, was an assistance. There had been a very inconveniencing crash in Wall street. That morning he had meditated wiring there and having the proceeds of July coupons and dividends cabled to his Paris account. But now, meanwhile, the pot, however relatively small, was a help. Mechanically he felt of the pocket in which he had placed it.

As he did so, Maud reappeared. Other confidences ensued, which, as before, were interrupted. A new aspirant for a turn came to the girl. After the second, there was a third, then there were more. For in the minds of men, however obtuse, her beauty put a restlessness, a trouble, sometimes a hope. Those who were free coveted the possibilities it evoked; those who were not ruminated the savourousness of those possibilities.

"Dearest," she said at last. "Shall we go?"

"Yes, à l'Anglaise," Welden answered, expressing in the language of the land its neat equivalent for the English "French leave."

"Dearest," she remonstrated, "I at least must say a word."

In search of Sally, on through the ball room she passed, surrounded by homages, enveloped by the glances of men.

Presently, after the word had been said, and her cloak had been put about her, she went down through a double hedge of lackeys to the perron below, where her lover waited and a footman bawled:

"The people of Madame la princesse de Solférino!"

Very gorgeous, very smiling, the princess, formerly Fanny Murray of New York, interrupted her luminous exit to remark to them: "Hasn't it been jolly?"

When she, her glitter and her platitudes had gone, the footman bawled again, this time for Welden's carriage.

About the entrance was a group of grooms, idlers, birds of the night. Down the avenue glowed the lamps of waiting cars and broughams. Before these a sergent-de-ville, his head bent, his hands behind his back, promenaded Napoleonically. Above, the moon hung, a round of butter in the sky. In the air was a sweetness, and from the open windows sank the swooning measures of a waltz.

Welden, after putting Maud into the carriage, drew from a pocket of his white waistcoat a chainless watch, from the stem of which her token, the sapphire, dangled.

"You have had no supper. Suppose we go somewhere and take a private room?"

With a quick intake of the breath, the

girl answered: "Dearest, yes, and let us hurry."

"The Café de la Paix," Welden threw at the coachman's back. "Et vivement!"

Then, in a moment, when he was beside her, the girl withdrew a glove, put her hand in his and whispered:

"Dearest, I am so happy that it frightens me."

"Yes," Welden replied. "I know. I, too, am afraid."

"You!"

"In any love affair there are always three. The third is the unknown. It is that which frightens."

What he meant he could not have told. The remark, passably oracular, had but sprung into the sudden utterance, which, occasionally, prophecies take. Dismissed at the time in immediate embraces, afterward it was shudderingly recalled.

V

THE VILLA PORTUGAISE

To the cosmopolite, Deauville is delightful. The days fall by in an atmosphere dripping with ammonia and desire, scented with caprices and brine, shuttled too by that general deviltry, which those consorts of society, wealth and idleness, inevitably produce.

The house there which the Malakoffs had taken was known as the Villa Portugaise. The reason of that was inscrutable. Instead of the patio, loggia, fountains and blooms which the name implied, there was a trim lawn fronting a thoroughly English dwelling that looked obliquely at the sea.

In spite of the Britannic reserve of its appearance, there was in it an ease, an entire liberty, a complete sans-gêne that harmonised very perfectly with the Deauvillian air.

On the ground floor were the living rooms, spacious, cool, perhaps a trifle severe. These gave on the ocean. On the lawn side was a wide hall that extended from one end of the house to the other. In the centre was the entrance. At the right of the doorway was a table on which were reviews, papers, periodicals. Above it was a rack in which letters were put. To the left of the entrance, at the extreme end, a flight of steps started, continued for a few steps, then halting, turned abruptly and directly up to a galleried floor above where the bedrooms were, which for general convenience had been numbered.

When, on the evening of the third of July, Maud and Welden arrived, they were met in the hall by Sally, by Malakoff, the Cérisys, the Solférinos and a dozen others, among whom was Cantire.

The boy, attired in beautifully cut evening clothes, looked hot, or rather red. Mme. de Cérisy, taking advantage of his youth, had put to him questions which even at Deauville were perhaps indiscreet. Mrs. Cawtree, who had come over from her own very neighbourly villa, had overheard and was laughing.

"Hasten, my children," Sally, after the first greetings, called in French. "We dine and at once."

Maud was then taken to No. 10, a room at the head of the stairs. Opposite was No. 12. It was there Welden was shown. The arrangement was so convenient that he congratulated himself on its idyllic simplicity.

A little later when he and Maud had dressed and both were about to descend the stair, they could hear Sally exclaiming.

In her hand was a blue rag of a telegram on which a string of typewritten words had been gummed.

"What is it?" Malakoff asked.

"Giselle Oppensheim who wires that she comes to-morrow. But where shall I put her? Where?"

"Bah!" answered Malakoff. "It will arrange itself. On s'avisera."

Mrs. Cawtree, who knew everything. everything fashionably knowable that is, looked admiringly at Sally. It was not every bride and particularly it was not every American bride, who was capable of being so indulgently sans-façon. Mrs. Cawtree's esteem for Sally mounted. But at once an attenuation followed. Probably she does not know, the lady reflected.

"Do you fancy that the duchess knows about Mme. Oppensheim?" she asked of Cantire when presently she found him next to her at dinner.

"Knows what?" the boy inquired, choking down as he spoke, the velvet of a bisque.

"I remind myself," Mrs. Cawtree inconsequentially resumed, "of the woman who asked Dumas whether there was anything between him and the Princess Belgioso.

'Madam,' he replied, 'sometimes nothing whatever.' "

It was a moment before Cantire got it. When he did he laughed in a fashion so disorderly that to steady him, Mrs. Cawtree asked him to a frisk at her house the next night.

The effort succeeding, she turned with a similar invitation to Aquaviva who was opposite, after which she asked Prince Saraguine who sat between her and Sally.

Kara Saraguine had an air of having lived extensively and of fully intending to continue such living. At the moment he was eating mussels from the sauce of a sole Normande and while listening to Sally's chatter, had an eye on Maud, who sat a little beyond, on the other side of the table.

"That youthfulness is ravishing," he remarked and wiped his mouth. "A compatriot, Duchess? One could devour her."

Cantire's eyes were now on the girl, so

were Malakoff's and Solférino's, and Maud, knowing of old the ideality of men's thoughts, blushed suddenly and divinely.

But at once, for countenance' sake, leaning forward, she called, in English, to Sally.

"What sort of a place is Etretat? While I was dressing they brought me a telegram from my father. He is to motor there from Frascati's to-morrow. Is it nice?"

"Charming!" Saraguine volunteered in French. "The downs, the cliffs, the view, whatever you will, is charming, except the world there. No, frankly, Mademoiselle, that is everything there is of most grocer."

"Etretat!" Solférino, also in French, exclaimed. "I promenaded myself once that way. Once, that is permissible, twice would be a sin. And I, I am not exacting. I—"

Solférino ran on. Presently everybody seemed to be talking at once. Momentarily Maud's too alluring looks were forgotten. But when the dinner was over, several men gathered in the hall about her and there remained until drawn into the fumoir, where Welden was the last to follow and where, afterward, with the hopelessness of a regret that is to be eternal, he wished he had never gone.

There, a footman was trundling a chest on wheels. In it were cigars of different shades and sizes, cigarettes of various brands. As Welden entered, the man steered it up to him. He took a londrès and surveyed the room.

Near by was a buffet, hospitably inviting. On it were decanters of chartreuse and maraschino; flagons of brandy and gin; bottles of Vichy and Eau de Vals. These latter had obviously been attacked. But with that abstemiousness which is a characteristic of the way we live now, the liquors and liqueurs were untouched.

Contiguously was a billiard table on which Cantire, a cigar between his teeth, was knocking balls about. Opposite on a sofa, raised by a dais, Solférino sprawled. He looked precisely like a fat old woman.

Idly Welden wondered why his wife had accepted him. She was a Murray. The Murrays were not brilliant. But in point of birth and, for that matter, of breeding, her family, like Maud's and like his own, were superior, in every way, to any imperial spawn.

He passed on. Beyond was the green baize of a baccarat table, about which now other men were grouped. Saraguine was dealing. The cards which he gave to the right, Aquaviva received; those to the left went to Malakoff. Behind these the others stood and punted.

Presently, Malakoff, to whom Saraguine had furnished an almost uninterrupted series of picture cards, got up, and Welden, after a circular look of inquiry, took the vacated chair.

The ill luck that had visited that side of the table continued. Across the way Aquaviva and his backers were winning. Meanwhile Welden and those behind him lost. Then, as is usual in such circumstances, the losers abandoning their positions, deserted to the favoured side and shortly, from the chair which Malakoff had relinquished, Welden was betting alone.

He had begun with hundred franc wagers. As these vanished, his stake increased. From a silk card case he drew blue and white notes, one after another, until all which it held were gone. Barring some loose gold in his waistcoat he had nothing.

"Je suis ratiboisé," he remarked. "I am cleaned out."

He was getting up, as Malakoff had done, when Saraguine, seeing his predicament and perhaps conscious that if he desisted, the game might cease, said to him:

"If you will, I beg of you, stake on parole."

"Thanks," Welden answered and resumed his seat. "A hundred louis."

The game proceeded. Cantire had left the billiard table. Solférino approached. Aquaviva, relinquishing his chair to de Cérisy, went to the buffet, drank largely of Vichy and walked away.

"Nine!" said Welden, exposing his cards.

"Eight!" said Saraguine, exposing his own.

"Nothing," said de Cérisy, pushing his cards aside.

Saraguine, after gathering in the money from that quarter, paid Welden and redealt.

For a while thereafter, fortune changed. The players that had deserted Welden returned. He recovered what he had lost and ten thousand francs in addition. Then luck veered. He staked the ten thousand, lost them and, a quarter of an hour later, had lost fifty thousand more.

Tranquilly, but this time definitely, he got from his seat, drank of the Vichy and went out in search of Maud.

In the hall women were grouped, talking modes and morals, the cosmopolitan gossip of London, Paris and Rome. Maud, a little removed from the others, was in a rocking chair, a slipper just visible beneath the hem of her skirt, her bare arms upraised behind her head.

Before her, Malakoff balanced himself on the arm of another chair. As Welden approached, he stood up.

"You won, I hope," he threw out, and sauntered away.

"As it happened I lost," Welden exclaimed, not to him, but to the girl. "I shall have to go to Paris to-morrow."

"Dearest, I have money, eight or nine hundred francs I think," Maud slowly, in her low, caressing voice, replied.

Welden laughed. "I could not take it and even if I could, it would not be anywhere near enough. As it is I shall have to cable."

"Dearest, to-morrow is the Fourth, it is particularly for to-morrow we are here and in the evening Mrs. Cawtree wants us to come to her. Could you not put it off?"

"Not very comfortably. The money has to be paid at once, within the legal delays that is, and they amount to twenty-four hours. But I will be back in time for Mrs. Cawtree's. At the latest I can take a train which gets here at nine and to-night—"

"Dearest, be careful," the girl interrupted. Slowly she looked around. But they were quite alone. "Be sure first, won't you," she added, "that no one is about."

Welden ran his long thin fingers through his bright thick hair. Not for this world certainly and probably not either for the next, would he by so much as a gesture have compromised the girl.

Much later, after he had waited longly

and listened vainly and made two abortive attempts, when at last the villa seemed entirely hushed, he crossed the little space that lay between his room and hers.

The door was unlocked. As he opened it the disposition of the room was such that he could see of the girl only the rich orange of her hair, the outline of her pillowed head.

At the noise, ever so slight, which he made on entering, she turned. Immediately he heard, or thought he heard, a footfall in the corridor without. Quickly he closed the door and bolted it. It was, he noticed, massively made, of solid oak.

In the momentary uneasiness which, in circumstances such as these, even a problematic footfall may and does properly excite, he reflected that no one could get in and then immediately he told himself that no one would try.

VI

THE HEAD

The next evening Welden left Paris for Deauville. Ordinarily, as he had told Maud, he would have arrived at nine. But the derailment of another train interfered. It was eleven when he reached the villa.

A gale was blowing. From within, through the windows and the open door, lights fell on the driveway, chequering the pebbles with yellow spots. From beyond, in a lull of the wind, came the sound of violins and voices. The villa itself was silent.

As Welden entered, a footman came running. No one else was about. Turning, he passed on to the stairs and up them.

During the delay that had supervened he told himself that because of it, Maud, ceasing to expect him, would have gone on to Mrs. Cawtree's, and it was with the idea of dressing and of joining her that he made for his room. But, while on the stair, it occurred to him to look in hers.

On reaching it, he turned the knob. The door was unlocked, it opened at his touch, and, precisely as on the night before, he saw the rich orange of her pillowed head, but saw too, beside her, Malakoff.

For a second only. Enveloped momentarily, yet, for the moment, enveloped absolutely by the catastrophic emotions of a whirlwind of nightmares, before he could move, the door, slammed in his face, was bolted.

In the instant concussion, the anchylosis of the anterior shock fell by, replaced immediately by blood madness.

Behind that door a man and a woman were occupied in continuing to be. Of that alone he was conscious. Over all the cells of his brain a somnolence had fallen, over all, save one, and that one cell, vehemently active, was inciting him to tear with bare hands life from the man, that done, to tear it again from the woman.

But for the door he could and would have.

Violently he flung himself against it. Violently yet vainly, and before perhaps it were possible for him to have realised the futility of the effort, he did realise that some one was near him, somebody who had a hand on his arm and who was offensively interfering.

Savagely he turned. Before him, in ball dress, a fichu of lace about her head, was Sally.

"Don't," she was saying. "Don't."

Welden, maniacal still, could have struck her. She saw it. But she did not flinch. Though naturally agitated, she did not seem frightened, surprised merely and also uncertain.

Welden raised his hand with a movement

that threatened her, threatened the occupants of that room, menaced the house, Deauville itself, a gesture wide, insane, elemental and human.

"Don't," she repeated.

In the constant reiteration of that one word there must have been something of the effect of a spray. The irritability of the one active cell subsided, that of other cells was aroused.

Welden's arm fell at his side. He stared at Sally. Then, for the first time, one of his two selves recognised her.

Sally, discovering not that, but the altered attitude, faced him.

"He would not be there unless she wished."

The words fell over him plentifully like water thrown from a bucket. In the full douche and splatter of them, their meaning insinuated itself into the arteries of thought. The man's two selves, the objective and the subconscious, rejoined each other; mania subsided, somnambulism ceased. Abruptly his entire brain awoke. The potential troglodyte that was in him, as potentially he is in us all, dematerialised. At once a man of the world in flannels and a straw hat found himself in the presence of a lady. That hat he removed.

In the eyes and about the mouth of the lady was an expression which some ladies have when they are occupied less with what they say than with other things which they do not propose to mention.

It was quite the same to Welden. That which occupied him was the ineluctable truth of her statement. Malakoff would not be there if Maud had not consented.

It was in a shrill whisper that Sally had produced it. Now, in the same tone, looking him still in the face, she said:

"Come below with me."

As she spoke she stooped, gathered the

train of her dress and together they descended the stair.

In the hall a footman stood. Sally left Welden and went to the table. Above it in a rack was a letter which she avidly took and put in her corsage. Then, turning, she spoke to the servant.

Welden, meanwhile, was still absorbed by her statement. But happiness was yet so recent that the ineluctable truth had not fully permeated all the cerebral convolutions, and the fact that it had not, manifested itself in the melodramatic phrase which all have uttered, all at least whom the unforeseen has felled.

"It is impossible; I am dreaming!"

At that, instantly, there surged before him the vision of the pillowed head, but now, through some miracle of hell, he could see the body, the fair ivory of it blotched with postules.

Again hæmatomania would have claimed

him. For a moment it was not only the vision that he saw but zigzags of black and scarlet. Determinedly he reacted. Almost immediately the natural poise of the man returned, with it as quickly came the realisation that since already he had done nothing, there was nothing that he or any other civilised being could do, except indeed to leave the house.

At the sure cognition of that he looked about for Sally. She was speaking to a maid.

"I am going," he told her.

Sally, from over her shoulder, nodded at him.

"So am I," she answered and went on with her orders.

"Perkins," she was saying, "M. de Malakoff is in number ten. Tell Harris to have two of the men remain near by until they see him leave it."

Welden wondered absently at her reply.

It was odd, he thought, that she also should be going. Then, as absently, he remembered that she was Malakoff's wife and he contemplated the fact gravely, without pity. It seemed to him just that besides himself some one else should suffer.

"And Perkins," Sally called at the now retreating woman. "Bring my jewel case and some things, enough for to-night."

"Come," she added to Welden, moving as she spoke to the door. "I am going to Mrs. Cawtree's. You had better go to the hotel, to the Roches Grises."

The weather, like themselves, had become dramatic. The high wind that swept the frivolity of the land, came from the sea, perhaps from the Pole. It was strong and rude and, as they issued from the house, it pounced on them, howling and gay as a pack of foxhounds.

Sally's clothes were lifted and tossed, the fichu was nearly torn from her head. She dominated her dress however, maintained the bit of lace, and, as they went down the path, she called at Welden: "What shall you do to-morrow?"

The "to-morrow" was all he caught. The rest of the question the gale scattered before it reached him. But it was enough. It prompted. As yet he had not thought. Then at once he knew, and he determined to wire to Le Hillel and dispatch him, with some local acquaintance, to Malakoff.

Sally, fancying that he had not heard at all, cried at him again, repeating the question.

Welden, holding his hat on with one hand and pointing back at the house with the other, shouted: "I shall have friends of mine call there."

That was very satisfactory. Sally, her head bent, considered it gleefully. It was what she had hoped, an additional arrow for her quiver, in which already was divorce.

Presently she spoke again, but what she said Welden did not hear, did not care.

The sea, pounding on the shore, was creating a thunder deafening and confused. It was as though a gigantic machine were hastening terribly to some enormous task.

Sally, in despair of making Welden hear otherwise, caught at his arm and motioned him to lower his head.

When he had she shrieked in his ear: "I want you to do me a great favour, a very great favour, will you?"

"Will I what?"

He had heard but half of what she said, not because of the roar but because of his thoughts which she, with her questions, entangled.

Now, however, again she was shrieking: "I want you to kill him."

But though she shrieked, she smiled and, in spite of the tossing gale, in spite too of her ballooning dress, she looked sweet and simple.

Welden nodded. For the first time since they had known each other, what she wanted he wanted also.

Sally nodded too. Clutching at her dress she shouted: "Don't let anyone know why; promise that you will not."

They had reached the gate of a little park in which the Cawtree villa stood. In the shelter of the wall there was a respite from the gale. The sea too sounded less thunderous.

"Promise you won't," she repeated more normally.

Welden cried at her: "That reminds me, will you do something for me?"

"Anything," Sally cried back. "I will do anything in the world for you."

The fervour of the protestation Welden let pass unnoticed.

"Is Prince Saraguine in there?"

"He is leading the cotillon."

Welden got at his card case and from it took a cheque already made out.

"Give him this with my thanks." He turned. "Good night," he added.

"Good night," she replied and, as he moved into the gale, she made a trumpet of her hands and screamed through them: "Good luck."

Welden, holding his hat to his head, passed on to the village. The wind that blew through his flannels, bent the trees, swept the narrow streets, dispersed their germs, refreshing whatever it touched, leaving the quivering air pure and delicious.

The hall of the Roches Grises, saturated with tobacco and electricity, full of people, of hurrying waiters, of parties returning from the Casino at Trouville and of tourists eyeing one another hostilely or with indifference, resounded with calls of the telephone, with slamming doors and the noise of lifts that ceaselessly rose and descended.

At the bureau, Welden secured a room, sent a chasseur for his things to the villa and, these recovered, at last was alone.

The room, though quiet, was as peopled as the hall. There were visions in it, very many, that gradually, without effort, fused into a picture of a girl's pillowed head.

The girl herself was a stranger. It was not she he had loved, it was another, totally different, one whom his imagination had created, a girl who had never lived and who now was dead. The past alone was real. It surged phantasmagorically, like a great deceit, a lie enormous and cruel, inexplicable from sheer monstrosity. The crime he had witnessed permeated that past, smearing it with the odiousness of a coarse vulgarity.

In the chair in which he sat, he moved.

From the wall at which he stared, he turned. Wherever he looked the picture appeared. To escape it he hid his face in his hands. He saw it there the clearer. At that, an agony made of a thousand wounds, each distinct, each more lancinant than the other, caught and enveloped him. The torture of it thrust into being memories long ablated. Fragments of recollections multiplied in his mind. There came to him the day he had first seen her, the hour he had first loved her, the moment he had first thought she might care for him, and, traversing these memories were tempests of others; shaded interiors, chairs under the trees, the ball-rooms of Newport, Long Island lawns; sudden tableaux of wherever a new delight had been experienced, of wherever a fresh sensation had been born, of wherever she had exhaled her invincible charm.

Within him the sea of these things mounted, adding their bitterness to the sear of his wounds. There was no myrrh for them. There is none for a death rattle, and as the obsessing vision returned, it brought with it a lassitude so large, so empty and desolate, that it resembled extinction itself.

VII

THE DOOR

On the morrow the gale had gone, flown afar, to die perhaps on some shore of the Mediterranean. In Welden too a tempest had subsided. In the eager sunshine that filled the room he stood, contemplating a note, a hurried scrawl from Sally informing him she had learned from Perkins that Malakoff was leaving for Paris.

The letter fell from him. A telegram different from the one he had meditated must, he saw, be sent, and he wrote one asking Le Hillel to meet him at the Escrime. But there were other things to be done and done quickly. He gave orders; tubbed, dressed, drank some coffee, for even in the great crises of life one must do these things, and in the same spirit perhaps that, at the reveille for battle, men shave and see to it that their gloves are spotless, Welden adjusted his neckcloth and considered the sheen of his shoes.

But Malakoff's move perplexed. He could not understand why the man should be leaving. Toward the man himself he was now indifferent. It was not the man he hated, it was the male. The man had outraged every canon of decency. He had broken hospitality's first and highest law. Yet, he could have done none of these things if Maud had not consented and, the consent granted, any other male would have done the same. Toward the consenter he felt no hatred either, a distaste merely, very immedicable, one that poisoned her and him and life.

A rap had come. It was time to be going and shortly, the bill paid, the service fee'd, he was off to the station.

There, already, an employee was calling

loudly for the voyageurs, and Welden, after purchasing his fare and getting his luggage ticketed, went from the bare white room to the platform and mounted into the grey upholstery of an empty compartment of the train.

He was but seated when he saw Malakoff swinging in. Rising abruptly, brusquely he forced himself by and out.

Malakoff turned angrily.

"Monsieur," he called, "you have a manner of disregarding the bagatelles of the door which I do not applaud. If you care to apologise—"

"I never apologise," Welden threw at him.

Malakoff, pulling a glove from one hand, raised it with the other.

Instantly that hand was pinioned. In another instant it was flung aside and Welden, whose jaw had become ominously square, confronted him.

"That is sufficient. Where can my friends find yours?"

"At my house if it suits them."

"En voiture, messieurs, en voiture!" a guard yelped, for now there were more laggards; Aquaviva, Saraguine and a man whom Welden did not know.

These, ignorant as yet of the little scene, had just issued from the station.

"Monsieur Welden," said the Russian, "my thanks for the envoi of last night."

"Monsieur Welden," said the Italian, "do not forget Chantilly to-morrow."

To an accompaniment of the employees' yelps both were speaking at once.

"You go with us, do you not?" asked the prince, climbing as he spoke into the section into which already Malakoff had mounted and where Aquaviva followed.

"This way, this way," a guard barked.

Welden had but time to clamber into an adjoining compartment. At once the bolt was shot, a whistle tooted, the train was off.

In a corner sat a woman, very well dressed, tall, fair, presumably English, who looked invitingly at him. Except to remove his hat, Welden ignored her completely.

The clarity of the morning sky, the poplars that bowed and fainted, the lovely Norman land, these things he ignored as well. Over the white leagues his thoughts had run on ahead. He was standing somewhere, in tennis shoes, his neck bare, his sleeves rolled up, a yard of steel in his hand, and Malakoff was before him. Mechanically his wrist moved. The point of the steel advanced and retreated in a line absolutely straight, effecting in the parries only the minimum circle. There were men that stood about and watched and suddenly they saw Malakoff fall, spitted, that yard of steel gone through him.

What was the fair English woman, the

clarity of the sky, the bowing poplars, the lovely Norman land beside these pleasantly murderous sensations? They entertained him fully until the rush of the train decreased into a soapy slide and the porters of Saint-Lazare were calling at him.

Leaving his things in the rue de la Paix, Welden drove on to the Escrime, the fencers' club of which he was a member.

There, in the main hall, on a black divan, a cigar between his teeth, Le Hillel was seated.

Adjacently other members were seated and two men, their hands behind their backs, paced slowly up and down. From a lateral entrance, a colossal lackey in the club livery, with knee breeches and silk stockings, called loudly the sempiternal announcement of French clubs, the amount of money in the baccarat bank.

Le Hillel, withdrawing his cigar, waved it.

"I got your wire. Nothing serious, eh?"

"Do you know Malakoff?" Welden asked, seating himself on the divan.

"Enough to say Good-day. Anything wrong between you?"

Welden nodded. "We had some words this morning."

Le Hillel stretched himself luxuriously. "About a woman?"

"No. On the contrary."

Le Hillel assumed an attitude of still greater luxuriousness. "You mean that the lady is not to be mentioned. That's of course. Whom have you got?"

"You for one, I suppose?"

"My dear fellow, with the greatest pleasure."

"And I will ask Cantire."

"Cantire, no. He is under-secretary. A little matter of this kind always makes talk and that is displeasing in an embassy. Do you know Louradour?"

Welden shook his head.

Le Hillel stood up, balanced himself on his heels, then, with that tread which athletes share with panthers, he joined the two men who were pacing up and down and spoke to one of them.

With a motion of apology to the other, the former turned with Le Hillel to where Welden was seated.

As they approached, Welden arose.

"Baron Louradour," said Le Hillel, "this is my friend and brother-in-arms M. Welden of New York. M. Welden has had an argument over—By the way," he interrupted himself to ask. "What did you say it was about?"

Welden, raising his hat in response to the baron's salutation, answered. "A door."

"A door!" Le Hillel repeated. "That is a very dangerous topic."

"Monsieur," said the baron, employing as he spoke an inflection which musically rose and fell, "we have here in France an adage with which doubtless you are familiar. It is that a door should be open or closed. Perhaps this one was neither—"

With that, in a gesture of complete appreciation, the baron extended both hands. Though presumably fifty, he had the pink skin of a child, a smile of infinite indulgence, and a large, loose tie.

"But permit me," he resumed. "With whom did this argument occur?"

"With Malakoff."

"And permit me, is he to send his seconds?"

"No, I am to send mine."

"That is to say," interrupted Le Hillel, "You and me, Baron, if you will do my friend that honour."

"But how then! It is your friend who honours me. Permit me once more. Your adversary has the choice of arms; and you, monsieur, have you any preference?"

"Thanks," Welden answered, "anything but swords."

Louradour smiled, displaying as he did so teeth small, even, white as white paper. It was obvious to him that that door had opened or closed on something extremely definite.

"I see," he replied. "No child's play." Turning to Le Hillel he added: "M. de Malakoff resides I suppose in his avenue? Good. It would be discourteous to keep his friends waiting." Turning back to Welden he continued: "You will remain here? Good. In an hour at the latest. Meanwhile allow me to express all my pleasure at meeting an American who views matters as we do."

Laughing and nodding, the two men passed on.

Presently Welden got the club chasseur and sent him with a five franc piece to buy a little cardboard box which cost two sous.

"Keep the change," he said when the servant reappeared.

Welden was lunching then. The meal concluded, he took out his watch from which hung the sapphire with its old French device: Aultre n'auray—None but you.

The moderate irony of it mocked him. He detached it, put it in the box and going to the reading-room, wrapped, sealed and directed it to Miss Barhyte, in the care of her bankers, rue Scribe. Then, again requisitioning the chasseur, he sent him with another white piece to deliver it.

"Finis!" he muttered with set teeth and for a while contemplated the epitaph.

"Pardon. There are gentlemen who demand monsieur."

Welden looked up. He had been far away, on the longest journey that a mortal can take, into the depths of the irreparable. It was the colossal lackey that had addressed him. Rising, he followed the man into the hall where Le Hillel and Louradour waited.

"To-morrow at eight," the former announced. "Baron Louradour has obligingly arranged to have the meeting take place at the residence of M. de Ponthieu, his father-in-law."

"You are really too good," said Welden.

The baron bowed. "It is nothing, nothing at all. M. de Ponthieu is with my family at the waters. And let us see. Yes. It is foils."

He smiled, patted his tie and added: "You will excuse me, my dear sir, will you not? Till to-morrow."

"Deuced nice of him too," said Le Hillel when he had gone. "We might have had to go to Neuilly. His father-in-law's place is five minutes from your hotel. I will stop by for you in the morning. And now, what is the programme?"

Welden lit a cigarette. "Later, if you

like, I will have a bout with you. Then we might dine somewhere and I will go to bed early."

Approvingly Le Hillel nodded. Welden was a man after his own heart, a man sure of himself, one who had no intention of writing letters, of making a will or even a night of it, a virtuoso who knew that the wrist of a swordsman is as sensitive as that of a violinist.

VIII

THE DUEL

The morning broke darkly. When Welden reached the street the sky was heaped with clouds sulphurous and evil. To the thin thunder of metal shutters a lout, across the way, was opening a shop. Beyond, two Percherons, harnessed to a high white cart, snorted their ennui. At the curb, in a motor, was Le Hillel. With him was a little man in a tall hat, who held a bag on his knees.

"Hello!" Le Hillel threw out. "Hop in. Be careful." As he spoke he indicated a long green bundle that lay at his feet. "Avenue Gabriel," he called at the chauffeur.

"Do you remember Sarcey?"—he presently resumed as the motor flew up the street. "On a morning a bit worse than this he had an affair which he insisted on conducting under an umbrella. 'I may be winged,' the old idiot declared, 'but I refuse to catch cold.' How did you sleep? This is Dr. Meyer."

The machine now had turned into the rue de Rivoli. Scudding on, it crossed the fountained Place and shortly stopped in the briefest and most seigneurial of Parisian avenues.

Before them, a great double doorway opened slowly, with respect. Above it was a stone arch in which a blazon had been cut. On either side was a vast, white wall. Within was a vista of trees, large urns, marble benches. Beyond was a tennis court, farther away a house. In the damp, fresh air, a scent of roses and acacias clung. Over all was a brooding quiet, the splendid disdain of nature for the imbecile activity of man.

Simultaneously with the motor, a crimson touring car flew up. From it descended

Malakoff, Aquaviva, Saraguine and a man also in a high hat, also with a bag who, as the others saluted, exchanged with Dr. Meyer a professional smile.

Without speaking all passed in and slowly, respectfully, the great doors closed. On each side a servant in brown was stationed. A step beyond stood Louradour.

He raised his hat. "Gentlemen, I salute you." As the others raised their hats, he added: "It may rain. If preferred, we can get under cover."

Saraguine, withdrawing a glove, stretched his hand horizontally and looked at the sky.

"A little mist," he announced. "It is nothing."

"Good," Louradour rejoined. "There is then nothing to detain us and no better place than the court over there. You have the foils, Le Hillel?"

For answer the green bundle was displayed.

At once, with the French observance of what is correct or, more exactly, of what is so considered, gravely, dumbly, in two detachments, the eight men proceeded to the tennis court where four of them, gathering together, consulted.

Welden took off his coat and waistcoat and tossed them on a bench. He undid his collar, opened his shirt, rolled up a sleeve and was rolling the other when he paused, arrested by a remark overheard.

"I say, Le Hillel," he called. "What is all that about Aquaviva's holding a stick within reach of our foils? To prevent an accident, is it? Well then, be good enough to say that I will submit to nothing of the kind. I am not here to learn how to fence. It was for a thing of this sort that I did learn."

Welden spoke in English which Aquaviva did not understand and which Saraguine who was talking to Louradour did not hear.

Malakoff heard.

The remark, perfectly audible to him, equally intelligible, carried a significance of its own. He knew that Welden could ride, he took it for granted that he could shoot, that he could handle a sword was, he had thought, within the range of possibilities, but that he could fence had never occurred to him. It was for that reason he had chosen foils. A poke in the ribs and easily, in no time, he had fancied he would be done with him. These ideas aiding and fortified moreover by two good seconds, he had come to this meeting, as he had gone to others, without the shadow of a preoccupation, with the view merely to the transaction of an entirely formal and tiresome affair.

Now, however, at the remark and at the sight of the man bare-necked, bare-armed, supple and vigorous, looking very much alive and equally deadly, the ideas he had had evaporated, his rank fell from him like a cloak, his titles like bits of armour, and in that nakedness, he shivered. Before him surged the abrupt apparition of death.

For one moment, that apparition, the instruments, bands, compresses, antiseptics—enough for an ambulance—which Dr. Meyer and his colleague were taking from their bags, grotesquely but poignantly maintained.

Then at once, the cultivated sentiment of form came, asserted itself, rescued him. With that air which he could assume, that appearance of being surrounded by lackeys ready, at a gesture, to shut the door in anyone's face, he took off his coat, undid his collar, rolled up his sleeves. That done, he looked again at Welden who was looking at him.

"I will see what he knows," Welden was thinking. "Then, in two minutes, Bonjour!"

Concerning himself he had that entire absence of apprehension which comes to some men from confidence, to others from indifference. Both left him as much at ease as though he were about to play polo.

Aquaviva, meanwhile, who had unwillingly yielded to the objection which Le Hillel transmitted, but who had tossed with him for the choice of arms and place, approached now with the foils which he offered, first to Malakoff, whom he stationed fronting the arch of the entrance, and then to Welden who, in facing Malakoff, faced also the house. Yet, as there was no sun, the advantage to either was negligible.

"Are you ready?" Saraguine asked.

Welden felt the point of his steel. It was sharp as a needle. He advanced toward Malakoff and both fell into position.

"On guard!" the prince called. "Go!"

The foils, united for an instant at the ends by Le Hillel, now were seeking each other, crossing, clashing, functioning with light movements of the wrist.

Welden, taller than Malakoff, perfectly

trained, perfectly tranquil, maintained the athlete's easy poise and, while his wrist moved, looked pitilessly at his adversary. As yet however he attempted nothing decisive. His parries, effected always in the smallest possible circle, were as clean, rapid and precise as though, with a buttoned foil before him, he were on the boards, in an ordinary bout. But in parrying merely, he forced Malakoff to show his hand, to tell what he knew, to expose the varieties of his play.

These were of the school, classic but not brilliant, and Malakoff, at the sight of those circles, at the sight of that steel which, when not describing them, advanced and returned in a line almost geometrically straight, saw that he had to deal not only with a swordsman but with a swordsman of the very first class. On the part of an American he had counted on nothing of the kind. At the evidence of it his sense of nudity increased.

He felt not only wholly naked but horribly insecure. The episode which he had regarded as an entirely formal and tiresome affair had rapidly assumed the proportions of an assassination.

"Halt!" cried Saraguine.

Malakoff was livid. Visibly he perspired. audibly he panted and on his forearm was a thin red line.

"You are touched," the prince added.

The wound was examined. It was but a scratch and so slight that it did not require even to be staunched.

Welden, in an undertone, said with a smile to Le Hillel: "I know him now. In a moment I will pin a carnation in his shirt."

Thoughtlessly while speaking, he had rested the point of the foil on the ground. Dr. Meyer approached and tenderly with a little sponge disinfected it.

"On guard!" Saraguine called and, as

the two men fell into position again, again he called: "Go."

The foils met as before. Malakoff, to hide the nakedness of his debility, masked himself behind the hilt, and parried only until after a counter-disengage from quatre to tierce, not finding Welden's blade, he lunged. But the foil, manœuvred by another and surer hand than his, deflected. An unawaited riposte touched him on the breast and, as he backed from the prick, a return sudden and violent ran him through the throat.

Before him, the double doors, the blazoned arch, the high white wall, soared in the air. They came to him, fell on him, bore him down. From under him the earth slid gently. The savour of something acrid filled his mouth. Above him were peering faces and fluttering hands. These blankly fainted. In that early morning it was night.

Welden looked at the prostrate form and

nodded at it. From the street beyond there floated a cry, trailing and musical, the call of an itinerant offering to repair broken porcelain. Otherwise in the silence of the fragrant garden there was all of nature's unconcern for the idiot agitations of man.

Save Welden, every one, Dr. Meyer included, had got about Malakoff. Welden, who could see of him now but the veneered sole of a shoe, stuck his foil under his arm and went, buttoning his shirt on the way, to the bench where he had tossed his coat. The tableau behind him differed not at all from one that he had seen on the train. It was an old acquaintance and he nodded once more.

At the bench he put the foil down and, getting a cigarette from his coat, lighted it.

Springingly Le Hillel approached. He had with him the long green bag in which now was the other foil.

"You are wounded!" he exclaimed.

Welden, expelling a puff of smoke into the damp, sweet air, stared at him.

"I never was better in my life."

"But look at yourself."

Welden did look. Beneath his left arm his shirt was red. He laughed.

"That comes from the foil, from my foil. Here, take it and put it with the other one."

In a moment he had his coat on, his collar and neckcloth readjusted.

"Where is my stick?" he asked.

"Your stick? In the motor probably. Shall we go?"

But now Louradour, detaching himself from the others, advanced. He looked at Welden.

"Monsieur, I may compliment you and reassure you also. M. de Mal—"

"Is he alive?" Welden, strangling an oath, threw out.

Louradour, pressing together a thumb and forefinger, exhibited them.

"By that much! The carotid artery just escaped. Allons! So much the better. In no time, in three weeks, he will be on his feet."

Silently Welden cursed. But Louradour's thumb and forefinger had separated, a hand was extended which Welden shook, and then, with Le Hillel, he passed on through the slowly opening doors to the purring car without.

"There's your stick," said Le Hillel as they reached it.

Welden looked at the sky. "It's raining," he announced.

"What do you care?" said Le Hillel as both got into the machine and he called: "Rue de la Paix."

"Personally, not a rap," Welden answered. "But I race to-day at Chantilly. If it keeps on it may interfere with the others."

Le Hillel considered him admiringly.

"Gourmand!" he cried. "This morning you nearly killed a man, this afternoon you will nearly kill a horse. That's fine, very fine."

Welden shrugged his shoulders. To change the subject he asked: "What became of the little chap?"

"Meyer! Good Lord! I forgot the poor devil. After I drop you, I'll go back for him. By the way, his fee is fifty francs. Malakoff's man will come higher. Did you notice that he was decorated? That means a hundred."

"Yes, confound it; and he'll earn it. I thought I had spared him that. If I had known in time I believe I would have finished his client as he lay there."

Le Hillel laughed. "No, you wouldn't, and, anyway, we would not have let you. Besides, why be so bloodthirsty? You fought like a god, now you will ride like a demon. I would give a red pippin to see you. By George! I would give two of them, only—"

"Only what?"

With a little modest air Le Hillel pulled at his cuff.

"A lady is to lunch with me."

"Here's the fifty," said Welden, who meanwhile had got the money out.

Le Hillel pocketed it. "Shall I see you to-morrow?"

There are morrows that never dawn. What is more notable, there are men who know they will not. But Welden nodded and shortly, when the car stopped again at his hotel, he thanked Le Hillel, who whirled away.

IX

THE RACE

After one blue brief moment, the forenoon died, suffocated with clouds. The agony of the day melted into rain. The drops, thin and hurried, fell in sheets, draping the trees with humid fringes, pouring their melancholy on Chantilly's sandy soil and, as Welden, in breeches and boots, drove up from the station, they added a dreariness of their own to the dreariness that was his.

To greet him came the pungent odour of stables, the clean smell of wet turf. He had too a glimpse of dripping ostlers, the vista of a vacant lawn, of a miniature tribune and of a course, punctuated by fences that circled the grounds. But, in lieu of the careless women, the careful men, the line of drags, carriages and cars that ordinarily would have been there, there was but gloom. Instead of clattering hoofs, ripples of laughter and mounting cries, there was silence and the falling rain.

At the perron of a gaunt, grey house, ugly and comfortable, the cab stopped. As Welden got out, there flew up a covered motor from which Cantire and another man alighted.

Cantire, like Welden, was in riding dress.

"Hello!" he cried. "Rather rotten, isn't it?" Indicating his companion he added: "You know Lord Ferrers?"

"Met you at Melton," said the latter, advancing toward Welden, his hand outstretched.

He was tall, slim, very fair. He wore a monocle and spoke with a slight stutter.

Welden, recalling some incident, mentioned it and both laughed. Meanwhile the door opened. All three passed into a hall where immediately de Dol appeared.

"But!" the Frenchman, in French, exclaimed. "What good wind brings you! You received my dispatch?" he continued, looking as he spoke from Welden's boots to Cantire's breeches. "The race is postponed. Kara Saraguine and Aquaviva telegraphed yesterday asking me to put it off. Thinking you would agree I wired you both at Deauville."

"To the Villa Portugaise?" said Cantire. "It's closed. The duchess chucked the whole thing. Why, I haven't an idea. Have you?" he asked, turning to Welden.

"Not the faintest."

"Of course not. How should you? I remember now, you went up to Paris the day before. There must have been the deuce of a row. Malakoff took the first train yesterday. Aquaviva and Saraguine went with him, I believe, but the rest of us straggled on at noon."

"You were saying?" intervened de Dol,

whom the conversation, carried on in English, had left in the dark. "But, I pray you, come this way."

Moving aside he motioned them into a room hung with etchings and photographs of sporting scenes and horses. There was a table there, a divan, several straight-backed chairs and the frame of a horse, wooden and articulated.

"You were saying?" he repeated.

Cantire, in French, summarised the matter for him.

De Dol raised his hands. "But! It is unbelievable! There, one would say, was a household veritably united. I did not grasp why these gentlemen wired, yet it could not have been because of what you tell me, nor could they have foreseen the rain. Have you seen them since?"

Cantire shook his head. He had straddled the wooden horse. Lord Ferrers was on the divan, Welden on a chair.

De Dol turned. "Have you, Monsieur Welden?"

Welden nodded.

"And they said nothing about the race?"

"Nothing."

"It is unbelievable!"

"They could not very well," Welden resumed. "I was having a word with Malakoff and they were acting for him."

"The deuce!" cried Cantire, sliding from the horse. "A duel! And you not even pinked!"

He laughed. The idea of it pleased him. His grandfather was a duke, a real one, a stately old man with a head empty but noble. Whether on that account or for other reasons is immaterial, but he had always thought Malakoff a mucker. It was not on his account he had gone to Deauville. It was for Sally.

"But!" exclaimed de Dol, his mouth agape. A little panorama was unfolding before him—Welden and Sally surprised in amorous conversation by Sally's husband. "And Malakoff?"

"He will be all right shortly."

As Welden spoke, de Dol bowed slowly to an advancing understanding of it all. Malakoff's seconds, aware of the conversation and foreseeing that for at least one of the principals the duel would be damaging had, for that reason, asked that the race be postponed.

"All the same," he affably rejoined, "It was most amiable of you to come. When it rains one's friends are doubly welcome."

Welden turned to Cantire. "Are you afraid of a wetting?"

"Good Lord, no, why?"

"Our horses are here, if we don't race now we won't race at all. I will back myself against you. I will back myself against Ferrers too, if he will. M. de Dol can give him a mount."

"Done," said Cantire. "Let's make it a fiver."

Lord Ferrers dropped his monocle. "Not for me, thanks, but I'll hold the stakes."

"You were saying?" asked de Dol, who had caught his name but who otherwise was again in the dark and that too despite the fact that a flash of intense vividness lit the room, one which a great crash followed instantly.

"It will be clearing shortly," said Ferrers, rising from the divan and peering through a window. "I say," he called, "I believe it is."

De Dol meanwhile, to whom Welden had translated the gist of it and who thought him and Cantire crazy, was giving the necessary orders.

Welden got from his chair and joined the others at the window. The rain had ceased. In the west was the glow of renaissant day. From a tree near by water was falling in little drops, soft and multiple. Overhead in the still neutral sky, long ribbons of ravens formed themselves into black wreaths and sombre garlands. Welden, to whom the visible existed, considered the signs which it is perhaps their mysterious duty to convey.

But now a footman appeared with raincoats and a lad from the stables, touching his forehead, just showed his nose.

"The horses are here," said de Dol. "Will you have a coat, monsieur?" he asked of Ferrers.

The latter displayed an umbrella that was thin as a walking-stick.

"Thanks, no. This will do me."

De Dol however had himself helped into a great-coat, took a fat umbrella besides, swung a field glass about him and, accompanied by the others, went out to the perron before which stablemen swarmed and the hunters stood.

The course began the throw of a stone beyond. While Welden and Cantire examined the girths, verified the stirrups, looked to the bits and bridles, Ferrers and de Dol passed on. Before they reached the stand, Cantire and Welden were in the saddle.

"I say, Ferrers," Cantire called. "You give the signal, will you?"

"Very good," the Englishman answered. "Now, then, steady."

He pulled a rope. Before the flag could fall, Welden's horse, over zealously, had bolted.

Welden got him in hand, turned him, brought him back, flattering him with pats on the shoulder.

"Vive l'Angleterre!" shouted de Dol. "Vive l'Amérique!"

"And vive la France!" Welden and Cantire, almost in unison, responded.

De Dol laughed with satisfaction. He still thought them mad and said as much to Ferrers.

The latter inserted his monocle. "The going does not seem so bad and the obstacles are not tremendous."

He spoke in French, very correctly, but with so marked a British accent, that he might as well have replied in English. De Dol thought he was agreeing with him and laughed again.

"Steady!" Ferrers called and for the second time pulled the flag-rope.

This time they were off, taking the sticks as though there were nothing there, clearing them, in spite of the rain, easily, without effort.

De Dol followed them through his glass, Ferrers through his monocle.

Beyond, the country stretched, inert and dolent. In the west the glow had heightened. Overhead, the darker sky was veined with flashes thin and sudden. The ravens, assembled now in screaming flight, shot southward.

Quickly but quietly Ferrers swore. Cantire was down.

"I awaited it!" cried de Dol. But at once he could see that the boy was up and in a moment that he was on and off again.

Welden now was leading. Blazes tore on. The splendid brute, with his impudent eye and shoulders like the top of a haystack, had covered the course; he was nearing the stand when, just as he was about to take the final fence, there came a flash vivider than any, a bolt so neighbourly and dazzling that it looked raspberry, and whether it unnerved the horse or the man or both, in any event Welden bent heavily forward and together, turning a somersault, they tumbled.

For a second, without sense of injury or sensation of pain, Welden lingered. Then his two selves, the conscious and the subconscious, scattered, evaporated, ceased to know. Again on that day it was night.

"God of gods!" cried de Dol. "I said they were mad!"

Ferrers, extracting his monocle, vaulted to the ground, where, as from the ground itself, stablemen came swarming, while, over all, indifferently, from disrupted clouds, the sun looked out.

X

THE DEVIL

A surgeon obtained, it was found that Welden had a fracture of the ankle, a fracture of the collarbone and a fracture of the skull.

The surgeon, Dr. Binet-Valmer, thought the first fracture trite; the second, stupid. Had there been but these he would have abandoned Welden to other hands. But the third fracture had the high merit of interesting this man whose country-seat was near by and who was one of the lights of French science.

"He won't die to-day," he absently announced.

As for the rest, a phrase which, for the benefit of the ignoramuses about him, he employed to designate the cerebral cortex—

that marvellous pulp behind the forehead through which the objective changes of the external world are, by some undiscovered witchery, converted into the subjective changes of consciousness—concerning that magical mystery and the fate of it, he had an opinion which he kept to himself.

The examination concluded, he addressed the Comte de Dol precisely as though the poor man were a lackey. He did not regard him as such, he considered him an insect. The Earl of Ferrers and the Honourable Mull Cantire were to him two insects more. Welden was not an insect or even an entity, he was a Case.

"An ambulance," he ordered.

But de Dol shook his head. The fractures had occurred on his grounds, to a guest of his bidding, and, with that decent sentiment of what decency is which the Arabs discovered, he had Welden tended in his house.

Through the enigmatic laws of life any kindness is repaid in pain. De Dol never actively regretted the charity, though certainly had he wished he might have, for when the report of it all had gone abroad, a woman, very modishly attired, emerged from a cab at the perron and demanded to be taken instantly to where Welden was.

Obviously the lady appertained to that class which the French describe as the top of the basket. But de Dol's footman knew his business.

"Perfectly, madame," he replied. "Will madame give herself the trouble to pass this way?"

Whereupon he showed her into the room hung with pictures of sporting scenes and horses.

From the threshold he added: "Will madame say whom I am to announce?"

"The Duchess of Malakoff."

The man bowed and vanished. Presently he returned, ushering de Dol.

"But! But!" exclaimed the latter, shuffling in, affecting to seem pleased yet succeeding so meagrely that, to cover his embarrassment, he raised and bent over the gloved hand which Sally put out, wondering all the time what the devil he could do with her.

Sally told him. In her sweetest voice she said: "Take me to him, please."

De Dol, sparring for wind, protested, "Duchess, he is unconscious."

Sally motioned at the door. "I know. I have brought a trained nurse. We will take care of him together."

De Dol, sparring still, again protested. "Duchess, I pray you, consider your position."

Sally lifted her little chin. "He considered that. He fought for me. What I consider is his condition."

But now de Dol had got his wind. For a moment, thoughtfully, with kind, honest eyes he looked in hers. Then he went at her.

"Duchess, believe me, never intentionally have I refused a lady anything. It is regrettable to be obliged to refuse you. But your husband is my friend. He has been gravely injured by this gentleman. If you will not consider your position, I pray you consider mine. Can you not see that it would be intolerable were I to do as you ask?"

Sally, floored but not defeated, leaned from the chair in which she sat, flung her arms on the table beside her, sank her head there, and audibly began to cry.

Men who face death unflinchingly, quail at a woman's tears. What is worse women know it. Sally used hers much as though they constituted a stick and de Dol, bruised and belaboured, cursed himself that he had not, at the start, invented some ukase of the surgeon to which she must unquestionably bow. Yet, after all, he reflected, the surgeon certainly would pronunciamento, and that edict he could hold in reserve should other tactics which then occurred to him, fail.

Timorously he approached and gingerly, with one finger, touched her.

At the attention, Sally's slight frame shook.

"Duchess, calm yourself. Calm yourself, I pray you. If you will but calm yourself, there is a little idea that has come to me which may result in what you wish. Will you let me tell you? Will you?"

But Sally felt now too securely intrenched to yield to what, perhaps, were mere treacherous cajolements. She continued to weep or appeared to, yet, apparently also in a fashion more broken, leaving invitingly between the sobs increasing intervals during which he could speak and which, if what he said were not agreeable, she, with renewed activity, could curtail.

Warily but boldly he utilised one such pause.

"Duchess, let us see. Be reasonable enough to listen. From the moment when this gentleman was carried from that divan to where he now is, I have not seen him, no one has, save the surgeon, the aids and imfirmières, nor, until he is conscious do I believe that the surgeon will permit anyone to see him, no one, not even the man's own mother were she here. If, therefore, I can not do as you would wish me, it is not merely for your sake and my sake, it is for his. But when he is better, when such danger as there is has been passed, enfin! in a little while, I, I who speak to you, will not be here. Then who comes and who goes, I do not know. I do not inquire. It is my intendant who has charge of such things. Do you appreciate, Duchess? My intendant has not the honour of your acquaintance; he is not a friend of the duke. Let us suppose then that of a morning a lady arrives and says: 'I have come to sit with this gentleman. I am his sister, his promised, his chère amie, his whatever you like.' My intendant says: 'But what then? But certainly! And patatis, patatas.' And behold the lady who then creates the rain and the fine weather. Does that say nothing to you, Duchess? Does it not seem well machined? Later, I return. My intendant says: 'The sister, the promised, the chère amie, the whatever you like of the sick gentleman has been here.' And I say: 'That does not regard me. I wash my hands.' "

Long since the intervals between the sobs had so elongated that the sobs themselves had ceased. Sally's bowed head was lifted. For a lady who had wept so profusely her eyes were phenomenally bright.

"Yes," de Dol resumed. "That is what I say to him. I say: 'I wash my hands.' "

"You promise I may come?"

"But no, Duchess. But no. I do not promise. It is not for me to promise anything. I have nothing to promise about. I play that I am dead. It is when I am gone for the lady of whom I speak to do as she may wish. Of my departure she can inform herself. It is easy as Good-day."

Sally stood up. She held out her hand and looking at him through her oblique, half-closed and entirely tearless eyes said sweetly: "You're a dear."

De Dol took the hand. Bending over it he sighed, deeply, with relief.

"A cup of tea, Duchess? A glass of wine?"

Sally, shaking her head at the offer, sighed too.

"Forgive me, if I have seemed to insist."

"Duchess, I pray of you, it is for me to ask your pardon."

Sally moved on. A moment or two later when de Dol after accompanying her to the cab, saw to it that she really got in, really drove off, he sighed afresh and muttered:

"Let the devil catch me again—if he can!"

XI

AT THE SIGN OF THE SWAN

To those about Welden it was as though he were dead, drowned rather, sunk into depths where nothing can follow, into those deepest depths where life is without form, without colour, without sensation of any kind. But presently either because of their efforts, or because of influences not higher but the reverse, because he had not suffered enough, death, loosening its hold, retreated; life beckoned, calling him from where he swooned, and imperceptibly, little by little, after infinite hesitations, relapses, retrievals, drifting upward from those depths, he awoke.

Where he was he did not know. What had happened, he could not tell. He did not try. He did not care. He had but one wish. to sink back again and sleep. But again life caught and called him, wrapped him, rocked him, accustoming him gradually to its subtleties, reconciling him to it and to himself.

It was at this juncture that Sally declared herself a miserable woman. In the opinion of the world she deserved to be. The opinion of the world is very valuable. The fried mixture of falsities on which it daily breakfasts would induce apoplexy in any entity less robust. In its distinguished opinion Sally's husband had fought because of her with a man who was engaged to one of her intimate friends and whom she had inveigled from her.

Even in the way we live now such behaviour is not regarded as nice. Yet any woman might have done as much, and more and worse, and been smiled at, provided only she and her husband continued, outwardly at least, on good terms. But on the open scandal of scandalous ruptures the world, which if credulous is also discreet, turns always its ponderous back.

It turned it on Sally. Though young, rich, good-looking and a duchess, the attitude of the world justified her declaration and the knowledge that it did gave Sally's mother an attack of indignation morbus of which the nausea lasted through twelve pages of pen and ink.

For final hiccough there was this: "You have disgraced me. No decent person will ever receive you unless you return to your husband at once."

Mrs. Kandy was then at Aix. The paroxysm dispatched, she felt better. Sally was then at Chantilly. The eructation received, she felt no worse. Lodged at the time at the Sign of the Swan, she had with her Harris and Perkins. She had also her thoughts. These, if not many, were pleasant.

Among them was the fact that Mr. Ridgeway, who had conducted the delicate arrangements of her marriage, was occupied with the still more delicate details of her divorce. Before going to Deauville she had consulted him. On her return she had consulted him again. She had done better. She had retained him. He had assured her that she could be free.

He was as good as his word. Evidence of the conversation that had occurred on the night of July the Fourth sufficed. But with that regard for the honour of families and the repute of women which Anglo-Saxon tribunals lack, during the punctilious and brief debates, the court, in withholding any mention of the co-respondent's name, obscured the lady from the public.

That is but gentlemanly. None the less the obscurity was one in which the world saw many things, the obviousness of the fact, for instance, that Sally had but stolen a march on Malakoff who, gallantly, had desisted from counter charges.

Sally did not attempt to undeceive the world which would not have believed her had she tried. She did not try, however. It would not have suited her book to do so. She had another and a more agreeable task.

De Dol meanwhile had gone, summer was going and Welden, issuing from the great iced bath of death, remounted to life's surface. Among other lesions, there had been an injury to the occipital cortex which resulted in impairment of vision. For a time he could not distinguish objects. When he succeeded, the first thing he saw was Sally.

He resented her presence. He regarded it as an intrusion. Moreover, the reason of it was beyond him. Then from being a phenomenon objectionable and occult, it became a phase of his condition, one that primarily he accepted from sheer inability to avoid and finally from the familiarising effects of habit. It is related that men who entered the Bastille as though it were their grave, had to be afterward ejected by force. They had got used to it and what human beings get used to they get to like. That was the case with Welden. In accounting for Sally's visits he forgot her former ambuscades and attributed present attentions to the effort he had made to rid the world of Malakoff. Anyway, what did it matter? Sally made his prison endurable. She was blithe as a humming bird. On the end of her fingers was every kind of pretty gesture. They were alert too, very divinatory. They knew what he wanted as soon as he did. They omitted to be in the way. They grew discreet. Recognising their usefulness, they ceased to flutter. They took themselves away, and away remained, until their return was solicited.

When that occurred Sally, even to the world, could no longer affect to be a miserable woman. She radiated smiles, she exhaled good humour. Dr. Binet-Valmer, who thoroughly approved of the presence of young gentlewomen in the bedrooms of convalescents, encouraged her visits. He knew she was only an insect but he realised that she was a pretty one. Without any faith in drugs whatever, with hardly any faith in anything, he yet had confidence in the tonic of prettiness, smiles and good humour. The infirmières had too. The intendant had also. To them, to the trainers and stablemen, Sally was the right sort. There was no end to her presents and pourboires.

Such were her occupations. In addition she had another. She, too, was having a run.

The post was a good bit off. Between her and it were wide ditches and tall fences. At any moment a tremendous crumpler might occur. But behind her were other obstacles, bigger and wider still, timber which she thought she could not take and which she had cleared without effort. Moreover, now she was nearing the home stretch. Provided she kept her seat, kept, too, a hand light, yet steady, luck might land her a winner, and at it she went, full tilt, straight ahead, at a pace so clinking that it accounted perhaps for her smiles and good humour.

It was not because of these radiations, but because of others, because it was his destiny to do so, that Welden no longer resented her presence. He accepted it, but with that curious lassitude which Death, in revenge it may be, puts on those for whom it has come and not got.

Apathetic and indifferent, he rejected the news of the day, ignored the cataclysms in Wall street, refused to see Cantire, Le Hillel, Lord Ferrers and the string of visitors that called. But apart from the apathy, apart, too, from the debility incident to his condition, health had returned. Long since his collar-bone had been mended and his ankle, treated after the setting to massage instead of plaster, was now but a little stiff.

Presently, Sally prompting, these things he recognised and recognising also that further delay would constitute a breach of hospitality, he wrote de Dol his thanks, asked him as an additional obligation to accept his hunter and, after distributing princely presents to the service, had himself transported to the Sign of the Swan.

"What you need," Sally said to him that evening, "is a good, long sea trip. Dr. Binet-Valmer told me so. Don't you agree with him?"

They were at table in her sitting room at the Hôtel du Cygne where, served by Harris, they had dined. The cloth had not yet been removed but Harris had gone. Sally wore a gown in the corsage of which ochre and lilac were blended. Welden's evening coat fell about him loosely. He was smoking.

"Don't you?" Sally repeated.

"Yes," he answered. "But hardly alone and for the moment I know no one whom I could ask to go with me."

Sally smiled, displaying her teeth, bits of mother of pearl, glistening and pointed.

"You could ask me."

At this prelude to the *Invitation à la valse,* Welden shrugged his shoulders. Men generally thought Sally very fetching. Her mauve eyes, oblique and half-closed, might have tempted saints, demons even, with whom she was perhaps akin. But she failed to represent to Welden that which makes some men constant not necessarily to one particular woman but to one particular feminine type.

"Nonsense," he told her.

"It is not nonsense at all," Sally, shaking her head and cocking an eye at him, retorted. "Why do you say so?"

Welden considered the prelude closer.

After all there was a certain worldly justice in it. Maud having taken up with Malakoff, it was perhaps nonsense for him to balk at taking up with Malakoff's wife. Jointly and severally they could combine for the payment of old scores. At the same time, between public and private payment, there was a margin.

"Why do you?" Sally repeated.

Welden lighted a fresh cigar. "I should be compromising you irretrievably."

Sally sighed. "You have already," she promptly answered.

From over the cigar Welden looked at her. About her throat was a string of pearls. One hand that lay invitingly on the table was covered with gems. But from it the pretty gestures had gone, from her face the smiles had passed. She looked virginal and sad, a sort of melancholy angel, only much better dressed than angels usually are. Through her half-closed eyes she watched him. There had been her visits to de Dol's, he was thinking, but that was her affair.

"In what way?" he asked.

"Well, you see, don't you know, everybody says the duel was on my account."

That also Welden considered. It seemed logical enough. On a certain night Sally had abandoned her husband. Within thirty-six hours he and that husband had fought. Their reasons for fighting no one, save themselves, Sally and Maud could possibly know. Clearly it was logical enough and yet insufficient to warrant the full measure of the *Invitation.*

"Mrs. Cawtree wrote to me," Sally resumed, "and Fanny Solférino and my mother. My mother was very violent. My mother said that I had disgraced her. She declared that no decent person would ever receive me, unless—"

Sally paused. Like the lady whom she

was quoting, she sometimes embroidered the truth.

"Unless—" she presently continued, and paused again.

But, as Welden manifested no interest in the proviso, she prodded him.

"I don't like to tell you."

Then, seeing that Welden had no intention of urging her, she took her courage in her jewelled hand.

"Unless you marry me."

Welden had been occupied with the logic of her previous statement, but the unobtrusive modesty of this announcement surprised him from it.

He removed his cigar. "I had an idea that you were married already."

Into the melancholy of Sally's face there crept a smile. "I was," she answered. "I am no longer."

"Ah," said Welden. "Is Malakoff dead?"

But now the smile in Sally's face deepened. It burrowed under the melancholy and tossed it aside. She laughed.

"No, divorced. It was so amusing too. Shall I tell you about it? Shall I? Well, after I put in the petition, the judge had us both see him in private. Ridgeway told me he would. It appears that in divorce cases here the judge takes a sort of fatherly attitude and tries to get the parties to make up and, if you will believe me, he did try. He was so nice about it, too, that you would have thought he was my aunt and Malakoff was so rude you would have thought he was my mother. But the judge was really very nice. And so civil! Dear me, his mouth was just full of madame la duchesse and monsieur de duc. Later on, in the decree, he fined his monsieur le duc a hundred francs. Don't you think it was amusing?"

Welden shrugged his shoulders. After the duel it had been grievous to him that he had not killed the man. Now he did not care. During the race he had tried to kill himself. There too he had failed. But that also was a matter of indifference. Before either race or duel he had been obsessed by the vision of a pillowed head. It had gone. Though he had failed with Malakoff and failed with himself, he had thoroughly assassinated that.

"Don't you think it was amusing?" Sally repeated.

"You certainly have not been idle," Welden replied. "What were the grounds?"

Sally made a gesture. Though there are things that men do, there are women who do not mention them.

Welden nodded. "Who was the co?"

"Who?" cried Sally. "Have you forgotten already? Don't you remember the night of the Fourth of July?"

Welden nodded again and knocked the ashes from his cigar. "You are no longer, then, madame la duchesse."

Smilingly Sally stood up. She moved from the table, dropped him a curtsy and sweetly, yet simply, replied:

"I am Sally Kandy again, and yours if you will have me."

"Thank you," said Welden, quite as though he had been offered another cup of coffee. "Thank you. But did not this Ridgeway tell you about the Court of Cassation? Malakoff has six months in which to appeal. Of course he will do nothing of the kind. None the less, in the interim, any marriage of yours would be bigamous."

At that last word Sally flushed and sat down. It is possible that she had misconstrued its meaning.

"What a dreadful expression," she exclaimed. "I am sure I never should think of anything so horrid. But, in the interim, as you call it, what is there to prevent us from going to South Africa or, better still, to the East?"

At the door came a rap. Harris entered, busying himself with the cloth. Welden got up and limped to the window.

In the park without, leaves were falling, falling from branch to branch; falling slowly, as with regret; falling undecidedly with precaution. In their faint rustle was a sound such as the steps of fate may make when approaching furtively, a-tiptoe.

The hesitancy of it filtered into Welden's thoughts. Usually, he knew what he had to do and did it. But illness plays strange tricks and destiny plays others. After all, he told himself, eventually there would be someone else. Perhaps as well then Sally as another. At least she would serve to show to Maud how indifferent he was to her. Even otherwise, how should it matter? How should anything matter any more?

He turned. Harris had gone. Sally through her half-closed eyes, was watching him.

"Very good," he said. "We will go to the Orient since you wish it."

With a feline twist of the tongue Sally moistened her lips. She had the sensation of being lifted lightly in the air. It was the last fence. She had reached the post a winner.

Alone in his room that night Welden still heard the leaves. They fell slowly, solemnly, burying the past beneath their slender weight, raising between him and it a veil, tenuous and aerial. Higher it rose, higher still, ever higher until, sinking again, it enveloped memory in it.

A fortnight later Welden and Sally, attended by their servants, embarked from Southampton on a voyage that took them first to India, where they loitered, then to Hong Kong, where they were married and finally to White Peacocks.

There the journey ended. There, for one of them, eternity began.

PART III

AFTERWARD

I

PERSPECTIVES

"Well, William, how are you? Is Miss Barhyte at home?"

"Yes, sir, Miss Barhyte has just come in. I hope I see you very well, sir. It's a long time, sir—"

Taking Welden's hat and stick, the servant showed him into the library, which apparently, was unaltered. The cushions on the sofa were as colourful as before. Opposite, the piano stood, and from the walls powdered heads looked down. But, from the table, the Sicilians had gone. In place of Greek poetry there was now a book of

French verse. Otherwise the room was quite as it had been the year previous and, apart from a black band on the sleeve of his grey coat, Welden himself was unchanged. There was the same smile in his eyes, the same glint in his hair, the same appearance of suppleness and strength.

He had opened the book and was loitering in its languors when William reappeared.

"I am sorry, sir. I made a mistake. Miss Barhyte is not at home."

The mistake must have been anticipated. Welden manifested no surprise.

"Is the general in?" he asked, his eyes still on the book.

"No, sir. The general is not at home either."

But now Welden put the book aside and nodded.

"Give him my compliments and say that I will wait on him at nine to-night. How is he?"

"Pretty well, sir." The man moved out through the reception room to the marble of the hall, where he handed Welden his hat and stick. "That was a nasty accident he had last summer. He limps a little still. Yes, sir."

Opening the door, he held it open until Welden reached the street.

Welden sauntered on. Five days previous he had left Santa Barbara. It was but an hour or two before that he had reached New York. In his head he could still feel the motion of the cars. That would pass, he told himself, as all things do. It would pass, as would also pass a girl's disinclination to be at home.

He sauntered on, turned into Fifth avenue, and sauntered up. At once, a man whom he knew stopped him, buttonholed, questioned, platitudinised. From passing traps and motors, women bowed, two other men joined him and, at the curb, a withered creature tossed from a barrel-organ a strain of Italian love.

The men annoyed him. It wearied him to talk about what had happened. It wearied him as much to be told about stocks. Pretexting a pretext he hailed a hansom and sailed away.

Presently, at the Plaza, where he had put up, it was comforting to find that his luggage had arrived. After the philistinism of the West, it was agreeable to be lodged in an artistic inn. After the horrors of a transcontinental trip, it was a pleasure to dress at ease. After the convict fare of the Limited, food properly served was a relief. After a tragedy, a change of air is good for the nerves.

Welden, as he sat at table that evening, his recent mourning indicated in his shirt by two small black studs, considered momentarily these minor gifts of the minor gods. But he had work ahead of him and, at five minutes to nine, hailing a hansom, he sailed back to Madison avenue.

At a door there, as he rang, a melody of Beethoven's which was being played within, ceased abruptly. The door opened and William, after taking his hat and coat, showed him into the dining-room where, before a wide table, the general sat, looking, as perhaps a general should, very fierce.

"William," he ordered, "close the door behind you."

Then, rising, he turned at Welden.

"Had you left your address this afternoon, I would have warned you not to call here. Your conduct has been dastardly. Dastardly! God bless my soul, there is no other word for it."

He paused, removed his glasses and shook them.

"After an accident which I experienced and Maud had joined me at Frascati's, you picked a quarrel with Malakoff, induced the duchess to obtain a divorce and married the lady, married her, God bless my soul, when you were engaged to my daughter and to-day, your wife barely cold in her grave, you have the impudence to come here. Damn me, sir, if I had acted as you have I would have come expecting the cowhide."

As the tirade proceeded the general's voice mounted to the diapason of a roar. At its conclusion he stamped a foot.

"Yes, damn me, the cowhide."

Immediately, but without heat, Welden took it up.

"From no other man living would I endure for an instant that expression, nor yet the one which preceded it. But you are right, right, that is, from your point of view. It would be dastardly, and it would be the cowhide I should expect, if I had acted as you say I have, intentionally."

"Intentionally," the general shouted. "Intentionally—"

He would have run on but Welden cut in.

"When your daughter left Deauville I was on my way to Paris. She wrote me of your accident, telling me she was going to you at once, and asking me to join you both at Frascati's—"

"Damn me, sir, this is ancient history."

Welden nodded. "Yes, to you and to your daughter. But not to me. The letter which your daughter wrote at Deauville on the morning of the Fourth of July, I received less than a fortnight since at Santa Barbara."

"Even so what of it? They were not dumb at the Malakoff's, I suppose. They all knew of it. Anyone could have told you."

"General, not only no one told me that your daughter had gone, but I was led to believe that she was still there and did not wish to see me."

"Stuff and nonsense! Do you mean to say

that you are a born fool? How could anyone gammon you with such rubbish?"

There are explanations which explain nothing. Unhesitatingly Welden advanced one.

"For the very reason you have given. Because I was a fool. But however much of a fool I may have been I am not a knave. Your daughter will appreciate that."

General Barhyte reached forward and touched a bell.

"Never," he answered. "I shall not allow you to see her and even if I did, she would refuse to do so."

The servant entered.

"William, the door for this gentleman."

He turned his back, took up an evening paper and sat down. To him Welden had apparently ceased to exist.

But Welden was thoroughly alive. Preceded by William, he passed into the drawing room and on to the hall. There, after getting his hat and coat, instead of going out, he turned into the reception room and went through it to the library beyond.

At the piano, a sheet of music before her, was a girl who, as he entered, turned slowly and slowly arose.

Welden, his hat in his hand, his coat on his arm, looked at her. Unlike the room, she had altered. The allurement of her face, the caress which she had exhaled, the charm of manner which always she had conveyed, these emanations were absent. In place of allurement was blankness; in lieu of the caress was rigidity; instead of the charm, a chill. In her eyes and about her mouth was an expression of distant inquiry, an air of saying: Who are you and what do you want?

Welden, prepared for the situation, began methodically at its demolition.

"Maud, there has been that between us which I know you will come to believe justifies me in disregarding any instructions you may have given, your father's orders as well. When I returned the sapphire—"

Insecure in her intrenchments the girl let fire. "It was your right to do so. It was a right which I had given you and expressly stipulated that you should use. In returning it you said everything there was to be said. There can be nothing to add to it."

"When I returned the sapphire," Welden continued, "it was because I thought you wished it."

"You may or may not have been mistaken, but you cannot possibly have been as mistaken in me as I have been in you."

"When I returned the sapphire," Welden persisted, "it was because I believed I had seen you in Malakoff's arms."

For a second, with diligent disdain, the girl considered him. Then at once, after the fashion which royalty has devised to signify that a conversation is at an end, she moved back.

Welden had been prepared for that also.

"Do you recall our last night together?"

At the memory evoked, the girl coloured and the disdain mounting with the flush, increased, accentuated by the wantonness of the question.

"Forgive me for referring to it," Welden added. "But that night when I entered your room, the disposition of it was such that I saw at first but your head. The next night I saw you as before, with this difference however, Malakoff was with you—with you I say, for it was but recently I learned that that night you were at Frascati's and that your room was occupied by a Mme. Oppenheim, a person whom I did not know existed."

On the music stool behind her the girl sank down. The flush had gone from her face but the disdain remained.

"Do you know of her?" Welden asked.

Maud, without unbending, bent a little; "She reached the villa as I was leaving it."

"Then you are aware of the resemblance between you. Her hair is precisely the colour of yours. Now do me this favour; put yourself in my place. Had you seen me as I thought I saw you, would you not have acted as I did?"

The girl straightened herself. "No," she answered shortly.

"Do you mean that it would not have affected your relations with me?"

"I mean nothing of the kind."

"Without indiscretion, may I ask then what you do mean?"

"Because I happened to fancy that you were volage, I myself would not have become so."

"Forgive me, Maud, I do not quite follow you."

"Nor can I allow you, nor do I wish to.

Admitting your delusion, one by the way which must have been almost self-evident, the slightest effort on your part would have corrected it."

"Maud, believe me, I had no opportunity."

"I do believe you, your opportunity lay elsewhere."

"No," Welden protested, "it did not. Moreover, the opportunity to which you refer came months later, and though utilised then, it was only for the wretchedest and therefore the most human of reasons, in order that I might at least be revenged."

"On Malakoff?" the girl tauntingly threw at him.

"Damn me, sir," some one was angrily calling, "when I instructed my servant to show you the door—"

Welden turned. Before him the general stood. Immediately Maud interposed herself between them.

"Father," she said, pushing him as she spoke, toward the adjoining room, "go in there, I must speak to you."

"You told me," the old man remonstrated, trying vainly to resist. "You told me—"

"I have not a doubt of it," Maud, pushing still, replied. "But I told you also never to believe a word a woman said."

The door closed suddenly. Welden could at last put down his hat and coat. He had not, he knew, demolished all the intrenchments, but in view of the girl's defence of him, he felt that he had sapped their base.

He was quite in error. None the less, in a few moments, when Maud issued unaccompanied from the conflict in the outer room, her parliamentaries there may have suggested a temporary truce. She stopped at the table, took up the book of verse, looked at it, replaced it and with tolerable irrelevance remarked:

"That was very terrible about Sally.

Have you any suspicion who did it?"

"No," Welden answered. "None whatever."

"I ought, I suppose, to condole with you, but I cannot. Neither of you I think behaved very well. She knew about Mme. Oppensheim even if, as you say, you did not. It was because of her that she got the decree. Everybody knew that. It was not in the papers, but it was common talk. Were you deaf at the time?"

"Partially," Welden replied. "At Chantilly I made rather a mess of it."

Of that mess the girl had been informed. At the time and since she had thought it not unmerited. What she did not know and what she never learned was the fact that the mess was intentional. For there are some things that some men do not talk about. Even otherwise, there are times and seasons when any compliment, however unique, falls flat.

"Afterward," Welden resumed, "it was quite a bit before I was about."

"But when you were, did you not hear?"

"When I was, Sally told me that it was you who were the co."

Maud lifted her hands. "She told you that! She told you that I was the co-respondent!"

"In so many words."

"When did you learn that I was not?"

"The other day at Santa Barbara. It came about rather oddly. We were on the lawn, the wind was blowing, it disarranged her hair. Her hair, if you will notice. She wanted a barrette. There was no one within call. She asked me to get it. It was in some case, in some bag. She told me where and where the keys were. She was very explicit about it all. But I misunderstood. I opened the wrong bag or the wrong box. In it I found a letter addressed to me. I know it by heart. 'July the Fourth, Villa Portugaise. Dearest: They have just wired me from Frascati's that my father has been injured. I am going over on the noon boat. Join me there to-morrow. Mille baisers, M.' "

"She had concealed it!"

"Evidently."

"What did you do?"

Welden made a gesture. At the time when he found the letter his mind had shot backward. Facts and incidents trivial in themselves and long since forgotten, mounted from those cellars of memory where whatever we do or say or see is noted, registered, catalogued and preserved. In a sort of retrograde vision the madness of a night returned. He beheld the silent villa and Sally, her hand on his arm, saying: "Don't." He recalled the singularity of her attitude; the avid movement with which, when in the hall below, she had taken and concealed the note; her subsequent eagerness to have him fight;

her stupid insistence that he should tell no one why; her speeches and answers at Chantilly: and suddenly a curtain rose. He saw, if not the truth, at least the lie.

"What did you do?" Maud repeated.

"I went to her and asked whom Malakoff had been entertaining that evening. It was a little before I could get her to admit that it was not you. Finally she acknowledged that it was Mme. Oppensheim."

Again Maud lifted her hands. "It is incredible!"

"Yes, particularly as from the start she quite played on my mistake, at first, I suppose, in order to have me kill Malakoff and later on, perhaps, because she felt compromised by the duel."

Maud considered these premises and then supplied the deduction.

"That is why she asked you to marry her."

"I did not say that."

"No, men never do say such things but

sometimes women infer them. How long afterward did she die?"

"The same night, or rather the next morning."

Maud considered that also, but more longly.

"Don't you see," she said at last, "were these things known, you would be suspected, arrested perhaps?"

"Naturally. If ever a man had a motive I had one. On the night when I went to the room which you had occupied and saw what I took to be you, Sally was at my elbow. She had come to surprise Malakoff, and finding me there and divining my error, took advantage of us both. I am sorry now for Malakoff. I intended to kill him. He knew it, knew the reason, knew that it was all a mistake. But, bounder that he is, he could not like an ordinary cad come to me with an explanation."

"No," said Maud. "Men never explain

and women always do. None the less—"

"None the less," Welden ran on, "though I can be sorry for him, I cannot be for Sally. What happened to her was the judgment of God."

That verdict Maud examined and at once indorsed.

"Yes, for with a word she could have set you straight."

Welden nodded. "It has been a tragedy of errors. Yet, of course, if the police at Santa Barbara had so much as an inkling of it, I would be in jail there now. They suspect me as it is, I think."

"But I read that you offered a reward."

"Yes, and it was then I felt that I was suspected."

Maud looked that over also, but without seeming to get the point of it.

"Surely they could not fancy that you would offer a reward for your own conviction?"

"No, but they could readily fancy that I offered it to divert suspicion, for that is precisely what a bungler would have done."

Welden paused. Presently he added:

"I did not realise that until afterward."

At this, Maud, who had remained at the table, crossed the room and seated herself on the sofa. Welden took a seat beside her.

"What do you propose to do now?" She asked.

"Beg you to marry me."

The girl shook her head. "You need not. I have no intention of it."

"For the same reason as before?"

"Partly. But for others also."

It was now Welden's turn to consider things. While he was at it, she helped him.

"It is not that I cannot forgive you," she explained. "But I have so long regarded you as unforgivable that I cannot immediately forget. Besides, that you should have suspected me is one thing, but that you should have consoled yourself is quite another."

"Consoled!" retorted Welden. "The word does not fit. I had no relations with Sally."

Maud turned and looked at him. She had never known him to lie, but she was not credulous and Sally, whatever her demonism, had been a very pretty woman.

"That's as may be," she answered. "The point is you hurt me and meant to. I think I could not have done that to you."

For a second she hesitated, her hands lying interclasped in her lap. She opened them and slowly added:

"But I am quite sure I could have done a little harm to her."

"The little harm has been done," Welden remarked.

But that Maud could not have found herself quite able to concede.

"By another," she answered, "and incompletely."

In what manner the harm could have been completer she did not say, nor did Welden ask, but he marvelled at the girl, who, in spite of the character of their previous intimacy, now, for the first time, revealed to him her naked soul.

She stood up, went to the piano and with one hand struck the keys into notes violent and discordant.

Then, as she turned, displaying the oval of her perfect face, and stood there, elaborately gowned, her head erect, she might perhaps, to any other, have presented but a genre picture of a society girl, ultra smart. To Welden she was something else, something higher or it may be, lower; a being intensely human, vibrant with elemental passion.

"She was made for me," he told himself, and crossing the room, he looked her in the eyes.

But however vibrant the girl may have

been, however primitive also, she was not in a mood for caresses. Dumbly against him she felt the revolt which women have for the man who comes to them from the arms of another. Those arms were lifeless now and such enfoldings as they had given perhaps were scant, but some at least there had been, and at the thought of them she recoiled instinctively.

"No," she said in answer to that look. "Not now, perhaps never. I cannot tell. Do not try to ask me."

"Good night," she added after a moment, when Welden, who knew better than to urge against her will, had taken up his hat and coat.

II

THE BENEDICTION

The fatigues compressed in a journey across the continent are of a completeness that satiates the sturdiest. On leaving Madison avenue, Welden slept thirteen hours, awoke, tubbed, dressed, drank some coffee, read a telegram, also a newspaper and, other details terminated, drove to the Grand Central where he arranged to repeat the trip.

The telegram, a night message from Santa Barbara, marked Collect and signed Wicks, was as follows:

> *Perkins indicted on evidence personally obtained. Rings recovered, trial to-morrow. I claim rewards.*

"The imbecile," Welden muttered as the message fell from him.

But the purport of it he found repeated in a morning paper, strung out there with sensational details, stories of full confession, others of priceless jewels—the property of the murdered woman with whom Welden had eloped and then been shot by the outraged husband—the usual farrago of fiction, garnished in this instance with a picture of White Peacocks which resembled the scene of the crime about as closely as it did the Plaza.

Beneath the ribbon of rubbish there was none the less a fact. There was also a possibility. There had been an indictment, conviction might follow.

The rooms which Welden occupied gave on Central Park. For a moment, from a window, he stood looking at the rain of sunshine, the leisurely motors, the gingerly stepping horses, the parade of nurses out with their charges for the midday air. Yet, though he looked, he did not see, or rather it was not the Park that he saw, but Santa Barbara and the obligation to return there.

The prospect was not agreeable. He had, however, contemplated it before. Now, with no thought of shirking, he contemplated it again. Then, the letter written, other details terminated, he went down Madison avenue for a word with Maud.

But the girl was not at home. William assured him of that, assured him that this time there was no mistake, that she was really out, gone but a little before in her brougham.

Welden took from a pocket the letter which he had written.

"Here is a note for Miss Barhyte. Give it to her yourself and say that it is not to be opened until she hears from me. I leave town to-day and I will wire shortly, but the letter is not to be opened until then. Do you understand? You do? You are sure you do? The letter is not to be opened until I wire. Very good. Here is something for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Welden. Thank you."

The man bowed Welden out, after which he put the letter on the hall table where, later that afternoon, Maud letting herself in with a latch-key as was her custom, found and read it.

Welden then was on his way to Chicago. The press there supplied him with fresh news from Santa Barbara, at Omaha there was more. But thereon, over the plains and through the hamlets which in a sort of horrible coquetry vie in hideousness with each other, there was a silence that continued until Ogden was reached.

Ogden too has its coquetries. But the news of the day may be had there. There is also a stop.

The stop is brief, yet it sufficed for Welden. He wired to Maud, got his trunks from the baggage car, his bags from the Pullman and boarded a returning train.

In a Salt Lake sheet he had read that, the prosecution collapsing, Perkins had been released. It was then that he wired. The wire was a request that his letter should not be opened. Four days later he was in New York.

On the evening of that fourth day, a bit fatigued, the motion of the train actively continuing in his head, but in a white tie, a white waistcoat—between which two small black studs served to indicate his recent mourning—he was again in Madison avenue, this time in the parlour, as the local drawing-room is sometimes called and on this occasion very properly, for a parlour or parloir is a talking place and Welden found himself called upon to say more than he had expected, and on a subject at that concerning which he had not intended to talk at all.

Maud was not present when he entered and he looked at the faded frescoes with a yawn. In a moment however, from the dining-room beyond, the girl appeared.

Her neck and arms were bare. Her gown was white, striated with violet. As she entered she stooped to arrange or to release a fold. The attitude, but momentarily maintained, was so graceful that Welden forgot his fatigue. Then, as she straightened and approached, one hand just upholding a hem, the picture she presented indemnified him for the little horrors of the trip.

The week previous he saw that she had altered. Now he realised that she had changed again. It was as though when bending at the door, her whole manner had unbent.

She took his hand. "Dearest, another would say that what you went from here to do was noble. I do not. It was You."

Passably perplexed, Welden stared. In the stare the perplexity was reflected.

The girl smiled. Her hand still in his, she led him to the S in upholstery, in one of the curves of which she seated herself while he, guided by her, seated himself in the other.

"Dearest, will you promise me something?"

Welden nodded.

"Will you promise not to be annoyed?"

Welden nodded again.

"I must tell you, then, that I have read your letter."

Vexation lifted Welden visibly like a lash. He dropped the hand he held, sprang from the seat and went to the window. On reaching it he turned. Maud was looking at him.

"Your promise!"

Welden ran his long, thin fingers through his bright thick hair.

"Your promise!"

"But, Maud, I am not annoyed. Annoyance is not the term. If anything, I am alarmed."

At that the girl also left her seat. Advancing to where he stood she said in his face: "It is the first time then in all your life."

Welden, moving uneasily, turned away.

"Dearest, can you not trust me? Even if I had not read the letter, sooner or later I would have known."

With the goaded action of a bull before the matador, Welden tossed his head.

"No, never, unless—" He stopped, looked at her, weighed her. "Unless matters had gone the other way. It was only in provision of the contingency that I wrote you and when I did, I expressly instructed William that you were not to read the letter until you heard from me again."

"Yes, so he told me—after I had read it. I am not sorry, nor should you be. No earthly thing could have brought us nearer. Dearest, do you not see that between us now it is for always?"

"You mean that?"

"Mean it! If you wish, I will go with you to-night. The world will say that I am your mistress, but I would rather be that than empress to an emperor."

"Doña Sol!" Welden, with assumed lightness, threw out.

"Doña Sol, yes, if you like, and Héloïse also, for both said it. With them, though, it was heroics; with me it is the truth."

Welden took her hands in his. "Supposing I put you to the test?"

"Give me only time to get a cloak, and for William to call a cab."

"I don't mean that. I mean a greater test."

"Is there any?"

Welden nodded. "Will you marry me?"

Maud laughed in his face. "Do you call that a test? Do you?"

Welden, a bit relieved, laughed also.

"Well, you see," he said, "heretofore it has rather seemed one. I give you my word

I had no idea but that you would refuse me."

Maud turned, surveying the room. Then, assured that they were quite alone, she disengaged her hands, put them on his shoulders and raising herself, whispered:

"What girl would refuse a man who loved her enough to kill another woman for her? Dearest, I adore you."

Welden drew her to him. Presently, as he held her in his arms, he said: "I hope you destroyed that agreeable information?"

With a smile the girl freed herself.

"Completely," she answered.

Then taking him again by the hand she led him back to where they had been seated.

There, after a moment, she added: "Dearest, tell me about it. Did Sally know beforehand?"

"Now, Maud," he protested, "don't be morbid."

But naïvely this girl in whom there was so little naïveté persisted.

"Dearest, tell me this; was it because of the letter you killed her?"

"I killed her for what she killed in me, for her assassination of my belief in you. That was more to me than life, and for it I took hers."

Maud thought it over. But still the episode of the letter rankled.

"What did she do when she found you had my note?"

"What did she do?" Welden repeated. "Personally she did nothing. But the most curious of all physical phenomena manifested itself in her. The red phantom of the human conscience appeared in her face. She flushed with a flame that came to her from hell."

Maud contemplated the picture. It seemed to her over coloured. With a question she toned it.

"Don't you suppose that she was merely angry at herself for having kept the note?

I cannot conceive what folly prompted her to do so."

"A folly that is common enough," Welden answered. "Almost all criminals leave or preserve some evidence of their guilt. There is an uncontrollable impulse which compels them."

Maud smiled. "Thank fortune, that impulse did not actuate my criminal. Did it, dearest?"

"Oh, but it did though. You read about the jewels, the famous jewels, the rings that cost ninety thousand and which an imbecile out there discovered, or thought he discovered, in Perkins' possession?"

"Yes, but it appeared that they were imitation and her own. The papers said she had a receipt from a Paris manufacturer, made out to her in her name."

"Precisely. Sally's stones cost more, but nothing like what I represented. I know it was not very nice of me to have exaggerated their value as I did, but I had to supply the police with a motive. Ça n'a pas fait un pli. They swallowed it whole."

Maud laughed. "That was very clever of you. Where were they at the time?"

"The rings? In my pocket."

Maud laughed again. "Where are they now?"

"Where I put them, neatly done up, in the coffin."

"You put them there! But why?"

"Partly from that uncontrollable impulse, but chiefly in provision of just such a thing as nearly happened, in order that if another were convicted, I could prove that I was the man."

"And if Perkins had been convicted you would have done so?"

"Naturally. It would have been the merest duty."

"Dearest, do you wonder that I love you?

No. I was right from the first. There is none but you. Tell me—"

But whatever the girl's question may have been, it was not asked or at least not then. In the door through which she had come, the general stood.

"Father!" she called in her clinging voice. "We are engaged again and we are to be married shortly."

Furiously the old gentleman turned on her.

"In all my life I have never heard of such indecency. Yes, damn me, indecency. You were engaged to that man before and he threw you over to marry another woman. The day you leave this house for him, you leave it forever. You are of age, you can do as you like, but so can I, and, damn me, I'll disown you."

Cursing and fuming, the general strode on.

It was their benediction. They knew it,

knew, too, that it was deserved. But the ball was over, the nightmare as well. Life larger, though more lawful, was about to begin. Slowly the girl's arms went about her lover. At their touch, in sudden retrospect, he saw again White Peacocks and the inaugural sky: the massacre on the horizon, the trooping titans, the luminous arc, the flight of the centaurs and the mirage of the archipelagoes of love.

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WORKS OF EDGAR SALTUS

MARY MAGDALEN

A Chronicle

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CHAPTER I.

MARY MAGDALEN

I.

THREE to one on Scarlet! "

Throughout the brand-new circus were the eagerness, the gesticulations, shouts, and murmurs of an impatient throng. On a ledge above the entrance a man stood, a strip of silk extended in his finger-tips. Beneath, on either side, were gates. About him were series of ascending tiers, close-packed, and brilliant with multi-colored robes and parasols. The sand of the track was very white: where the sunlight fell it had the glitter of broken glass. In the centre was a low wall; at one end were pillars and seven great balls of wood; at the other, seven dolphins, their tails in the air. The uproar mounted in unequal vibrations, and stirred the pulse. The air was heavy with odors, with the emanations of the crowd, the cloy of myrrh.

Through the exits whiffs of garlic filtered from the kitchens below, and with them, from the exterior arcades, came the beat of timbrels, the click of castanets. Overhead was a sky of troubled blue; beyond, a lake.

" They are off! "

The strip of silk had fluttered and fallen, the gates flew open, there was a rumble of wheels, a whirlwind of sand, a yell that deafened, and four tornadoes burst upon the track.

They were shell-shaped, and before each six horses tore abreast. Between the horses' ears were swaying feathers; their manes had been dyed clear pink, the forelocks puffed; and as they bounded, the drivers, standing upright, had the skill to guide but not the strength to curb. About their waists the reins were tied; at the side a knife hung; from the forehead the hair was shaven; and everything they wore, the waistcoat, the short skirt, the ribbons, was of one color, scarlet, yellow, emerald, or blue: and this color, repeated on the car and on the harness, distinguished them from those with whom they raced.

Already the cars had circled the hippodrome four times. There were but three more rounds, and Scarlet, which in the beginning had trailed applause behind it as a torch trails smoke, lagged now a little to the rear. Green was leading. Its leadership did not seem to please; it was cursed at and abused, threatened with naked fist; yet when for the sixth time it turned the terminal pillar, a shout that held the thunder of Atlas leaped abroad. Where the yellow car, pursued by the blue, had been, was now a mass of sickening agitation — twelve fallen horses kicking each other into pulp, the drivers brained already; and down upon that barrier of blood and death swept the scarlet car. In a second it veered and passed; in that second a flash of steel had cut the reins, and, as the car swung round, the driver, released, was tossed to the track. What then befell him no one cared. Stable-men were busy there; the car itself, unguided, continued vertiginously on its course. If it had lagged before, there was no lagging now. The hoofs that beat upon the ring plunged with it through the din down upon

Emerald, and beyond it to the goal. And as the last dolphin vanished and the seventh ball was removed, the palm was granted, and the spectators shouted a salutation to the giver of the games — Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee.

He was superb, this Antipas. His beard was like a lady's fan. On his cheeks was a touch of alkanet; his hair, powdered blue, was encircled by a diadem set with gems. About his shoulders was a mantle that had a broad purple border; beneath it was a tunic of yellow silk. Between the railing of the tribune in which he sat one foot was visible, shod with badger's skin, dyed blood-red. He was superb, but his eyelids drooped. He had a straight nose and a retreating forehead, a physiognomy that was at once weak and vicious. He looked melancholy; it may be that he was bored. At the salutation, however, he affected a smile, and motioned that the games should continue. And as the signals, the dolphins and the seven balls, appeared again, his thoughts, forsaking the circus, went back to Rome.

Insecure in the hearts of his people, uncertain even of the continued favor of the volatile monster who was lounging then in his Caprian retreat, it was with the idea of pleasing the one, of flattering the other, that he had instituted the games. For here in his brand-new Tiberias, a city which he had built in a minute, whose colonnades and porticoes he had bought ready-made in Rome, and had erected by means of that magic which only the Romans possessed — in this capital of a parvenu was a mongrel rabble of Greeks, Cypriotes, Egyptians, Cappadocians, Syrians, and Jews, whose temper was uncertain, and whose rebellion to be feared.

Annonâ et spectaculis indeed! Antipas knew the dictum well; and with an uprising in the yonderland, and a sedition under his feet, what more could he do than quell the first with his mercenaries, and disarm the second with his games? Tiberius, whom he emulated, never deigned to appear at the hippodrome; it was a way he had of showing his contempt for a nation. Antipas might have imitated his sovereign in that, only he was not sure that Tiberius would take the compliment as it was meant. He might view such abstention as the airs of a trumpery tetrarch, and depose him there and then. He was irascible, and when displeased there were dungeons at his command which reopened with difficulty, and where existence was not secure. Ah, that sausage of blood and mud, how he feared and envied him! An emperor now, a god hereafter, truly the dominion of this world and a part of the next was a matter concerning which fear and envy well might be.

And as Antipas' vagabond fancy roamed in and out through the possibilities of the Cæsar's sway, unconsciously he thought of another monster, the son of a priest of Ascalon, who had defied the Sanhedrim, won Cleopatra, murdered the woman he loved the most, conquered Judæa and found it too small for his magnificence — of that Herod in fact, his own father, who gave to Jerusalem her masterpiece of marble and gold, and meanwhile, drunk with the dream of empire, had made himself successor of Solomon, Sultan of Israel, King of the Jews, and who, even as he died, had vomited death and crowns, diadems and crucifixions.

It was through his legacy that Antipas ruled. The kingdom had been sliced into three parts, of one of which Augustus had made a province; over another a brother whom he hated ruled; and he had but this third part, the smallest yet surely the most fair. Its unparalleled garden surrounded him, and its eye, the lake, was just beyond. In the amphitheatre the hills formed was a city of pink and blue marble, of cupolas, porticoes, volutes, bronze doors, and copper roofs. Along the fringe of the shore were Choraizin and Bethsaïda, purple with pomegranates, Capharnahum, beloved for its honey, and Magdala, scented with spice. The slopes and intervales were very green where they were not yellow, and there were terraces of grape, glittering cliffs, and a sky of troubled blue, wadded with little gold-edged clouds.

Yes, it was paradise, but it was not monarchy. It was to that he aspired. As he mused, a rancid-faced woman decked with paint and ostrich-plumes snarled in his ear:

"What have you heard of Iohanan?"

And as with a gesture he signified that he had heard nothing, she snarled again.

Antipas turned to her reflectively, but it was of another that he thought — the brown-eyed bride that Arabia had given him, the lithe-limbed princess of the desert whose heart had beaten on his own, whom he had loved with all the strength of youth and weakness, and whom he had deserted while at Rome for his brother's wife, his own niece, Herodias, who snarled at his side.

Behind her were her women, and among them was one who, as the cars swept by, turned her head with that movement a flower has which a breeze has stirred. Her eyes were sultry, darkened with stibium; on her cheek was the pink of the sea-shell, and her lips made one vermilion rhyme. The face was oval and rather small; and though it was beautiful as victory, the wonder of her eyes, which looked the haunts of hope fulfilled, the wonder of her mouth, which seemed to promise more than any mortal mouth could give, were forgotten in her hair, which was not orange nor flame, but a blending of both. And now, as the cars passed, her thin nostrils quivered, her hand rose as a bird does and fluttered with delight.

On the adjacent tiers were Greeks, fat-calved Cypriotes, Cappadocians with flowers painted on their skin, red Egyptians, Thracian mercenaries, Galilean fishermen, and a group of Lydians in women's clothes.

On the tier just beyond was a man gazing wistfully at the woman that sat behind Herodias. He was tall and sinewy, handsome with the comeliness of the East. His beard was full, unmarred at the corners; his name was Judas. Now and then he moistened his under lip, and a Thracian who sat at his side heard him murmur " Mary " and some words of Syro-Chaldaic which the Thracian did not understand.

To him Mary paid no attention. She had turned from the track. An officer had entered the tetrarch's tribune and addressed the prince. Antipas started; Herodias colored through her paint. The latter evidently was pleased.

" Iohanan! " she exclaimed " To Machærus with him! You may believe in fate and mathematics; I believe in the axe."

And questioningly Herodias looked at her husband, who avoided her look, yet signified his assent to the command she had given.

The din continued. From the tier beyond, Judas still gazed into the perils of Mary's eyes.

"Dear God," he muttered, in answer to an anterior thought, "it would be the birthday of my life."

CHAPTER II.

II.

"O PROPHET IOHANAN, how fair you are!" Iohanan was hideous. His ankles were in stocks, a chain about his waist was looped in a ring that hung from the wall. About his body were tattered furs, his hair was tangled, the face drawn and yellow. Vermin were visible on his person. His lips twitched, and his gums, discolored, were as those of a camel that has journeyed too far. A tooth projected, green as a fresh almond is; the chin projected too, and from it on one side a rill of saliva dripped upon the naked breast. On the terrace he was a blur, a nightmare in a garden.

"Ah, how fair!"

Tantalizing as temptation, Mary stood just beyond his reach. Her eyes were full of compliments, her body was bent, and, the folds of her gown held back, she swayed a little, in the attitude of one cajoling a tiger. She was quite at home and at her ease, and yet prepared for instant flight.

Iohanan, or John — surnamed, because of practices of his, the Baptist — beckoned her to approach. In his eyes was the innocence that oxen have.

" My body is chained, but my soul is free! "

Mary made a pirouette, and through the terrace of the citadel the rattles on her ankles rang.

It was appalling, this citadel; it dominated the entire land. Perched on a peak of basalt, it overhung an abyss in which Asphalitis, the Bitter Sea, lay, a stretch of sapphire to the sun. In the distance were the heights of Abraham, the crests of Gilead. Before it was the infinite, behind it the desert. At its base a hamlet crouched, and a path hewn in the rock crawled in zigzags to its gates. Irregular walls surrounded it, in some places a hundred cubits high, and in each of the many angles was a turret. Seen from below it was a threat in stone, but within was a caress, one of those rapturous palaces that only the Orientals build. It was called Machærus. Peopled with slaves and legends, it was a haunt of ghosts and fierce delights.

And now as Mary tripped before the prophet the walls alone repelled. The terrace was a garden in which were lilies and sentries. For entrance there was a portal of red porphyry, above which was a balcony hemmed by a balustrade of yellow Numidian stone.

Against it Antipas leaned. He had been eyeing the desert in tremulous surmise. The day before, he had caught the glitter of lances, therewith spirals of distant smoke, and he had become fearful lest Aretas, that king of Arabia Petræa whose daughter he had deserted, might be meditating attack. But now there was nothing, at most a triangular mass speeding westwards, of which only the edges moved, and which he knew to be a flight of cranes.

He took heart again and gazed in the valley below. It was the anniversary of his birth. To celebrate it he had invited the stewards of his lands, the notables of Galilee, the elect of Jerusalem, the procurator of Judæa, the emir of

Tadmor, mountaineers and Pharisees, Scribes and herdsmen.

But in the valley only a few shepherds were visible. Along the ramparts soldiers paced. At the further end of the terrace a group of domestics was busy with hampers and luggage. The day was solemnly still, exquisitely clear; and between two hills came a glare of gold projected from the Temple of Jerusalem.

Through the silence rang the tinkle of the rattles that Mary wore. The prophet was beckoning her.

" And Martha? " the tetrarch heard him ask.

The pirouette ceased awkwardly. Mary's eyes forget their compliments. Her brows contracted, and, as though perplexed, she held her head a little to one side.

" There," he added, " there, I know you well. It was at Bethany I saw you first. Yes, yes, I remember perfectly; you were leaving, and Martha was in tears. Only a little since I had speech with her. She spoke of you; she knew you were called to Magdalen. No," he continued, for Mary had shrunk back, " no, I will not curse. There is another by whom you will be blessed."

Mary laughed. "I am going to Rome. Tiberius will give me a palace. I shall sleep on the down the Teutons bring. I shall drink pearls dissolved in falernian. I shall sup on peacocks' tongues."

"No, Mary, Rome you will never see. The Eternal has you in His charge. Your shame will be washed away."

"Shame to you," she interrupted. "Shame and starvation too." She made as though she were about to pirouette again. "Whom are you talking of?"

"One whose shoes I am unworthy to bear."

For a moment he seemed to meditate; then, with the melancholy of one renouncing some immense ambition, he murmured, half to himself, half to the sky, "For him to increase I must diminish."

"As for that, you are not much to look at now. I must go. I must braid my hair; the emir's eyes are eager."

"Mary," he hissed, and the sudden asperity of his voice coerced her as a bit might do, " you will go to Capharnahum, you will seek him, you will say Iohanan is descended into the tombs to announce the Son of David."

Through the lateral entrance to the terrace a number of guests had entered. From the balcony above, Antipas leaned and listened. Some one touched him; it was Herodias.

" The procurator is coming," she announced. " You should be at the gate."

" Ah! "

He seemed indifferent. What Iohanan had said concerning the Son of David stirred him like the point of sword. He felt that there could be no such person; his father had put a stop to all that. And yet, if there were!

His indifference surprised Herodias.

" What are you staring at? " she asked; and to assure herself she looked over the balustrade. " That carrion? You should —— "

Her hand drawn across her throat completed the sentence.

The tetrarch shook his head. There was no hurry. Then, too, the prophet was useful. He reviled Jerusalem, and that flattered Galilee. But there was another reason, which he kept to himself. Iohanan affected him as no one had done before.

He feared him, chained though he was, and into that fear something akin to admiration entered. In his heart he wished he had let him alone. No, there was no hurry. As he assured her of that the prophet looked up.

"Jezebel!"

The guests approached. Their number had increased. There were Greek merchants from Hippos and Sepphoris, Pharisees from Jericho, and Scribes from Jerusalem. Herodias clapped her hands. A negro, naked to the waist, appeared.

"Take him below."

But the guests surrounded Iohanan. The Pharisees recognized him at once. He was the terror of the hierarchs.

As he cried out at Herodias he seemed as though he would rise and wrench his bonds and mount to where she was. His eyes had lost their pathos; they blazed.

"Woe unto you!" he shouted, "and woe unto your barren bed! Though you hid in the bowels of the earth, in the uttermost depths of a jungle, the stench of your incest would betray you. Woe unto you, I say; the swine will turn from you, the Eternal will rend you, and the heart of hell will vomit you back!"

Herodias shook with anger. She was livid. Murmurs circulated through the increasing throng.

The Pharisees edged nearer. On their foreheads were slips of vellum on which passages of the Law had been inscribed. About their left arms other slips extended spiralwise from the elbow to the end of the third finger. They were in white; where their garments had become soiled, the spots had been chalked.

To them the prophet showed his teeth. "And woe unto you too, race of vipers, bladders of wind! As the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so your root will be rottenness and your seed go up as dust. Fear will engulf you like a torrent. The high peaks will be broken, the mountains will sever, and night be upon all. The valleys and hills will be strewn with your corpses, the rocks will run with your blood, the plain will drink it, and the vultures feast on your flesh. Woe unto you all, I say, that call good evil, and evil good! "

The invective continued. It enveloped the world. Everything was to be destroyed. Presently it subsided; the voice of the prophet sank lower; his eyes sought the sky, the pupils dilated; and the dream of his nation, the triumphant future, the sanctification of the faithful, the magnificence that was to be, poured rapturously from his lips.

" The whole land will glow with glory. The sky will be a rose in bloom. The meadows will rejoice, and the earth will be filled with men and maidens singing and kneeling to Thee, Immanuel, whom I await."

The vision would have expanded, perhaps, but the chain that bound him was loosed, sinewy arms were dragging him away. As he went, he glared up again at Herodias. His face had lost its beatitude.

" You will be stripped of your purple, Jezebel; your diadem will be trodden under foot. The pains of a woman in travail will be as joys unto yours. There will be not enough stones to throw at you, and the abomination of your lust will bellow, Accursed, even beyond the tomb."

The anathema fainted in the distance. The Scribes consulted between their teeth. By the Pharisees Antipas was blamed. A merchant from Hippos did not understand, and the Law was explained. That a man should marry his brother's wife was a duty, only in this instance it had not occurred to the brother to die beforehand. Then, again, by her first husband Herodias had a child, and in that was the abomination.

The merchant did not wholly grasp the distinction, but he nodded as though he had.

" There was a child, was there? "

A captain of the garrison answered: " A girl, Salomè."

He said nothing further, but the merchant could see that his mouth watered at the thought of her.

The crowd had become very dense. Suddenly a trumpet blared. At the gate was Pontius Pilate. On his head was a high and dazzling helmet. His tunic was short, open at the neck. His legs were bare. He was shod with shoes that left the toes exposed. From his cuirass a gorgon's head had, in deference to local prejudice, been effaced; in its stead were scrolls and thunderbolts. From the belt rows of straps, embroidered and fringed, fell nearly to the knee. He held his head in the air. His features were excellent, and his beard hung in rows of short overlapping curls.

Behind him was his body-guard. Before him Antipas stood, welcoming the Roman in Greek.

In the sky now were the advancing steps of night; in crevices of the basalt the leaves of the baaras weed had begun to flicker. It was time for the festival to begin; and, preceding the guests, Antipas passed into a hall beyond.

It was oblong, curved at the ends, and so vast that the roof was vague. On the walls were slabs of different colors, marble spotted like the skin of serpents, and onyx flecked with violet.

On two sides were galleries supported by columns of sandstone. A third gallery formed a semicircle. Opposite, at the further end, on a dais, was the table of the tetrarch.

Antipas faced the assemblage. At his left was the procurator, at his right the emir of Tadmor. Curtains were looped on either side. Above were panels; they separated, and flowers fell. On a little stool next to the couch on which the emir lay was a beautiful boy with curly hair. The couch of the procurator was covered with a dim Babylonian shawl. That of the tetrarch was of ivory incrusted with gold. All three were cushioned.

As the guests entered they were sprinkled with perfume. Throughout the length of the hall other tables extended, and at these they found seats and food: Syrian radishes, melons from the oases near the Oxus, white olives from Bethany, honey from Capharnahum, and the little onions of Ascalon. There were candelabra everywhere, liquids cooled with snow, cheeses big as millstones, chunks of fat in wooden bowls, and behind the tables, slaves with copper platters. On the platters were quarters of red beef, breams swimming in grease, and sunbirds with their plumage on. In the semicircular gallery musicians played, three notes, constantly repeated.

The tetrarch's table was spread with a cloth of byssus striped with Laconian green. On it were jars of murrha filled with balsam, Sidonian goblets of colored glass, jasper amphoræ, and water-melons from Egypt. Before the procurator was a dish of oysters, lampreys, and boned barbels, mixed well together, flavored with cinnamon and assafœtida; mashed grasshoppers baked in saffron; and a roasted boar, the legs curled inward, the eyes half-closed. The emir ate abundantly of heron's eggs whipped with wine into an amber foam. When his fingers were soiled, he wiped them in the curls of the beautiful boy who sat near by.

The smell of food filled the hall, mounted to the roof. The atmosphere was that of a bath, and the wines were heady. Already discussions had arisen. A mountaineer and a Galilean skiffsman had been dragged away, the one senseless, the other with features indistinguishable and masked in blood. It was a great festival, and the tetrarch was entertaining, as only he could, his friends, his enemies, and whoever chanced that way.

" As a child he rubbed his body with the leaves of the cnyza, which is a preservative of chastity." It was a little man with restless eyes and a very long white beard detailing the virtues of Iohanan. "But," he added, " he must have found cold water better."

His neighbors laughed. One pounded the table.

" Jeshua — " he began, but everyone was talking at once.

" Jeshua — " he continued; yet, as no one would listen, he turned to a passing eunuch and caught him by the arm — " Jeshua does more; he works miracles, and not with the cnyza either."

The eunuch eluded him and escaped. However, he would not be balked; he stood up and, through the din, he shouted at the little man:

"Baba Barbulah, I tell you he is the Messiah!"

His voice was so loud it dominated the hubbub, and suddenly the hubbub ceased.

From the dais Pontius Pilate listened indifferently. Antipas held his hands behind his ears that he might hear the better. The emir paid no attention at all. On his head was a conical turban; about it were loops of sapphire and coils of pearl. He wore a vest with scant sleeves that reached to the knuckles, and trousers that overhung the instep and fell in wide wrinkles on his feet; both were of leopard-skin. Over the vest was a sleeveless tunic, clasped at the shoulders and girt at the waist. His hair was long, plentifully oiled; his beard was bushy, blue-black, and speckled with silver.

Mary had approached. From the lessening waist to the slender feet her dress opened at either side. Beneath was a chemise of transparent Bactrianian tissue. From girdle to armpits were little clasps; on her ankles, bands; and above the elbow, on her bare white arm, two circlets of emeralds from the mines of Djebel Zabur.

The emir spoke to her. She listened with a glimpse of the most beautiful teeth in the world. He put out a hand tentatively and touched her: the tissue of her garment crackled and emitted sparks. He raised a goblet to her. The wine it held was yellower than the marigold. She brushed it with her lips; he drank it off, then, refreshed, he looked her up and down.

In one hand she held a cup of horn, narrower at the top than at the end; in it were dice made of the knee-joints of gazelles, and these she rattled in his beard.

" That beautiful Sultan, will he play? "

With an ochre-tipped finger she pointed at the turban on his head. The eyes of the emir vacillated. He undid a string of gems and placed them on the table's edge. Mary unclasped a coil of emeralds and rattled the dice again. She held the cup high up, then spilled the contents out.

" Ashtaroth! " the emir cried. He had won.

Mary leaned forward, fawned upon his breast, and gazed into his face. Her breath had the fragrance of his own oasis, her lips were moist as the pomegranate's pulp, her teeth as keen as his own desire.

"No, beautiful Sultan, it is I." With the back of her hand she disturbed the dice. "I am Ashtaroth, am I not?"

Questioningly the emir explored the unfathomable eyes that gazed into his.

On their surface floated an acquiescence to the tacit offer of his own. Then he nodded, and Mary turned and gathered the jewels from the cloth of byssus where they lay.

"I tell you he is the Messiah!" It was the angry disputant shouting at the little man.

"Who is? What are you talking about?"

Though the hubbub had ceased, throughout the hall were the mutterings of dogs disturbed.

"Jeshua," the disputant answered; "Jeshua the Nazarene."

A Pharisee, very vexed, his bonnet tottering, gnashed back: "The Messiah will uphold the law; this Nazarene attacks it."

A Scribe interrupted: " Many things are to distinguish his advent. The light of the sun will be increased a hundredfold, the orchards will bear fruit a thousand times more abundantly. Death will be forgotten, joy will be universal, Elijah will return."

" But he has! "

Antipas started. The Scribe trembled with rage. But the throng had caught the name of Elijah, and knew to whom the disputant referred — a man in tattered furs whom a few hours before they had seen dragged away by a negro naked to the waist, and some one shouted:

" Iohanan is Elijah."

Baba Barbulah stood up and turned to whence the voice had come:

" In the footprints of the Anointed impudence shall increase, and the face of the generation shall be as the face of a dog. It may be," he added, significantly — " it may be that you speak the truth."

The sarcasm was lost. The musicians in the gallery, who had been playing on flute and timbrel, began now on the psalteron and the native sambuca. Behind was a row of lute-players; but most in view was a trignon, an immense Egyptian harp, at which with nimble fingers a fair girl plucked.

In the shadow Herodias leaned. At a signal from her the musicians attacked the prelude of a Syrian dance, and in the midst of the assemblage a figure veiled from head to foot suddenly appeared. For a moment it stood very still; then the veil fell of itself, and from the garrison a shout went up:

" Salomè! Salomè! "

Her hair, after an archaic Chanaanite fashion, was arranged in the form of a tower. Her high bosom was wound about with protecting bands. Her waist was bare. She wore long pink drawers of silk, and for girdle she had the blue buds of the lotus, which are symbols of virginity. She was young and exquisitely formed. In her face you read strange records, and on her lips were promises as rare. Her eyes were tortoise-shell, her hair was black as guilt.

The prelude had ceased, the movement quickened. With a gesture of abandonment the girl threw her head back, and, her arms extended, she fluttered like a butterfly on a rose. She ran forward. The sambuca rang quicker, the harp quicker yet. She threw herself to one side, then to the other, her hips swaying as she moved. The buds at her girdle fell one by one; she was dancing on flowers, her hips still swaying, her waist advancing and retreating to the shiver of the harp. She was elusive as dream, subtle as love; she intoxicated and entranced; and finally, as she threw herself on her hands, her feet, first in the air and then slowly descending, touched the ground, while her body straightened like a reed, there was a long growl of unsatisfied content.

She was kneeling now before the dais. Pilate compared her to Bathylle, a mime whom he had applauded at Rome. The tetrarch was purple; he gnawed his under lip. For the moment he forgot everything he should have remembered — the presence of his guests, the stains of his household, his wife even, whose daughter this girl was — and in a gust of passion he half rose from his couch.

"Come to me," he cried. "But come to me, and ask whatever you will."

Salomè hesitated and pouted, the point of her tongue protruding between her lips.

"Come to me," he pleaded; "you shall have slaves and palaces and cities; you shall have hills and intervales. I will give you anything; half my kingdom if you wish."

There was a tinkle of feet; the girl had gone. In a moment she returned, and balancing herself on one foot, she lisped very sweetly: "I should like by and by to have you give me the head of Iohanan — " she looked about; in the distance a eunuch was passing, a dish in his hand, and she added, "on a platter."

Antipas jumped as though a hound under the table had bitten him on the leg. He turned to the procurator, who regarded him indifferently, and to the emir, who was toying with Mary's agate-nailed hand. He had given his word, however; the people had heard. About his ears the perspiration started; from purple he had grown very gray.

Salomè still stood, balancing herself on one foot, the point of her tongue just visible, while from the gallery beyond, in whose shadows he divined the instigating presence of Herodias, came the grave music of an Hebraic hymn.

"So be it," he groaned.

The order was given, and a tear trickled down through the paint and furrows of his cheek. On the hall a silence had descended. The guests were waiting, and the throb of the harp accentuated the suspense. Presently there was a clatter of men-at-arms, and a negro, naked to the waist, appeared, an axe in one hand, the head of the prophet in the other.

He presented it deferentially to Antipas, who motioned it away, his face averted. Salomè smiled. She took it, and then, while she resumed her veil, she put it down before the emir, who eyed it with the air of one that has seen many another object such as that.

But in a moment the veil was adjusted, and with the trophy the girl disappeared.

The harp meanwhile had ceased to sob, the guests were departing; already the procurator had gone. The emir looked about for Mary, but she also had departed; and, with the expectation, perhaps, of finding her without, he too got up and left the hall.

Antipas was alone. Through the lattice at his side he could see the baaras in the basalt emitting its fiery sparks of flame. From an adjacent corridor came the discreet click-clack of a sandal, and in a moment the head of the prophet was placed on the table at which he lay. The tetrarch leaned over and gazed into the unclosed eyes. They were haggard and dilated, and they seemed to curse.

He put his hand to his face and tried to think — to forget rather, and not to remember; but his ears were charged with rustlings that extended indefinitely and lost themselves in the future; his mind peopled itself with phantoms of the past. Perhaps he dozed a little. When he looked up again the head was no longer there, and he told himself that Herodias had thrown it to the swine.

CHAPTER III.

III.

IN THE distance the white and yellow limestone of the mountains rose. Near by was a laughter of flowers, a tumult of green. Just beyond, in a border of sedge and rushes, a lake lay, a mirror to the sky. In the background were the blue and white terraces of Magdala, and about a speaker were clustered a handful of people, a group of laborers and of fishermen.

He was dressed as a rabbi, but he looked like a seer. In his face was the youth of the world, in his eyes the infinite. As he spoke, his words thrilled and his presence allured. "Repent," he was saying, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And as the resplendent prophecy continued, you would have said that a bird in his heart had burst into song.

A little to one side, in an attitude of amused contempt, a few of the tetrarch's courtiers stood; they were dressed in the Roman fashion, and one, Pandera, a captain of the guard, wore a cuirass that glittered as he laughed. He was young and very handsome. He had white teeth, red lips, a fair skin, a dark beard, and, as he happened to be stationed in the provinces, an acquired sneer. Dear old Rome, how vague it was! And as he jested with his comrades he thought of its delights, and wished himself either back again in the haunts he loved, or else, if he must be separated from them, then, instead of vegetating in a tiresome tetrarchy, he felt that it would be pleasant to be far off somewhere, where the uncouth Britons were, a land which it took a year of adventures to reach; on the banks of the Betis, whence the girls came that charmed the lupanars; in Numidia, where the hunting was good; or in Thrace, where there was blood in plenty — anywhere, in fact, save on the borders of the beautiful lake where he happened to be.

It was but the restlessness of youth, perhaps, that disturbed him so, for in Galilee there were oafs as awkward as any that Britannia could show; there was game in abundance; blood, too, was not as infrequent as it might have been; and as for women, there at his side stood one as appetizing as Rome, Spain even, had produced. He turned to her now, and plucked at his dark beard and showed his white teeth; he had caught a phrase of the rabbi in which the latter had mentioned the kingdoms of the earth, and the phrase amused him.

"I like that," he said. "What does he know about the kingdoms of the earth? Mary, I wager what you will that he has never been two leagues from where he stands. Let's ask and see."

But Mary did not seem to hear. She was engrossed in the rabbi, and Pandera had to tug at her sleeve before she consented to return to a life in which he seemingly had a part.

"What do you say?" he asked.

Mary shook her head. She had the air of one whose mind is elsewhere. Into her face a vacancy had come; she seemed incapable of reply; and as the guardsman scrutinized her it occurred to him that she might be on the point of having an attack of that catalepsy to which he knew her to be subject. But immediately she reassured him.

"Come, let us go."

And, the guardsman at her side, the others in her train, she ascended the little hill on which her castle was, and where the midday meal awaited.

It was a charming residence. Built quadrangularwise, the court held a fountain which was serviceable to those that wished to bathe. The roof was a garden. The interior façade was of teak wood, carved and colored; the frontal was of stone. Seen from the exterior it looked the fortress of some umbrageous prince, but in the courtyard reigned the seduction of a woman in love. From without it menaced, within it soothed.

Her title to it was a matter of doubt. According to Pandera, who at the mess-table at Tiberias had boasted his possession of her confidence, it was a heritage from her father. Others declared that it had been given her by her earliest lover, an old man who since had passed away. Yet, after all, no one cared. She kept open house; the tetrarch held her in high esteem; she was attached to the person of the tetrarch's wife; only a little before, the emir of Tadmor had made a circuitous journey to visit her; Vitellius, the governor of the province, had stopped time and again beneath her roof; and — and here was the point — to see her was to acquire a new conception of beauty. Of human flowers she was the most fair.

Yet now, during the meal that followed, Mary, the toast of the tetrarchy, she whose wit and brilliance had been echoed even in Rome, wrapped herself in a mantle of silence. The guardsman jested in vain. To the others she paid as much attention as the sun does to a torch; and when at last Pandera, annoyed, perhaps, at her disregard of a quip of his, attempted to whisper in her ear, she left the room.

The nausea of the hour may have affected her, for presently, as she threw herself on her great couch, her thoughts forsook the present and went back into the past, her childhood returned, and faces that she had loved reappeared and smiled. Her father, for instance, Theudas, who had been satrap of Syria, and her mother, Eucharia, a descendant of former kings.

But of these her memories were slight — they had died when she was still very young — and in their place came her sister, Martha, kind of heart and quick of temper, obdurate, indulgent, and continually perplexed; Simon, Martha's husband, a Libyan, born in Cyrene, called by many the Leper because of a former whiteness of his skin, a whiteness which had long since vanished, for he was brown as a date; Eleazer, her brother, younger than herself, a delicate boy with blue pathetic eyes; and with them came the delight of Bethany, that lovely village on the oriental slope of the Mount of Olives, where the rich of Jerusalem had their villas, and where her girlhood had been passed.

From the lattice at which she used to sit she could see the wide white road begin its descent to the Jordan, a stretch of almond trees and oleanders; and just beyond, in a woody hollow, a little house in which Sephôrah lived — a woman who came from no one knew where, and to whom Martha had forbidden her to speak.

She could see her still, a gaunt, gray creature, with projecting cheek-bones, a skin of brick, and a low, insinuating voice. The fascination which she had exercised over her partook both of wonder and of fear, for it was rumored that she was a sorceress, and as old as the world. To Mary, who was then barely nubile, and inquisitive as only fanciful children are, she manifested a great affection, enticing her to her dwelling with little cakes that were sweet to the tooth and fabulous tales that stirred the heart: the story of Stratonice and Combabus, for instance, which Mary did not in the least understand, but which seemed to her intensely sad.

"And then what?" she would ask when the tale was done; and the woman would tell her of Ninus and Semiramis, of Sennachereb, of Sardanapalus, Belsarazzur, of Dagon, the fish-god of Philistia, by whom Goliath swore and in whose temple Samson died, or of Sargon, who, placed by his mother in an ark of rushes, was set adrift in the Euphrates, yet, happily discovered by a water-carrier, afterwards became a leader of men.

"Why, that was Moses!" the child would exclaim.

"No, no," the woman invariably answered, "it was Sargon."

But that which pleasured Mary more highly even than these tales were the legends of Hither Asia, the wonderlands of Babylon, and particularly the story of the creation, for always the human mind has wished to read the book of God.

"Where did they say the world came from?" she would ask.

And Sephôrah, drawing a long breath, would answer: "Once all was darkness and water. In this chaos lived strange animals, and men with two wings, and others with four wings and two faces. Some had the thighs of goats, some had horns, and some had horses' feet, or were formed behind like a horse and in front like a man; there were bulls with human faces, and men with the heads of dogs, and other animals of human shape with fins like fishes, and fishes like sirens, and dragons, and creeping things, and serpents, and fierce creatures, the images of which are preserved in the temple of Bel.

"Over all these ruled the great mother, Um Uruk. But Bel, whom your people call Baal, divided the darkness and clove the woman asunder. Of one part he made the earth, and of the other the sun, the moon, the planets. He drew off the water, apportioned it to the land, and prepared and arranged the world. The creatures on it could not endure the light of day and became extinct.

"Now when Bel saw the land fruitful yet uninhabited, he cut off his head and made one of the gods mingle the blood which flowed from it with earth and form therewith men and animals that could endure the sun. Presently Chaldæa was plentifully populated, but the inhabitants lived like animals, without order or rule. Then there appeared to them from the sea a monster of the name of Yan. Its body was that of a fish, but under its head another head was attached, and on its fins were feet, and its voice was that of a man. Its image is still preserved. It came at morning, passed the day, and taught language and science, the harvesting of seeds and of fruits, the rules for the boundaries of land, the mode of building cities and temples, arts and writing and all that pertains to civilized life, and for four hundred and thirty-two thousand years the world went very well.

" Then in a dream Bel revealed to Xisuthrus that there would be a great storm, and men would be destroyed. He bade him bury in Sepharvaim, the city of the sun, all the ancient, mediæval, and modern records, and build a ship and embark in it with his kindred and his nearest friends. He was also to take food and drink into the ship, and pairs of all creatures winged and four-footed.

" Xisuthrus did as he was bidden, and from the ends of heaven the storm began to blow. Bin thundered; Nebo, the Revealer, came forth; Nergal, the Destroyer, overthrew; and Adar, the Sublime, swept in his brightness across the earth. The storm devoured the nations, it lapped the sky, turned the land into an ocean, and destroyed everything that lived. Even the gods were afraid. They sought refuge in the heaven of Anu, sovereign of the upper realms.

As hounds draw in their tails, they seated themselves on their thrones, and to them Mylitta, the great goddess, spake: ‘ The world has turned from me, and ruin I have proclaimed.’ She wept, and the gods on their thrones wept with her.

“ On the seventh day Xisuthrus perceived that the storm had abated and that the sea had begun to fall. He sent out a dove, it returned; next, a swallow, which also returned, but with mud on its feet; and again, a raven, which saw the corpses in the water and ate them, and returned no more. Then the boat was stayed and settled upon Mount Nasir. Xisuthrus went out and worshipped the recovered earth. When his companions went in search of him he had disappeared, but his voice called to them saying that for his piety he had been carried away; that he was dwelling among the gods; and that they were to return to Sepharvaim and dig up the books and give them to mankind. Which they did, and erected many cities and temples, and rebuilt Babylon and Mylitta’s shrine.”

“ It is simpler in Genesis,” Mary said, the first time she heard this marvellous tale. For to her, as to Martha and Eleazer, the khazzan, the teacher of the synagogue, had read from the great square letters in which the Pentateuch was written another account of the commingling of Chaos and of Light.

At the mention of the sacred canon, Sephôrah would smile with that indulgence which wisdom brings, and smooth her scanty plaits, and draw the back of her hand across her mouth.

" Burned on tiles in the land of the magi are the records of a million years. In the unpolluted tombs of Osorapi the history of life and of time is written on the cerements of kings. Where the bells ring at the neck of the camels of Iran is a stretch of columns on which are inscribed the words of those that lived in paradise. On a wall of the temple of Bel are the chronicles of creation; in the palace of Assurbanipal, the narrative of the flood. It is from these lands and monuments the Thorah comes; its verses are made of their memories; it gathered whatever it found, and overlooked the essential, immortal life."

And Sephôrah added in a whisper, "For we are descended from gods, and immortal as they."

The khazzan had disclosed to Mary no such prospect as that. To him as to all orthodox expounders of the Law man was essentially evanescent; he lived his little day and disappeared forever. God alone was immortal, and an immortal being would be God. The contrary beliefs of the Egyptians and Aryans were to them abominations, and the spiritualistic doctrine inaugurated by Juda Maccabæus and accepted by the Pharisees, an impiety. The Pentateuch had not a word on the subject. Moses had expressly declared that secret things belong to the Lord, and only visible things to man. The prophets had indeed foretold a terrestrial immortality, but that immortality was the immortality of a nation; and the realization of their prophecy the entire people awaited. Apart from that there was only Sheol, a sombre region of the under-earth, to which the dead descended, and there remained without consciousness, abandoned by God.

"Immortal!" Mary, with great wondering eyes, would echo. "Immortal!"

"Yes; but to become so," Sephôrah replied, "you must worship at another shrine."

"Where is it?"

Sephôrah answered evasively. Mary would find it in time — when the spring came, perhaps; and meanwhile she had a word or two to say of Baal to such effect even that Mary questioned the khazzan.

"However great the god of the Gentiles has been imagined," the khazzan announced, "he is bounded by the earth and the sky. His feet may touch the one, his head the other, but of nature he is a part, and, to the Eternal, nature is not even a garment, it is a substance He made, and which He can remould at will. It is not in nature, it is in light, He is: in the burning bush in which He revealed Himself; in the stake at which Isaac would have died; in the lightning in which the Law was declared, the column of fire, the flame of the sacrifices, and the gleaming throne in which Isaiah saw Him sit — it is there that He is, and His shadow is the sun."

Of this Mary repeated the substance to her friend, and Sephôrah mused.

"No," she said at last — "no, he is not in light, but in the desert where nature is absent, and where the world has ceased to be. The threats of a land that never smiled are reflected in his face. The sight of him is death. No, Baal is the sun-god. His eyes fecundate."

And during the succeeding months Sephôrah entertained Mary with Assyrian annals and Egyptian lore. She told her more of Baal, whose temple was in Babylon, and of Baaltis, who reigned at Ascalon. She told her of the women who wept for Tammuz, and explained the reason of their tears. She told her of the union of Ptah, the unbegotten begetter of the first beginning, and of Neith, mother of the sun; of the holy incest of Isis and Osiris; and of Luz, called by the patriarchs Bethel, the House of God, the foothold of a straight stairway which messengers ceaselessly ascended and descended, and at whose summit the Elohim sat.

She told her of these things, of others as well; and now and then in the telling of them a fat little man with beady eyes would wander in, the smell of garlic about him, and stare at Mary's lips. His name was Pappus; by Sephôrah he was treated with great respect, and Mary learned that he was rich and knew that Sephôrah was poor.

When the Passover had come and gone, Sephôrah detected that Mary had ceased to be a child; and of the gods and goddesses with whose adventures she was wont to entertain her, gradually she confined herself to Mylitta; and in describing the wonderlands which she knew so well, she spoke now only of Babylon, where the great tower was, and the gardens that hung in the air.

It was all very marvellous and beautiful, and Sephôrah described it in fitting terms. There was the Temple of the Seven Spheres, where the priests offered incense to the Houses of the Planets, to the whole host of heaven, and to Bel, Lord of the Sky. There was the Home of the Height, a sheer flight of solid masonry extending vertiginously, and surmounted by turrets of copper capped with gold. In its utmost pinnacle were a sanctuary and a dazzling couch. There the priests said that sometimes Bel came and rested. For the truth of that statement, however, Sephôrah declined to vouch. She had never seen him; but the hanging gardens she had seen, long before they were demolished. She had walked in them, and she described their loveliness, and related that they were erected to pleasure a Persian princess whose eyes had wearied of the monotony of the Babylonian plain.

Once when Pappus was present — and latterly he had been often there — she passed from the gardens to the grove where the temple of Mylitta stood. At the steps of the shrine, she declared, were white-winged lions, and immense bulls with human heads. Within were dovecotes and cisterns, the emblems of fecundity, and a block of stone which she did not describe. Without, among the terebinths and evergreens, were little cabins and an avenue bordered by cypress trees, in which men with pointed hats and long embroidered gowns passed slowly, for there the maidens of Babylon sat, chapleted with cords, burning bran for perfume, awaiting the will of the first who should toss a coin in their lap and in the name of Mylitta invite them to perform the sacred rite.

" That," said Sephôrah, " is the worship Mylitta exacts." As she spoke she drew herself up, her height increased, an unnatural splendor filled her eyes. " I," she continued, " am her priestess. I sacrificed at Byblus, but you may sacrifice here. There is a dovecote, yonder is a cistern, beyond are the cypress and the evergreens that she loves. Mary, do you wish to be immortal? Do you see the way? "

Mary smiled vaguely, and with the serenity of one worshipping a divinity she suffered the fat Jerusalemite to take her in his arms.

And now as she lay on her great couch these things returned to her, and subsequent episodes as well. There had been the lamentable grief of Martha, the added pathos in her brother's eyes. The estate of her father had been divided, and the castle of Magdala had fallen to her share. Meanwhile she had been at Jerusalem, and from there she had journeyed to Antioch, where she had heard the beasts roar in the arena. She had looked on blood, on the honey-colored moon that effaced the stars, and everywhere she had encountered love.

Since then her hours had been grooved in revolving circles of alternating delights, and delights to which no shadow of regret had come. To her, youth had been a chalice of aromatic wine. She had drained it and found no dregs. Day had been interwoven with splendors, and night with the rays of the sun. Where she passed she conquered; when she smiled there were slaves ready-made. There had been hot brawls where she trod, the gleam of white knives. Men had killed each other because of her eyes, and women had wept themselves to death. For her a priest had gone mad, and a betrothed had hid herself in the sea. In Hierapolis the galli had fancied her Ashtaroth; and at Capri, where Tiberius lounged, a villa awaited her will.

Her life had indeed been full, yet that morning its nausea had mounted to her heart. At the words of the rabbi the horizon had expanded, the dream of immortality returned. It had been forgot long since and abandoned, but now, for the first time since her childhood, something there was which admonished her that perhaps she still might stroll through lands where dreams come true. The path was not wholly clear as yet, and as in her troubled mind she tried to disentangle the past from the present the sun went down behind the castle, the crouching shadows elongated and possessed the walls.

An echo came to her, Repent, and the prophecy continuing danced in her ears; yet still the way was obscure. In the echo she divined merely that the past must be put from her like a garment that is stained. The rest was vague. Then suddenly she was back again in Machærus, and she heard the ringing words of John. Could this be the Messiah her nation awaited? was there a kingdom coming, and immortality too?

Her thoughts entangled and grew confused. There was a murmur of harps in the distance, and she wondered whence it could come. Some one was speaking; she tried to rouse herself and listen. The room was filled with bats that changed to butterflies. The murmur of harps continued, and through the wall before her issued a litter in which a woman lay.

A circle of slaves surrounded her. She was pale, and her eyes closed languorously. "I am Indolence," she said. "Sleep is not softer than my couch. My lightest wish is law to kings. I live on perfumes; my days are as shadows on glass. Mary, come with me, and I will teach you to forget."

She vanished, and where the litter had been stood a eunuch. "I am Envy," he said, and his eyes drooped sullenly. "I separate those that love; I dismantle altars and dismember nations. I corrode and corrupt; I destroy, and I never rebuild. My joy is malice, and my creed false-witnessing. Mary, come with me, and you will learn to hate."

He disappeared, and where his slime had dripped stood a being with fingers intertwisted and a back that bent. "I am Greed," it said. "I sap the veins of youth; I drain the hearts of women; I bring contention where peace should be. I make fathers destroy their sons, and daughters betray their mother. I never forget, and I never release. I am the master. Mary, come with me, and you shall own the world."

The fetor of the presence went, and in its place came one whose footsteps thundered. "I am Anger," he declared. "I exterminate and rejoice. I batten on blood. In my heart is suspicion, in my hand is flame. It is I that am war and disaster and regret. My breath consumes, and my voice affrights. Mary, come with me, and you will learn to quell."

He dissolved, and in the shadows stood one whose hands were ample, and whose wide mouth laughed. "I am Gluttony," he announced, and as he spoke his voice was thick. "I fatten and forsake. I offer satrapies for one new dish. I invite and alienate, I welcome and repel. It is I that bring disease and disorders. I am the harbinger of Death. Mary, come with me, and you shall taste of Life."

He also disappeared, and two heralds entered with trumpets on which they blew, and one exclaimed, " Make way for Assurbanipal, ruler of land and of sea." Then, with horsemen riding royally, Sardanapalus advanced through the fissure in the wall. On his head a high and wonderful tiara shone with zebras that had wings and horns. His hair was long, and his beard curled in overlapping rings. His robe dazzled, and the close sleeves were fastened over his knuckles with bracelets of precious stones. In one hand he held a sceptre, in the other a chart.

" I," he cried — " I am Assurbanipal; the progeny of Assur and of Baaltis, son of the great king Riduti, whom the lord of crowns, in days remote prophesying in his name, raised to the kingdom, and in the womb of his mother created to rule. The man of war, the joy of Assur and of Istar, the royal offspring, am I. When the gods seated me on the throne of the father my begetter, Bin poured down his rain, Hea feasted the people. My enemies I destroyed, and their gods glorified me before my camp. The god of their oracles, whose image no man had seen, I took, and the goddesses whom the kings worshipped I dishonored."

He paused and looked proudly about, then he continued:

"That which is in the storehouse of heaven is kindled, and to the city of cities my glory flies. The queens above and below proclaim my glory. I *am* Glory, and I am Pride. Mary, come with me, and you shall disdain the sky."

But Mary gave no sign. The clattering horses vanished, and two men dressed in women's clothes appeared. They bowed to the ground and chanted:

"The holy goddess, our Lady Mylitta, whose sacrificants we are."

Then came a form so luminous that Mary hid her face and listened merely.

"I," said a voice — "I am Desire. In Greece I am revered, and there I am Aphrodite. In Italy I am Venus; in Egypt, Hathor; in Armenia, Anaitis; in Persia, Anâhita; Tanit in Carthage; Baaltis in Byblus; Derceto in Ascalon; Atargatis in Hierapolis; Bilet in Babylon; Ashtaroth to the Sidonians; and Aschera in the glades of Judæa. And everywhere I am worshipped, and everywhere I am Love. I bring joy and torture, delight and pain. I appease and appal. It is I that create and undo. It is I that make heaven and people hell. I am the mistress of the world. Without me time would cease to be. I am the germ of stars, the essence of things. I am all that is, will be, and has been, and my robe no mortal has raised. I breathe, and nations are; in my parturitions are planets; my home is space. My lips are blissfuller than any bloom of bliss; my arms the opening gates of life. The Infinite is mine. Mary, come with me, and you shall measure it."

When Mary ventured to look again the vision had gone. They had all gone now. She had made no effort to detain them. They were tempters of which she was freed, in which she believed, and which were real to her. The wall through which they had come and departed was vague and in the darkness remote, but presently it dissolved again, and afar in the beckoning distance was one breathing a soul into decrepit rites. " Come unto me, all ye that sorrow and are heavy-laden," she heard him say; and, as with a great sob of joy she rose to that gracious summons, night seized her. When she awoke, a newer dawn had come.

CHAPTER IV.

IV.

IN THE gardens of the palace the tetrarch mused. The green parasols of the palms formed an avenue, and down that avenue now and then he looked. Near him a Syrian bear, quite tame, with a sweet face and tufted silver fur, gambolled prodigiously. Up and down a neighboring tree two lemurs chased with that grace and diabolic vivacity which those enchanting animals alone possess. Ringed-horned antelopes, the ankles slender as the stylus, the eyes timid and trustful, pastured just beyond; and there too a black-faced ape, irritated perhaps by the lemurs, turned indignant somersaults, the tender coloring of his body glistening in the sun.

" It is odd that Pahul does not return," the tetrarch reflected; and then, it may be for consolation's sake, he plunged his face in a jar of wine that had been drained, in accordance with a recipe of Vitellius, through cinnamon and calamus, and drank abundantly.

Long since he had deserted Machærus. The legends that peopled its corridors had beset him with a sense of reality which before they had never possessed. The leaves of the baaras glittered frenetically in the basalt, and in their spectral light a phantom with eyes that cursed came and went. At night he had drunk, and in the clear forenoons he paced the terrace fancying always that there, beyond in the desert, Aretas prowled like a wolf. Machærus was unhealthy; men had gone mad there, others had disappeared entirely. It was a haunt of echoes, of memories, of ghosts also, perhaps too of reproach. And so, with his court, he returned to his brand-new Tiberias, where the air was serener, and nature laughed.

And yet in the gardens that leaned to the lake the tranquillity he had anticipated eluded and declined to be detained. Rumors that Herodias collected came to him with the stamp of Rome. One of his brothers was plotting against him; another, though in exile, was plotting too. It was the Herod blood, his wife said; and, with the intemperance of a woman whose ambition has been deceived, she taunted him with his plebeian descent. "Your grandfather was a sweep at Ascalon, a eunuch at that," she had remarked; and the tetrarch, by way of reply, had been obliged to content himself by asking how, in that case, he could have been grandfather at all.

But latterly a new source of inquietude had come. At Magdala, Capharnahum, Bethsaïda, there, within the throw of a stone, was a Nazarene going about inciting the peasants to revolt. It was very vexatious, and he told himself that when an annoyance fades another appears. Life, it occurred to him, was a brier with renascent thorns. And now, as he gargled the wine that left a pink foam on his lips, even that irritation lapsed in the perplexing absence of Pahul.

Pahul was a butler of his, a Greek whom he had picked up one adventurous night in Rome, who had made himself useful, whom he had attached to his household, whom he consulted, and on whom he relied. Early that day he had sent him off with instructions to run the demagogue to earth, to listen, to question if need were, and to hurry back and report. But as yet he had not returned. The day was fading, and on the amphitheatre which the hills made the sun seemed to balance itself, the disk blood-red. The lemurs had tired, perhaps; their yellow eyes and circled tails had gone; the bear had been led away; only the multicolored ape remained, gnawing now with little plaintive moans at a bit of fruit which he held suspiciously in his wrinkled hand.

Presently a star appeared and quivered, then another came, and though overhead were streaks of pink, and, where the sun had been, a violence of red and orange, the east retained its cobalt, night still was remote — an echo of crotals from the neighboring faubourg, the cry of elephants impatient for their fodder, alone indicating that a day was dead.

In the charm of the encroaching twilight the irritation of the tetrarch waned and decreased. He lost himself in memories of the princess who had been his bride, and he wondered were it possible that, despite the irrevocable, he was never to see, to speak, to hold her to him again.

Truly her grievance was unmeasurable, the more so even that she had not deigned to utter so much as a reproach. At the rumor of his treachery she had betaken herself to the solitudes, where Aretas her father was king, and had there remained girt in that unmurmuring silence which nobility raises as a barrier between outrage and itself, and which the desert is alone competent to suggest.

"It is he!"

The tetrarch started so abruptly that he narrowly missed the jar at his side. On noiseless sandals Pahul had approached, and stood before him nodding his head with an air of assured conviction. The ape had fled and a stork stepped gingerly away.

"It is he," the Greek repeated — "John the Baptist."

Antipas plucked at his beard. "But he is dead," he gasped; "I beheaded him. What nonsense you talk!"

"It is he, I tell you, only grown younger. I found him in the synagogue."

"Where? what synagogue?"

Pahul made a gesture. “ At Capharnahum,” he answered, and gazed in the tetrarch’s face. He was slight of form and regular of feature. As a lad he had crossed bare-handed from Cumæ to Rhegium, and from there drifted to Rome, where he started a commerce in Bœtican girls which had so far prospered that he bought two vessels to carry the freight. Unfortunately the vessels met in a storm and sank. Then he became a hanger-on of the circus; in idle moments a tout. It was in the latter capacity that Antipas met him, and, pleased with his shrewdness and perfect corruption, had attached him to his house. This had occurred in years previous, and as yet Antipas had found no cause to regret the trust imposed. He was a useful braggart, idle, familiar, and discreet; and he had acquired the dialect of the country with surprising ease.

“ There were any number of people,” Pahul continued. “ Some said he was the son of Joseph, the son of —— ”

“ But he, what did he say? How tiresome you are! ”

"Ah!" And Pahul swung his arms. "Who is Mammon?"

"Mammon? Mammon? How do I know? Plutus, I suppose. What about him?"

"And who is Satan?"

"Satan? Satan is a—he's a Jew god. Why? But what do you mean by asking me questions?"

Pahul nodded absently. "I heard him say," he continued, "that no man could serve God and Mammon. At first I thought he meant you. It was this way. I got into conversation with a friend of his, a man named Judas. He told me any number of things about him, that he cured the sick——"

"Bah! Some Greek physician."

"That he walks on the sea——"

"Nonsense!"

"That he turns water into wine, feeds the multitude, raises the dead——"

"Raises the dead!" And the tetrarch added in the *sotto voce* of thought, "So did Elijah."

"That he had been in the desert——"

"With Aretas?"

"No; I questioned him on that point. He had never heard of Aretas, but he said that in the desert this Satan had come and offered him — what do you suppose? *The empire of the earth!*"

Antipas shook with fright. "It must have been Aretas."

"But that he had refused."

"Then it was John."

"There, you see." And Pahul dandled himself with the air of one who is master of logic. "That's what I said myself. I said this: 'If he can raise the dead, he can raise himself.'"

"It *is* John," the tetrarch repeated.

"I am sure of it," the butler continued. "But he did not say so. Judas didn't either. On the contrary, he declared he was not. He said John was not good enough to carry his shoes. I saw through that, though," and Pahul leered; "he knew whom I was, and he lied to protect his friend. I of course pretended to believe him."

"Quite right," said the tetrarch.

"Yes, I played the fool. H'm, where was I?

Oh, I asked Judas who then his friend was, but he went over to where a woman stood; he spoke to her; she moved away. Some of the others seemed to reprove him. I would have followed, but at that moment his friend stood up; a khazzan offered him a scroll, but he waved it aside; then some one asked him a question which I did not catch; another spoke to him; a third interrupted; he seemed to be arguing with them. I was too far away to hear well, and I got nearer; then I heard him say, 'I am the bread of life.' Now, what did he mean by that?"

Antipas had no explanation to offer.

"Then," Pahul continued, "he said he had come down from heaven. A man near me exclaimed, 'He is the Messiah'; but others —— "

"The Messiah!" echoed the tetrarch. For a moment his thoughts stammered, then at once he was back in the citadel. On one side was the procurator, on the other the emir of Tadmor. In front of him was a drunken rabble, wrangling Pharisees, and one man dominating the din with an announcement of the Messiah's approach. The murmur of lutes threaded through it all;

and now, as his thoughts deviated, he wondered could that announcement have been the truth.

"But others," Pahul continued, "objected loudly. For a little I could not catch a word. At last they became quieter, and I heard him repeat that he was the bread of life, adding, 'Your fathers ate manna and are dead, but this bread a man may eat of and never die.' At this there was new contention. A woman fainted — the one to whom Judas had spoken. They carried her out. As she passed I could see her face. It was Mary of Magdala. Judas held her by the waist, another her feet."

Antipas drew a hand across his face. "It is impossible," he muttered.

"Not impossible at all. I saw her as plainly as I see you. The man next to me said that the Rabbi had cast from her seven devils. Moreover, Johanna was there — yes, yes, the wife of Khuza, your steward; it was she, I remember now, who had her by the feet. And there were others that I recognized, and others that the man next to me pointed out: Zabdia, a well-to-do fisherman whom I have seen time and again, and with him his sons James and John, and Salomè his wife. Then, too, there were Simon Barjona and Andrew his brother. Simon had his wife with him, his children, and his mother-in-law. The man next to me said that the Rabbi called James and John the Sons of Thunder, and Simon a stone. There was Mathias the tax-gatherer, Philip of Bethsaïda, Joseph Barsaba, Mary Clopas, Susannah, Nathaniel of Cana, Thomas, Thaddeus, Aristian the custom-house officer, Ruth the tax-gatherer's wife, mechanics from Scythopolis, and Scribes from Jerusalem."

The fingers of Antipas' hand glittered with jewels. He played with them nervously. The sky seemed immeasurably distant. For some little time it had been hesitating between different shades of blue, but now it chose a fathomless indigo; Night unloosed her draperies, and, with the prodigality of a queen who reigns only when she falls, flung out upon them uncounted stars.

Pahul continued: " And many of them seemed to be at odds with each other. They wrangled so that often I could not distinguish a word. Some of them left the synagogue. The Rabbi himself must have been vexed, for in a lull I heard him say to those who were nearest, 'Will you also go away?' Judas came in at that moment, and he turned to him: 'Have I not chosen twelve, and is not one of you a devil?' Judas came forward at once and protested. I could see he was in earnest, and meant what he said. The man next told me that he was devoted to the Rabbi. Then Simon Barjona, in answer to his question, called out, 'To whom should we go? Thou art Christ, the Son of God.'"

Antipas had ceased to listen. At the mention of the Messiah the dream of Israel had returned, and with it the pageants of its faith unrolled.

Behind the confines of history, in the naked desert he saw a bedouin, austere and grandiose, preparing the tenets of a nation's creed; in the remoter past a shadow in which there was lightning, then the splendor of that first dawn where the future opened like a book, and in the grammar of the Eternal the promise of an age of gold.

Through the echo of succeeding generations came the rumor of that initial impulse which drew the world in its flight. The bedouin had put the desert behind him, and stared at another. Where the sand had been was the sea. As he passed, the land leapt into life. There were tents and passions, clans not men, an aggregate of forces in which the unit disappeared. For chieftain there was Might; and above, the subjects of impersonal verbs, the Elohim from whom the thunder came, the rain, light and darkness, death and birth, dream too, and nightmare as well. The clans migrated. Goshen called. In its heart Chaldæa spoke. The Elohim vanished, and there was El, the one great god, and Isra-el, the great god's elect. From heights that lost themselves in immensity the ineffable name, incommunicable and never to be pronounced, was seared by forked flames on a tablet of stone. A nation learned that El was Jehovah, that they were in his charge, that he was omnipotent, and that the world was theirs.

They had a law, a covenant, a future, and a god; and as they passed into the lands of the well-beloved, leaving tombs and altars to mark their passage, they had battle-cries that frightened and hymns that exalted the heart. Above were the jealous eyes of Jehovah, and beyond was the resplendent to-morrow. They ravaged the land like hailstones. They had the whirlwind for ally; the moon was their servant; and to aid them the sun stood still. The terror of Sinai gleamed from their breastplates; men could not see their faces and live. They encroached and conquered. They had a home, they made a capitol, and there on a rock-bound hill Antipas saw David founding a line of kings, and Solomon the city of God.

It was in their loins the Messiah was; in them the apex of a nation's prosperity; in them glory at its apogee. And across that tableau of might, of splendor, and of submission for one second flitted the silhouette of that dainty princess of Utopia, the Queen of Sheba, bringing riddles, romance, and riches to the wise young king.

She must have been very beautiful, Antipas with melancholy retrospection reflected; and he fancied her more luminous than the twelve signs of the zodiac, lounging nonchalantly in a palanquin that a white elephant with swaying tail balanced on his painted back. And even as she returned, with a child perhaps, to the griffons of the fabulous Yemen whence she came, Antipas noted a speck on the horizon that grew from minim into mountain, and obscured the entire sky. He saw the empire split in twain, and in the twin halves that formed the perfect whole, a concussion of armies, brothers appealing against their kin, the flight of the Ideal.

Unsummoned before him paraded the regicides, convulsions, and anarchies that deified Hatred until Vengeance incarnate talked Assyrian and Nebuchadnezzar loomed above the desert beyond. His statue filled the perspective. With one broad hand he overturned Jerusalem; with another he swept a nation into captivity, leaving in derision a pigmy for King of Solitude behind, and, blowing the Jews into Babylon, there retained them until it occurred to Cyrus to change the Euphrates' course.

By the light of that legend Antipas saw an immense hall, illuminated by the seven branches of countless candelabra, and filled with revellers celebrating a monarch's feast. Beyond, through retreating columns, were cyclopean arches and towers whose summits were lost in clouds that the lightning rent. At the royal table sat Belsarazzur, laughing mightily at the enterprise of the Persian king; about him were the grandees of his court, the flower of his concubines; at his side were the sacred vases filled with wine. He raised one to his lips, and there on the frieze before him leapt out the flaming letters of his doom, while to the trumpetings of heralds Cyrus and his army beat down the city's gates.

It passed, and Antipas saw Jerusalem repeopled, the Temple rebuilt, peace after exile, the joy of bondage unloosed. For a moment it lasted — a century or two at most; and after Alexander, in chasing kings hither and thither, had passed with his huntsmen that way, Isis and Osiris beckoned, and the descendants of the bedouin belonged to Goshen again, and so remained until Syria took them, lost them, reconquered them, and might have done with them utterly had not Juda Maccabæus flaunted his banner, and the Roman eagles pounced upon their prey. Once more the Temple was rebuilt, surperber than ever, and from the throne of David, Antipas saw the upstart that was his father rule Judæa.

With him the panorama and the kaleidoscope of its details abruptly ceased. But through it all the voices of the prophets had rung more insistently with each defeat. The covenant in the wilderness was unforgetable; in the chained links of slavery they saw the steps of a throne, the triumph of truth over error, peace over war, Israel pontiff and shepherd of the nations of the world.

The expectation of a liberator who should free the bonds of a people and definitively re-create the land of the elect possessed them utterly; his advent had been constantly awaited, obstinately proclaimed; the faith in him was unshakeable. Palestine was filled with believers praying the Eternal not to let them die before the promise was fulfilled; the atmosphere itself was charged with expectation.

And as the visions rushed through his mind, Antipas fell to wondering whether that covenant was as meaningless as he had thought, or whether by any chance this rabbi who had been arguing at Capharnahum could be the usher of Israel's hope. If he were, then indeed he might say good-bye to his tetrarchy, to his dream of a kingdom as well.

" Yes," Pahul repeated, " the Son of God! "

Antipas had been so far away that now he started as one does whom the touch of a hand awakes. To recover himself he leaned over and plunged his face in the jar. The wine brought him courage.

He must be suppressed, he decided.

" But," the butler continued, " I —— "

The frontal of the palace was set with lights. The parasols of the palms had turned from green to black, the stars seemed remoter, the sky more dark. From beyond came the call and answer of the sentinels.

Antipas stood up. A fringe of his tunic was detained by a rivet of the bench on which he had sat; he stooped to loose it; something moist touched his fingers, and as he moved to the palace the black-faced ape sprang at his side and nibbled at the jewels on his hand.

CHAPTER V.

V.

THE house of Simon Barlevi was gray, and in shape an oblong. It had a flat roof laid with a plaster of lime, about which was a fretwork of open tiles. Beneath, for doorway, was a recess, surmounted by an arch and covered with a layer of mud. On each side was a room.

In the recess, sheltered from the sun and visited by the breeze, Simon stood. His garments were white, and where they were not they had been neatly chalked. On the border of his skirt and sleeves were the regulation fringes, and on his forehead and about his left arm the phylacteries which Pharisees affect. He was not pleasant to the eye, but he was virtuous and a strict observer of the Law.

In the room at his left were mats and painted stools, set in the manner customary when guests are awaited. For on that day Simon Barlevi was to give a little feast, to which he had bidden his friends and also a rabbi whom he had listened to in the synagogue, and with whose ideas he did not at all agree. Save for the mats and stools, and a lamp of red clay, the room was bare.

In front of the house was a bit of ground enclosed by a hedge of stones; and now as Simon stood in the recess a guest appeared.

"Reulah!" he exclaimed, "the Lord be with you."

And Reulah answering, as etiquette required, "Unto you be peace, and to your house be peace, and unto all you have be peace," the two friends clasped hands, raised them as though to kiss them, then each withdrawing kissed his own hand, and struck it on his forehead.

Singularly enough, host and guest looked much alike. Simon had the appearance of one conscious of and strong in his own rectitude, while Reulah seemed humbler and more effaced. Otherwise there was not a pin to choose between them.

To Simon's face had come an expression of perplexity in which there was zeal.

" I was thinking, Reulah," he announced, " of the rabbi who is to break bread with us to-day. His teaching does not comfort me."

Reulah was unlatching his shoes. " Nor me," he interjected.

" On questions of purity and impurity he seems unscrupulously negligent. I have heard that he is a glutton and a wine-bibber. I have heard that he despises the washing of the hands."

" Whoso does," Reulah threw back, " will be rooted out of the world."

Simon nodded; a smile of protracted amiability hovered in the corners of his mouth. For a moment he played with his beard.

" I think," he added, " that he will find here food in plenty, and counsel as well."

Reulah closed his eyes benignly, and Simon, in a falsetto which he affected when he desired to impress, continued in gentle menace:

" But I have certain questions to put to him. Whether water from an unclean vessel defiles that which is clean. Whether the flesh of a dead body alone defiles, or the skin and bones as well. I want to see how he will answer that. Then I may ask his opinion on points of the ritual. Should the incense be lighted before the high-priest appears or as he does so. Is or is not the Sabbath broken by the killing of the Paschal lamb? Why is it lawful to take tithe of corn and wine and oil, and not of anise, cummin, and peppers? In swearing by the Temple, should one not first swear by the gold on the Temple? and in swearing by the altar, should one not first swear by the sacrifices on it? These things, since he preaches, he must know. If he does not——"

And Simon looked at his friend as who should say: What is there wanting in me?

"If I may be taught another duty I will observe it," said Reulah, sweetly.

At this evidence of meekness Simon grunted. Two other guests were approaching. On the edges of their tallîth were tassels made of four threads which had been drawn through an eyelet and doubled to make eight. Seven of these threads were of equal length, but the eighth was longer, and, twisted into five knots, represented the five books of the Law. The right hand on the left breast, they saluted their host, and placing in turn a hand under his beard, they kissed it. A buzz of inquiries followed, interrupted by the coming and embracing of newer guests, the unloosing of sandals, the washing of feet.

As they assembled, one drew Simon aside and whispered importantly. Simon's eyes dilated, astonishment lifted him, visibly, like a lash, and his hands trembled above his head.

"Have you heard," he exclaimed to the others — "have you heard that the Nazarene whom I invited here, and who pretends to be a prophet, allowed his followers to pluck corn on the Sabbath, to thresh it even, and defended and approved their violation of the Law? Have you heard it? Is it true?"

Reulah quaked as one stricken by palsy. "On the Sabbath!" he moaned. "On the Sabbath! Why, I would not send a message on Wednesday, lest perchance it should be delivered on the Sabbath day. Surely it cannot be."

But on that point the others were certain. They were all aware of the scandal; one had been an eye-witness, another had heard the Nazarene assert that he was " Lord of the Day."

" This is monstrous! " Simon cried.

" He declared," the eye-witness continued, " that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

" It is monstrous! " Simon repeated. " The command to do no manner of work is absolute and emphatic. The killing of a flea on the Sabbath is as heinous as the butchering of a bullock. The preservation of life itself is inhibited. Moses had the son of Shelomith stoned to death for gathering sticks on it. Shammai occupied six days of the week in thinking how he could best observe it. It is unlawful to wear a false tooth on the Sabbath, and if a tooth ache it is unlawful to rinse the mouth with vinegar."

" Yet," objected Reulah, " it is lawful to hold the vinegar in the mouth provided you swallow it afterward."

No one paid any attention to him. Simon's indignation increased. Of the thirty-nine

Abhôth he quoted twelve; he showed that the Nazarene had violated each one of these prohibitions against labor; he showed, too, that by his subsequent speech and bearing he had practically scoffed at the Toldôth, at the synagogue which had drawn it up as well.

" If the Sadducees were not in power, Jerusalem should hear of this. As it is —— "

Whatever resolution he may have intended to express remained unuttered. A silence fell upon his lips; his guests drew back. At the step stood the Nazarene, behind him his treasurer, Judas of Kerioth. For a second only Jesus hesitated. He stooped, undid his shoes, and moved to where Simon stood. The latter bowed constrainedly.

" Master," he said, " we awaited you."

At this his friends retreated into the little room. Reulah reached the middle seat of the central mat first and held it, his nostrils quivering at the envy of the others.

Preceded by their host, Jesus and Judas found places near together, and, the usual ablutions performed, the customary prayers recited, lay, the upper part of the body supported by the left arm, the head raised, the limbs outstretched.

On the stools were dishes of stewed lentils, milk, and cakes of mashed locusts. Reulah ate with the tips of his lips, greedily, like a goat. Judas, too, ate with an air of hunger. The Master broke bread absently, his thoughts on other things. These thoughts Simon interrupted.

" Rabbi " — and to his wide mouth came the sneer of one propounding a riddle already solved — " it is not meet, is it, to thresh on the Sabbath day? Yet since you permit your followers to do so, how are we to distinguish between what is lawful and what is not? "

The Master raised his eyes. The dawn was in them, high noon as well.

" Show yourself a tried money-changer. Choose that which is good metal, reject that which is bad."

Simon blinked as at a sudden light.

" But," he persisted, " in seeking to observe the Law, there is not a jot or tittle in it that can be rejected."

With an acquiescence that was both vague and melancholy, Jesus looked the Pharisee in the face.

"Seek those things that are great, and little things will be added unto you ——"

He would have said more, perhaps, but a woman who had entered from the recess approached circuitously, and kneeling beside him let a tear, long as a pearl, fall upon his unsandalled feet.

Judas' heart bounded; he glared at her, his eyes dilating like a leopard preparing to spring. At once he was back in the circus, gazing into the perils and the splendors of a woman's face, telling himself with reiterated insistence that to hold her to him would be the birthday of his life; and here, within reach of his hand, was she whom in the din of the chariots he had recognized as the one woman in all the world, and who for one moment the day before had lain unconscious in his arms.

Reulah sat motionless, his mouth agape, a finger extended. "The paramour of Pandera," he stammered at last; and lowering his eyes, he looked at her covetously from beneath the lids.

Simon, too, sat motionless. There was rage in his expression, hate even — that hatred which the beautiful excites in the base. Time and again he had seen her; she was a byword with him; from the height of her residence she looked down on his mean gray walls; her luxury had been an insult to his abstinence; and with that zest which a small nature takes in the humiliation of its superior, he determined, in spite of her manifest abjection, to humiliate her still more.

" If this man," he confided to his neighbor, " has in him anything of that which goes to the making of a prophet, he will divine what manner of woman she is. If he does not, I will denounce them both." And nourishing his hate he waited yet a while.

The Master seemed depressed. The great secret which in all the world he alone possessed may have weighed with him. But he turned to Mary and looked at her. As he looked she bent yet lower. The marvel of her hair was unconfined; it fell about her in tangling streams of gold and flame, while on his feet there fell from her tears such as no women ever shed before. In the era of primitive hospitality the daughters of kings had not disdained to unlatch the sandals of their fathers' guests; but now, at the feet of Mercy, for the first time Repentance knelt. And still the tears continued, unstanched and undetained. Grief, something keener still perhaps, had claimed her as its own. She bent lower. Then Misery looked up at Compassion.

The Master stretched his hand. For a moment it rested on her head. She quivered and clutched at her throat; and as he withdrew that hand, in which all panaceas were, from her gown she took a little box, opened it, and dropping the contents where the tears had fallen, with a sudden movement she caught her hair and poured its lava on his feet.

An aroma of beckoning oases filled the small room, passed into the recess, mounted to the roof, pervaded and penetrated it, and escaped to the sky above.

And still she wept. Judas no longer saw her tears, he heard them. They fell swiftly one after another, like the ripple of the rain. A sob broke from her, but in it was something which foretokened peace, the sob which comes to those who have conceived a despairing hope, and suddenly intercept its fulfilment. Her hands trembled; the little box fell from her and broke. The noise it made exorcised the silence.

The Master turned to his host. "I have a word to say to you."

Simon stroked his beard and bowed.

"There was once a man who had two debtors. One owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty. Both were poor, and because of their poverty the debt of each he forgave."

For an instant Jesus paused and seemed to muse; then, with that indulgence which was to illuminate the world, "Tell me, Simon," he inquired, "which was the more grateful?"

Simon assumed an air of perplexity, and glanced cunningly from one guest to another. Presently he laughed outright.

"Why, the one who owed the most, of course."

Reulah suppressed a giggle. By the expression of the others it was patent that to them also the jest appealed. Only Judas did not seem to have heard; he sat bolt upright, fumbling Mary with his violent eyes.

The Master made a gesture of assent, and turned to where Mary crouched. She was staring at him with that look which the magnetized share with animals.

" You see her? "

Straightening himself, he leaned on his elbow and scrutinized his host.

" Simon, I am your guest. When I entered here there was no kiss to greet me, there was no oil for my head, no water for my feet. But this woman whom you despise has not ceased to embrace them. She has washed them with her tears, anointed them with nard, and dried them with her hair. Her sins, it may be, are many, but, Simon, they are forgiven —— "

Simon, Reulah, the others, muttered querulously. To forgive sins was indeed an attribute which no one, save the Eternal, could arrogate to himself.

"— for she has loved much."

And turning again to Mary, who had crouched at his side, he added:

"Your sins are forgiven. Go now, and in peace."

But the fierce surprise of the Pharisees was not to be shocked into silence. Reulah showed his teeth; they were pointed and treacherous as a jackal's. Simon loudly asserted disapproval and wonder too.

"I am amazed ——" he began.

The Master checked him:

"The beginning of truth is amazement. Wonder, then, at what you see; for he that wonders shall reign, and he that reigns shall rest."

The music of his voice heightened the beauty of the speech. On Mary it fell and rested as had the touch of his hand.

"Messiah, my Lord!" she cried. "In your breast is the future, in your heart the confidence of God. Let me tell you. There are those that live whose lives are passed; the tombs do not hold all of those that are dead. I was dead;

you brought me to life. I had no conscience; you gave me one, for I was dead," she insisted. "And yet," she added, with a little moan, so human, so sincere, that it might have stirred a Cæsar, let alone a Christ, "not wholly dead. No, no, dear Lord, not wholly dead."

Again her tears gushed forth, profuser and more abundant than before; her frail body shook with sobs, her fingers intertwined.

"Not wholly dead," she kept repeating. "No, no, not wholly dead."

Jesus touched his treasurer.

"She is not herself. Lead her away; see her to her home." And that the others might hear, and profit as well, he added, in a higher key, "Deference to a woman is always due."

And to those words, which were to found chivalry and banish the boor, Judas led Mary from the room.

CHAPTER VI.

VI.

"ARE you better?"

The road that skirted the lake had branched to the left, and there an easy ascent led to the hill beyond. On both sides were carpets of flowers and of green, and slender larches that held their arms and hid the sky. Above, an eagle circled, and on the lake a sail flapped idly.

"Yes, I am better," Mary answered.

From her eyes the perils had passed, but the splendors remained, accentuated now by vistas visible only to herself. The antimony, too, with which she darkened them had gone, and with it the alkanet she had used on her cheeks. Her dress was olive, and, contrary to custom, her head uncovered.

"You are not strong, perhaps?"

As Judas spoke, he thought of the episode in the synagogue, and wished her again unconscious in his arms.

"I have been so weak," she murmured. And after a moment she added: "I am tired; let me sit awhile."

The carpet of flowers and of green invited, and presently Judas dropped at her side. About his waist a linen girdle had been wound many times; from it a bag of lynx-skin hung. The white garments, the ample turban that he wore, were those of ordinary life, but in his bearing was just that evanescent charm which now and then the Oriental possesses — the subtlety that subjugates and does not last.

"But you must be strong; we need your strength."

Mary turned to him wonderingly.

"Yes," he repeated, "we need your strength. Johanna has joined us, as you know. Susannah too. They do what they can; but we need others — we need you."

"Do you mean ——"

Something had tapped at her heart, something which was both joy and dread, and she hesitated, fearing that the possibility which Judas suggested was unreal, that she had not heard his words aright.

"Do you mean that he would let me?"

"He would love you for it. But then he loves everyone, yet best, I think, his enemies."

"They need it most," Mary answered; but her thoughts had wandered.

"And I," Judas added — "I loved you long ago."

Then he too hesitated, as though uncertain what next to say, and glanced at her covertly. She was looking across the lake, over the country of the Gadarenes, beyond even that, perhaps, into some infinite veiled to him.

"I remember," he continued, tentatively, "it was there at Tiberias I saw you first. You were entering the palace. I waited. The sentries ordered me off; one threw a stone. I went to where the garden is; I thought you might be among the flowers. The wall was so high I could not see. The guards drove me away. I ran up the hill through the white and red terraces of the grape. From there I could see the gardens, the elephants with their ears painted, and the oxen with the twisted horns. The wind sung about me like a flute; the sky was a tent of different hues. Something within me had sprung into life. It was love, I knew. It had come before, yes, often, but never as then. For," he added, and the gleam of his eyes was as a fanfare to the thought he was about to express, "love returns to the heart as the leaf returns to the tree."

Mary looked at him vacantly. "What was he saying?" she wondered. From a sea of grief she seemed to be passing onto an archipelago of dream.

"The next day I loitered in the neighborhood of the palace. You did not appear. Toward evening I questioned a gardener. He said your name was Mary, but he would tell me nothing else. On the morrow was the circus. I made sure you would be there — with the tetrarch, I thought; and, that I might be near the tribune, before the sun had set I was at the circus gate. There were others that came and waited, but I was first. I remember that night as never any since. I lay outstretched, and watched the moon; your face was in it: it was a dream, of course. Yes, the night passed quickly, but the morning lagged. When the gate was open, I sprang like a zemer from tier to tier until I reached the tribune. There, close by, I sat and waited. At last you came, and with you new perfumes and poisons. Did you feel my eyes? they must have burned into you. But no, you gave no heed to me. They told me afterward that Scarlet won three times. I did not know. I saw but you. Once merely an abyss in which lightning was.

" Before the last race was done I got down and tried to be near the exit through which I knew you must pass. The guards would not let me. The next day I made friends with a sentry. He told me that you were Mirjam of Magdala; that Tiberius wished you at Rome, and that you had gone with Antipas to his citadel. In the wine-shops that night men slunk from me afraid. A week followed of which I knew nothing, then chance disentangled its threads. I found myself in a crowd at the base of a hill; a prophet was preaching. I had heard prophets before; they were as torches in the night: he was the Day. I listened and forgot you. He called me; I followed. Until Sunday I had not thought of you again. But when you appeared in the synagogue I started; and when you fainted, when I held you in my arms and your eyes opened as flowers do, I looked into them and it all returned. Mary, kiss me and kill me, but kiss me first."

"Yes, he is the Day."

Of the entire speech she had heard but that. It had entered perhaps into thoughts of her own with which it was in unison, and she repeated the phrase mechanically, as a child might do. But now as he ceased to speak, perplexed, annoyed too at the inappositeness of her reply, she came back from the infinite in which she had roamed, and for a moment both were silent.

At the turning of the road a man appeared. At the sight of Judas he halted, then called him excitedly by name.

"It is Mathias," Judas muttered, and got to his feet. The man hurried to them. He was broad of shoulder and of girth, the jaw lank and earnest. His eyes were small, and the lids twitched nervously. He was out of breath, and his garments were dust-covered.

"Where is the Master?" he asked; and at once, without waiting a reply, he added: "I have just seen Johanna. Her husband told her that the tetrarch is seeking him; he thinks him John, and would do him harm. We must go from here."

Judas assented. "Yes, we must all go. Mary, it may be a penance, but it is his will."

Mathias gazed inquiringly at them both.

"It is his will," Judas repeated, authoritatively.

Mary turned away and caught her forehead in her hands. "If this is a penance," she murmured, "what then are his rewards?"

CHAPTER VII.

VII.

ON the floor of a little room Mary lay, her face to the ground. In her ears was the hideousness of a threat that had fastened on her abruptly like a cheetah in the dark. From below came the sound of banqueting. Beyond was the Bitter Sea, the stars dancing in its ripples; and there in the shadow of the evergreens was the hut in which that Sephôrah lived to whom long ago Martha had forbidden her to speak. Through the lattice came the scent of olive-trees, and with it the irresistible breath of spring.

In its caress the threat which had made her its own presently was lifted, and mingling with other things fused into them. The kaleidoscope of time and events which visits those that drown possessed her, and for a second Mary relived a year.

There had been the sudden flight from Magdala, the first days with the Master, the gorges of the Jordan, the journey to the coast, the glittering green scales of that hydra the sea. Then the loiterings on the banks of the sacred Leontes, the journey back to Galilee, the momentary halt at Magdala, the sail past Bethsaïda, Capharnahum, Chorazin, the fording of the river, the trip to Cæsarea Philippi, the snow and gold of Hermon, the visit to Gennesareth, the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the return to Bethany.

Her recollections intercrossed, scenes that were trivial ousted others that were grave; the purple limpets of Sidon, the shrine of Ashtaroth, the invective at Bethsaïda, the transfiguration on the mountain height, the cure of lepers, and the presence that coerced. Yet through them all certain things remained immutable, and of these, primarily her contact with the Christ.

To her, Jesus was not the Son of man alone, he was the light of this world, the usher of the next. When he spoke, there came to her a sense of frightened joy so acute that the hypostatical union which left even the disciples perplexed was by her realized and understood. She had the faith of a little child. And on the hills and through the intervales over which they journeyed, in the glare of the eager sun or beneath the wattled boughs, the emanations of the Divine filled her with transports so contagious that they affected even Thomas, who was skeptical by birth; and when, after the descent from Hermon, two or three of the disciples mused together over the spectacle which they had seen, the rhyme of her lips parted ineffably. She too had seen him aureoled with the sun, dazzling as the snow-fields on the heights. To her it was ever in that aspect he appeared, with a radiance so intense even that there had been moments in which she had veiled her eyes as from a light that only eagles could support. To her, marvels were as natural as the escape of night. At Beth-Seân she had heard him speak to dumb beasts, and never doubted but that they answered him. At Dan she had seen a short-eared hare rush to him for refuge, and follow him afterwards as a dog might do. At Kinnereth he had called to a lark that from a tree-top was pouring its heart out to the morning, and the lark had fluttered down and nestled in his hand. At Gadara he had tamed wild doves, and a swarm of bees had stopped and glistened in his hair. At Cæsarea, when he began to speak, the thrushes that had been singing ceased; and when the parables were delivered, began anew, louder, more jubilant than before, and continued to sing until he blessed them, when they mounted in one long ascending line straight to the zenith above. At his approach the little gold-bellied fish of the Leontes had leaped from the stream. In the suburbs of Sidon the jackals had fawned at his feet. The underbrush had parted to let him pass, and where he passed white roses came and the tenderness of anemones. At times he seemed to her immaterial as a shadow in a dream, at others appalling as the desert; and once when, in prayer, she entered with him into the intimacy of the infinite, she caught the shiver of an invisible harp whose notes seemed to fall from the night. And as she journeyed, her love expanded with the horizon. She loved with a love no woman's heart has transcended. In its prodigality and ascending gammes there was place for nothing save the Ideal.

The little band meanwhile lived as strangers on earth. Out of her abundant means their simple wants were supplied. She was less a burden than a sustenance; her faith bridged many a doubtful hour; and when, as often occurred, they disputed among themselves concerning their future rank and precedence, Mary dreamed of a paradise more pure.

One evening, near the rushes of Lake Phiala, where the Jordan leaps anew to the light, a Greek merchant who had refused them shelter at Seleucia ambled that way on an ass, and would have stopped, perhaps, but one of the band scoffed him, and he rode on, and disappeared in the haze of the hills.

Unobserved, the Master had seen and heard; presently he called them to where he stood.

"Do not think," he admonished — "do not think that because you imitate the Pharisees you are perfecting your lives. They fast, they pray, they weep, and they mortify the flesh;

but to them one thing is impossible, charity to the failings of others. Whoso then shall come to you, be he friend or foe, penitent or thief, receive him kindly. Aid the helpless, console the unfortunate, forgive your enemy, and forget yourselves — that is charity. Without it the kingdom of heaven is lost to you. There, there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female; nor can it come to you until the garment of shame is trampled under foot, until two are as one, and the body which is without is as the soul within."

Thereat, with a gesture of exquisite indulgence, he turned and left them to the stars.

Mary had heard, and in the palingenesis disclosed she saw space wrapped in a luminous atmosphere, such as she fancied lay behind the sun. There, instead of the thrones and diadems of the elect, was an immutable realm in which there was neither death nor life, clear ether merely, charged with beatitudes. And so, when the disciples disputed among themselves, Mary dreamed of diaphanous hours and immaculate days that knew no night, and in this wise lived until from the terrace of Jerusalem's Temple the Master bade her return to Bethany and wait him there.

Obedience to that command was bitter to her. She did not murmur, however. "Rabboni," she cried, "let me but do your will on earth, and afterwards save me or destroy me as your pleasure is."

With that she had gone to her sister's house, and to the bewildered Martha poured out her heart anew. There could be no question of forgiveness now, of penitence even; her sins, such as they were, had been remitted by one to whom pardon was an attribute. And this doubtless Martha understood, for she took her in her arms unreproachfully and mingled her tears with hers.

Where all is marvel the marvellous disappears. To the accounts which Mary gave of her journeys with the little band that followed the Master, Martha listened with an attention which nothing could distract. With her she sailed on the lovely lake; with her she visited cities smothering in the scent of cassia and of sugar-cane; with her she passed through glens where panthers prowled, and bandits crueller than they. With her eyes she saw the listening multitudes, with her ears she heard again the words of divine forgiveness; and, the lulab and the citron in her hands, she assisted at the Feast of the Tabernacles, and watched the vain attempt to charm the recalcitrant Temple and captivate the inimical town.

For in Jerusalem, in place of the reassuring confidence of peasants, was the irritable incredulity of priests; instead of meadows, courts. Besides, was not this prophet from Galilee, and what good had ever come from there? Then, too, he was not an authorized teacher. He belonged to no school. The followers of Hillel, the disciples of Shammai, did not recognize him. He was merely a fractious Nazarene trained in the shop of a carpenter; one who, by repeating that it was easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, flattered basely the mob of mendicants that surrounded him. The rabble admired, but the clergy stood aloof.

When he was not ignored he was disdained. Save the pleb, no one listened.

Presently he spoke louder. Into the grave music of the Syro-Chaldaic tongue he put the mutterings of thunder. Where he had preached, he upbraided; in place of exquisite parables came sonorous threats. He blessed but rarely, sometimes he cursed. That mosaic, the Law, he treated like a cobweb; and to the arrogant clergy a rumor filtered that this vagabond, who had not where to lay his head, declared his ability to destroy the Temple, and to rebuild it, in three days, anew.

A rumor such as that was incredible. Inquiries were made. The rumor was substantiated. It was learned that he healed the sick, cured the blind; that he was in league, perhaps, with the Pharisees.

The Sanhedrim took counsel. They were Sadducees every one. The Pharisees were their hereditary force. Both were militant, directing men and things as best they could. The Sadducees held strictly to the letter of the Law; the Pharisees held to the Law, and to tradition as well. But the Sadducees were in power, the Pharisees were not. The former endeavored in every way to maintain their authority over the people; and against that authority, against the aristocracy, the priesthood, and the accomplices of foreign dominion, the Pharisees ceaselessly excited the mob. In their inability to overthrow the pontificate, they undermined it. With microscopic attention they examined and criticised every act of the clergy; and, with a view of showing the incompetence of the priests, they affected rigid theories in regard to ritualistic points. Every detail of the ceremonial office was watched by them with eyes that were never pleased. They asserted that the rolls of the Law from which the priests read the Pentateuch were made of impure matter, and, having handled them, the priests had become impure as well. The manner in which the incense was made and offered, the minutiæ governing the sacrifices, the legality of hierarchal decisions — on each and every possible subject they exerted themselves to show the unworthiness of the officiants, insinuating even that the names of the fathers of many of the priests were not inscribed at Zipporim in the archives of Jeshana. As a consequence, many of those whose rights the Pharisees affected to uphold saw in the hierarchy little more than a body of men unworthy to approach the altar, a group of Herodians who in religion lacked every requisite for the service of God, and who in public and in private were bankrupts in patriotism, morality, and shame.

The possibility, therefore, that this fractious demagogue had found favor with the Pharisees was grave. He was becoming a force. He threatened many a prerogative. Moreover, Jerusalem had had enough of agitators. People were drawn by their promises into the solitudes, and there incited to revolt. Rome did not look upon these things leniently. If they continued, Tiberius was quite capable of putting Judæa in a yoke which it would not be easy to carry. Clearly the Nazarene was seditious, and as such to be abolished. The difficulty was to abolish him and yet conciliate the mob.

It was then that the Sanhedrim took counsel.

As a result, and with the hope of entrapping him into some blasphemous utterance on which a charge would lie, they sent meek-eyed Scribes to question him concerning the authority that he claimed. He routed the meek-eyed Scribes. Then, fancying that he might be seduced into some expression which could be construed as treason, they sent young and earnest men to learn from him their duty to Rome. The young and earnest men returned crestfallen and abashed.

The elders, nonplussed, debated. A levite suspected that the casuistry and marvellous cures of the Nazarene must be due to a knowledge of the incommunicable name, Shemhammephorash, seared on stone in the thunders of Sinai, and which to utter was to summon life or beckon death. Another had heard that while in Galilee he was believed to be in league with Baal-Zebub, Lord of Flies.

To this gossip no attention was paid. Annas, merely — the old high-priest, father-in-law of Caiaphas, who officiated in his stead — laughed to himself. There was no such stone, there was no such god. Another idea had been welcomed. A festival was in progress; there was gayety in the neighborhood, drinking too; and as over a million of pilgrims were herded together, now and then an offence occurred. The previous night, for instance, a woman had been arrested for illicit commerce.

Annas tapped on his chin. He had the pompous air of a chameleon, the same long, thin lips, the large, protruding eyes.

" Take her before the Galilean," he said. " He claims to be a rabbi; he must know the Law. If he acquit her, it is heresy, and for that a charge will lie. Does he condemn her he is at our mercy, for he will have alienated the mob."

A smile of perfect understanding passed like a vagrant breeze across the faces of the elders, and the levites were ordered to lead the prisoner to the Christ.

They found him in the Woman's Court. From a lateral chamber a priest, unfit for other than menial services because of a carbuncle on his lip, dropped the wood he was sorting for the altar and gazed curiously at the advancing throng, in which the prisoner was.

She must have been very fair, but now her features were distorted with anguish, veiled with shame. The blue robe she wore was torn, and a sleeve rent to the shoulder disclosed a bare white arm. She was a wife, a mother too. Her name was Ahulah; her husband was a shoemaker. At the Gannath Gate, where her home was, were two little children. She worshipped them, and her husband she adored. Some hallucination, a tremor of the flesh, the flush of wine, and there, circled by a leering crowd, she crouched, her life disgraced, irrecoverable for evermore.

The charge was made, the usual question propounded. The Master had glanced at her but once. He seemed to be looking afar, beyond the Temple and its terraces, beyond the horizon itself. But the accusers were impatient. He bent forward and with a finger wrote on the ground. The letters were illegible, perhaps, yet the symbol of obliteration was in that dust which the morrow would disperse. Again he wrote, but the charge was repeated, louder, more impatiently than before.

Jesus straightened himself. With the weary indulgence of one to whom hearts are as books, he looked about him, then to the dome above.

"Whoever is without sin among you," he declared, "may cast the first stone."

When he looked again the crowd had slunk away. Only Ahulah remained, her head bowed on her bare white arm. From the lateral chamber the priest still peered, the carbuncle glistening on his lip.

"Did none condemn you?" the Master asked.

And as she sobbed merely, he added: "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."

To the elders this was very discomforting. They had failed to unmask him as a traitor to God, to Rome even, or yet as a demagogue defying the Law. They did not care to question again. He had worsted them three times. Nor could they without due cause arrest him, for there were the Pharisees. Besides, a religious trial was full of risk, and the coöperation of the procurator not readily to be relied on. It was that coöperation they needed most, for with it such feeling as might be aroused would fall on Rome and not on them. As for Pilate, he could put a sword in front of what he said.

In their enforced inaction they got behind that wall of prejudice where they and their kin feel most secure, and there waited, prepared at the first opportunity to invoke the laws of their ancestors, laws so cumbersome and complex that the Romans, accustomed to the clearest pandects, had laughed and left them, erasing only the right to kill.

At last chance smiled. Into Jerusalem a rumor filtered that the Nazarene they hated so had raised the dead, that the suburbs hailed him as the Messiah, and that he proclaimed himself the Son of God. At once the Sanhedrim reassembled. A political deliverer they might have welcomed, but in a Messiah they had little faith. The very fact of his Messiahship constituted him a claimant to the Jewish throne, and as such a pretender with whom Pilate could deal. Moreover — and here was the point —

to claim divinity was to attack the unity of God. Of impious blasphemy there was no higher form.

It were better, Annas suggested, that a man should die than that a nation should perish — a truism, surely, not to be gainsaid.

That night it was decided that Jesus and Judaism could not live together; a price was placed upon his head, and to the blare of four hundred trumpets excommunication was pronounced.

Of all of these incidents save the last Mary had been necessarily aware. In company with Johanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Mary, wife of Clopas, and Salomè, mother of Zebedee's children, she had heard him reiterate the burning words of Jeremiah, and seen him purge the Temple of its traffickers; she had heard, too, the esoteric proclamation, " Before Abraham was, I am "; and she had seen him lash the Sadducees with invective. She had been present when a letter was brought from Abgar Uchomo, King of Edessa, to Jesus, " the good Redeemer," in which the potentate prayed the prophet to come and heal him of a sickness which he had, offering him a refuge from the Jews, and quaintly setting forth the writer's belief that Jesus was God or else His Son. She had been present, also, when the charge was made against Ahulah, and had comforted that unfortunate in womanly ways. " Surely," she had said, " if the Master who does not love you can forgive, how much more readily must your husband who does! " Whereupon Ahulah had become her slave, tending her thereafter with almost bestial devotion.

These episodes, one after another, she related to Martha; to Eleazer, her brother; to Simon, Martha's husband; to anyone that chanced that way. For it was then that the Master had bade her go to Bethany. For a little space he too had forsaken Jerusalem. Now and then with some of his followers he would venture in the neighborhood, yet only to be off again through the scorched hollows of the Ghôr before the sun was up.

These things it was that paraded before her as she lay on the floor of the little room, felled by the hideousness of a threat that had sprung upon her, abruptly, like a cheetah in the dark. To Martha and to the others on one subject alone had she been silent, and now at the moment it dominated all else.

From the day on which she joined the little band to whom the future was to give half of this world and all of the next, Judas had been ever at her ear. As a door that opens and shuts at the will of a hand, his presence and absence had barred the vistas or left them clear. At first he had affected her as a scarabæus affects the rose. She knew of him, and that was all. When he spoke, she thought of other things. And as the blind remain unawakened by the day, he never saw that where the wanton had been the saint had come. To him she was a book of ivory bound in gold, whose contents he longed to possess; she was a book, but one from which whole chapters had been torn, the preface destroyed; and when his increasing insistence forced itself upon her, demanding, obviously, countenance or rebuke, she walked serenely on her way, disdaining either, occupied with higher things. It was of the Master only that she appeared to think. When he spoke, it was to her as though God really lived on earth; her eyes lighted ineffably, and visibly all else was instantly forgot. At that time her life was a dream into whose charmed precincts a bat had flown.

These things, gradually, Judas must have understood. In Mary's eyes he may have caught the intimation that to her now only the ideal was real; or the idea may have visited him that in the infinite of her faith he disappeared and ceased to be. In any event he must have taken counsel with himself, for one day he approached her with a newer theme.

"I have knocked on the tombs; they are dumb."

Mary, with that grace with which a woman gathers a flower when thinking of him whom she loves, bent a little and turned away.

"Have you heard of the Buddha?" he asked. "Babylon is peopled with his disciples. One of them met Jesus in the desert, and taught him his belief. It is that he preaches now, only the

Buddha did not know of a heaven, for there is none."

And he added, after a pause: "I tell you I have knocked on the tombs; there is no answer there."

With that, as a panther falls asleep, his claw blood-red, Judas nodded and left her to her thoughts.

"In Eternity there is room for everything," she said, when he came to her again.

"Eternity is an abyss which the tomb uses for a sewer," he answered. "Its flood is corruption. The day only exists, but in it is that freedom which waves possess. Mary, if you would but taste it with me! Oh, to mix with you as light with day, as stream with sea, I would suck the flame that flickers on the walls of sepulchres."

She shuddered, and he saw it.

"You have taught me to love," he hissed; "do not teach me now to hate."

Mary mastered her revolt. "Judas, the day will come when you will cease to speak as you do."

“You believe, then, still?”

“Yes, surely; and so do you.”

“The day will come,” he muttered, “when you will cease to believe.”

“And you too,” she answered. “For then you will *know*.”

The dialogue with its variations continued, at intervals, for months. There were times, weeks even, when he avoided all speech with her. Then, abruptly, when she expected it least, he would return more volcanic than before. These attacks she accustomed herself to regard as necessary, perhaps, to the training of patience, of charity too, and so bore with them, until at last Jerusalem was reached. Meanwhile she held to her trust as to a fringe of the mantle of Christ. To her the past was a grammar, its name — To-morrow. And in the service of the Master, in the future which he had evoked, she journeyed and dreamed.

But in Jerusalem Judas grew acrider. He had fits of unnecessary laughter, and spells of the deepest melancholy. He quarrelled with anyone who would let him, and then for the irritation he had displayed he would make amends that were wholly slavish. His companions distrusted him. He had been seen talking amicably with the corrupt levites, the police of the Temple, and once he had been detected in a wine-shop of low repute. The Master, apparently, noticed nothing of this; nor did Mary, whose thoughts were on other things.

At Bethany one evening Judas came to her. The sun, sinking through clouds, placed in the west the tableau of a duel to the death between a titan and a god. There was the glitter of gigantic swords, and the red of immortal blood.

" Mary," he began, and as he spoke there was a new note in his voice — " Mary, I have watched and waited, and to those that watch how many lamps burn out! One after another those that I tended went. There was a flicker, a little smoke, and they had gone. I tried to relight them, but perhaps the oil was spent; perhaps, too, I was like the blind that hold a torch. My way has not been clear. The faith I had, and which, I do not know, but which, it may be, would have been strengthened, evaporated when you came. The rays of the sun I had revered became as the threads of shadows, interconnecting life and death. In them I could see but you. In the jaw of night, in the teeth of day, always I have seen you. Mary, love is a net which woman throws. In casting yours — there! unintentionally, I know — you caught my soul. It is yours now wholly until time shall cease to be. Will you take it, Mary, or will you put it aside, a thing forever dead? "

Mary made no answer. It may be she had not heard. In the west both titan and god had disappeared. Above, in a field of stars, the moon hung, a scythe of gold. The air was still, the hush of locusts accentuating the silence and bidding it be at rest. In a house near by there were lights shining. A woman looked out and called into the night.

Then, as though moved by some jealousy of the impalpable, Judas leaned forward and peered into her face.

" It is the Master who keeps you from me, is it not? "

“It is my belief,” she answered, simply.

“It was he that gave it to you. Mary, do you know that there is a price upon his head? Do you know that if I cannot slake my love, at least I can gorge my hate? Do you know that, Mary? Do you know it? Now choose between your belief and me; if you prefer the former, the Sanhedrim will have him to-morrow. There, your sister is calling; go — and choose.”

It was with the hideousness of this threat in her ears that Mary escaped to the little room where her childhood had been passed and flung herself on the floor. From beyond came the sound of banqueting. Martha was entertaining the Lord, his disciples as well; and Mary knew that her aid was needed. But the threat pinioned and held her down. To accede was death, not of the body alone, but of the soul as well. There was no clear pool in which she might cleanse the stain; there could be no forgiveness, no obliteration, nothing in fact save the loss never to be recovered of life in the diaphanous hours and immaculate days of which she had dreamed so long.

For a little space she tried to comfort herself. Perhaps Judas was not in earnest; perhaps even he had lied. And if he had not, was there not time in plenty? The desert was neighborly. She could follow the Master there, and minister to him till the sky opened and the kingdom was prepared. And the threat, coupled with that perspective, charmed, and for the moment had for her that enticement which the quarrels and kisses of children equally possess. She would warn him secretly, she decided, for surely as yet he did not know; she would warn him, and before the sun was up he could be beyond the Sanhedrim's reach, and she preparing to follow. For a moment she lost herself in anticipation; then, the threat loosening its hold, she stood up, her face very white in the starlight, her eyes brave and alert. Already her plan was formed; and, taking a vase that she had brought with her from Magdala, she hurried to the room below.

The Master; the disciples; Eleazer, her brother; Simon, her sister's husband, were all at meat. Martha was serving, and as Mary entered Judas stood up. She moved to where the Master was, and on him poured the contents of the vase. Thomas sniffed delightedly, for now the room was full of fragrance. The Master turned to her and smiled; the homage evidently was grateful. Mary bent nearer. Thomas and Bartholomew joined in loud praises of the aroma of the nard, and under cover of their voices she whispered,

" Rabboni, the Sanhedrim has placed a price on —— "

The whisper was drowned and interrupted. Judas had shoved her away. " To what end is this waste? " he asked; and as Mary looked in his face she saw by the expression in it that her purpose had been divined and her warning overheard.

" It is absurd," he continued, with affected anger. " Ointment such as that has a value. It might better have been saved for the poor."

Thomas chimed in approvingly; placed in that light it was indeed an extravagance, unnecessary too, and he looked about to his comrades for support. Eleazer and Peter seemed inclined to view the matter differently. A discussion would have arisen, but the Master checked it gently, as was his wont.

" The poor are always with you, but me you cannot always have."

As he spoke he turned to Judas with that indulgence which was to be a heritage.

Could he *know?* Judas wondered. Had he heard what Mary said? And, the Master's speech continuing, he glanced at her and left the room.

The moon had mowed the stars, but the sky was visibly blue. Behind the shoulder of Olivet he divined the silence of Jerusalem, the welcome of the Sadducees, the joy of hate assuaged. There was but one thing now that might deter; and as his thoughts groped through that possibility, Mary stood at his side.

" Judas —— "

He wheeled, and, catching her by the wrists, stared into her eyes.

" Is it yes? "

A shudder seized her. There was dread in it, anguish too, and both were mortal. He had not lied, she saw, and the threat was real.

"Is it yes?" he repeated.

There may be moments that prolong, but there are others in which time no longer is; and as Mary shrank in the blight of Judas' stare, both felt that the culmination of life was reached.

"No!"

The monosyllable dropped from her lips like a stone, yet even as it fell the banner of Maccabæus unfurled and flaunted in her face; the voice of Esther murmured, and a vision of Judith saving a nation visited her, and, continuing, made spots on the night.

Judas had flung her from him. She reeled; the violence roused her. Who was she to consider herself when the security of the Master was at stake? How should it matter though she died, if *he* were safe?

"It is my soul you ask," she cried. "Take it. If I had a thousand souls, I would give each one for Him."

But she cried to the unanswering night.

Where the road curved about the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, for one second she saw a white robe glisten. Agonized, she called again, but there was no one now to hear.

A little later, when the followers of the Lord issued from the house, Mary lay before the door, her eyes closed, her head in the dust. They touched her. She had fainted.

CHAPTER VIII.

VIII.

THEY have him, they are taking him to Pilate."

It was Eleazer calling to his sister from the turn in the road. In a moment he was at her side, dust-covered, his sandals torn, his pathetic eyes dilated. He was breathless too, and, in default of words, with a gesture that swept the Mount of Olives, he pointed to where the holy city lay.

To Mary the morrow succeeding her swoon was a pall. Love, it may be, is a forgetfulness of all things else, but despair is very actual. It takes a hold on memory, inhabits it, and makes it its own. And during the day that followed, Mary lay preyed upon by the acutest agony that ever tortured woman yet. Early in the night, before her senses returned, the Master had gone without mentioning whither. His destination may have been Ephraïm, Jericho even, or further yet, beyond the hollows of the Ghôr. Then, again, he might have loitered in the neighborhood, on the hill perhaps, in that open-air solitude he loved so well, and for which so often he forsook the narrowness of roofs and towns. But yet, in view of the Passover, he might have gone to Jerusalem, and it was that idea that tortured most.

It was there the keen police, the levites, were, and their masters the Sadducees, who had placed a price on his head. Did he get within the walls, then surely he was lost. At the possibilities which that idea evoked her thoughts sank like the roots of a tree and grappled with the under-earth. To her despair, regret brought its burden. A moment of self-forgetfulness, and, however horrible that forgetfulness might have been, in it danger to him whom she revered would have been averted, and, for the time being at least, dispersed utterly as last year's leaves. It had been cowardice on her part to let Judas go; she should have been strong when strength was needed. There were glaives to be had; the head of Holofernes could have greeted his.

The legend of Judith still echoed its reproach, and recurring, pointed a slender finger of disdain.

To the heart that is sinking, hope throws a straw. Immaterial and caressing as a shadow, came to her the fancy that if the Master were in the neighborhood, at any moment he might appear. In that event it was needful that she should be prepared to aid him at once beyond the confines of Judæa. Were he already beyond them, presently she must learn it, and then could warn him of the danger of return. But meanwhile, for security's sake, had he gone by any chance to Jerusalem, some one must be there to warn him of the plot. She thought of her sister, and dismissed her. Martha was too feather-headed for an errand such as that. She thought of Ahulah, but some of those well-intentioned friends that everyone possesses had told of the misadventure to her husband, and the latter, cruel as a woman, had spat upon her, and now through the suburbs she wandered, distraught, incompetent to aid. Her brother occurred to her. It was on him she could rely.

His devotion was surpassed only by her own. Thereupon she sought him out, instructed him in his duty, and sent him forth to watch and warn.

The green afternoon faded in the hemorrhages of the setting sun. Twilight approached like a wolf. Night unfurled her great black fan; the moon came, fumbling the shadows, checkering the underbrush with silver spots. Once a caravan passed, and once from the hillside came the bark of a dog, caught up and repeated in some farm beyond; otherwise the night was unstirred; and as Mary stared into the immensities where lightning wearies and subsides, a lethargy beset her, her body was imprisoned; but her soul was free, and in a moment it mounted sheerly to a fringe of the heavens and bathed in space.

When it descended, another day had come, and Eleazer was calling to her from the turn of the road. At once she was on earth and on her feet, and as the brother gasped for breath the sister's strength returned. There must be no more weakening now, she knew; it was time to act. She got drink, water for the feet; then Eleazer, refreshed, continued:

"I ran through the ridge and up to where the two cedars are. I looked among the cypresses beyond, in the pines where the descent begins, through the olive groves below and the booths and tents beneath. There was no trace of him anywhere. I crossed the brook and sat a while at the Shushan gate, watching those that entered. The crowd became so dense that it was impossible to distinguish. I thought I might hear of him in the Temple. The porch was thronged. I roamed through the Mountain of the House into the Woman's Court, and out of it on the Chel. But they were all so filled with pilgrims that had he been there only accident could have brought me to him. It was on that I counted, and I went out on Zion and Acra, where the crowd was less. It was getting late. Beth-horon was dim. I could see lights in Herod's palace. Some one said that the tetrarch of Galilee was there, the guest of the procurator. I went back by way of Antonia to Birket Israil and the Red Heifer Bridge. I had given up; it seemed to me useless to make further attempt. Suddenly I saw Judas in the angle of the porch. With him was a levite. I got behind a pillar, near where they stood, and listened. The only thing I distinctly heard was the name of Joseph of Haramathaïm. I fancied, though I was not certain, that Judas spoke as though he had just left his house. They must have moved away then, for when I looked they had gone. I knew that Joseph was a friend of the Master's, and it struck me that he might be at his house. It is in the sook of the Perfumers, back of Ophel. I ran there as fast as I could. It was unlighted. I beat on the door: there was no answer. I felt that I had been mistaken, anyway that I could do no more. I went down again into the valley, crossed the Kedron, and would have returned here at once perhaps, but I was tired, and so, on the slope where the olive-presses are, I lay down and must have fallen asleep, for I remembered nothing till there came a tramping of men. I crouched in the underbrush. They passed very close; some had torches, some had spears. Judas was leading, and as an ape munches a flower he was muttering the Master's name."

Eleazer paused and looked at his sister. She was standing erect, her face wan, the brow contracted, the rhymes of her lips tight-pressed. Then, with a glance at Olivet, he continued:

"For a little space I waited. They had ascended the slope and halted. There was a shout, the waving of torches, then a silence. In it I heard the Master's voice, followed by a cry of pain. I hurried to where they were. They had him bound when I got there. I saw a soldier raising a hand to his ear and looking at the palm; it was red. Peter was running one way, Thomas another. I got nearer. Some one, a levite I think, caught me by the coat. I freed myself from it and escaped up the hill.

"From there I looked down. They were going away. When they had gone, I went back and found my cloak. While I was putting it on, John appeared. 'They are taking him to Caiaphas,' he said; 'I shall follow. Come with me if you wish.' I went with him. On the way we met Peter; he joined us. We walked single-file, John leading. Beyond I could see the lights of the torches, the glint of steel. No one spoke. Peter whimpered a little. We crossed the Kedron and got up into the city. The soldiers went directly to where Annas lives; they entered in a body, and the door closed. John rapped: it was opened. He said something to the doorkeeper, who admitted him. The door closed again. Peter and I waited a little, not knowing where to turn. Presently the door reopened, and John motioned us to come in. In the court was a fire; about it were servants and khazzans. I stopped a moment to warm my hands; Peter did the same. John had disappeared. I heard one of the khazzans say that they had taken the Master to Annas, and the others discuss what he would probably do. While I stood there listening, and wondering what had become of John, I saw the Master being led across the court to the Lishcath ha-Gazith. I left Peter, and followed. In the hall were the elders, ranged in a semicircle about Caiaphas. They must have been prepared beforehand, for the clerks of acquittal and of condemnation were there, the crier too, and a group of levites and Scribes. In a corner were some of Annas' servants. I got among them and stood unnoticed.

" The Master's hands were bound. On either side of him was a soldier. Caiaphas was livid. He looked him from head to foot.

" 'You are accused,' he said, 'of inciting sedition, of defying the Law, of blasphemy, and of breaking the Sabbath day. What have you to answer? '

" The Master made no reply.

" Caiaphas pointed to the levites. 'Here,' he continued, 'are witnesses.'

" He motioned; one of them stepped forward and spoke.

" 'I testify that this man has incited to sedition by denouncing the members of this reverend council as hypocrites, wolves in sheep's clothing, blind leaders of the blind; and I further testify that he has declared no one should follow them.'

" 'What have you to say to that? ' Caiaphas snarled. But the Master said nothing.

"The first levite moved back, and at a gesture from the high-priest another stepped forward.

"'I testify that I have seen that man eat, in defiance of the Law, with unwashed hands, and consort with publicans and people of low repute.'

"'And what have you to say to that?' Caiaphas asked again. But still the Master said nothing.

"The second levite moved back, and a third advanced.

"'I testify that I have heard that man blaspheme in calling God his father, and in declaring himself to be one with Him.'

"'Is that blasphemy or is it not?' Caiaphas bawled. But the Master's lips never moved.

"The third levite gave way to a fourth.

"'I testify that that man has broken the Sabbath in healing the sick on that day, and further that he has seduced others to break it. On the Sabbath I have heard him order a cripple to take up his bed and carry it to his home. I have heard him also declare that he could destroy the Temple and rebuild it, in three days, anew.'

"Caiaphas turned to the Master. 'Do you still refuse to answer?' he asked. 'Do you think that silence can save you? Have you heard these witnesses?'

"And as the Master still made no reply, Caiaphas lifted his hand and cried, 'I adjure you by the Eternal to answer, Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?'

"In the breathless silence Jesus raised his eyes. He looked at the high-priest, at the levites, the Scribes. 'You have said it,' he murmured, and smiled with that air he has.

"Caiaphas grew purple. He caught his gown at the throat and ripped it from neck to hem. The elders started. I heard them mutter, '*Ish maveth*.' The high-priest glanced toward them. 'You have heard this ragged blasphemy?' he exclaimed; and, turning to where the Scribes stood, 'What,' he asked, 'does the Law decree concerning the Sabbath-breaker?'

"One of them, the book unrolled in his hand, advanced and read:

" 'Ye shall keep the Sabbath holy. Whoso does any work thereon shall be cut off from his people.'

" 'And what of blasphemy?'

" The Scribe glanced at the roll and repeated from memory: 'He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall be put to death. The congregation shall stone him, as well the stranger as he that was born in the land.'

" Caiaphas closed the fingers on the palm of his left hand, and, raising it, turned again to the elders. '*Ish maveth*,' they repeated, closing their fingers as he had done.

" I knew then that he was condemned. After all " — and Eleazer looked wearily to the ground — " it was legal enough. Each moment I expected him to give some sign, but, save to affirm the charge of blasphemy, during the entire time he kept silent. Yes, it was legal enough. From where I stood I heard the Scribes say that he would be sentenced at sunrise, and then Pilate would have a word with him. I could do nothing. Caiaphas still fumed. I went out in the court again. In the corridor was Judas.

Peter was wrangling with the servants. I did not wait for more. I got away and into the valley and up again on the hill. A cock was crowing, and I saw the dawn. O Mary, the pity of it! "

He looked at his sister. There was no weakness now in her face, nor beauty either. Age must have passed her in the night.

" And I will have a word with Pilate too," she said.

As a somnambulist might, she drew her mantle closer, and, moving to the wayside, ascended the hill. The silver and green of the olives closed around her, and with them the branching dates. Above, a star left by the morning glimmered feebly. In a myrtle a bird began to sing, and a lizard that had come out to intercept the sun scurried as she passed. Upward and onward still she went, and, the summit reached, for a moment she stopped and rested.

To the east the Dead Sea lay, a stretch of silk. At its edge was the flutter of ospreys feasting on the barbels and breams of the Jordan, which as they enter, die. Beyond was a glitter of white and gold, the scarp of Moriah and its breast of stone, the Tyrian bevel of Solomon, the porphyry of Nehemiah, the marble that Herod gave; ascending terraces, engulfing porticoes, the splendor of Jerusalem at dawn. Between the houses nearest was the dimness that shadows cast; those further away had a scatter of pink; about it all was a wall surmounted by turrets; beneath was a ravine in which was a brook, and a city of booths and tents, grazing camels and fat-tailed sheep.

Through the pines and cypresses Mary passed down to where the olives were. The brook sent a message to her; the blood that had flowed from the sacrifices was in it, and in the fresh morning it reeked a little, as such brooks do. It was here, she thought, the Master had been taken, and for a second she stopped again. The sun now was rising behind her; the color of the sky shifted. Beyond Jerusalem a mountain was melting in excesses of vermilion, and the ravine that had been gray was assuming the tenderest green. The star had disappeared, but from each tree broke the greeting of a bird.

A rustle of the leaves near by startled her, and she looked about, fearful, as women are, of some beast of prey. A white robe was there, a white turban, and beneath it the swart face of one whom she had known.

To her eyes came massacres. "Judas!" she exclaimed, and looked up in that roof of her world where day puts its blue and night puts its black. "Judas!" she repeated. Her small hands clenched, and the rhymes of her mouth grew venomous.

Then the woman spoke in her. "Why did you not kill me first?"

Judas swayed like an ox hit on the forehead. The motion distracted and irritated her. "Can't you speak," she cried, "or does hell hold you, tongue and all?"

He raised a hand as though he feared another blow. The gesture was so human and yet so humble that Mary looked into his face. Time, which turns the sweet-eyed girl into a withered spectre, must have touched him with its thumb.

His eyes were ringed and cavernous, his cheeks empty.

"You have heard, then?" he said; but he evinced no curiosity. He spoke with the apathy of one who takes everything for granted, one with whom fate is to have its will. "I have just come from there," he added, with a backward gesture. "I never thought that such a thing could be. No, I swear it, I never did." Then, in answer perhaps to some inner twinge, perhaps also because of the expression of Mary's lips, he continued: "If there is a new oath, one that has never been used before, prompt me, and I will swear again, I never did. I thought ——"

Mary interrupted him savagely: "There are ten kinds of hypocrisy. You have nine of them; you will develop the tenth and invent a new one besides."

At this Judas made a pass with his hands and stared absently at the ground. "Mary," he said, "life is a book which man reads when he dies. During the last hour I have been unrolling it. In its scroll I found existence a wine-shop where the guest fares so badly that he would go at once were it not that he fears to call for the reckoning. The reckoning, Mary, is death. I have called for it. I am about to pay. Let me tell you. I have no excuse to offer, no forgiveness now to await. My heart was a meadow: you made it stone. There were well-springs in it: you dried them, Mary. When I first saw you, you were a dream fulfilled. Others had brought echoes of life; you brought its song. It was then that I heard the Master speak. I followed him, and tried to forget. It must be that I failed, for when I saw you in Capharnahum my blood danced, and when you spoke I trembled. It was love, Mary; and love, when it is not death, is life. It was that I sought at your side. You would not listen. Innocence is a garment. You seemed to have wrapped it about you. I tried to tear it away. There was my fault, and this my punishment. Your right was inflexible as a prison-door, and yet always behind it was the murmur of a mysterious Perhaps. The others turned to me; I turned to you. I forgot again, but this time it was my duty, my allegiance, and my faith. Mary, I loved the Master more wholly even than I loved you. He was the Spirit; you were the flesh. In him was the future; in you the tomb. I thought to conquer both. While I mixed my darkness with his light, I pursued you as night pursues the day. On the light I have cast a shadow, and to you I have brought a blight. But, Mary, both will disappear. The one consolation I cling to now is that belief. When I delivered him up, it was myself I betrayed, not him. I am forever dead, and he forever living. While I bargained with the priests and pretended that my aim was coin, when I led the levites and the Temple-guard just here to where he stood, during all the hours since I left you, I tried to escape from that cage we call Fate. Mary, there is something about us higher than our will. The revenge I sought on you forsook me before I reached the city's gate. It is the intangible that has brought me where I am. I have sworn to you I never thought this thing could be. I swear it now again. In carrying out the threat I made, I thought to make you fear my hate and make him greater than he was. His enemies, I had seen, were many. Those that had believed in him grew daily. In Jerusalem his miracles had ceased, and I thought that, when the levites and the Temple-guard approached, he would speak with Samuel's thunder, answer with Elijah's flame. I thought the stars would shake, the moon grow red; that he would produce the lost Urim, the vanished Ark, and so forever silence disbelief. I was wrong, and he was right. Belief is in the heart, not in the senses; the visible contradicts, but faith is not to be confuted. No, Mary, the tombs are not dumb. I said so once, I know, but they answer, and mine will speak. On it perhaps a caricature may be daubed, and about it prejudice will uncoil. I deserve it. Yet though you think me wholly base, remember no man is that. Since I met you my life has been a battle-field in which I have fought with conscience. It has conquered. I am its slave; it commands, and I obey."

He drew a breath as though he had more to add, and turned to where she stood. There was no one there. From an olive-branch a red-start piped to the morning, over the buds of a pomegranate a bee buzzed its delight; across the leaves of a myrtle a blue spider was busy with its web, but Mary was no longer there. He peered through the underbrush, and wandered to the grove beyond. There was no one. He looked to the hill-top: there was the advancing sun. He looked in the valley: there were the pilgrims' booths, the grazing camels and fat-tailed sheep.

"She has gone," he told himself. "She would not even listen."

He bent his head. For the first time since boyhood the tears rolled down his face.

"She might at least have heard me," he thought, and brushed the tears away. Others came and replaced them. When they had fallen, there were more.

"Yes, she might at least have listened. If I had no excuse to offer, at least I had regret." For a moment he fancied her, cruel as only woman is, hurrying to some unknown goal. The tears he had tried to stanch ceased now abruptly. " She is right," he mused. " She has left me to conscience and to death."

He turned again and went back to where he had stood before. As he crossed the intervening space he unloosed the long girdle which he wore, and from which still hung the treasury of the twelve. The bag that held it fell where the bee was buzzing. One end of the girdle he tossed over a branch; the red-start spread its wings and fled. He looked about. There was a stone near by; he got it and with a little labor rolled it beneath the branch. Then he made a noose, very carefully, that it might not come undone, and settling it well under the chin, he tied the other end of the girdle to it and swung himself from the stone.

CHAPTER IX.

IX.

IN the apartment of Claudia Procula, Mary and the wife of the procurator stood face to face.

The apartment itself overlooked Jerusalem. Beneath was an open space tiled with little oblong stones, red, yellow, and blue; the blue predominating. On either side the colossal white wings of the palace stretched to a park, very green in the sunlight, cut by colonnades in which fountains were, and surrounded by a marble wall that was starred with turrets and fluttered with doves. The Temple, which, from its cressets, radiated to the hills beyond a glare of gold, was not as fair nor yet as vast as this. Within its gates an army could manœuvre; in its banquet-hall a cohort could have supped. It was Herod's triumph, built subsequent to the Temple, to show the world, perhaps, that to surpass a masterpiece he had only to conceive another.

To it now and then, for a week or more, the procurator descended from his residence by the sea. He preferred the latter; the day was freer there, life less cramped. But during festival times, when the fanatic Jews were apt to be excited and need the chill of a curb, it was well for him and his soldiery to be on hand. And so on this occasion he had come, and with him his wife, Claudia Procula, and the tetrarch Antipas, who had joined them on the way.

Antipas and his retinue occupied the Ægrippeum, the north wing of the palace, while in the Cæsareum, the wing that leaned to the south, was Pilate, his wife and body-guard.

And now on this clear morning the sweet-faced patrician, Claudia Procula, with perfectly feminine curiosity was looking into the drawn features of the Magdalen, and wondering whence her rumored charm could come.

"I will do my best," she said, at last, in answer to an anterior request. And calling a servant, she wrote on a tablet a word for Pilate's eye.

Mary moved to the portico. The variegated tiles of the quadrangle were nearly covered now. A flight of wide, low steps led to the main entrance of the palace, and there a high seat of enamelled ebony had been placed. In it Pilate sat, in his hand the staff of office. Beside him were his assessors, members of his suite, and Calcol, a centurion. On one of the steps Caiaphas stood, near him the elders of the college. Below was the Christ, bound and guarded. Across the quadrangle was a line of soldiery, behind it a mob.

The helmets, glancing mail, short skirts, and bare legs of the Romans contrasted refreshingly with the blossoming garments, effeminate girdles, frontlets, and horned blue bonnets of the priesthood. And in the riot of color and glint of steel the Christ, bound as he was, looked, in the simplicity of his seamless robe, the descendant of a larger sphere. Above, to the left, Antipas, aroused by the clamor, leaned from a portico. Opposite where the sunlight fell Mary held her cloak about her.

Caiaphas, a hand indicating Jesus, his head turned to Pilate, was formulating a complaint. Not indeed that the prisoner had declared himself a divinity. There were far too many gods in the menagerie of the Pantheon for a procurator to be the least disturbed at the rumor of a new one. It was the right to rule, that attribute of the Messiah, on which he intended the gravamen of the charge should rest. But he began circuitously, feeling the way, in Greek at that, with an accent which might have been improved.

"And so," he concluded, "in many ways he has transgressed the Law."

"Why don't you judge him by it, then?" asked Pilate, grimly.

A servant approached with a tablet. The procurator glanced at it, looked up at the man, and motioned him away.

"My lord governor, we have. The Sanhedrim, having found him guilty, has sentenced him to death. But the Sanhedrim, as you know, may not execute the sentence. The Senate has deprived us of that right. It is for you, as its legate, to order it done."

Pilate sneered. “I can’t very well, until I know of what he is guilty. What crime has he committed — written a letter on the Sabbath, or has he been caught without his phylacteries?”

“He has declared himself Israel’s king!”

“Ah!” And Pilate smiled wearily. “You are always expecting one; why not take him?”

“Why not, my lord? Because it is treason to do so.”

Pilate nodded with affected approval. “I admire your zeal.” And with a glance at the prisoner, he added: “You have heard the accusation; defend yourself. What!” he continued, after a moment, “have you nothing to say?”

Caiaphas exulted openly. The corners of his mouth had the width and cruelty, and his nostrils the dilation, of a wolf.

“My lord,” he cried, “his silence is an admission.”

“Hold your tongue! It is for me to question.” And therewith Pilate gave the high-priest a look which was tantamount to a knee pressed on the midriff. He glanced again at the tablet, then at the prisoner.

"Tell me, do you really claim to be king?"

"Is it your idea of me?" the Christ asked; and in his bearing was a dignity which did not clash with the charge; "or have others prompted you?"

"But I am not a Jew," Pilate retorted. "The matter only interests me officially. It is your hierarchy that brings the charge. Why have they? What have you done? Tell me," he continued, in Latin, "do you think yourself King?"

"*Tudixisti,*" Jesus answered, and smiled as he had before, very gravely. "But my royalty is not of the earth." And with a glance at his bonds, one which was so significant that it annulled the charge, he added, still in Latin, "I am Truth, and I preach it."

Pilate with skeptical indulgence shook his head. Truth to him was an elenchicism, an abstraction of the Platonists, whom in Rome he had respected for their wisdom and avoided with care. He turned to Caiaphas. The latter had been regretting the absence of an interpreter. This amicable conversation, which he did not understand, was not in the least to his liking, and as Pilate turned to him he frowned in his beard.

"I am unable to find him guilty," the procurator announced. "He may call himself king, but every philosopher does the same. You might yourself, for that matter."

"A philosopher, this mesîth!" Caiaphas gnashed back. "Why, he seduces the people; he incites to sedition; he is a rebel to Rome. It is for you, my lord, to see the empire upheld. Would it be well to have another complaint laid before the Cæsar? Ask yourself, is this Galilean worth it?"

The thrust was as keen and as venomous as the tooth of a rat. Pilate had been rebuked by the emperor already; he had no wish to incur further displeasure. Sejanus, the emperor's favorite, to whom he owed his procuratorship, had for suspected treason been strangled in a dumb dungeon only a little before. Under Tiberius there was quiet, a future historian was to note; and Pilate was aware that, should a disturbance occur, the disturbance would be quelled, but at his expense.

An idea presented itself. " Did I understand you to say he is a Galilean? " he asked.

" Yes," Caiaphas answered, expecting, perhaps, the usual jibe that was flung at those who came from there. " Yes, he is a Nazarene."

" Hm. In that case I have no jurisdiction. The tetrarch is my guest; take your prisoner to him."

" My lord," the high-priest objected, " our law is such that if we enter the palace we cannot officiate at the Passover to-night."

Pilate appeared to reflect. " I suppose," he said at last, " I might ask him whether he would care to come here. In which case," he added, with a gesture of elaborate courtesy, " you may remain uncontaminated where you are. Ressala! "

An official stepped forward; an order was given; he disappeared. Presently a massive throne of sandalwood and gold was trundled out. Caiaphas had seen it before, and in it — Herod.

"The justice that comes from there," he muttered, "is as a snake that issues from a tomb."

His words were drowned in the clamors of the crowd. The sun had crossed the zenith; in its rays the waters that gushed from the fountain-mouths of bronze lions fell in rainbows and glistened in great basins that glistened too. There was sunlight everywhere, a sky of untroubled blue, and from the Temple beyond came a glare that radiated from Olivet to Bethlehem.

Pilate was bored. The mantle which Mary wore caught his eye, and he looked at her, wondering how she came in his wife's apartment, and where he had seen her before. Her face was familiar, but the setting vague. Then at once he remembered. It was at Machærus he had seen her, gambling with the emir, while Salomè danced. She was with Antipas, of course. He looked again; she had gone.

The Sanhedrim consulted nervously. The new turn of affairs was not at all to their liking. The clamors of the mob continued Once a fanatic pushed against a soldier. There was a thud, a howl, and a mouth masked with liquid red gasped to the sun and was seen no more.

Behind the procurator came a movement. The officials massed about the entrance parted in uneven ranks, and in the great vestibule beyond, Antipas appeared. Pilate rose to greet him. The elders made obeisance. The tetrarch moved forward and seated himself in his father's throne. At his side was Pahul, the butler, balancing himself flamingowise on one leg, his bold eyes foraging the priests.

Caiaphas formulated the complaint anew, very majestically this time, and, thinking perhaps to overawe the tetrarch, his voice assumed the authority of a guardian of the keys of heaven, a chamberlain of the sceptres of the earth.

Antipas ignored him utterly. He plucked at his fan-shaped beard, and stared at the Christ.

He could see now he bore no resemblance to Iohanan. There was nothing of the hyena about him, nor of the prophet either. Evidently he was but a harmless vagabond, skilled in simples, if report were true; perhaps a thaumaturge. And it was he whom he had feared and fancied might be that Son of David for whom a star was created, whom the magi had visited, whom his father had sought to destroy, and whom now from his father's own throne he himself was called upon to judge! He shook his head, and in the sunlight the indigo with which his hair was powdered made bright blue motes.

"I say ——"

Just beyond, where the assessors stood, Mary suddenly appeared. He stopped abruptly; for more than a year he had not seen her. Pahul had told him she had gone to Rome. If she had, he reflected, the journey had not improved her appearance. Then for the moment he dismissed her, and returned to the Christ.

"See here: somebody the other day told me you worked miracles. I have wanted to see one all my life. Gratify me, won't you? Oh, something very easy to begin with. Send one of the guards up in the air, or turn your bonds into bracelets."

The Christ did not seem to hear. Pahul laughed and held to the throne for support. Antipas shrugged his shoulders.

" He looks harmless enough," he said. " Why not let him go? "

Caiaphas glowered, and his fingers twitched. " He claims to be king! "

At this statement the tetrarch laughed too. He gave an order to Pahul, who vanished with a grin.

" He has jeered at the Temple your father built," Caiaphas continued. " He has declared he could destroy it and build a better one, in three days at that."

" He *is* king, then, but of fools."

" And he has called you a fox," Caiaphas added, significantly.

" He doesn't claim to be one himself, does he? "

" He is guilty of treason, and it is for you, his ruler, to sentence him."

"Not I. The blood of kings is sacred. Pahul, make haste!"

The butler, reappearing, held in his hand the glittering white vestment of a candidate. The tetrarch took it and held it in air.

"Here, put this on him, and let his subjects admire him to their hearts' content."

"Antipas, you disgrace your purple!"

At the exclamation, the Sanhedrim, the guards, the assessors, the officials, Pilate himself, everyone save the prisoner, turned and looked. On the colored pavement Mary stood, her face very pale.

The tetrarch flushed mightily; anger mounted into his shifting eyes. For a moment the sky was blood-red; then he recovered himself and answered lightly:

"It seems to me, my dear, that you take things with a high hand. It may be that you forget yourself."

"I take them from where I am," she cried. "As for forgetfulness, remember that my grandfather was satrap of Syria, my father after him, while yours ——"

"Yes, yes, I dare say. He is not in power now; I am."

"Not here, Antipas, nor in Rome. I appeal to Pilate."

The tetrarch rose from the throne. The elders whispered together. Pilate visibly was perplexed. Remembering Mary as he did, he looked upon the incident as a family quarrel, one in which it would be unseemly for him to interfere, and which none the less disturbed the decorum of his court.

Caiaphas edged up to the tetrarch, but the latter brushed him aside.

"The hetaira is right," he exclaimed. "I am not in power here. If I were, she should be lapidated."

And, preceded by the butler, Antipas passed through the parting ranks to the vestibule beyond.

The perplexity of the procurator increased. He did not in the least understand. To him Mary stood in the same relation to Antipas that Cleopatra had to Herod. There had been a feud between the tetrarch and himself, one recently mended, and which he had no wish to renew. Yet manifestly Antipas was aggrieved, and his own path in the matter by no means clear.

" Bah! " he muttered, in the consoling undertone of thought, " what are their beastly barbarian manners to me? "

These reflections Caiaphas interrupted.

" We are waiting, my lord, for the sentence to be pronounced."

The tone he used was not, however, indicative of patience, and in conjunction with the incident that had just occurred it irritated and jarred. Besides, Pilate did not care to be prompted. It was for him to speak first. He strangled an oath, and, gathering some fringe of the majesty of Rome, he announced very measuredly:

" You have brought this man before me as a rebel. I have examined him and find no ground for the charge. His ruler, the tetrarch, has also examined him, and by him too he has been acquitted. But in view of the fact that he appears to have contravened some one or another of your laws I order him to be scourged and to be liberated."

With that he turned to the prisoner. During the entire proceedings the attitude of Jesus had not altered. He stood as a disinterested spectator might — one whom chance had brought that way and there hemmed in — his eyes on remote, inaccessible horizons, the tongue silent, the head a little raised.

"Scourging, my lord," Caiaphas interjected, "is fit and proper, but," he continued, one silk-gloved hand uplifted, "our law prescribes death. Only an enemy to Tiberius would prevent it."

At the veiled menace Pilate gnawed his under lip. He had no faith at all in the loyalty of the hierarch; at any other time the affection the latter manifested for the chains he bore would have been ludicrous and nothing else. But at the moment he felt insecure. There were Galileans whom he had sacrificed, Judæans whom he had slaughtered, Samaritans whom he had oppressed, an embassy might even now be on its way to Rome; he thought again of Sejanus, and, with cause, he hesitated. Yet of the inward perturbation he gave no outward sign.

"On this day," he said at last, "it is customary that in commemoration of your nation's delivery out of Egypt I should release a prisoner to you. There are three others here, among them Jesus Barabba."

Then, for support perhaps, he looked over at the clamoring mob.

"I will leave the choice to the people."

A wind seemed to raise the elders; they scattered through the court like leaves. "Have done with the Nazarene," cried one. "He would lead you astray," insinuated another. "He has violated the Law," exclaimed a third.

And, filtering through the soldiery into the mob without, they exhorted and prayed and coerced. "Ask for Barabba; denounce the blasphemer. Trust to the Sanhedrim. We are your guides. Let him atone for his crimes. The God of your fathers commands that you condemn. Demand Barabba; uphold your nation. To the cross with the Nazarene!"

"Whom do you choose?" shouted Pilate.

And the pleb of Jerusalem shouted back as one man, "Barabba!"

At the moment Pilate fancied himself in an amphitheatre, the arena filled with beasts. There were the satin and stripes of the panther, the yellow of treacherous eyes, the gnash of fangs, the guttural rumble, the deafening yell, the scent of blood, and above, the same blue tender sky.

"What of the prisoner?" he called.

A roar leapt back. "Sekaph! Sekaph! Let him be crucified."

Pilate had fronted a rabble before, and in two minutes had turned that rabble into so many dead flies, the legs in the air. He shook his head, and told himself he was not there to be coerced.

"Release Barabba," he ordered. "And as for the prisoner, take him to the barracks and have him scourged."

"Brute!" cried a voice that lifted him as a blow might from his ebony chair. "Pilate, though you are a plebeian, why show yourself a slave?"

And Mary, with the strength of anger, brushed through the encircling officials and towered before him, robed in wrath.

"Ah, permit me," he answered; "you are singularly unjust."

"Prove me so, and countermand the order that you gave."

As she spoke she adjusted her mantle, which had become disarranged, and looked him from head to foot, measuring him as it were, and finding him, visibly, very small.

Already the prisoner had been led away, and beyond, in the barracks, was the whiz of jagged leather that lacerated, rebounded, and lacerated again.

"I will not," he answered. "What I have ordered, I have ordered. As for you ——"

There had come to her that look which sibyls have. "Pilate," she interrupted, "you are powerful here, I know, but" — and her hand shot out like an arrow from a bow — "over there vultures are circling; in your power is a corpse. What the vultures scent, I see."

So abrupt and earnest was the gesture that unconsciously Pilate found himself looking to where she seemed to point. He lowered his eyes in vexation. Wrangling with a woman was not to his taste.

"There, there," he said, much as one might to a fretful child; "don't throw stones."

"I have but one; it is Justice, and that I keep to hurl at you."

The procurator's mouth twitched ominously. "My dear," he said, "you are too pretty to talk that way; it spoils the looks. Besides, I have no time to listen."

"Tiberius has and will."

Pilate nodded; it was the third time he had heard the threat that day.

"There are many rooms in his palace," he answered, with covert significance.

"Yes, I know it. There are many, as you say. But there is one I will enter. On the door stands written The Future, and behind it, Pilate, is your death."

The Roman, goaded to exasperation, sprang to his feet. An expression which Antipas had used occurred to him. "Away with the hetaira," he cried; and he was about, it may be, to order her to be tossed to the fierce wild swine in the paddocks of the park when the prisoner and his guards reappeared on the tessellated pavement, and Mary, already dragged from him, was instantly forgot.

A tattered sagum, which had once been scarlet, but which had faded since, hung, detained at the shoulder by a rusty buckle, and bordered by a laticlave, loosely about his form. In his hand a bulrush swayed; on his head was a twisted coil of bear's-breech, in which, among the ruffled leaves, one bud remained; it was white, the opening edges flecked with pink, perhaps with blood, for from the temples and about the ear a rill ran down and mixed with the purple of the laticlave below. And in this red parody of kingship the Christ stood, unmoved as a phantom, but in his face and eyes there was a projecting light so luminous, so intangible, and yet so real, that the skeptical procurator started, the staff of office pendent in his grasp.

"Ecce homo!" he exclaimed. Instinctively he drew back, and, wonderingly, half to himself, half to the Christ, "Who are you?" he asked.

"A flame below, a soul above," Jesus answered, yet so inaudibly that the guards beside him did not catch the words.

To Pilate his lips had barely moved, and his wonderment increased. "Why do you not answer?" he said. "You must know that I have the power to condemn and to acquit."

With that gentleness that was the flower of his parables Jesus raised his voice. "No," he replied, "you can have no power against me unless it come from above."

Again Pilate drew back. Unsummoned to his lips had sprung the words, "Behold the man!" and now he exclaimed, "Behold the king!"

But to the mob the vision he intercepted was lost. They saw the jest merely, and with it the stains that torture leaves. The sight of blood is heady; it inebriates more surely than wine. The mob, trained by the elders, and used by them as a body-guard, fanatic before, were intoxicated now. With one accord they shrieked the liturgy again.

“Sekaph! Sekaph! Let him be crucified.”

In that gust of hatred Pilate recovered. He turned to Caiaphas:

“I have released one prisoner; I will release another too.”

“My lord, be warned by one who is your elder.”

“One whom I can remove.”

“No doubt, my lord; but suffer him while he may to warn you not to cause a revolution on the day of the Paschal feast. You hear that multitude. Then be warned.”

“But your feast is one of mercy.”

The high-priest gazed curiously at his silk-gloved hands. You would have said they were objects he had never seen before. Then he returned the procurator's stare.

“We know of no such god.”

“Ah!” And the procurator drew a long breath of understanding. “It is that, I believe, he preaches.”

"And it is for that," Caiaphas echoed, "that he must die. Yes, Pilate, it is for that. There is no such doctrine in the Pentateuch. We have done our duty. We have convicted a rebel of his guilt. We have brought him to you, and we demand his sentence. Pilate, it is not so very long ago you had hundreds massacred without judgment, without trial either, and for what? — for one rebellious cry. You must have a reason for the favor you show this man. It would interest me to learn it; it would interest Tiberius as well. Listen to that multitude. If you pay no heed to our accusation nor yet to their demand, on you the consequences rest. We are absolved."

"He is your king," the procurator objected, meditatively.

. Caiaphas wheeled like a feather a breeze has caught. One hand outstretched he held to the mob, with the other he pointed to the Christ.

"Our king!" he cried. "The procurator says he is our king!"

As the thunder peals, a roar surged back:

"We have no other king than Cæsar."

“Think of Sejanus,” the high-priest suggested. The thrust was so well timed it told.

Pilate looked sullenly about. “Fetch me water,” he ordered.

A silver bowl was brought, and borrowing a custom from the Jews he loathed, he dipped his fingers in it.

“I wash my hands of it all,” he muttered.

Caiaphas looked at the elders and sighed with infinite relief. He had conquered. For the first time that day he smiled. He became gracious also, and he bowed.

“The blood be upon us, my lord, and on our children. Will you give the order?”

“Calcol!”

The centurion approached. An order was given him in an undertone, and as he turned to the guards, Pilate drew the staff of office across his knee, snapped it in two, tossed the pieces to the ground, and through the ranks of his servitors passed on into the great blue vestibule beyond.

CHAPTER X.

X.

IN a sook near the Gannath Gate Mary stood. In the distance the palace of Herod defied the sun. Beyond the gate lay the Hennom Valley, the Geia Hennom, contracted by the people into Ge' Hennom, or Gehenna, and converted by them into a sewer, a place where carrion was thrown, and the filth of a great city. In earlier days children had been immolated to Moloch there, human victims had been burned; it was a place accursed, and to purify the air, as a safeguard against pestilence, the offal was consumed by bonfires that were constantly renewed and never extinguished. At its extremity was an elevation, a hilly contour which to the popular fancy suggested a skull. To the west it fell steeply away. It was called Gülgolta.

The sook in which Mary stood was affected by shoemakers. Against the dwelling of one of them she leaned. The mantle was gone from her now, and the olive robe had a rent, but the splendor of her hair fell unconfined, the perils of her eyes had increased; yet in their depths where love had been was hate. One arm lay along the resisting stone, the other hung at her side; her face was turned to the palace, her thin nostrils quivering, her breath coming and going with that spasmodic irregularity which the consciousness of outrage brings. She laid it all to Judas; he must have returned to Kerioth, she thought. The sook itself was silent, stirred merely by some echo of the uproar in the palace beyond.

From a grilled lattice near by an old man peered out. He had the restless eyes of a ferret, and a white beard that was very long. He too was looking toward the palace. Now and then he muttered inaudibly in Aramaic to himself. In the shadow of a neighboring house a woman appeared; he shook at the lattice as an ape does at the bars of a cage, and spat a bestial insult at her. The woman shrank back. Instinctively Mary turned. In the retreating figure she recognized Ahulah, and at once, without conscious effort, she divined that the dwelling against which she leaned was that of Baba Barbulah, the husband of the woman whom the Master had declined to condemn.

But other things possessed her — the outrage to the Christ, perplexity as to how the trial would result, more remotely the indignity to herself, the slurs of the tetrarch and of the procurator; and with them, sapping her heart as fever might, was that thirst for reparation, unquenchable in its intensity, which comes to those who have seen their own life wrecked and its ideals dispersed.

Already Ahulah was forgot. On the wings of vagabond fancy she was in Rome, demanding vengeance of Tiberius, wresting it from him by the sheer force of entreaty, and with it exulting in the death-throes of the procurator. Oh, to see his nails pulled out, his outer skin removed, his tongue severed, his eyes seared with irons, his wrists slowly twisted till they snapped! to hear him cry for mercy! to promise it and not fulfil! — dear God, what joy was there!

From the alley into which Ahulah had shrunk a man issued. He was sturdy as a bludgeon, and he had a growth of thick black hair that curled about an honest face. In his hand was a basket. At the sight of Mary his steps hesitated, and his eyes followed hers to where the palace lay. Then he crossed the zigzag of the intervening space, but he had to touch her outstretched arm before she noticed him.

" Simon! " she exclaimed, with that start one has when suddenly awaked.

" Yes, Simon indeed; " and through the silence of the sook his clear laugh rang. " I frightened you, did I not?"

Mary interrupted him. " Haven't you heard? Has not Eleazer told you —— "

" When I left Bethany he was sleeping with both fists closed. Martha —— "

" The Master is arrested. Last night he was before the Sanhedrim; he is before the procurator now."

Hurriedly Mary gave an account of what had occurred. As the recital continued, Simon's expression grew darker than his curling hair, he clutched at the basket which he held, so tightly that the handle severed, the basket fell, and fruit that imprisoned the sunlight rolled on the ground.

"They were for the Master," he said. "I thought he would sup with us to-night."

"He may do so yet," she answered. "Perhaps ——"

"Never!" cried a voice from the lattice. "They are leading him to Gülgolta now."

Beyond, through the palace gate, a mass undulated, the body elongated, expanding as it moved. It was black, but at the sides was the glisten that cobras have. About it dust circled, and from it came the rumble of thunder heard afar. As the bulk increased, the roar deepened; the black lessened into varying hues. To the glisten came the glint of steel; the cobra changed into a multitude, the escort of a squad of soldiery, fronted by a centurion and led by the banner of Imperial Rome.

Behind the centurion, Jesus, in his faded sagum, staggered, overweighted by the burden of a cross. Two comrades in misery were at his side, but they moved with steadier step, bearing their crosses with the brawn of muscular and untired arms. The soldiers marched impassibly, preceding the executioners — four stalwart Cypriotes, distinguishable by the fatness of their calves — while behind was the Sanhedrim, and, extending indefinitely to the rear, the rabble of yelling Jews.

In a cobra's coils is death, its eyes transfix. Neither Mary nor Simon had spoken, and now, as the soldiery was upon them, they leaned yet nearer the wall. For a moment Mary hid her face. At her feet the Christ had fallen, and from her came one wail, choked down at once. She stooped to aid him, but he stood up unassisted and reached to the wall for support.

The bars of the lattice shook; the old man peered out.

"Don't touch my house, you vagabond! Move on!" he cried.

Calcol had turned to Simon, who was raising the cross. "Carry it for him," he commanded.

Baba Barbulah still shook at the lattice.

"Move on!" he repeated. "Seducer of the people, remitter of sins, upholder of adultery, move on; don't touch my house, it will fall down on you! Move on, I say!"

Calcol's command Simon had anticipated. He shouldered the cross. It was heavier to him than to the Christ, not in weight, perhaps, but in purpose. In the narrowness of the sook the crowd was impeded, but from the rear they pushed, surprised at the halt.

Mary sprang at the lattice. "It is you that shall move on," she cried; "yes, you; and forever. The desert will call to you, 'March;' and the sea will snarl, 'Further yet.' The gates of cities will deny you, and the doors of hamlets be closed. The eagles may return to their eyrie, the panthers retreat to their lair, but you will have no home, no rest, and, till time dies, no tomb."

The old man gnashed back at her an insult more bestial than he used before, and spat at her through the bars. But Mary had turned to the Christ. He was surrounded now by some women who had filtered through the alley above.

Johanna, Mary Clopas, the wife of Zebdia, and Bernice, a fragile girl newly enrolled. The latter was wiping from his face the stains of blood and dust. The others were beating their breasts, crying aloud.

Of the disciples there was no trace, nor yet of any of those who had greeted him as the Messiah. It may be that the admiring throngs that had gathered about him had faded before a superior force. It may be they had lost heart, belief perhaps as well. Invective never propitiates. Recently he had omitted to prophesy, he argued. The exquisite parables with which he had been wont to charm even the recalcitrant seemed to have been put aside, and with them those wonders which rumor held him to have worked. But now that pathos and grace which endeared, that perfection of sentiment and expression which exalted the heart, returned to him, accentuated perhaps by the agonies he had endured.

" Weep for me no more," he entreated. " But weep for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming," he added, with a gesture at the impatient mob — " the days are coming in which they shall say to the mountains, Fall on us; to the hills, Cover us. For if these things are done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry? "

And in this entreaty, in which he exhorted them to view disaster otherwise than from the external and evanescent aspect, the voice of the prophet rang once more.

Mary as yet had not realized the full portent of the soldiery and the mob. When it was approaching it had occurred to her that it might be another triumphal escort, such as she had once seen surround him on his way to a feast. As it advanced, the roar bewildered, and she had ceased to conjecture; then the Master had fallen, and the old Jew had vomited his slime. At the moment it was that, and that only, which had impressed her, and she had answered with the force of that new strength which suddenly she had found. But now at the sight of the women beating their breasts, and the blood-stained face of the Master, an inkling came to her; she stared open-mouthed at the cross, at

Calcol, and at the executioners that were there.

Then immediately that horrible longing to know the worst beset her, and she darted to where the centurion stood.

"What is it?" she gasped. "What are you to do with him?"

By way of answer Calcol extended his arms straight out from either side, his head thrown back. He was a good-natured ruffian, with clear and pleasant eyes.

"Not crucify?" she cried. "Tell me, it is not that?"

Calcol nodded. To him one Jew more, one Jew less, was immaterial, provided he had his pay, and the prospect of a return to Rome was not too long delayed. Yet none the less in some misty way he wondered why this woman, with her splendid hair and scorching eyes, should have upbraided the tetrarch and abused the procurator because of the friendless Galilean whom he was leading to the cross. Woman to him, however, was, as she has been to others wiser than he, an enigma he failed to solve. And so he nodded merely, not unkindly, and smiled in Mary's face.

The horrible longing now was stilled. She knew the worst; yet as the knowledge of it penetrated her being, it seemed to her as though it could not be true, that she was the plaything of some hallucination, her mind inhabited by a nightmare from which she must presently awake. The howl of the impatient mob undeceived her. It was real; it was actual; it was life. She stared at Calcol, her fair mouth agape. There were many things she wanted to say; her thoughts teemed with arguments, her mind with persuasions; but she could utter nothing; she was as one struck dumb; and it was not until the centurion smiled that the spell dissolved and the power of speech returned.

"Ah, *that* never; you shall kill me first!" she cried. And already she saw herself circumventing the centurion, blinding the soldiery, defying the mob, and leading the Master through byways and underground passages out of the accursed city into the fresh glades of Gethsemane, over the hill, down the hollows to the Jordan, and into the desert beyond. There was one spot she knew very well; one that only a bird could find; one that she would mention to no one, but to which she could take him and keep him hidden there in the brakes till night came, and the fording of the river was safe.

"That never!" she cried. And brushing Bernice off, she caught the Master by the cloak. "Come with me," she murmured. "I know a way ——"

And she would have dragged him perhaps, regardless of the others, but the centurion had her by the arm.

"See here, my pretty friend, your place is not here."

With a twist he sent her spinning back to Baba Barbulah's wall.

"March!" he ordered.

The soldiery, disarranged, fell in line. The two robbers picked up their burden. The Master turned to Mary, to the others as well, with that expression which he alone possessed, that look which both promised and assuaged, and, it may be, would have said some word of encouragement, but Mary was at his side again, her hand upon his cloak.

"It shall never be," she repeated. "They must kill me first."

Calcol wheeled. His short sword glistened, reversed, and her cheek was laid open by the hilt. She staggered back. The soldiery moved on. The women surrounded her and stanched the wound. To her the blow held the difference between a cut and a cancer; she knew that it could never heal; and, as the blood poured down her face, for the first time she divined the uselessness of revolt.

Presently a wave of the mob caught her, separating her from the other women, and carrying her in its eddy through the gate, into the valley and on to the hillock beyond. On one side were the glimmer of fires, the smell of smoke, of offal too. On the infrequent trees vultures perched. To the right was a nest of gardens and of tombs.

In the eddies Mary lost foothold and lagged a little to the rear. When she reached Gülgolta the soldiery had formed three sides of a square. In it were the executioners, the prisoners, and the centurion. At the place where a fourth side might have been a steep decline began.

Within the square three crosses lay; before them the prisoners stood, stripped of their clothing now, and naked.

The Sanhedrim was grouped about that side of the square which leaned to the south, the horned bonnet of Caiaphas towering its lace-work above the others. To the wide and cruel corners of his mouth had come the calm of a cheetah devouring its prey. At the outer angle, to the right, the standard of the empire swayed; and from an oak two vultures soared with a scream into the air, their eyes fixed on the vision of bare white flesh.

Through the ranks an elder passed. In his hand was a gourd, which he offered to one of the thieves.

“ Drink of it, Dysmas,” he invited. “ In it grains of frankincense have been dissolved.”

To the rear Annas nodded his approval. His lean, lank jaws parted. “ Give strong drink,” he announced, authoritatively; " give strong and heady drink to those about to die, and wine to those that sorrow."

Dysmas drank abundantly of the soporific, and held the gourd to his comrade.

" Take it, Stegas."

As the second thief raised it to his lips, with a motion of arm and knee an executioner caught Dysmas beneath the chin, behind the leg, and the thief lay on a cross. In a second his wrists were bound, his feet as well. There was the blow of a hammer on a nail, a spurt of blood from the open hand; another blow, another spurt; and the cross, upraised, settled in a cavity already prepared, a beam behind it for support.

Stegas, his thirst slaked, fell as Dysmas had, and the elder caught the gourd and offered it to the Christ. If he had been tempted in the desert, as rumor alleged, the temptation could have been as nothing in comparison to the enticements of that cup. It held relief from thought, from the acutest pain that flesh can know, from life, from death.

He waved it aside. The executioner started with surprise; but he had his duty to perform, and, recovering himself, he caught the Christ, and in a moment he too was down, his hands transfixed, the cross upraised. The blood dripped leisurely on the sand beneath. Across his features a shadow passed and vanished. His lips moved.

" Father," he murmured, " forgive them; they know not what they do."

Calcol gave an order. Over the heads of Dysmas and of Stegas the sanis were affixed, wooden tablets smeared with gypsum, bearing the name of the crucified and with it the offence. They were simple and terse; but above the Christ appeared a legend in three tongues, in Aramaic, in Greek, and in Latin:

שוהיטרי מיר דוהודים.

Ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Rex Judæorum.

Caiaphas sprang back as from the point of a sword.

" Mâlkâ dî Jehudâje! " he bellowed. " King of the Jews! It is a blasphemy, an iniquity, and an outrage. Centurion, tear it down."

Calcol shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to the palace. "What the procurator has written he has written," he answered.

In the tone, in the gesture that preceded it, and in its impertinence Caiaphas read Pilate's one yet supreme revenge, the expression of his absolute contempt for the whole Sanhedrim and the nation that it ruled.

From the rear the mob jumped at the title as at a catchword. To them the irony of the procurator presumably was lost.

"King of the Jews!" they shouted. "Mâlkâ dî Jehudâje, come down from your cross!"

It was a great festival, and as they jeered at Jesus they enjoyed themselves hugely.

In their vast delight the voice of Stegas was drowned.

"I am a Roman citizen," he kept repeating, his head swaying, and indicating with his eyes the wounds in his hands, the torture he endured. "Kill me," he implored. And finding entreaty idle, he reviled the centurion, cursed the soldiery, and would have spat at them, but to his burning throat no spittle came.

The tongue of Dysmas lolled from his mouth.

He had not the ability to speak, even if in speech relief could come. Flame licked at his flesh, his joints were severing, each artery was a nerve exposed, and something was crunching his brain. He could no longer groan; he could suffer merely, such suffering as hell perhaps has failed to contrive, that apogee of agony which it was left for man to devise.

Stegas, catching the refrain the mob repeated, turned his eyes from the soldiers to the adjacent cross.

"If you are as they say," he cried, "save yourself and us."

As a taunt to Caiaphas, Calcol echoed, "Behold your king!" and raising a stalk of hyssop, on which was a sponge that he had dipped in the posca, the thin wine the soldiers drink, he offered it to the Christ.

The sun was nearing the horizon. Caiaphas gathered his ample folds about him. He had seen enough. The feast, wretchedly embittered, was nearly done. There was another at which he must officiate: the shofa presently would sound; the skewering of the Paschal lamb it was needful for him to superintend. It was time, he knew, to return to the Temple; and as he gave a last indignant look at the placard, the lips of the Christ parted to one despairing cry:

"Elî, Elî, lemâh shebâktanî?"

Caiaphas, nodding to the elders, smiled with satisfaction.

At last the false pretender was forced to acknowledge the invalidity of his claims. The Father whose son he vaunted himself to be had disowned him when his recognition was needed, if ever it had been needed at all. And so, with the smile of one whose labor has had its recompense, Caiaphas patted his skirt, and the elders about him strolled back through the Gannath Gate to the Temple that awaited him.

The multitude meanwhile had decreased. To the crowd also the Temple had its attractions, its duties, and its offices. Moreover, the spectacle was at an end. With a blow of the mallet the legs of the thieves had been broken. They had died without a shriek, a thing to be regretted. The Galilean too, pierced by the level stroke of a spear, had succumbed without a word. Sundown was approaching. Clearly it was best to be within the walls where other gayeties were. The mob dispersed, leaving behind but the dead, the circling vultures, a group of soldiers throwing dice for the garments of the crucified, and, remotely, a group of women huddled beneath a protecting oak.

During the hour or two that intervened, the force which had visited Mary evaporated in strength overtaxed. She was conscious only that she suffocated. The words of the women that had drawn her to them were empty as blanks in a dream; the jeers of the mob vacant as an empty bier. To but one thing was she alive, the fact that death could be. Little by little, as the impossible merged into the actual, the understanding came to her that the worst that could be had been done, and she ceased to suffer. The departing hierarchy, the dispersing mob, retreating before encroaching night, left her unimpressed. To her the setting sun was Christ.

The soldiers passed. She did not see them. Calcol called to her. She did not hear. The women had gone from her; she did not notice it. She stood as a cataleptic might, her eyes on the cross. Once only, when the Christ had uttered his despairing cry, she too had cried in her despair. In the roar of the mob the cry was lost as a stone tossed in the sea. Since then she had been dumb, sightless also, existing, if at all, unconsciously, her life-springs nourished by death.

Though she gazed at the cross, she had ceased to distinguish it. A little group that had reached it before the soldiery left had been unmarked by her. On the platform of her dream a serpent had emerged. In its coils were her immortal hopes. It was that she saw, and that alone. Those moments of agony in which the imagination oscillates between the past and the future, devouring the one, fumbling the other, had been endured, and resignation failed to bring its balm.

She had believed with a faith so firm that now in its demolition there was nothing left — an abyss merely, where light was not.

A hand touched her, and she quivered as a leaf does at the wing of a bird. " Mary, come with us," some one was saying; " we are taking him to a tomb."

Just beyond were men and women whom she knew. Joseph of Haramathaïm, a close follower of the Master; Nikodemon, the richest man in all Judæa; Johanna, Mary Clopas, Salomè, Bernice, and the servants of the opulent Jew. It was Ahulah who had touched her; and as Mary started she saw before her a coffin which the others bore.

" Come with us," Ahulah repeated; and Mary crossed the intervening ridge to where the gardens were and the tombs she had already passed.

At the door of a sepulchre the brief procession halted. Within was a room, a little grotto furnished with a stone slab and a lamp that flickered, surmounted by an arch. The coffin, placed on the slab, routed a bat that flew to the arch, and a lizard that scurried to a crevice. In the coffin the Christ lay, his head wrapped in a napkin, the body wound about by broad bands of linen that were secured with gum and impregnated with spices and with myrrh. The odor of aromatics filled the tomb. The bat escaped to the night. A stone was rolled before the opening, the brief procession withdrew, and Mary was left with the dead.

The momentary exertion, the bier, the sepulchre, the sight of the Christ in his cerements, the brooding quiet — these things had roused her. Her mind was nimbler, and thought more active. One by one the stars appeared. They would vanish, she told herself, as her hopes had done. Only they would reappear, and belief could not. It had come as a rainbow does, and disappeared as vaporously, little by little, before the full glare of might. For a minute, hours perhaps, she stood quite still, interrogating the past in which so much had been, gauging the future in which so much was to be. The one retreated, the other fled. Thoughts came to her evanescently, and faded before they were wholly formed. At one moment she was beckoning the unicorns from the desert, the winged lions from the yonderland, commanding them to bear her to the home of some immense revenge. At others she was asking her way of griffins, propounding the problem to the Sphinx. But the unicorns and lions took flight, the griffins spread their wings, the Sphinx fell asleep. There was no answer to her appeal.

Behind the sepulchre the moon rose; it dropped a beam near by. There is light somewhere, it seemed to say; and in that telegram from Above, she thought of Rome. She remembered now, in Rome was Tiberius, and in him Revenge. She smiled at her own forgetfulness. Yes, it was there. She would go to him, she would exact reparation; there should be another crucifixion. Pilate should be nailed to the cross, Judas on one side, Caiaphas on the other. Only it would be at Rome where there was no Passover to interfere with the torture they endured. Things were done better there. Men were crucified, not with the head up, but with the feet; and so remained, not for hours, but for days; and died, not of their wounds alone, but of hunger too.

A chariot of dream caught her, and, borne across the intervening space, she saw herself in a palace where there were gods and monsters, columns of transparent quartz, floors of malachite, roofs of gold. And there, on a dais, the Cæsar lay. Behind him a fan, luminous as a peacock's tail, oscillated to the tinkling of mysterious keys. In his crown was the lividity of uncolored dawns, in his sceptre the dominion of the world. An ulcer devoured his face, and in his ear a boy repeated the maxims of Elephantis. Mary threw herself at his feet, her tears fell on them as rain on leaves. "Vengeance," she implored; but he listened merely to the boy at his side. "Death is your servant," she cried. "You command, it obeys." The ulcer oozed, the face grew vague, he gave no answer. She stood up and menaced him. "Behind you spectres crouch; you may not see them. I do; their name is To-morrow." The murmurs of the boy were her sole reply. The roof crumbled, the flooring disappeared, the emperor faded, and Mary stared into space.

The moon that had struck aslant the tomb had gone, but where its beams had fallen the message remained. There is light somewhere, it repeated. Across the heavens a meteor shot like a bee. In the air voices whispered confusedly. It is not in Rome, one seemed to say. It is not on earth, another called.

Mary clutched at her beating breast. The sky now was an opening rose. What the sunset had sown the dawn would reap. In the night that had enveloped, day raised a lattice, and through it came a gust of higher thought. It is not in revenge, a voice whispered. It is not in regret, another called.

"I know it," Mary gasped. "Yes, yes, I know it now. It is in faith."

"And in abnegation of self."

The stone which stood before the sepulchre had rolled away. At her side the Christ stood. In his eyes were golden parables, in his face Truth shone revealed. She stared, dumb with the unexpected joy of belief confirmed, blinded by the sudden light, while he who had rent the bonds of death passed on into the budding day.

When the brief procession of the night before returned to the tomb, it was empty. At the door Mary lay, her arms outstretched and vacant.

FINIS MARIÆ.

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THE PERFUME OF EROS

The
Perfume of Eros

A Fifth Avenue Incident

By
EDGAR SALTUS

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THE FACTS IN THE CASE

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THE PERFUME OF EROS

CHAPTER I

A MAN OF FASHION

"ROYAL," said the man's mother that evening, "are you still thinking of Fanny Price?"

It was in Gramercy Park. As you may or may not know, Gramercy Park is the least noisy spot in the metropolitan Bedlam. Without being unreasonably aristocratic it is sedate and what agents call exclusive.

The park itself is essentially that. Its design is rather English. The use is restricted to adjoining residents. About it is a fence of high iron. Within are trees, paths, grasses, benches, great vases and a fountain. But none of the usual loungers, none of the leprous men, rancid women, and epileptic children that swarm in other New York squares. Yet these squares are open to all. To enter this park you must have a key. By day it is a playground. Nurse-maids come there with little boys and girls, the subdued, undemonstrative, beautifully dressed children of the rich. At night it is empty as a vacant bier.

In a house that fronted the north side Royal Loftus lived with his mother, a proud, arrogant woman socially known to all, but who socially knew but few. Behind her, in the shade of the family tree, was her dead lord, Royal's father and, more impressively still, the latter's relatives, the entire Loftus contingent, a set of people super-respectable, supernally rich. She too was rich. She wore a wig, walked with a staff, spoke with a Mayfair intonation in a high-pitched voice, and, in the amplitudes of widowhood and wealth, entertained frequently but cared only for her son.

On this evening the two were seated together in a drawing-room that faced the park. The walls, after a fashion of long ago, were frescoed. The ceiling too was frescoed. The furniture belonged also to an earlier day. The modern note in the room was the absence of chandeliers and the appearance of Royal Loftus, who, in a Paris shirt and London clothes, was contemplating his painted nails.

At his feet was an Ardebil rug which originally had cost a small fortune and now was worth a big one. In allusion to it a girl to whom he had handed out the usual "You don't care for me," had retorted, "Not care for you! Why, Royal, I worship the rug you tread on."

That girl was Fanny Price.

"No," he answered in reply to his mother's question. The answer was strangely truthful. Fanny Price had tantalized him greatly. Semi-continuously he had thought of her for a long time. But not matrimonially. To him matrimony meant always one woman more and usually one man less. He had no wish to dwindle. When he was fifty he might, perhaps, to make a finish, marry some girl who wanted to begin. But that unselfishness was remote. He was quite young; what is worse, he was abominably good-looking. Fancy Aramis in a Piccadilly coat. That was the way he looked. His features were chiseled. On his lip was a mustache so slight that it might have been made with a crayon. His hair was black. His eyes were blue. Where they were not blue they were white, very white. They were wonderful eyes. With them he had done a great deal of execution.

At the time they rather haunted a young woman who moved in another sphere and whose acquaintance he had made quite adventurously. The name of this young woman was Marie Durand. It was of the latter, not of Fanny Price, that he was thinking.

"No," he repeated. "But was it for Annandale that you asked her for tonight?"

"How perfectly absurd of you, Royal. Have you forgotten that he is in love with Sylvia? I asked her partly for you, partly for Orr."

"Is he coming too! Good Lord! it is going to be ghastly."

But at the side of the room a portière was being drawn and a servant announced:

"Miss Waldron."

With the charming manner of the thoroughbred New York girl a young woman entered. She was tall, willowy, with a face such as those one used to see in keepsakes—delightful things which now, like so many other delightful things, are seen no more.

As she approached Mrs. Loftus, who had risen to greet her, she made a little courtesy.

"Sylvia, this is so dear of you. And is your mother very well?"

Again the portière was drawn. A voice announced:

"Miss Price."

Then there appeared a girl adorably constructed—constructed, too, to be adored. She was slight and very fair. Her mouth resembled the red pulp of some flower of flesh. Her eyes were pools of purple, her hair a turban of gold.

Cannibalistically Loftus looked the delicious apparition up and down. He could have eaten it.

"Mr. Annandale," the voice announced.

A man, big and blond, with a cavalry mustache and an amiable, aimless air, strolled in.

"Mr. Melanchthon Orr."

On the heels of Annandale came a cousin of Miss Waldron, a lawyer by trade, a man with a bulldog face that was positively attractive.

There were more how-do-you-do's, the usual platitudes, interrupted by the opening of doors at the further end of the room, where a butler, a squad of lackeys behind him, disclosed himself in silent announcement of dinner.

After the general move which then ensued and hosts and guests were seated at table, Orr created an immediate diversion by calling to Fanny Price and telling her that shortly she was to marry.

"Yes," he continued, "and my cousin Sylvia is to marry also, though not so soon; but either Annandale or Royal will never marry at all."

Bombarded by sudden questions Orr gazed calmly about.

"How do I know? Miranda told me. Miranda the spook. She charged five dollars for the information. If you like to make it up to me, I shall not mind in the least. On the contrary. You see, Mrs. Loftus," Orr added, turning to his hostess, "I happened, when I went to her, to have your very kind invitation for this evening in my pocket, and, as she wanted something to psychometrize, I gave her that. She held it to her forehead and said, 'I see you in the house of an elegant lady'—that is you, Mrs. Loftus; yes, there is no doubt about it—'and there are present two young ladies, one fair, one dark, and two gentlemen; one of the gentlemen will never marry, but the dark young lady will marry in two years and the fair young lady in one. Five dollars. Thank you. Next.'"

"Did she say nothing about me except that I am an 'elegant lady'?" Mrs. Loftus, with a pained laugh and a high voice, inquired.

"Did she say whom I am to marry?" Fanny Price asked, smiling, as she spoke, at Royal.

"But, Melanchthon, surely you do not believe in these things?" said Sylvia gravely.

"Of course he does not," Loftus exclaimed. "He does not believe in anything. Do you, Orr?"

"I believe in a great many things," the lawyer replied. "I have precisely three hundred and sixty-five beliefs—one for every day in the year."

"When the twenty-ninth of February comes around how do you manage then?" said Fanny.

"Yes," said Annandale, "and how about April first?"

Orr raised a finger. "Jest if you will. But beliefs are a great comfort, or would be among people like you who have none except in fashion, and there is the oddity of it, for belief in this sort of thing is very fashionable now, particularly in London. Yes, indeed, Lady Cloden—you remember her, she was Clara Hastings—well, she went to a spook in Tottenham Court Road, and the spook told her that she would have twins. Immediately she had herself insured. In London, you know, you can be insured against anything. The twins appeared and she got £5,000. Belief in this sort of thing is therefore not merely fashionable but convenient."

In the ripple of laughter which followed the logic, Orr turned to Mrs. Loftus, Annandale to Miss Waldron, Loftus to Fanny Price.

"You take very kindly to snubbing, don't you?" said the latter.

"I?"

"Oh, pooh! The other day I saw Mr. Royal Loftus trying to scrape acquaintance with a young person in the street. I never laughed more in my life. She would not look at you. Is that sort of thing amusing? Why don't you take a girl of your size?"

Loftus looked into Fanny's eyes. "If you want to know, because you are all so deuced prim."

"Ah!" and Fanny made a tantalizing little face, showing, as she did so, the point of her tongue. "Now tell me, what makes you think so?"

Across the table Annandale was talking to Sylvia Waldron. His manner was rather earnest, but his utterance had become a trifle thick.

"Oh, Arthur," the girl at last interrupted him. "Don't drink any more. You have had five glasses of champagne already."

Heroically Annandale put his glass down. "Since you wish it, I won't. But it does not hurt me. I can stand anything."

"I am afraid it may grow on you."

Annandale laughed. "Grow on me," he repeated. "I like that. Why, I am cultivating it.

Miss Waldron laughed too. "Yes, but you know you must not. I won't let you." Then at once, with that tact which was part of her, she changed the subject. "Doesn't Fanny look well tonight?"

"Very. She is the prettiest girl in New York.

But you are the best and the dearest. What is more, you are an angel."

"To you I want to try to be."

"Only," resumed Annandale with a spark of the wit which is born of champagne, "don't try to be a saint—it is a step backward."

"Yes, Mrs. Loftus," Orr was saying, "Miranda is fat, very fat. All mediums are. The fatter they are the more confidence you may have."

Then there was more small talk. Courses succeeded each other. Sweets came and went. Presently Mrs. Loftus looked circuitously about and slowly arose. When she and the girls had gone and the men were re-seated Loftus turned to Orr.

"Did the spook say anything else?"

Orr was selecting a cigar from a cabinet on wheels which a servant trundled about. He chose and lighted one before he replied. Then he looked at Loftus.

"Yes, she told me that she saw—" Orr paused. The cigar had gone out. He lighted it again. "She told me that she saw death hereabouts."

Loftus was also lighting a cigar. "Then I too am a spook," he replied. "I foretold that you would say something ghastly."

"But, my dear fellow," Orr rejoined, "truth is always that. People fancy that it is made of lace and pearls like a girl on her wedding day. It is not that at all. It is just what you call it. It is ghastly. Read history. Any reliable work is but a succession of groans. The more reliable it is the more groans there will be."

Annandale, who had been helping himself to brandy, interrupted. "Talking of reading things, I saw somewhere that after some dinner or other, when the women had gone, a chap began on a rather—well, don't you know, a sort of barnyard story and the host, who could not quite stomach it, said: 'Suppose we continue the conversation in the drawing-room?' So, Royal, what do you say? If Orr is going to shock us, suppose we do."

Loftus with a painted finger-tip flipped the ashes from his cigar.

"I fear that I have lost the ability to be shocked, but not the ability to be bored."

Yet presently, after another cigar and conscious perhaps that Fanny Price, though often exasperating, never bored, he returned with his guests to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER II

THE POCKET VENUS

"HOW do you like my hat?" said Fanny to Sylvia. Since the dinner a week had gone. The two girls were in Irving Place.

Irving Place is south of Gramercy Park. To the west are the multiple atrocities of Union Square, to the east are the nameless shames of Third avenue. Between the two Irving Place lies, a survival of the peace of old New York. At the lower end are the encroaching menaces of trade, but at the upper end, from which you enter Gramercy Park, there is a quiet, pervasive and almost provincial. It was here that Sylvia Waldron lived.

People take a house for six months or an apartment for a year and call it a home. That is a base use for a sacred word. A home is a place in which you are born, in which your people die and your progeny emerge. A home predicates the present, but particularly the past and with it the future. Any other variety of residence may be agreeable or the reverse, but it is not a home.

In Irving Place there are homes. Among them was the house in which Sylvia Waldron lived. It had been in her family for sixty years. In London a tenure such as that is common. In New York it is phenomenal.

To Sylvia the phenomenon was a matter of course. What amazed her were the migrations of others. Of Fanny, for instance. Each autumn Sylvia would say to her, "Where are you to be?" And Fanny, who at the time might be lodged in a hotel, or camping with a relative, or visiting at Tuxedo, or stopping in Westchester, never could tell. But by December the girl and her mother would find quarters somewhere and there remain until that acrobat, summer, turned handsprings into town and frightened them off.

Summer had not yet come. But May had and, with it, an eager glitter, skies of silk, all the caresses and surrenders of spring.

The season was becoming to Fanny. She fitted in it. She was a young Venus in Paris clothes—Aphrodite a maiden, touched up by Doucet. In her manner was a charm quite incandescent. In her voice were intonations that conveyed the sensation of a kiss. Her eyes were very loquacious. She could, when she chose, flood them with languors. She could, too, charge them with rebuke. You never knew, though, just what she would do. But you always did know what Sylvia would not.

Sylvia suggested the immateriality that the painters of long ago gave to certain figures which they wished to represent as floating from the canvas into space. You felt that her mind was clean as wholesome fruit, that her speech could no more weary than could a star, that her heart, like her house, was a home. She detained, but Fanny allured.

In spite of which or perhaps precisely because of their sheer dissimilarity the two girls were friends. But association weaves mysterious ties. It unites people who otherwise would come to blows. Fanny and Sylvia had been brought up together. The mesh woven in younger days was about them still, and on this particular noon in May they made a picture which, while contrasting, was charmful.

"You really like my hat?"

The hat was gray. The girl's dress was gray. The skirt was of the variety known as trotabout. The whole thing was severely plain, yet astonishingly smart. Sylvia was also in street dress. The latter was black.

They were in the parlor. For in New York there are still parlors. And why not? A parlor—or parloir—is a talking-place. Yet in this instance not a gay place. It was spacious, sombre, severe.

"And now," said Fanny, after the hat had been properly praised, "tell me when it is to be?"

"When is what to be?"

"You and Arthur?"

"Next autumn."

"I shall send a fish knife," said Fanny, savorously. "A fish knife always looks so big and costs so little. Though if I could I would give you a diamond crown."

"Give me your promise to be bridesmaid, and you will have given me what I want from you most."

"But what am I to wear? And oh, Sylvia, how am I to get it? I don't dare any more to so much as look in on Annette, or Juliette, or Marguerite. There are streets into which I can no longer go. I told Loftus that, and he said—so sympathetically too—'Ah, is it memories that prevent you?' 'Rubbish,' I told him, 'it's bills.' "

"Fanny! How could you? He might have offered to pay them."

"If he had only offered to owe them!" Fanny laughed as she spoke and patted her perfect skirt.

"But he has other fish to fry. Do you know the other day I saw him—"

But what Fanny had seen was never told, or at least not then. Annandale was invading the parlor.

"Conquering hero!" cried Fanny. "I am here congratulating Sylvia."

"I congratulate myself that you are. I have a motor at the door, and I propose to take you both to Sherry's, afterward, if you like, to the races. There you may congratulate me."

"What is this about Sherry's?" Again the parlor was invaded. This time by Sylvia's mother. She had bright cheeks, bright eyes, bright hair. In her voice was indulgence, in her manner ease. She gave a hand to Fanny, the other to Annandale.

"In my day," she resumed, "girls did not go lunching without someone to look after them."

"They certainly did not go to Sherry's," said Annandale. "There was no Sherry's to go to. But why won't you come with us?"

"Thank you, Arthur. It is not because Fanny or Sylvia needs looking after. But when I was their age anything of the sort would have been thought so common. Yet then, what was common at that time seems to have been accepted since. Now, there is a chance to call me old-fashioned."

"I can do better than that," said Annandale, "I can call you grande dame."

"Yes," Fanny threw in, "and that, don't you think, is so superior to being merely—ahem—demned grand."

"Why, Fanny!" And Mrs. Waldron, at once amused at the jest and startled at the expression, shook her finger at her.

But Annandale hastened to her rescue. "Fanny is quite right, Mrs. Waldron. You meet women nowadays whose grandfathers, if they had any, were paving the streets while your own were governing the country and who, just because they happen to be beastly rich, put on airs that would be comical in an empress. Now, won't you change your mind and come with us? At Sherry's there are always some choice selections on view."

"You are not very tempting, Arthur. But if the girls think otherwise, take them. And don't forget. You dine with us tonight."

Thereat, presently, after a scurry through sunshine and streets, Sherry's was reached.

There Annandale wanted to order a châteaubriand.

The girls rebelled. A maître d'hôtel suggested melons and a suprême with a bombe to follow.

Annandale turned to him severely. "Ferdinand, I object to your telling me what you want me to eat."

"Let me order," said Sylvia. "Fanny, what would you like?"

"Cucumbers, asparagus, strawberries."

"Chicken?"

Fanny nodded.

"Yes," said Annandale to the chastened waiter, "order that and some moselle, and I want a Scotch and soda. There's Orr," he interrupted himself to announce. "I wonder what he is doing uptown? And there's Loftus."

At the mention of Orr, Fanny, who had been eying an adjacent gown, evinced no interest. But at the mention of Loftus she glanced about the room.

It was large, high-ceiled, peopled with actresses and men-about-town, smart women and stupid boys, young girls and old beaux. From a balcony there dripped the twang of mandolins. In the air was the savor of pineapple, the smell of orris, the odor of food and flowers.

On entering Sylvia had stopped to say a word at one table, Fanny had loitered at another. Then in their trip to a table already reserved, a trip conducted by the maître d'hôtel whom Annandale had rebuked, murmurs trailed after them, the echo of their names, observations profoundly analytical. "That's Fanny Price, the great beauty." "That's Miss Waldron, who is engaged to Arthur Annandale." "That is Annandale there"—the usual subtleties of the small people of a big city. Now, at the entrance, Orr and Loftus appeared.

"Shall I ask them to join us?" Annandale asked.

"Yes, do," said Fanny. "I like Mr. Orr so much."

But Loftus, who, with his hands in his pockets, a monocle in his eye, had been looking about with an air of great contempt for everybody, already with Orr was approaching. On reaching the table very little urging was required to induce them to sit, and, when seated they were, Loftus was next to Fanny.

"What are you doing uptown at this hour?" Annandale asked Orr, who had got between Loftus and Sylvia. "I thought you lawyers were all so infernally busy."

"Everybody ought to be," Orr replied. "Although an anarchist who had managed to get himself locked up, and whom I succeeded in getting out, confided to me that only imbeciles work. By way of exchange

I had to confide to him that it is only imbeciles that do not."

"Now that," said Annandale, who had never done a stroke of work in his life, "is what I call a very dangerous theory."

"A theory that is not dangerous," Orr retorted, "can hardly be called a theory at all."

With superior tact Sylvia intervened. "But what is anarchy, Melanchthon? Socialism I know about, but anarchy—?"

"To put it vulgarly, I drink and you pay."

"But suppose I am an anarchist?"

"Then Sherry pays."

"But supposing he is an anarchist?"

"Then there is a row. And there will be one. The country is drifting that way. It will, I think, be bloody, but I think, too, it will be brief. Anarchists, you know, maintain that of all prejudices capital and matrimony are the stupidest. What they demand is the free circulation of money and women. As a nation, we are great at entertaining, but we will never entertain that."

"Why, then, did you not let the beggar rot where he was?" Annandale swiftly and severely inquired.

"Oh, you know, if I had not got him out someone else would have, and I thought it better that the circulation of money should proceed directly from his pocket to mine."

"You haven't any stupid prejudices yourself, that's clear," said Annandale, helping himself as he spoke to more Scotch. "Sylvia," he continued, "if I am ever up for murder I will retain Melanchthon Orr."

Orr laughed. "That retainer will never reach me. You would not hurt a fly."

"Wouldn't I?" And Annandale assumed an expression of great ferocity. "You don't know me. I can imagine circumstances in which I could wade in gore. By the way, I have ordered a revolver."

"What!"

"Yes, a burglar got in my place the night before last and woke me up. If he comes back and wakes me up again I'll blow his head off."

Sylvia looked at him much as she might at a boastful child. "Yes, yes, Arthur, but please don't take so much of that whisky."

"I think I will have a drop of it, if I may," said Loftus, who meanwhile had been talking to Fanny. In a moment he turned to her anew.

"Where are you going this summer?"

"To Narragansett. It is cool and cheap. Why don't you come?"

"It is such a beastly hole."

"Well, perhaps. But do you think you would think so if I were there?"

"That would rather depend on how you treated me."

"You mean, don't you, that it would rather depend on how I let you treat me?" Fanny, as she spoke, looked Loftus in the eyes and made a face at him.

That face, Loftus, after a momentary interlude with knife and fork, tried to mimic. "If a chap gave you the chance you would drive him to the devil."

On Fanny's lips a smile bubbled. She shook her pretty head. "No, not half so far. Not even so far as the other end of Fifth avenue, where I saw you trying to scrape acquaintance with that girl. Apropos. You might tell me. How are matters progressing? Has the castle capitulated?"

"I haven't an idea what you are talking about."

"That's right. Assume a virtue though you have it not. It's a good plan."

"It does not appear to be yours."

"Appearances may be deceptive."

"And even may not be."

Sylvia interrupted them. "What are you two quarreling about?"

"Mr. Loftus does not like my hat. Don't you like it, Mr. Orr?"

"I like everything about you, everything, from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet."

"There!" exclaimed Fanny. "That is the way I like to have a man talk."

"It is dreadfully difficult," Loftus threw in.

"You seem to find it so," Fanny threw back.

Sylvia raised a finger. "Mr. Loftus, if you do not stop quarreling with Fanny I will make you come and sit by me."

"If I am to look upon that as a punishment, Miss Waldron," Loftus with negligent gallantry replied, "what would you have me regard as a reward?"

"Arthur! Arthur!" Fanny cried. "Did you hear that? This man is making up to Sylvia."

But Annandale did not seem in the least alarmed. He was looking about for Ferdinand. "Here," he began, when at last the waiter appeared. "You neglect us shamefully. We want some more moselle and more Scotch."

"None for me," said Loftus rising. "I have an appointment."

"Appointment," Fanny announced, "is very good English for *rendezvous*."

"And *taisez-vous, mademoiselle*, is very good French for I wish it were with yourself."

"I have not a doubt of it."

"Fanny!" Sylvia objected. "You are impossible."

"Yes," Fanny indolently replied. "Yet then, to be impossible and seem the reverse is the proper caper for a debutante. Heigho! I wish girls smoked here. I would give a little of my small change for a cigarette. Are you really off, Royal. Well, my love to the lady."

CHAPTER III

THE EX-FIRST LADY

LOFTUS, letting himself into a hansom, sailed away. At Morris Park that afternoon there were to be races, and up the maelstrom of Fifth avenue came scudding motors, fleeting traps.

As the hansom descended the current Loftus nodded to this acquaintance and to that, occasionally raising his hat as women smiled and bowed. Occasionally, too, he contemplated what he could of himself in the little mirror at the side of the cab. He looked triumphant and treacherous.

Fanny, he reflected, was ideal. But exacting, ambitious even. She had a perfect mania for matrimony. There was another girl that he had in mind whom he fancied more reasonable. This other was Marie Durand.

In just what way he had met her was never quite clear. Fanny, who had witnessed the preliminary skirmish, always believed that he had picked her up. Afterward, at the time of the trial, it was so reported. The report was false in addition to being vulgar. Marie Durand was not of that sort. There was nothing fast or flirtatious about her. But she was a human being. She had eyes. She had a heart. By nature she was sensitive. Moreover, she was but nineteen. Being human, sensitive, and not very old, having eyes to see and a heart that throbbed, she was impressionable and, to her misfortune, Loftus impressed her.

Loftus was rather used to impressing people. He saw the girl on Fifth avenue, followed her home, learned her name—or thought he did—and sent her flowers every day until he saw her again, when he presumed to accost her. At that impertinence Marie tilted her nose and trotted on, distant, disdainful, demure.

But not indifferent. Not oblivious either. Often she had seen him. Occasionally on a high drag behind a piebald four-in-hand. In crowded Fifth avenue, drags, with or without piebalds, are infrequent. This drag Marie had seen not merely tooling along the street but pictured in the press. With, of course, full accounts of the driver. As a consequence she knew who he was, knew that he was one of the rich young men of New York and that he moved and had his being in the upper circles.

Marie's own sphere of life was obscure. She lived with her father in Gay street. Her father, a tailor by trade, was a naturalized Frenchman, a gaunt Gaul, who had a sallow face, walked with a stoop, complained of his heart and adored his daughter. To him she was a pearl, a *perle,* rather. For though he had been long in New York and spoke English well, he had never quite acquired the accent.

Marie spoke English without any accent whatever. She also spoke French, sang in it, too, sang in Italian and, with a view to the lyric stage, or, more exactly, with the hope of studying for it abroad, was, at the time when this drama begins, taking lessons in what is termed the *bel canto.*

But her aspirations, in so far as they concerned Europe, her father was unable to gratify. He could not let her go alone and he could not afford to throw up what he called his beesness. Here, then, was this girl, pretty as a picture, with a lovely contralto voice, with aspirations entirely worldly, with wings, you might say, cooped in Gay street, spiritually and mentally starved there.

Gay street lies back of Jefferson Market. In shape a crescent, it curves briefly in a lost and dismal way through a region which, though but a block or two from Fifth avenue, is almost squalid. At one end of its short curve is a saloon, at the other an apothecary.

It was from this apothecary that Loftus learned Marie's name—or thought he did. For inadvertently the man got things mixed as his drugs and supplied Loftus with the name of a young woman who lived in a house next to the one in which Loftus had seen the girl enter.

What is more interesting is the fact that, though, while he was following her there, she had looked neither to the right nor to the left, or anywhere save straight ahead, she had been fully aware that he was behind her. How? We cannot tell. It is one of the mysteries of femininity. But once safely in, boldly she peeked out. Loftus was crossing the street. Presently he entered the shop. For what, it did not take Marie more than a minute to conjecture.

Later in the day a motor van appeared in that street. On it was the name of a Broadway florist. Since the memory of man never before had such a thing happened. From the van a groom had hopped and, if you please, with roses. That, too, was phenomenal. Yet thereafter every day for a week there was the motor, the groom and flowers at a dollar and a half apiece. The recipient of these attentions was Miss Rebecca Cohen, the daughter of Mr. Abraham Cohen, who also, like Marie's father, was a tailor.

Marie saw the van, divined the mistake, and, being as full of fun as a kitten, greatly enjoyed the continued humor of it. For still into that sordid street the flowers poured. Every day, to the unhallowed surprise of Mr. Cohen and to the equal bewilderment of his offspring, a box of radiant roses was handed out.

In that surprise and bewilderment the neighborhood joined. Scandalized at the scandal Cohen questioned the groom, questioned the chauffeur. He might have saved himself the trouble. Then he inquired at the florist's. But there no one could be found who knew anything at all about anything whatever. Already he had questioned Rebecca. It seemed to him that in spite of her protests she must be engaged in some fathomless intrigue. But Rebecca, whose commercial instinct was beautifully developed, not only protested but appeased. She told her father that the roses were worth money. Furthermore, that which is worth money can be sold. Thereupon sold they were. But quite as inexplicably as the van had appeared so did its visits cease. When that happened Mr. Cohen felt and declared that he was robbed. He had come to regard the roses as assets.

Marie meanwhile, whom the humor of the situation had amused, ended by worrying over it. She was a good girl, as such conscientious, and it troubled her, at first only a little and then very much, to think that Loftus must believe that she was knowingly accepting his flowers. Moreover, her father had commented upon them; in commenting he had wondered. Marie began to fear that Loftus might discover the mistake and turn in and inundate her. She did not know quite what to do. She thought of writing to him, very distantly, in the third person, or else anonymously. But the letter did not seem to get itself framed. Then, from thinking of that, she fell to thinking of him.

To see him she had only to close her eyes. Once he visited her in dream. He came accompanied by butterflies that fluttered about her and changed into kisses on her lips. Again she fancied him much sought after by ladies and became hotly and unaccountably vexed at the idea. It would be so lovely to really know him, she always decided. But she did not see at all how that ever could come about.

Yet, of course, it did come about. It came about, moreover, in a fashion as sordid as the street she lived in.

That street, though sordid, is relatively silent. It is beyond, in Sixth avenue, that you get a sample of real

New York noise. The slam-bang of the trains overhead, the grinding grunt of the surface cars, the demon draymen, the clanging motors, the ceaseless crowds, collaborate in an uproar beside which a bombardment is restful. But though the entire thoroughfare is appalling, Jefferson Market, behind which Gay street squats, is infernal.

Loftus loathed it. Until he pursued the girl into its horrors never before had he been there. Nor, save for her, would he have returned. But return he did. For recompense he beheld her. She was strolling along, a roll of music under her arm, in the direction of Fifth avenue.

It was there he attempted to accost her. Without deigning to seem even aware that he had presumed to do so, she passed on and, in passing, turned into Washington Square, where, ascending the steps of a house, she vanished. It was then three by the clock of a beautiful day in April.

Loftus was as well able as another to put two and two together. He knew that young girls do not stroll about with a music roll under their arm for the fun of it. A music roll predicates lessons, and there where lessons are must also be a teacher.

From that teacher he was unaware of any good and valid reason why he should not himself take lessons.

But fate is not unrelenting. Of such toil he was spared. He spared himself too any further toil that day. He felt that he had done enough. He had quarried the girl again, stalked her to what was obviously a boarding-house. He turned on his heel.

The next day he was back at that house, inquiring at the door. As a result he was shown into a shabby back parlor where he made the acquaintance of Mme. Machin, a tired old Frenchwoman, who, with rouge on her yellow cheeks, powder on her pointed nose, confided to him that she had been prima donna, though whether *assoluta* or *dissoluta* she omitted to state.

But her antecedents, her possibilities as well, Loftus divined at a glance and, while he was at it, divining too, that, personally, she was no better, and, financially, no better off than the law allows, asked point-blank about the Miss Cohen who had come there at three the day before. Learning then from the ex-first lady that the girl's name was not Cohen but Durand, he damned the apothecary and offered a hundred dollars to be introduced. Poverty is not a crime. But it is rumored to be an incentive. The crime which Loftus proposed to Mme. Machin is one which the code does not specify and the law cannot reach. Knowing which, the woman may have been guilty of it before and, the opportunity occurring, was guilty again—salving her conscience, if she had a conscience, with the convenient, "Mon Dieu, il faut vivre!"

Anyway, at the offer she did not so much as blink. She smiled very receptively and declared that she would be charmed.

When, therefore, two days later Marie re-entered that shabby back parlor she found Loftus there. Generally the girl and the ex-first lady got to work at once, sometimes with the brindisi from "Lucrezia Borgia," sometimes with arias from "Aida." Save themselves no one was ever present.

Now at the unexpected spectacle of the man the cream of the girl's delicate skin suffused. It was as though there were claret in it. She had not an idea what to do and, before she could decide, ceremoniously, with due regard for the pomps of etiquette, Loftus had been introduced.

If abrupt, the introduction was at least conventional, and Marie, who had not the remotest suspicion that it was all bought and paid for and who, if consciously startled, subconsciously was pleased, attributing the whole thing to accident and, flushing still, smiled and sat down.

"I think," said Loftus, "that I have had the pleasure of seeing you before."

At this inanity Marie looked first at him, then at the carpet. She did not know at all what he was saying. But in his voice was a deference, in his manner a sorcery and in his bearing and appearance something that went to her head. It was all very novel and delightful, and she flushed again.

"Yes," Loftus resumed, "and when I did see you I committed a very grave offense. Can you forgive me?"

For countenance sake the girl turned to Mme. Machin. But the ex-first lady, pretexting a pretext, had gone.

"Can you?" Loftus requested. "Can you forgive?"

Forgive indeed! Had she not so forgiven that she had almost wished a renewal of that grave offense? She did not answer. It was her face that spoke for her. But the silence Loftus affected to misconstrue.

"Couldn't you try?"

"Yes." The monosyllable fell from her softly, almost inaudibly. Yet for his purpose it sufficed.

"Thank you. I hoped that you would. But will you let me tell you now how I came to behave as I did?"

To this, timorously, with the slightest movement of her pretty head, the girl assented.

"Because I could not help myself. Because at the first sight of you I knew that I loved you. Because I felt that I could never love anyone else."

Marie started. She was crimson. Starting, she half got from her seat. Loftus caught at her hand. She disengaged it. But he caught at it again.

"I love you," he continued, burning her with his words, with the contact of his fingers, that had intertwisted with hers. "Look at me, I love your eyes. Speak to me, I love your voice."

But the door opened. Preceded by a precautionary roulade, the ex-first lady reappeared.

"Allons!" she remarked to the ceiling. "Et maintenant, mademoiselle, au travail."

Loftus stood up, took Marie's hand again, held it a second, nodded at the woman. In a moment he had gone.

"Au revoir," the ex-first lady called after him. She turned to the girl. "A gallant monsieur. And good to look at." Then seating herself at the piano she attacked the brindisi from "Lucrezia." "Ah! the segreto!" she interrupted herself to exclaim, "il segreto per esser felice—the secret of happiness! Mais! There is but one! C'est l'amour! And with a gallant monsieur like that! And rich! C'est le rêve! N'est ce pas, mon enfant?"

"Je vous en prie, madame," said Marie severely, or rather as severely as she could, for she was trembling with emotion, saturated with the love that had been thrown at her head, drenched with it, frightened too at the apperception of the secret which the aria that her teacher was strumming revealed.

CHAPTER IV

ENCHANTMENT

SAILING in the hansom down Fifth avenue, Loftus thought of that first interview with the girl, of the den in which it had occurred and of his subsequent visits there. Since the introduction he had seen her three times, seen, too, of course, that she was not up to Fanny, but he had seen also that she was less ambitious, more tractable in every way. Besides, one is not loved every afternoon. To him that was the main point, and of that point he was now tolerably sure.

Suddenly the hansom tacked, veered and landed him at the ex-first lady's door.

"Bonjour, mon beau seigneur," the woman began when, presently, he reached her lair. "The little one will not delay."

"And then?"

"Be tranquil. I have other cats to whip."

Mme. Machin was hatted and gloved. Loftus stuck his hand in his pocket. Mme. Machin was too genteel to notice. From the pocket he drew a roll of yellow bills. Mme. Machin affected entire unconcern. The bills he put in her paw. Mme. Machin was so entirely unconscious of the liberty that she turned to the mantel, picked up a bag of bead, opened it, took from it a little puff with which she dusted her nose. Then the puff went back into the bag. With it went the bills.

"I run," she announced. She moved to the door. There, looking at Loftus over her shoulder, she stopped. "You come again?"

For reply Loftus made a gesture.

"Yes," said the woman. "Naturally. It depends. But let me know. It is more commodious. Pas de scandale, eh?"

To this Loftus made no reply whatever. But his expression was translatable into "what do you take me for?"

"Allez!" the ex-first lady resumed. "I have confidence."

She opened the door and through it vanished. Loftus removed his gloves, seated himself at the piano, ran his fingers over the keys, struck a note which suggested another and attacked the waltz from "Faust."

The appropriateness of it appealed to him. As he played he hummed. Then, passing upward with the score, he reached the "Salve Dimora," Faust's salute to Marguerite's home. But in the den where he sat the aria did not fit. He went back again to the waltz. Then, precisely as on the stage Marguerite appears, Marie entered.

Loftus jumped up, went to her, took her hand. It was trembling. He led her to a sofa, seating himself at her side, her hand still in his.

He looked at her. She had the prettiness and timidity of a kitten, a kitten's grace as well. Like a kitten, she could not have been vulgar or awkward had she tried. But association and environment had wrapped about her one of the invisible yet obvious mantles that differentiate class from class. Loftus was quite aware of that. He was, though, equally aware that love is a famous costumer. There are few mantles that it cannot remove and remake. That the girl loved him he knew. The tremor of her hand assured him more surely than words.

None the less he asked her. It seemed to him only civil. But she did not answer. The dinginess of the den oppressed him. It occurred to him that it might be oppressing her. Again he inquired. Only the tremor of the hand replied.

"Tell me," he repeated.

The girl disengaged her hand. She looked down and away.

"Won't you?" he insisted.

"I ought not to," she said at last.

"But why?"

With her parasol the girl poked at the carpet. "Because it is not right. It is not right that I should." But at once, with a little convulsive intake of the breath, she added, "Yet I do."

Then it seemed to her that the room was turning around, that the walls had receded, that there was but blankness. His lips were on hers. In their contact everything ceased to be save the consciousness of something so poignant, so new, that to still the pain of the joy of it she struggled to be free.

Kissing her again Loftus let her go. Dizzily she got from the sofa. The parasol had fallen. Her hat was awry. To straighten it she moved to a mirror. Her face was scarlet. Instantly fear possessed her, fear not of him but of herself. With uncertain fingers she tried to adjust the hat.

"I must go."

But Loftus came to her. Bending a bit he whispered in her ear: "Don't go—don't go ever."

Do what she might she could not manage with her hat. In the glass it was no longer that which she saw, nor her face, but an abyss, suddenly precipitate, that had opened there.

"No, don't go," Loftus was saying. "I love you and you love me."

It was, though, not love that was emotionalizing her then. It was fear. A fear of that abyss and of the lower depths beneath.

"Don't go," Loftus reiterated. "Don't, that is, if you do love me; and if you do, tell me, will you be my wife?"

At this, before her, in abrupt enchantment, the abyss disappeared. Where its depths had been were parterres of gems, slopes of asphodel, the gleam and brilliance of the gates of paradise.

"Your wife!" The wonder of it was in her voice and marveling eyes.

"Come." Taking her hand, Loftus led her to their former seat.

"But——."

"But what?"

"How can I be your wife? I am nobody."

"You are perfect. There is only one thing I fear—" Loftus hesitated. Nervously the girl looked at him.

"Only one," he continued. "I am not and never shall be half good enough for you."

"Oh!"

"Never half enough."

"Oh! How can you say that? It is not true. Could I care for you if it were?"

"And you do?"

"Don't you know it?"

"Then don't go, don't go from me ever."

"But——"

"Yes, I know. You are thinking of your father, of whom you have told me; perhaps, too, of my mother, of whom I told you. When she knows you and learns to love you, as she will, we can be married before all the world. We could now were I not dependent on her. Yet then, am I not dependent too on you? Come with me, and afterward——"

"I cannot," the girl cried; "it would kill my father."

"You have but to wire him that you have gone to be married, and it will be the truth."

"I cannot," the girl repeated. "Oh, what are you asking me to do?"

"I am asking you to be my wife. What is the ceremony to you? What are a few words mumbled by a hired priest? Love, love alone, is marriage."

"No, no. To you perhaps. But not to me."

"And the ceremony shall follow as soon as we can manage. Can you not trust me for that?"

"But——"

"Will you not trust me? If you are to put your whole life into my keeping you should at least begin by doing that."

The girl looked at the man and then away, at vistas he could not see, the winding slopes of asphodel, the sudden and precipitate abyss. Yet he spoke so fair, she told herself. Surely it was to the slopes he meant to take her, not to that blackening pit.

"Yet if you won't," Loftus continued, "it is best for both that we should part."

"For—for always?"

"Yes."

Just why he omitted to explain. But then there are explanations that explain nothing. Yet to her, for a moment, the threat was like a flash in darkness. For a moment she thought that she could not let him go. About her swarmed her dreams. Through them his kisses pierced. For a moment only. The flash had passed. She was in darkness again. Before her was the precipitate abyss. Shudderingly she drew from it.

But Loftus was very resolute. "If you will you have my promise."

For answer she looked at him, looked into his eyes, peered into them, deep down, striving to see what was there, trying to mirror her soul in his own.

"Before God and man I swear you shall be my wife."

At that, suddenly within her, fear melted away. If she had not seen his soul she had heard it. Where fear had been was faith. Dumb with the enchantment of a dream come true, she half arose. But his arms went about her and in them she lay like seaweed in the tide.

CHAPTER V

MARIE CHANGES HER NAME

GAY STREET knew Marie no more. Twenty-second street made her acquaintance. There, in the Arundel, an apartment house which is just around the corner from Gramercy Park, Loftus secured quarters for her.

These quarters, convenient for him, to her were temporary. She regarded them as a tent on the road to the slopes. Even in that light they were attractive. Though small, they were fastidiously furnished and formed what agents call a "bijou." Loftus, who had whims which the girl thought poetic, preferred "aviary." He preferred, too, that she should change her name. Durand seemed to him extremely plebeian. Mentally he cast about. Leroy suggested itself. It had in it an echo of France and also of old New York. As such it appealed to him and, therefore, to her. There and then Marie became known as Miss Leroy and, incidentally, very busy.

Every day Annette, Juliette and Marguerite had frocks for her to try on. There were hats to go with those frocks. There was lingerie to be selected, stuffs immaterial as moonbeams, cambrics that could be drawn through a ring. In addition, there was Signor Tambourini, who was to teach her how to handle her voice, and Baron Mesnilmontant, who was to teach her to handle a horse. When she so desired she had but to telephone and in five minutes there was a victoria at the door. For her sitting-room the florist who had so disturbed Mr. Cohen fetched flowers every other day.

In the flowers there were thorns, of course. Marie worried about many things, yet mainly because Mrs. Loftus had not yet "seen and learned to love her." Against that, though, there were difficulties. At first Mrs. Loftus had a dreadful cold. Then she had gone out of town to recuperate. This was very unfortunate, but like the quarters, only temporary. Loftus assured her of that. What he said was gospel.

The position in which the girl was placed worried her nevertheless. She knew it was wrong. But always she consoled herself with the belief that shortly it would be righted. On that belief she would have staked her soul. Had he not sworn it? Precisely how she would have acted had she realized that he had lied like a thief one may surmise and never know. The misery of life is the necessity of becoming accustomed to certain things. There are natures that adapt themselves more readily than others. There are also natures that cannot adapt themselves at all. Had Marie realized the truth it may be that she would have beaten her head against the walls. Yet it may also be that in the end adaptability would have come. But not happiness. Happiness consists, if it consists in anything, in being on good terms with oneself. Had Marie known the truth never could she have been that. In the circumstances it was considerate of Loftus to withhold it from her. But Loftus was a very considerate person. He hated tears, and scenes he frankly abominated.

Loftus, though considerate, was vain. It was regrettable to him that he could not parade Marie about. But social New York is severe. Among its members it refuses to countenance any open disregard for what's what. Though what occurs behind its back it is too high-bred to notice.

Loftus, unable to parade Marie about, paraded her in. To the aviary he brought men, some of whom having otherwise nothing to do with this drama need not delay its recital, but, among others, he brought Annandale and Orr.

Annandale, who could not keep a thing from Sylvia, told her about it. The story so shocked her that she first made a point of his not going there again and then debated whether she ought to recognize Loftus any more. In the process she confided the story to Fanny Price, who got suddenly red—a phenomenon rare with her and which annoyed her very much, so much that she bit her lip, desisting only through fear of making it bleed. What is the use of spoiling one's looks?

Marie, meanwhile, rather liked Annandale. She also rather liked Orr. One evening both were bidden to the aviary. At the bidding Annandale had hesitated. He did not wish to offend Sylvia. But reflecting that she need never know, that, anyway, it was none of her business and, besides, what the deuce! he was not tied to her apron strings, was he? he concluded to go.

To that conclusion he was assisted by a cocktail. At the time he was in Madison Square, where on a ground floor he occupied a set of chambers, a suite of long, large rooms, sumptuously but soberly furnished with things massive and plain. Here he lived in much luxury and entire peace, save recently when he had lost a retainer and found a burglar. The memory of that intrusion recurring, he touched a bell.

A man appeared, smug and solemn, a new valet that he had got in to replace an old family servant whom an accident had eliminated.

"Harris, I forgot to ask. Did you get the revolver I told you to buy?"

"Yes, sir. A 32 calibre. It is in the pantry, sir."

Put it in the drawer of my dressing-table."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"And Harris, make me another cocktail." As the man was leaving Annandale called after him, "Make two."

It was these that assisted Annandale to his decision. A man of means, without immediate relatives, without ponderable cares, under their influence he felt rather free to do as he saw fit. The bidding to the aviary, telephoned for him to Harris, was for that evening. Yet that evening he was also expected in Irving Place. But Marie's invitation was for dinner, whereas he was not due at Sylvia's until later on.

It was not necessary, he told himself, to be in two places at once. He could dovetail one with another. Then presently, having dressed, he issued forth. But he had omitted to look at the evening papers. He was interested in certain stocks, and to learn what they were doing he stopped in at a neighboring club. There encountering men who asked him to drink, he accepted

—though how much he was on the morrow unable to recall. Yet at the time the effect of the stuff, while insidious, was not apparent. When ultimately he reached the aviary he was feeling merely fit, a feeling which the dinner increased.

The dinner, perfect in itself, was perfectly served. The appointments were superior and the table a delight. Loftus when he did things did them well. Marie, in a creation of Paquin, imported by Annette, was a pleasure to behold. She had Orr at her right, Annandale at her left. Between them and Loftus were half a dozen other men. All were decorous and beautifully behaved. Except for the absence of feminine guests and one thing else, there was nothing to denote that they were not at the house of some smart young married woman. There was not a word uttered that could not have been bawled through a ballroom. There was not a suggestion not eminently discreet. In this respect only did the dinner differ from any other at which you might assist in the upper circles of New York life.

During the preliminary courses stocks were the sole topic. There was a boom on in the Street. Everybody was making money, including Marie, for whom Loftus had bought a few hundred A. O. T.

Orr alone had sold. "You are all mad," he declared.

"The whole city is crazy. The country is on a debauch. Bulls cannot live forever. The corridas of the Street are just like those of Spain. It is the climax that differs. There the ring is swept by a supe, here it is struck by a crisis. That crisis may come next week, next month, next year. But it will come. It can no more desert the heavens of political economy than the stars can deviate from their course. It is not here yet, the bull is very lively, he is tossing everything sky high, but just when he is at his best and fiercest, just when you are shouting yourselves hoarse, the great espada, whose name is Time, with one swift thrust will transfix him. That is the fate of bulls.

"We are to be transfixed, are we?" said Annandale.

Marie looked over at Loftus. "Had I not better sell?"

Orr turned to her. "No; hold on and lose. A loss, particularly a fist loss, is always a good investment. Besides, if you will permit me to say, you should have no heed of such things. No, Miss Leroy. You should content yourself with continuing to be. A woman who does only that acquires a charm almost supernatural. This was the occupation of the young goddesses of old Greece. How delightful they were! The rose was their model. They had learned the secret of its witchery. They charmed and did nothing. To charm is never easy, but to do nothing is the most difficult of all things, as it is, too, the most intellectual. Yes," Orr added after a moment, "it is also a thing which the rest of us sadly neglect."

"Oh, I say," Loftus threw in. "It is not so long ago that I heard you maintaining that only imbeciles were idle, that everybody should have something to do. You are rather contradictory, don't you think?"

"No, not a bit; and for the reason that then I was speaking of the generality of people, and now of the exceptional few. The idleness of the imbecile is always imbecilic, but the dreams of a poet have spells that enthrall. Try to fancy a busy poet. You cannot. It is an anomaly at which the imagination balks. By the same token you cannot fancy a useful Venus. You cannot fancy Psyche occupied with anything but love. Love is—or rather, should be—woman's sole occupation. The perfume of Eros should be about them all."

"The perfume of Eros!" muttered Annandale, to whom the phrase appealed. "The perfume of Eros!" he repeated and helped himself to wine. "I say, Orr, what the dickens is that?"

"Only the motor force of the universe."

"What?"

"Yes, indeed. It is the sublimate of love. And love is the source of human activity. It has no other.

Without it civilization would retrograde and society return to the woods. Love is the basis of tragedy, the woof of romance, the incentive of commerce, of crime too, of heroism as well."

"My!" said Marie, whom the brief deluge of words amazed. "My!"

"I must get that off," Annandale muttered. In the *sotto voce* of thought he added, "to Sylvia." Obviously, he had had his fill. He stood up, making an excuse, imperceptibility lurching as he did so.

It was after ten. Long since coffee had been served. Orr, too, got up. He thanked his hostess. The other men imitated him. Loftus and Marie were alone.

Loftus went to a window. Then he turned. "Put on your hat, little girl, and we will go out; though, after all, I do not see that you need bother with a hat, unless you prefer."

"I will do as you wish, dear."

Presently they were in Lexington avenue, a moment more, in Gramercy Park. Loftus, after fumbling for his key, opened one of the little gates. Within was silence. Occasionally, from the pavement without came the sound of footsteps.

Loftus and Marie seated themselves on a bench near the gate through which they had entered. Loftus was smoking. A boy passed; stopped, and sticking his nose through the railings, called: "Hi, mister, will you give me a light?"

Loftus made no answer. The boy called again. "Will you? And a cigar with it?"

Then he laughed and passed on. The silence increased. In the air was a fragrance, the clinging odor of the honeysuckle, the clean smell of fresh turf. Beyond, the great dim houses that front the park gave the place and the hour an accent of their own.

"I like it here," said Marie, "it is so elegant."

"Never let me hear you use that word again. It is provincial, suburban and, worse, it is shopgirl."

"Yes, dear."

"This evening I saw you eat an ice with a spoon. Never do that. Use a fork."

"Yes, dear."

Appeased by this docility, Loftus condescended to agree in turn with her. He, too, liked the park. At night, when the weather was decent, always he sat there a bit quite by himself. He had done so for years. He told her this, adding confidentially, "It is a habit."

To Marie the habit seemed most poetic. She said so, explaining that she was very fond of poetry.

Loftus looked up at the stars. "The only real poetry is there. By the way, do you believe in God?"

Marie, uncertain of her lover's creeds, hesitatingly glanced at him. "Yes—in a way. But I won't, if you object."

This self-abnegation pleased Loftus. He twisted his mustache and smiled. "But no, you little goose, I don't object in the least. On the contrary. It is right and proper that you should."

Gratified at this encouraging indulgence the girl's hand stole into his. Then for awhile they sat and talked about nothing whatever, which, of all subjects, is, perhaps, the least disagreeable. Wearying at last even of that, they got up to go.

At the gate Marie drew back. A man was passing, swaying uncertainly, arguing with himself.

"Why! it is Mr. Annandale," the girl in a frightened whisper murmured.

"I wonder where he got all that liquor?" Loftus queried. "Not at Sylvia Waldron's, I'll wager."

"Sylvia Waldron! What a sweet name," said Marie. "Who is she?"

"The girl he is engaged to."

"Is she pretty?"

"Oh, tall and dark, don't you know. Not at all my style."

But now night had swallowed Annandale. Loftus and Marie passed on.

CHAPTER VI

THE YELLOW FAY

AT noon the next day Annandale was not awake nor was he asleep. Through spaces in which memories met, entangled and sank, he was groping in search of himself. In these spaces there were things, some formless, others half-formed, that got between consciousness and interfered with the search.

These things pulled at him, tripped him, shoved him down to the memories that were sinking below. The spaces themselves were very dark. But, in the deeper depths, where memories swooned, the darkness was punctuated by slender flames the size of pins. They burned him.

Up and away he tried to rise. When he nearly succeeded, the things above, the things half-formed and formless that were waiting there, pushed him back. Again he tried. But the darkness was thick, the depths were thunderous, the things above pounded on his head, the thin flames lapped at him.

A force took and lifted him high, very high, and suddenly dropped him. In the abrupt descent he clutched at the things, but he was whirled through them to receding plains and up again, higher, still higher. There a ray filtered, in the light of which a memory staggered. He saw himself drinking in the rooms of that girl of Loftus. From there he passed into blankness at the end of which stood Sylvia, her face white and drawn. The vision vanished. Then it seemed to him that he was drinking with a fat man who had prominent teeth which he took from his mouth and changed into dice. But where? In hell, perhaps. Annandale was uncertain. He knew merely that he had been beastly drunk and that his head was simply splitting.

It continued to split. Hours later, sedatives and his servant aiding, the splitting ceased. But the blanks did not fill and though behind them he could not look, yet the subconscious self that registers and retains everything we do and hear and say prompted him dumbly that behind the blanks there lurked the dismal and, perhaps, the dire.

This foreboding he attributed to his nerves. As a matter of fact they were rather shaky. But inaction was intolerable. He tried to write a note to Sylvia, but his hand was insufficiently steady. Failing in that he told Harris to get some flowers, take them to Miss Waldron, and say that he would call that evening. When later the man returned he brought no answer to the message.

"Was Miss Waldron out?" Annandale asked.

"I could not say, sir. I gave the flowers to the maid, and said as how you would call this evening, sir. The maid came back and said Miss Waldron would not be at 'ome."

At this Annandale flushed. It is true he was flushed already. But the affront was a little more than he could stand. Was he not engaged to her? What did she mean? Yet, then, too, what had he done? He wished to the devil he could tell. Try, though, as he might, he could not recall a thing except a vision of the girl's face, white, drawn and angered. The rest was not blurred, it was blank. It was extremely unfortunate, and Annandale decided that he was both unhappy and misused.

These meditations Harris interrupted.

"Mr. Orr, sir."

Annandale, who had been far away, looked up. Then he nodded.

A moment and Orr entered, eying Annandale curiously as he came.

"What a deuce of a chap you are," he began.

"Who? I? Why? Why do you say that?"

Orr looked about the room, contemplated a wide lounge of black leather, selected a straight-backed chair instead and seated himself, his hat and stick in his hand.

"You know well enough," he answered. "But there," he added at a protest from Annandale, "I don't propose to scold you. My visit is purely official. Sylvia has asked me to inform you that the engagement is at an end."

Had any little dog which Annandale did not possess run out from nowhere and bit him fiercely on the leg, he could not have started more. He stared at Orr, who stared at him.

"But! It is impossible! What have I done?"

"It would be more to the point," Orr cheerfully replied, "to ask what you have not done. Though just what you did do Sylvia omitted to state. She said she could not."

"Could not tell you?"

"Could not or would not."

"Then I can't," said Annandale helplessly. "I went there last evening, I remember that. I remember, too, that she was angry. But why I do not know. Though, to be candid, she had cause to be. I was drunk."

"You seemed all right at the Arundel," Orr objected.

"At all events, drunk or sober, I cannot recall a thing. I have tried. I have tried hard. It has gone.

"Does it happen to you often?"

"What?"

"To forget like that?"

Annandale shook his head. He stood up and stalked about. Orr eyed him. He saw he was not shamming.

"You know, Annandale," he said at last, "you could not get many to accept that. But I can and do. I have seen cases of the kind before. Will you permit me to advise you?"

"Advise me? I wish to God you would."

"Littré, who was the wisest and ugliest of men, stated that Hippocrates recommended everybody to get tight once a month, asserting that it was hygienic, good for the system, that it relaxed the nerves. Littré must have known what he was talking about. He put Hippocrates in French, into ten volumes at that! But what is good for everybody is bad for you. Don't drink, Annandale. It will get you into mischief."

"As if it had not? Look at the box I am in. But could you not get Sylvia to reconsider the matter? If she will, I pledge my word never to touch another drop. Of course, I apologize for everything I did. I am only too anxious to. You must understand that I am profoundly humiliated at the idea that I could have done anything she did not like. Certainly I did not intend to. Won't you say that to her?"

"Oh, I appreciate your position," said Orr. "To me the essence of crime is the intent. But, then, you see, I am a man. Now girls are different, and my cousin is very different even from most girls. Her views are very strict. Even otherwise, to any decent girl, a man in his cups is not agreeable. But then, you know, it is not merely a question of that. It is a question of matrimony. Matrimony generally means children. It is on them that the sins of the father are visited. There is the rub. Sylvia, I have not a doubt, will in the end forgive you, but were she to marry you and her children have your sins visited on them, never would she forgive herself. That I am sure you can realize. Anyway, for the moment argument with her would be futile. Besides, she has gone from town."

"Gone?"

"Yes, she left for Newport today. If I were you

I would not attempt to follow. But I will write. I will tell her what you say, and I will tell you her reply."

Orr stood up. As he did so Annandale sat down. He cared for Sylvia Waldron, absolutely, uniquely. He felt, too, that she had cared for him. But while Orr had been speaking he told himself that her caring had ceased. Had any affection remained she could not have gone. It was his fault, though. He had shocked it out of existence. At the thought of that he felt unutterably miserable. What he felt he looked."

Orr saw his dejection. "Annandale," he said, "I hardly suppose that it will console you now to have me tell you that nothing earthly is of any consequence, but, if you let the idea permeate you, ultimately perhaps it may. By the way, that is a new man you have, isn't it?"

In the wreckage amid which Annandale was floundering the question was like a rope; he caught at it and swam up.

"Who? Harris? Yes, the other poor devil I had was run over and died in an ambulance."

Orr tapped at his foot with his stick. "I may be in error," he said, "but I think I have seen him before."

"Then it must have been in London. He has been here only a short time. He tells me he used to be with Catty."

Catty was a relative of Annandale, a New York girl who had married the Duke of Kincardine.

"Possibly," said Orr. "Well," he added, reverting to the episode that had brought him there, "I am sorry for all this. I know you are. I will write to Sylvia and tell her so."

"Please do."

Annandale stood up and accompanied him to the door. When he turned life seemed blank as the blanks of the night.

CHAPTER VII

SWEET-AND-TWENTY

WHAT Sylvia replied to Orr's communication, whether indeed she replied at all, Annandale was not informed. He himself wrote to her. The letter was long; it was also abject. But he got no answer. He wrote again. The result was the same.

Then both at her and at himself he rebelled. He had supped on humiliations. He had no appetite for more. With some bravery, yet without bravado, he tore a leaf from his life and on it wrote Finis. The epitaph was figurative, but he thought it final. He thought that he could dictate to Fate. It is a mistake that many make.

Presently it surprised him to find how laborious is the task of putting people out of your life. If you have cared for them they will come back. In the pages of a book, in the pauses of speech, suddenly you behold them. In sleep they will not let you be. When you awake, there they are. However detestable their behavior may have been, in dream they visit and caress you. It takes time and vigilance; it takes more, it takes other faces to disperse them.

In spite of the Finis, Sylvia Waldron declined to be dismissed. She haunted Annandale. To memories of her he could not always show the door. Sometimes they were masked. Occasionally they reproached him. Again they seemed to say that did he but find out how, all might yet be well between them. But usually they came and stood gazing at him in love and grief eternal.

Then he would start. But what could he do? Besides, there was the Finis.

June meanwhile had come and gone. Summer with a frenzy quasi-maniacal had battened on the town. It is said that the hottest place in the world is a port on the Persian Gulf. But it is wrong to believe everything we hear. When New York decides to be hot, the temperature of the Persian port must be agreeable by comparison.

One fetid noon Annandale fled. When he stopped it was at Narragansett.

Before August comes and with it the mob, Narragansett is charming. There is a mile of empty hotels, a stretch of sand fine as face powder, a heaving, heavenly desert of blue and an atmosphere charged with ozone and desire.

In August the hotels are packed. The stretch of sand is a stage. Every day a ballet is given there. The coryphées are the prettiest girls in the world—girls from Baltimore, girls from Philadelphia, girls from everywhere, girls with the Occident in their eyes and lips that say "Drink me."

At high noon, from the greenroom of the bath-houses, Sweet-and-twenty floats down, clasps the sea to the hum of harps, breasts the waves to the laugh of brass and re-emerges to the sound of trumpets.

After the dip, other diversions. Primarily flirtations on the lawns; later, polo at the Country Club; at night, dancing in the ballrooms, more flirtations on the galleries of the Casino, supper on the terrace below.

The terrace resembles, or, more exactly, on this particular summer did resemble, a roof garden on the ground floor. From a kiosk a band of Hungarians distributed selections of popular rot, sometimes their own delirious czardas. There, circled by variegated lights, fanned by the violins, girls and men sat beneath the high, wide, flowerful umbrellas of Japan.

Sometimes some of them, wearying of that, wandered into silences and shadows and lingered there, occupied with the crops, with strikes and other subjects of national interest which young people always discuss when holding hands in the dark.

To Newport, which squats disdainfully over the way, this is all too free and easy. To Annandale, it was distressing. Everywhere there was love, yet none for him. He had come to the Pier, as Narragansett is locally termed, because of Newport's propinquity. If Sylvia so much as signaled he could join her at once.

As yet no signaling was apparent. In its place was an influx of a reflection of fashion. The influx made Annandale swear. He hated to be seen stalking moodily about. He hated still more to have the rupture of his engagement discussed. The ballet on the beach irritated him. He told himself that he had come to the wrong shop. One day he thought of joining friends in Canada. The next he thought of joining friends who had gone abroad. The day after he thought that still he might be signaled.

In these uncertainties he loitered, annoyed but sober. Since the visit from Orr he had not touched a drop. Then, it so fell about that one evening he looked in at a dance at the Casino. Madness was in the air. The savors of the sea, the tonic of the dip, the stare of the harvest moon, go to the head, stir the heart, excite the pulse in a manner really Boccaccian.

Madness is contagious. It seemed particularly catching that night. The hall was filled, the gallery flushed. On a stage, at the end of the ballroom, musicians were tossing out in trailing rhythm the sorcery of "Il Bacio," the invitation of the "Cent Vierges," the muffled riot of "El Capitan."

To these incentives couples turned. Beneath the gallery where Annandale stood there was a vision of white arms, bare necks, slender waists circled by the blackness of men's sleeves. Three hundred girls and men were waltzing together, interchanging partners, clasping hands, gazing into each other's eyes.

Behind Annandale a group had gathered. They were talking, yet of what he did not heed. But, presently, into the conversation filtered the freshness of another voice.

"I quite believe, you know," the voice was saying, "that a girl who stops here this summer will stop at nothing next."

At the jest Annandale turned. There, pretty as a peach but rather more amusing, stood Fanny Price.

"Hamlet!" she exclaimed.

Annandale resembled the Dane as little as he did the devil. He was fully aware of that. But he was equally aware that he must seem blue. He straightened himself and smiled. Then at once it occurred to him that Fanny might be a signal bearer.

"How do you do?" he said. "Don't you want to come and sit on the terrace? When did you get here?"

"Just now. I am over from Newport. They told me there that I ought to come in disguise. They call it slumming."

"Yes," Annandale inanely and eagerly replied. Of the little speech he had caught but one word—Newport.

"Now, if I go with you, will you give me something pink, something with raspberries in it?"

Fanny, as she spoke, disengaged herself from the people with whom she had come.

"You saw Sylvia, didn't you?" he asked, when at last through coils of girls and men they reached the terrace below.

Fanny nodded. "Suppose we sit here," she said, indicating a table from which grew a big parasol.

"Did she say anything?"

Fanny sat down. Annandale seated himself by her. "You know? Don't you——?"

"Oh, yes," Fanny interrupted. "But then——"

"Then what?"

"Nothing. Only it is so much better so, don't you think?"

"Better!" Annandale fiercely repeated.

"Why, yes. You and Sylvia were totally unsuited for each other. She is the best and dearest girl in the world. But—here is the waiter. Will you tell him to fetch me a lemon squash?"

Annandale gave the order.

"With raspberries in it," Fanny called at the waiter's retreating back. "Aren't you going to take anything?"

In deep gloom Annandale shook his head.

Fanny laughed. "Drink delights you not; no, nor woman either."

"You see——"

"Yes, yes, yes. Of course I see. But why cannot you? Why can't you see that you and Sylvia stood as much chance of hitting it off as though you both spoke a different language? A break was bound to come."

But now the man appeared with the squash. Fanny looked at it. "Only two raspberries," she cried. "And such little ones."

"Bring a dish of them," said Annandale. "I suppose," he resumed as the waiter again retreated, "I suppose she will find somebody with whom she can hit it off."

"Yes, of course. There is me and there are other girls. But the men will be few. They will be elderly, I think, and I think, too, tame enough to eat out of her hand."

"You think, then, that I am out of the running?"

Fanny did not answer. She was drinking the squash. When she put it down she put with it the subject. It bored her.

"Are you going to be here long?" she asked. Until a moment before Annandale had been wavering. But now his mind was made up. Or he thought it was.

"No. I am off tomorrow."

"Where to?"

"The North Woods, perhaps. I am not sure."

"If you are not sure, you cannot be in any very tearing haste. Why not stop a day or two longer and take me about?"

Annandale looked at her. In the look was surprise; inquiry, too.

"Yes. Why not?"

Annandale's look deepened into a stare.

"Now, don't be stupid," said Fanny, to whom such stares were familiar. "I am not trying to get up a flirtation with you. But I must have someone to talk to."

"I like to hear you talk."

"Yes; men always like nonsense."

"Only from a pretty girl, though."

"Do you know," said Fanny, rising from beneath the big parasol, "the waiter didn't bring the raspberries. No matter now, though. I must go and find mother. This is no place for her to be out alone."

CHAPTER VIII

TWO IN A TURRET

FROM a back gallery of the Casino a narrow stair leads to a tower. Up that stair Annandale one afternoon invited Fanny Price.

A fortnight had gone, two weeks of dressing and undressing, of dinners, dances and dips; a succession of mellow mornings; long, green afternoons, dusks stabbed by sudden stars and nights lit by a moon that painted the ocean, penetrated the shadows, checkered the underbrush with silver spots.

But now, though the mornings were as mellow and the afternoons as green, though in the air the same madness subsisted and the nights were as languid as before, verandas were emptying, there were wide spaces where once were thick crowds. The end of the season had come.

In the procession of these things Annandale had put the North Woods from him; he had put, too, the thought of journeying abroad. With them he had put also any hope that Sylvia would signal him back.

For awhile the hope had persisted, as the light of a candle persists. Then it had dwindled, flickered and sunk. That is the way with hope. Though sometimes it is snuffed. You are in darkness. But through that darkness occasionally another light will be upheld. It may not, perhaps, be intended for you, but it may enable you to see.

Aided by another light, Annandale had begun to discern his way. He should, of course, have remained in darkness. To darkness, were this fiction, he would be condemned. But this is not fiction. The drama with which these pages deal is documented from life. It was Fanny who held the light.

During the month that had gone he had been almost constantly at her side. The fact that one light may be replaced by another had not at first occurred to him. Presently the ease with which such substitution can be effected had mystified him very much. He was not prepared for anything of the kind. He had arranged to be a gloomy, disappointed man. He kept telling himself that if Sylvia had stuck to him he would have been true to her his whole life through. But she had not stuck to him, and the withdrawal of herself had left existence so empty that, unknown even to him, Nature had been filling the vacuum which she abhors.

In this, Nature had been greatly aided. Fanny Price was a remarkably fetching young girl. To a man out of court and consequently out of sorts the companionship of a pocket Venus is tonifying in the extreme. It is not merely that, it is recuperative. It banishes the blues. It establishes a new court, and with it a new code of its own.

The censorious allege that this is all wrong. It may be that they are right. But Nature is not censorious. Nature is not even ethical. She has no standards of right, no canons of wrong. What she does have is her way. A saint may defy her. Annandale was not that by a long shot. He was simply a human being, one that had been punished, and, as he thought, unjustly punished, for that which might have been condoned. Injustice humiliates. Saints may welcome humiliation, but human beings resent it.

Over the emptiness which Sylvia had created there brooded therefore two things. One was darkness, the other pique. In the light which Fanny upheld it seemed to Annandale that they might be dispersed. This idea, which he regarded as his very own, and consequently as highly original, was not his in the least. It was Nature prompting him to fill the vacuum which she so dislikes.

Instigated by her, Annandale invited Fanny up a stair and into a tower, a place remote, aloof, furnished with seats for just two.

Fanny had not been there before. She had heard, though, of its aloofness; it was regarded as a dangerous spot. But Fanny was a brave girl. Besides, Annandale was at his worst, and even at his best was not very alarming.

The ascent effected, Fanny peeped from a casement. "Why," she exclaimed, "you can see everywhere!" She looked about. "But no one can see you."

Assured of that, she produced a little gold box. On the back were her initials in jewels. She opened it, took a cigarette and lit it. "Will you have one?" she asked.

"This is a deuced nice case," said Annandale.

Fanny puffed and smiled.

"A present, I suppose."

"Yes. But you must not ask from whom."

Annandale looked out at the landscape, then in at the girl. "There is something else I want to ask."

So grave was his tone that Fanny deployed for action.

"Will you marry me?"

Though Fanny had deployed, the shot bowled her over. Into one of the chairs she dropped. Already Annandale had captured the other.

"Will you?"

But Fanny was recovering. With an air of vexation in which there was amusement, she puffed at her cigarette and then at him.

"Now, honestly, have I ever given you the slightest encouragement to ask me that?" She hesitated a moment, puffed again and added: "We have been friends, I think; let us remain so."

Annandale, who was in loose white flannels, contemplated his tight white shoes. Then his eyes sought hers. "Are you interested in Loftus?"

"That is none of your business," Fanny proudly and promptly replied. As she spoke she got from her seat, approached the casement, gazed out and away.

"I do not believe you are," Annandale announced to her slender waist. "But if I am wrong, it is hardly disloyalty to him to say that he is not good enough for you."

Beneath the tower was a tennis court. Fanny made a face at it. But the face must have been insufficient. Looking over her shoulder at Annandale, she showed her teeth.

"Do you fancy a girl cares for a man because he is or is not good enough? When a girl cares she cares because she cannot help herself."

"I know that is the way with a man, or at least with me. I cannot help caring for you."

"Nor could you help caring for Sylvia."

"She is so different."

"Yes," said Fanny dreamily, "and so are you." Though to whom she referred she did not say, nor did Annandale ask. She gave him no chance. "Next month you will not be able to help caring for some other girl."

"Not if you would take me."

"But, you see, I don't care for you."

"But couldn't you?" Annandale persisted. "Couldn't you if you tried? Of course, in saying that Loftus is not good enough for you I don't mean that I am. But if you could try I would."

At this program Fanny laughed. "We should be a pair of Christian Endeavorers, shouldn't we?"

To the levity of that Annandale found no immediate reply. Yet presently, with an irrelevance more obvious than real, he threw out: "He has gone abroad, you know."

"Who? Loftus?"

"Yes, for a year, I believe."

Fanny turned to the tennis court again. It was, though, not that which she saw, but a hope that was slipping away, sinking away, sinking down into death dishonored. For a moment she was very still. A movement of Annandale's aroused her.

"Come," she said. "It is hot here. Let us go."

Gathering a fold of her skirt, Fanny descended the stair. Annandale filed after. On a balcony below a lady with faded hair and gimlet eyes pounced at her.

"I have been hunting for you everywhere," the lady exclaimed. "Aren't you going to dress?" Then she nodded to Annandale.

Annandale touched his cap. "How do you do, Mrs. Price?"

He would have lingered, but Fanny dismissed him.

"Good-bye," she said. "I may see you this evening."

As he ambled off Mrs. Price returned to the charge. "Where have you been?"

Fanny patted a yawn. "Listening to sweet nothings."

"From him? Why, he hasn't anything, has he? What did you do?"

Fanny patted another yawn or else another sigh. "I fell on his neck and sobbed for joy."

"Nonsense. Has he anything, tell me?"

"Not enough to entertain on. Twenty-five thousand a year, I think."

"The impertinence of it!" said the lady.

Had her daughter been an heiress a duke would hardly have satisfied her. As things were, or more exactly, since the girl began to grow in beauty she had dreamed for her but one dream—a brilliant match. To Mrs. Price there could be no brilliance if the party of the second part had a dollar less than ten million.

"You might have had Loftus," she declared at last. "Where is he, do you know?"

"Abroad, I hear."

"With that creature?"

Mrs. Price in common with many others had heard of Marie Leroy. But though others in hearing had not heeded, Mrs. Price took it as a personal affront.

"Then it is your fault," she snarled. "You could have had him if you had wanted. Don't tell me. He was in love with you. I could see it."

Fanny was looking at the ocean. A white sail was fainting in the distance. Like it, a hope she had had was fading away. She watched it go. It had been very fair, very dear, more dear and fair than any she had known. But it was going It was out of reach and now out of sight. She could not beckon to it.

"What are you staring at?" Mrs. Price asked.

"A sail out there," the girl answered.

Then presently mother and daughter passed into an adjoining corridor where they had rooms.

CHAPTER IX

FANNY CHANGES HER CLOTHES

FANNY did not appear that evening. In search of her Annandale prowled vainly around. But on the morrow he ran into her on the beach.

It was still as fine as powder. To have found elbow room there a few days previous you would have had to go out to sea. Now, in and on it children were making hillocks and holes. Near them a few groups of older people loitered. But the coryphées that had danced there were migrating. Already the Rockingham, a big hotel which faced the beach, had closed. Sweet-and-twenty was packing her trunk.

The morning itself was of the quality which Lowell has catalogued as from the Gulf adrift. In the air was a caress. Fanny, in a frock the color of pale pastel pink, a wide hat in which that color was repeated, her eyes blue as the sea and bluer, added to its charm.

As Annandale approached she smiled and gave him a finger. But at once the smile fell from her. With the finger which he had released she pointed at the big hotel. Annandale turned. Other people were turning. Some were running. A child that had been at play in the sand jumped and clapped his hands. About one side of the hotel a sheet of flame was climbing, crackling in and out. A cry of "Fire!" caught up and renewed, mounted in the crystalline air.

"Damn!" said Annandale. "If that goes——"

Fanny said nothing. Her eyes widened. Through the windows that front the beach more flames were leaping. From the side the first flames passed to shops over the way, passed back with fresh ones created and joined the others beyond. Above was smoke. Higher yet the tender blue of the sky. But below was a whirlwind of ochre, scarlet and gamboge, a fierce yet compact tornado of oscillant hues, shot with green and shuttled with black. Then suddenly, with a roar, the tornado doubled, the roof had fallen. The child that had jumped and clapped his hands, feebly now was beginning to cry.

"It is glorious," said Fanny.

"I am afraid—" Annandale muttered.

Fanny glanced at him. Yet at once she understood. On the other side of the hotel, across the road, the

Casino stood. Her mother, of course, would be safe. But her clothes! At thought of them her hand went to her throat.

"Do you think the Casino will catch?" she gasped.

Annandale nodded.

"Oh," she continued, "I shan't have a stitch, not one."

"Yes, you shall," Annandale heroically retorted. "I will see to them. But I must run. Find your mother if you can and take her to the Inn."

The Inn, a hotel half a mile away, was where Annandale lodged. At once he was off. Shortly, by a detour, he got to the other side of the fire. As he swung about he saw that the Casino's ballroom had caught. But that part of the place was of wood. The other end, where Fanny lodged, was of wood also, but it was also partly of stone. To this part as yet the flames had not reached.

As Annandale ran he told himself that he would have time to get in and get out, but he told himself too that it was a ridiculous job. Fanny's clothes a stroke of his pen could replace. But now the crowd impeded him. Lines had formed. Buckets were being passed. There were throngs of natives and resorters. Through them he pushed.

At the further entrance to the Casino, above which he knew the Prices lodged, a fat policeman stood, blocking the way. Annandale shoved him aside, sprang up the stairs, reached the room, fumbled with the door. It was locked.

Annandale swore deeply, tried the door with his shoulder, kicked at it till it cracked, kicked again, throwing himself against it with all his weight, then, not the door, but the fastenings of the lock broke and he went sprawling in. Through the open window he could see the flames, he could hear them, he could hear too the cries of the crowd. But he had no time to waste. He tore around the room.

In one corner was a deep closet, full of clothes. He took them and threw them in armfuls on the bed. In another corner was a bureau, the drawers packed with scented lingerie. These on the bed he emptied also. What else did women wear? he wondered. Oh, yes, he remembered; hats certainly and probably shoes. Around the room he tore again. But already the bed was mountainous. He turned it all over on the floor, gathered up as much as the coverlid would hold and made a hasty bundle of it. Beneath was a blanket; he filled that, made a bundle of it also, repeated the operation with a sheet. Into another sheet he threw hats which meanwhile had loomed in boxes on a shelf, and dragging a curtain down filled that with shoes which also he had found, changed his mind and stuffed them into a pillow case, tossing in after them articles from a dressing-table, brushes and combs, odds and ends, helter skelter.

But in dragging the curtain from the window he had noticed a writing-desk. After he had finished with the pillow case he returned to it. Like the door it was locked. He kicked at it, kicked it open, discovered in it loose money and trinkets, stuck them in his pockets, grabbed at the bundles and dashed from the room just as with a roar the flames leaped in.

In the corridor he tripped, but he was up again with the tightly tied bundles and down the stair before the flames and the smoke of them could catch him. Once on the road without he turned to look, but the flames pirouetting in increasing size made it too hot to linger. Down the road he went, not overweighted but impeded by the awkward bundles, and staggered first into an engulfing, shouting crowd, then into a convenient hack, in which he reached the Inn, minus his cap and perspiring profusely.

The Prices as yet had not turned up. Annandale secured rooms for them, had the bundles taken there, went to his own quarters, re-emerged shortly fresh as paint, hungry as a wolf.

It was high noon. From beyond drifted the sound of cries, the smell of smoke, the commotion of flight. The Rockingham had gone, the adjacent shops and bath houses with it; the Casino had fallen. Hurrying to the railway station beyond came people with handbags, wagons with trunks. From the air the caress had passed. There was panic in it.

But presently the flames showed less voluminous. After devouring all that they conveniently could they were subsiding. It was apparent that the worst was over. Then at last Fanny and her mother drove up.

From the veranda where he stood Annandale ran down to meet them. "I have your things," he cried. "I have rooms for you also."

"Hobson is not in it with you," said Fanny, when the tale of the bundles had been told. "I could kiss you. I would if mamma were not here."

For that, ordinarily, Fanny would have been promptly sat upon. But here was the exceptional. Mrs. Price recognized it or appeared to. Instead of rebuking the girl and snubbing the man, Mrs. Price condescended to tell Annandale that he was "too good."

This was very nice. Annandale felt over-rewarded. Then, shortly, the midday meal ensuing, he conducted mother and daughter to the restaurant, sat with them at table, ordered Ruinart cup and assumed family airs.

Later, in a motor, he took Fanny to view the ruins, hummed her over the country and later still procured for her a lemon squash with plenty of raspberries in it, which she consumed on the porch, to the sound of the waves, by the light of the stars.

Meanwhile she had changed her pastel frock for another, which, if a bit rumpled in transit, became her wonderfully well.

Annandale commented on it. "By the way," he suddenly interrupted himself to remark, "I have more of your things. I stuffed them in my pocket and forgot them entirely. I will go and fetch them now."

"Don't bother. Tomorrow will do. What are they, do you remember?"

"Money and jewelry. Rings and pins, I think. I am sure there were pins. One of them stuck in me."

"Any clothes?"

"Clothes!" Annandale echoed in surprise. "Why, no, are any missing?"

"My mother's. They were in the room next to mine."

"The Lord forgive me, I never thought of it."

"It does not really matter. Only we will have to go to town tomorrow. Mamma has not a stitch."

"The devil!" muttered Annandale in fierce self-reprobation. "Hang my stupidity. I am a fool."

"You are nothing of the kind. If it were not for you I would not have a stitch either."

"That is all very well. But I have bungled matters dreadfully. I don't know what your mother can think of me. I do know, though, that I wish she would let me replace the things which she has lost through my fault."

In the sky a star was falling, swiftly, silently, like a drop of water on a window-pane. Fanny watched it. She had been lolling back in a chair. But at Annandale's suggestion she sat up. "That is absurd," she announced.

"Well, then, it would be only nice and fair of you to put me in a position where, without offense, I could do so."

But Fanny was rising. "It is late," she announced. "I must go."

Annandale caught at her. "Say 'Yes,'" he implored. "Or at least don't say 'No.' Say something."

"Something, then. There, let me be."

At that Annandale, who still held her, held her yet tighter. "You are the dearest girl in all the world."

Fanny gave him a little shove. "Don't do that, anyone might see you."

"Yes, and see too that you belong to me."

"I am not so sure."

"You shan't go then till you are." Annandale, as he spoke, planted himself uncircuitously before her.

"Oh," said Fanny, in a little sugary, demure voice, "if you are going to use brute force——"

"I am."

"Then I give in."

"For keeps?"

"Don't, there's my mother."

In the doorway beyond, Mrs. Price had loomed. Fanny joined her. Annandale followed, denouncing himself to the lady for the oversight that noon. Yet, whether because of that oversight of his or because of some foresight of her own, so grim was Mrs. Price that Annandale, concluding that it would be more cheerful elsewhere, turned tail, ambled out to the road and across it to the sea wall, where he sat and kicked his heels and told himself that he was engaged.

In the telling he lost himself in impossibilities and wondered how it would fare with him and how with Sylvia could the past be mended and the old plans mature. For though Fanny allured, Sylvia enchained. Fanny was delicious. But he fancied that other men had found her so. He fancied that her heart had been an inn, and he knew that Sylvia's was a home. Yet from that he was barred. To those that lack homes hotels are convenient.

Across the way meanwhile Mrs. Price was very busy. In looming on the veranda it had seemed to her that her daughter and that man were occupied with certain ceremonies. Regarding them she attacked the girl at once.

"You have not taken him?" she began by way of reconnaissance.

That afternoon Fanny had visited ruins. There were others more personal that she was viewing then, the ruins of fair things not dead but destroyed.

"Answer me," Mrs. Price commanded.

The girl started. But she had been far away—in that lovely land where dreams come true and then, it may be, turn into nightmares. Through the dreams hand in hand with Loftus she had been strolling. Now she must put them all away.

"Answer me," Mrs. Price repeated.

"I am afraid so."

Into a misty and deserted parlor of the Inn Mrs. Price pulled the girl and there let fire.

"Afraid! You ought to be! What will your father say?"

The father here projected was a gentleman who resided abroad and who seldom opened his mouth except to put something in it.

"And Fred!"

Fred was Fanny's brother, a young chap whose opinions were of no value to anyone, himself included.

"And everybody!"

Everybody was the upper current of social life.

"And Sylvia!"

The earlier shots had not inflicted any visible damage, but this must have told.

"I shall have to write to her," Fanny with unusual meekness replied.

"Yes, do. Do by all means. Tell her you have taken her leavings. And why? Merciful heavens, why? If you were as staid and stiff as she I could understand. But a girl like you, with your tastes, your extravagances, a girl with a national reputation for beauty, to go and accept twenty-five thousand a year is—is—sinful, that's what it is. Your own father has that, and on it we are out at elbows. It is just about enough for you to dress on. Oh, Fanny, Fanny!"

Hysterically the old lady waved her hands. "Oh, Fanny, I have so prayed that you would make a brilliant match. I have scrimped and saved that you might, and you go and take a blond beast of a pauper. It is too cruel!"

Fanny winced. It was cruel. But the cruelty was not hers. It was Fate's. She too had hoped for the very marriage her mother had so ardently desired. But Loftus had not cared. Occupied elsewhere he had sailed away. As well then Annandale as another.

"You see, you know," she said in a wretched effort at smoothing things over, "he is quite a hero."

But this was too much. Mrs. Price shook her head like a battle horse and fairly neighed.

"Because he saved your clothes? If it had been your life and you had said 'Thank you' it would have been ample. But your clothes! Not mine; the beast had not sense enough for that, but yours! I do hope you will give that as an excuse to Sylvia!"

CHAPTER X

A VICTIM

SYLVIA had gone from Newport. She was then at Lenox. It was there the previous autumn that her interest in Annandale had begun. The interest had so deepened that she gave him her heart. Never before had she given that to anyone. Annandale had taken it and then, one night, he had so bruised it that she thought it broken. He had written that he had not meant to. His letter had been full of regrets, of protestations, of bad grammar. Such things may palliate, but they do not cure. Only time can do that.

Time is a strange emollient. In its mysterious potency it softens without our knowledge. Suddenly a whisper, a breeze that passes, shows that it has done its work. With Sylvia time was having its will. Furtively she had found herself wondering, as Annandale had wondered, how it should fare with her, and how with him, could the past be effaced and the old days renewed. But those days were gone, she decided. Though into that decision a doubt would creep, not indeed concerning the departure, but concerning her attitude and the justice of it.

Annandale had sinned. He had sinned wantonly, grievously. From an atmosphere of vice—an atmosphere from which, under pain of her displeasure, she had distinctly warned him—he had staggered to her, its pollution about him, reeking with drink, talking abundantly about nothing imaginable, and at her just remonstrance had become instantly irritable, refusing almost to leave the house.

So had his condition and the spectacle of it shocked her that, for awhile, memory of him and of it was repellent. In her own eyes she felt degraded. That men drank, she knew. But in her sphere of life they drank either moderately or else in haunts invisible to her. And it was precisely from such a haunt he had come, a shameless haunt, one that sullied her even to know of.

Yes, he had sinned, wantonly, grievously, almost unforgivably. Almost, she reflected, but perhaps not quite. In his letter of protest and regret he had told her that he remembered nothing, nothing whatever, absolutely nothing at all, save one vague, brief vision of herself. The rest, the beginning, the end, the inter-spaces were, he assured her, blank. At first she had thought that sheer nonsense. But, later, the earnest way in which it was put impressed her. Then on the heels of that communication there had followed one from Orr, indorsing what Annandale said, declaring that it was all quite possible, adding that, in certain temperaments, memory when influenced by toxics will play tricks stranger than the average mind can comfortably credit.

These letters she had not answered. Logically she could not admit the validity of the statements which they contained. But the heart has logic which logic does not know. Then, too, is there not that within us that prompts us to believe less what we should than what we wish? Sylvia's reason, guided by her inexperience, refused at first to accept the idea that any sane man could act as Annandale had and afterward be oblivious of it. That remorse there should be was only natural, but that there should be no memory of anything whatever seemed to her absurd.

But there was her cousin's assurance to the contrary. Then imperceptibly, little by little, that assurance, filtering through the saddened girl, took possession of her, insisting on recognition, telling her that, though her lover had erred, yet, in erring, he was more to be pitied than condemned. Dominated by drink, which, Orr added, he had promised to renounce, he had gone to that haunt and, contaminated there, knew not what he did. But she, instead of realizing that, she who was to have been his in sickness and health, for better, for worse, she, in her pride, had dismissed him.

He had erred, Sylvia told herself, deeply, grievously, but so, too, had she. She had condemned when she should have condoned; she had spurned him when it was her solicitude that he needed.

At the sure cognition of that, it was as though from her eyes a bandage had fallen. Then at once in her tender conscience she beheld herself, detestable in pride, a girl without a heart, one of whom he, no doubt, was well rid of.

It was during the process of this awakening that the conflagration at Narragansett Pier occurred. Sylvia read of it. She read, too, of certain prowesses which the dismissed had displayed.

The account, very inexact as such accounts always are, was also highly colored, spun out for space purposes for much more than the space was worth. Had you not known better you would have taken it for granted that the heroism of Annandale was on a par with that of Leonidas at Thermopylæ and even of Roosevelt at San Juan. It quite stirred you.

It stirred Sylvia. The paper fell from her. But the past returned. At once it seemed to her that it might be mended and the old days renewed. The hero of whom the paper told she knew now that she had wholly loved, and she knew, too, that wholly she still loved him.

Time had done its work ridiculously, inopportunely, yet effectively at last. But the gates of life are double. On one stands written "Too Soon." On the other "Too Late." It is unfortunate to get wedged between them. Of that fact Sylvia became rapidly aware. On the morrow she began a letter to Annandale. Before it was finished there came one from Fanny, announcing that she was to be Annandale's wife.

In certain crises of the emotions there is a certain sense of unreality. Even as Sylvia read what Fanny said she could not grasp it. When presently she did, she could not believe it. But there it was. Then immediately she experienced the agony which comes when we battle in dream with the intangible and the dread, when we know it is dream and yet feel it is death.

"It is all my fault," she cried. She found but that. At the moment she was in that condition which precedes the great commotion of tears, when the strangulation of agony is subsiding and contracted nerves distend. But the tears did not come. The pain was infinite. There was a weight which she felt not without but within, a weight so heavy that she thought she could not bear it. It racked her. Only her mind was active. "It is my fault," she repeated. Then she added, "And my cross."

From a crisis such as this, in a nature such as hers, the soul issues as from an orgy. It has supped on sorrow. It is fed. It ceases to look back. It looks forward, marveling indeed that it should look at all, yet looking. Life's burdens are more bearable than the despairful think. Until the eyes are closed and the heart no longer beats, in some way, somehow, they can be carried.

Sylvia took up her cross. It was leaden. But in the effort she was aided. Pride helped her. The assistance of pride may be poor, yet is it not better than none? To Sylvia it was useful. It enabled her to answer Fanny's letter.

"You have my congratulations, Fanny dear," she wrote, "all of them, my best and warmest, and so has Arthur too. Please say so to him and tell him that, in marrying by dearest friend, he and I must be dear friends also."

Then the tears did come, swiftly, like the ripple of the rain. On the table where she sat she put her head down and sobbed, paroxysmally, as sobs a child.

THE GENERAL SESSIONS

CHAPTER I

DISENCHANTMENT

"*IL segreto*——"

Marie's voice rang out, clear and fluid, scattering notes through the room, filling it with them, charging the air with melody, then, like a chorus entering a crypt, it sank in diminishing accords and, sinking, died slowly away.

The *segreto* indeed! The secret of happiness was remoter now than when, under the teaching of the ex-first lady, she had first attacked the score. But her voice had improved. It was fuller, more resonant and ample.

Marie, too, had improved. In face and figure beauty had developed. Her manner was securer, her eyes more grave, her smile less frequent. The bud had blossomed.

In the process a year had gone. From high Norman downs she had watched the summer pass. Autumn had met her in the Elysian Fields. There the wolfish winter had approached. At the first bite there had been a flight to Havre, the return to New York. Now it was spring again. Through the open windows of the Arundel came the city's hum and with it the subtleties and enticements of May.

A year had gone. But there are years that count double. There are others so vast that in them you may have evolved a world, seen it glow and subside. The solitudes of space appal. The solitudes of the heart may be as endless as they. In those where Marie loitered a world had had its birth and subsidence, a world with gem-like hopes for stars, a world lighted by a sun so eager that its rays had made her blind. There had been aspirations, gorgeous and tangental as comets are. There had been the colorless ether of which dreams are made. For cosmic matter there was love. A year had gone. In it, these wonders had formed and fled.

Marie got from the piano. It had no secret to tell. But there was another which the year had revealed, a secret which, at first opaque and obscure, little by little had taken shape and changed from an impossibility into a monstrous fact. Marie had begun by disavowing it. She had disowned it, would have none of it. But disavowals cease. In certain conditions we get used to monsters. The soul makes itself at home with what it must. The monster to which Marie was accustoming herself was the knowledge that her lover had lied.

In departing with him from the den of the ex-first lady it was not merely with faith and trust, but with absolute certainty that marriage, if delayed, was only postponed; that a week, a month at the furthest, would see her his wife.

On the way she had stopped and wired to Gay street, telling her father not to worry, that she had gone to be married, that she would write to him soon.

Whether he had worried she could only surmise. But soon she had written, inclosing a photograph of Loftus, one which she had colored, an excellent likeness that displayed his chiseled features, wonderful eyes and thin, black mustache with a perfection of precision that was lifelike. Above it she wrote: "Marie's Husband." It would please her father, she was sure, and in the letter she told him prettily, in a little, cajoling way which he loved, that while, for the moment, he must not know where she was, yet shortly she was planning to come and surprise him—to surprise him more than he could ever imagine, and show him that he could be very, very proud of her, but prouder still, much, much prouder of the man she had married.

The plan, delightful to her, first the illness of her lover's mother, then the lady's absence from town, prevented her from at once effecting. Then, greatly to her uneasiness, she found that the plan must be yet further delayed. Mrs. Loftus had gone to her manor on the Hudson, where, her son declared, he could not take Marie "like that." Financially it was stupid to rush things. Gradually his mother must be prepared. Moreover, as preparation could be decently managed only in town, to which she would not now return until autumn, it would be a good idea to run over to Europe.

So spoke Royal Loftus. It was all false as an obituary. Financially he was entirely independent of his mother, who, at the time, was not at her manor, but just around the corner and never better in her life. But Marie, wholly infatuated, quite willing to believe that the moon was made of green cheese if only he took the trouble to so inform her, accepted it all for gospel.

The delay, of course, was a deep disappointment. She felt it, and felt it acutely. But in Europe she supposed that people would not know, and would not care a rap if they did, Loftus hastened to assure her.

To his project, therefore, she yielded. Presently she was glad that she had. The journey itself was a joy. At the Arundel he had come and gone. Often she had been lonely. Often she had sat through hours that limped themselves away, waiting for him, waiting fruitlessly. But during the journey and after it, on the high Norman downs, always she had him with her. Therein was the joy.

The places, new to her and fragrant, to which he took her interested her very much, but very much, too, as accessories might. It was from him that their real charm emanated. He also enjoyed himself, but less rapturously, in a fashion more detached. He found time to busy himself with the news of the world, with menus, with wines—occupations which to her were extraordinary. Marie did not know what she ate; as for the world, it was sublimated in him, a fact which she confided to him—of which, if she had not, he would have been perfectly aware and which he accepted at first as but a proper tribute to himself, but which ended by boring him distinctly. An excess of anything disagrees with the best.

The first symptoms of indigestion declared themselves in Paris. They had there a large suite in a big hotel. So large was the suite that frequently Marie could not find Loftus in it. He was off, returning when he saw fit, refusing to be questioned, yawning at reproaches, but otherwise perfectly civil, agreeing with her that it was not nice to be left alone, yet leaving her alone whenever he felt like it.

On the Norman downs the fresh fragrance of life had put a higher color on her cheeks, marking them with the flush of happiness and health. But in this game of hide and nowhere to seek her face became pallid as the curious white sky which in autumn stretches itself over Paris. Then stealthily, like a wolf, winter approached. The cheerlessness of it Loftus hated, as all New Yorkers do. To Marie, however, it was welcome. It meant a return to the Arundel, where she felt that the marriage so long delayed could not be further postponed.

The illusion was pleasant but not permanent. On re-emerging in the noise and sunshine of New York Loftus ceased to bother himself with the invention of excuses. He told Marie that his mother would not listen to anything of the kind, a statement which, while frank, was not exact. Mrs. Loftus had never heard of it, or for that matter, of the girl, and Loftus saw no reason whatever why she should. Yet if not frank, he was patient. Marie, on the other hand, took it all very hard. Humiliation possessed her. By day it confronted her, spectrally. At night it came to her, sat by her side, plucked at her sleeve, awoke her. It was a thing she could not get away from, could not forget; what is worse, she could not understand. It tortured her, and concerning it she tormented him constantly, displaying a persistence that was annoying and pathetic—the persistence of a child. It was as such that he treated it with yawning indifference, quite as though it were but a whim which, other things intervening, she would forget.

Other things did intervene. Among them was an adventure in Central Park. One afternoon a brougham in which she was driving crossed a victoria where sat a remarkably pretty woman with Loftus at her side.

Marie's eyes filled. Had he struck her he would have hurt her far less. When next she saw him she told him so. The idea amused him. He was not a ruffian, only a cad. Like the whim, he waved the little tragedy away.

"That was Mrs. Annandale," he announced unabashedly, "a very old friend of mine. I have known her all my life."

"Mrs. Annandale!" Marie exclaimed. "Not the wife of the Mr. Annandale whom you brought here last year?"

Loftus stared at her. He did not understand. Yet then, neither did she.

"Why," she continued, "you told me he was to marry a dark young lady."

"Yes," said Loftus, fumbling as he spoke for a cigarette. "But I told you also not to use that expression. Say girl or young woman. If you want to be fantastic, say young gentlewoman, but never young lady. You are right, though. Annandale was to have married a Miss Waldron, but she threw him over and he married somebody else."

To Marie all this was inexplicable. She did not understand how a man thrown over by one girl could so speedily marry another. She did not understand, either, what Loftus could be doing with her. To her mind driving presupposed an intimacy which acquaintance might explain but did not excuse. The matter perplexed her, and not unnaturally. It is only through our own heart that it is possible to attempt to read the heart of another. In her heart Marie knew that nothing earthly could induce her to appear as intimate with a man as Loftus had with that woman. Yet, though she knew that, she knew also that many of her views, like many of her expressions, were not in tune with the tone of the set in which Loftus moved.

None the less a fact remained. To her other men did not exist. To him other women existed. However she tried to console herself with difference in breeding, that fact, remaining, pricked. It pricked perhaps the harder because of this particular woman's looks. The woman herself was hateful. How, she wondered, could Loftus drive about with her when, with herself, he would barely be seen.

And why wouldn't he? In those days Marie's whys were many. But at the end of every one of them the answer which she always found was that it was all because she was not his wife. Yet there always another why recurred. Why was she not what he had sworn she should be?

The possible disinheritance which hitherto he had imaginatively displayed had no terrors of any kind for her. On bread and kisses she would have lived with him joyfully in a slum. To luxury she was unused. That with which she was surrounded she would not have missed in the least. On the contrary, it had grown odious to her; it suggested a form of compensation the very thought of which was sickening. It was not for this that she had left Gay street, but for him and an honest name.

In the prolonged absence of the latter there were times when her soul seemed to slink into the obscurities of her being and swoon there for shame. There were times when she could not look at herself in the glass. Quite as often she had found it difficult to look at her servants.

After the episode in Central Park the increasing sense of degradation affected her so deeply that with a weary idea of preserving such self-respect as she might, summoning those servants she dismissed them—securing, meanwhile, from an agency a woman able to do what little was essential, a negress named Blanche who talked Irish.

When Loftus discovered what she had done he was for having the servants immediately back. He liked to have the girl entertain for him. He liked to have his friends come to the aviary and hear the bird sing. But Marie, with an air of determination that was new to him, refused.

"They do not respect me," she said. "I don't blame them for that. Nor can you. When we are married it will be different.

"When we are," she added with slow scorn.

CHAPTER II

THE MOTE IN THE EYE

A PHILOSOPHER has noted that at certain periods a great many stupid people have a good deal of stupid money. This condition, describable as plethora, is succeeded by another catalogued as panic.

The number of stupid people who at this time stalked the streets unchecked was phenomenal. Among them was Annandale. It was not a beggarly twenty-five thousand a year that he had, but fifty, with, in addition, more to come. This, though measurably satisfactory, was not brilliant. Not brilliant, that is, as Mrs. Price used that term. Still it was sufficient to remove him from the menagerie of paupers in which she had classed him. Assured whereof, Mrs. Price, pocketing further objections, gave in. Two months by the clock after the episodes at Narragansett she assisted at his marriage to her daughter. A little later Annandale took a house in Gramercy Park.

This house, leased fully furnished from November to June, Fanny selected. She liked the neighborhood. Annandale, whose bachelor quarters had, of course, been given up, liked it too. It was convenient. He had got an idea that he ought to have something to do. The something which he hit on consisted in going downtown every day and standing, in a broker's office, over a ticker. Such were the quantities of stupid money afloat that the ticker was very loquacious. It talked and talked, generally in jumps. As it jumped Annandale bought. As it continued to jump, he made. Whereupon he regarded himself as a born financier. It was an illusion which that year very many men shared.

But the illusion was agreeable to him. It was equally so to Fanny. It took him out of the way and induced pleasant dreams. He talked of drags and yachts. On fifty thousand a year these things are impossibilities. But Annandale, believing himself a born financier, believed, too, that the day was not remote when they would solidify into facts. Pending which, Fanny, from her own carriage, distributed to Annette, Juliette and the rest of them such orders as she liked.

It was in this carriage that Marie had seen her with Loftus. Others also saw her. Fanny being a little more than a bride and Loftus a good deal more than a beau, the spectacle caused comment. There were, though, other things that the future had in charge which were to cause more. But among those who beheld the particular spectacle was Fanny's husband.

Annandale was in a hansom with Mr. Skitt, the broker in whose office he looked over the tape. As Fanny drove by, Annandale raised his hat, then, with a mimic which he meant to be humorously indignant, he shook his stick at Loftus much as though he were saying, "Aha! making up to my wife!"

Loftus entering into the spirit of the jest, ducked his head in feigned alarm.

"That's a deuced pretty woman," remarked Mr. Skitt when the carriage had passed.

"It is Mrs. Annandale," his client returned with some hauteur.

"Oh, beg pardon, I didn't know."

"Yes," Annandale resumed, "and that was Loftus, an old friend of mine."

"Any relation to *the* Loftus?" Mr. Skitt, glad that the subject was out of the way, inquired.

"He is *the* Loftus," Annandale, now entirely mollified, replied.

Others, however, took the spectacle less lightly. To Marie it was distressing. To Mrs. Price it was absurd. Mrs. Price had not seen it, but she heard of it. To air a few views on the subject she pounced in on Fanny the very next day. Loftus, however, was there at the time. She had to wait until he was gone. Then she let drive.

"Do you fancy," she asked fiercely, "that this is London? Do you?" she repeated and menacingly pulled off a glove. "Don't you know that you cannot have men hanging about you, and of all men that man? Great heavens, if you wanted him you should have taken him at the start."

Fanny lit a cigarette, made a ring of smoke, poked a finger through it and in a sugary, demure little way which she sometimes affected, answered serenely: "At the finish perhaps I may yet."

"What!" cried Mrs. Price.

But from the door a servant was announcing Miss Waldron. The girl swam in. Necessarily, for the time being, the subject was dropped. Later Mrs. Price got back to it, but without notable result, without obtaining either any elucidation of Fanny's rather curious remark.

That though, with graver things, the future had in charge. Meanwhile Fanny, with nine servants and a housekeeper to run them, led the life of any other young society woman, the life of an *objet de luxe.*

This form of existence would have been quite to her liking if—Yet is there not always an If? A poet declaimed on the subject two thousand years ago. Times have changed, customs with them, but not the human heart. Barring great wealth and its fanfares and accompaniments, Fanny had enough to throw the average woman into stupors of envy, enough also to even satisfy her, if only instead of one man she had married another. Annandale was very nice. He had but one defect. But that defect was fatal. He did not happen to be somebody else.

This defect Fanny had fancied that she could overlook. She was young, therefore ignorant, and, in fancying that she could ignore that fatal defect, fancied also that she had the ability to order herself about, to command her nature and dictate to her heart. The fallacy is common. Many of us have entertained it and kept at it too until the discovery is made that the heart is a force which we must yield to or break.

Fanny became aware of this shortly after Loftus returned. There in her existence was the If. As a consequence, although Annandale was quite perfect to her, his perfection was as nothing to his one defect.

Of this defect Annandale was wholly unconscious. Yet, though he could not see the mote in his own eye, there was one in Fanny's which, though he saw, he was unable to define. It is true on the mote question he was not an expert. A husband, particularly when he happens to be big and blond, seldom is. Then, too, the effect of the mote was odd. It affected Fanny's disposition. When he approached her he could not but notice that she became elusive. He could not but perceive that she was as afraid of a kiss as of a bee.

"What is the matter with you?" he inquired on one occasion when she appeared even more tantalizingly intangible than he had seen her yet.

"Women are the very devil," he muttered as, without answering, she moved yet further away.

The question, though, was very unreasonable. So at least Mrs. Price, whom he tried to take into his confidence, assured him with fine scorn. "The idea of a man asking his wife what is the matter with her!" she exclaimed. "A man ought to know. If he doesn't, how in the world can he expect her to?"

But that was before the episode with Loftus in the Park. Had Annandale gone to Mrs. Price then she would have been quite capable of putting a flea in his ear. That opportunity he neglected. Stocks were soaring. On paper he was making money hand over fist. He had no time to bother with women's whims. When men do have time for such things the time has passed.

Even then it had gone. One night early in May Fanny had a few people in, among whom were Loftus and Sylvia Waldron.

Sylvia, who long since had let bygones be bygones, was now as sisterly as ever with Fanny, and with Annandale on terms friendly and frank, an attitude which, as Fanny put it, "made it so easy, don't you know, all around." Yet then in putting it in that way Fanny may have been actuated by the fellow-feeling which makes us all so wondrous kind. With Loftus she was rather friendly herself.

That, however, by the way. During the dinner a telegram was brought to Annandale. It concerned the morrow's market and interested him considerably. As soon as he decently could he got away to confer with Skitt. Later the other guests began to go. But Loftus lingered. Presently he and Fanny were alone.

"How is the lady?" Fanny negligently inquired.

Her arms and neck were bare. Her dress, immaterial as cobwebs, was of starbeams' restful hue. About her throat was a string of opals. They were colorful, though less so than her eyes and mouth.

She was seated on a sofa. Loftus was standing. As always, he was superiorly sent out. Other men who got their things at the same places that he got his never succeeded, however they tried, in appearing half so well.

"Do you know," Fanny continued, "she has improved vastly since that day when I saw you trying to pick her up. How did you ever manage? Tell me."

Loftus, his hands in his pockets, shrugged a shoulder.

"And she is so delightfully disdainful," Fanny ran on. "In Central Park this afternoon she turned up her nose at me. It is a very pretty nose, Royal, did you know that?"

"I know that it is a bit out of joint," Loftus condescended at last to reply.

"Dear me! Fancy that! But then the course of true love never did run smooth."

Loftus assumed an air of great weariness. "Do drop it," he said. "You know very well that I have never cared for anyone but you."

"Oh, of course," Fanny promptly and pleasantly retorted. "I may have had a doubt or two about it. But when you put this lady in a flat around the corner, then, naturally, you convinced me. It was a rather circuitous way, though, to go at it, don't you think?"

Beside her on the sofa Loftus flopped. "Why do you always go back to that?" he asked, with the same affectation of weariness.

Fanny turned from him. "I don't seem to be able to get away from it," she answered, but less promptly and pleasantly than before. Her fair face had grown serious. From her eyes the bantering look had gone. "Besides," she added after a moment, "you took her to Europe, and that did seem a trifle steep."

"Would you like her to go back there?" Loftus tentatively inquired.

In and out from Fanny's skirt a white slipper, butterflied with gold, moved restlessly. "I should have preferred that you had let her alone. It was not nice of you. It was not nice at all."

From him she had turned to the carpet. She was looking at it still. "I wonder," she presently resumed, "if you ever suspected how it hurt me." Pausing a bit she looked up. "But you have been so dense, Royal."

Loftus was about to interrupt. She checked him. "The first time I saw you I was just fifteen. That is eight years ago. Since then I can honestly say that until I accepted Arthur I had never thought of anyone but you. Never. Not once. Can you realize now how this affair of yours affected me? It hurt. If it had not been for that, do you suppose I would have taken the prince in the fairy tale? You were my prince."

"But," Loftus protested; "this affair, as you call it, came about only *faute de mieux, faute de toi.* Why cannot I—why cannot we——"?

Fanny checked him again. "No, we cannot. Two years ago you said the same thing to me. I forgave you then because I loved you. For the same reason I forgive you now. But, however I care for you, never will I be your mistress."

"Fanny——"

"No, never. If, as again and again you have told me during the past few months, you still care for me, either you must love me openly or I will not permit you to love me at all."

At the sudden horizon Loftus bent to her. "Let us go, then. In Europe we can love before all the world."

Fanny drew back. "Particularly before all the half-world," she answered with a sniff. "No. You misunderstand me. Perhaps, too, I misunderstand you. Let my hand be."

"Fanny, I will do anything——"

"It is rather late to say that. But if I were free now, what would you do? Would you repeat the invitation you have made?"

Loftus, his wonderful eyes looking deep into hers, answered quickly and sweetly, "I would beg you to be my wife."

Fanny straightened herself. "Then give that girl her congé, give her a dot too, send her abroad and let her marry some count."

"Very good, I will do so."

"When you have," said Fanny, "I will ask Arthur for a divorce."

"What?" And Loftus, with those wonderful eyes, stared in surprise. He was in for it, let in for it, was his first impression. Yet at once, on looking back, her realized that Fanny was incapable of trick of any kind. "But," he objected, "supposing he refuses?"

"Then I will apply."

"But you can't, you see. He is good as gold."

"Oh, I don't mean here. I mean out West."

For a moment Loftus said nothing. Even in the West, he reflected, divorce took time. Yet then, reflecting, too, that it would be very gentlemanly of Annandale were he to go there and leave the coast free for him, he smiled and remarked, with what seemed astounding inappositeness, "I have been selling short."

"Ah!" said Fanny longly. "And what of it?"

"Unless the market turns I shall be out, God knows how much!"

"But what of it?" Yet even as she spoke she understood. "Fiddlesticks!" she exclaimed with a gesture of annoyance. "I sha'n't care if you haven't two cents."

To this Loftus had no chance to reply. Annandale came lounging in.

"Do you know what I have done?" he collectively and blandly inquired. "I told Skitt to buy me, at the opening, 1,000 Atchison and 1,000 Steel. Now I would like a quiet drink."

Loftus stood up. "I am going in the Park for a quiet smoke. But I thought you had sworn off."

Annandale tugged at his cavalry mustache and laughed. "I haven't touched a thing for nearly a year. But on a night like this, when the whole town is mad, I think I might have a drop. Stop, dear boy, won't you, and have one with me? No? Well—" And, accompanying Loftus to the door, he whispered to him there, "My compliments to Miss Leroy."

"Don't forget, Royal," Fanny called after him, "that you dine with us on the ninth."

CHAPTER III

THE GATES OF LIFE

IN her sitting-room at the Arundel Marie sat. It was nearly midnight. Hours before she had dined. Since then she had wandered from one room to another, from one chair to another, wondering would Loftus come. Sometimes he did. More often he did not. She never knew beforehand. It was as it pleased him. Always the uncertainty irked her. But on this evening it was particularly enervating. She had reached the gates of her endurance. She could stand no more. She must pass through them, pass or fall back, where she did not know, but somewhere, to some plane, in which, though life forsook her, at least its degradation would be foregone.

At first, in the old days, when he met her in the ex-first lady's den, it had seemed to her that life would be incomplete without him. Then it had seemed that with him it would be fulfilled to the tips. Subsequently the long train of disenchantments had ensued.

In Paris he had pained her greatly. There, after a series of those things, little in themselves, but which, when massed, become mountainous, she had been forced to consider not her love for him but the nature of such love as he had for her. In him there was a reticence which perplexed, depths which she could not reach. At times his silence was that of one to whom something has happened, who is suffering from some constraint, from some pressure or from some long illness of which traces remain. At others, it had exasperated her, it made her feel like a piano, on which, a piece played, the cover is shut. She had seemed to serve as a pastime, nothing more; a toy which now and then he took up, but only because it was there, beneath his feet. Yet even then she was not quite unhappy. Even then she had faith. She believed in him still. Hope had not gone.

Hope has its braveries. Its outposts patrol our lives. Until death annihilates it and us, always beyond is a sentry. The sentry which she still discerned was the promise he had made. Latterly it had not been much of a sentry. It had far more resembled a straw. But it was all she had. She had clung to it. Hope indeed has its braveries, but it has its cowardices as well.

This hope, ultimate and forlorn, she knew now was craven, mated to her degradation, born of her shame.

If it were to be realized the realization must delay no more. She was at the gates. She must pass through. On that she had decided. When Loftus came she would tell him so. She would tell him that she would work for him, slave for him, envelop him with her love, pillow him on her heart. Though he lost his wretched money what would it matter to her and how should it matter to him? She could sing him if not into affluence at least into ease. Tambourini, with whom until recently she had studied, had told her not once, out of politeness merely, but again and again that in her throat was a volcano of gold. With Italian exaggeration he had called her Pasta, Alboni, Malibran, predicting their triumphs for her. If Loftus would make an honest woman of her those triumphs would be for him. But as she told herself that she told herself too that such triumphs he would prefer to avoid. He should have, though, the chance. If he rejected it she would go. And of its rejection she had little manner of doubt. But the chance he should have, yes, even though she knew beforehand that with his usual civility—a civility which she had learned to hate —he would hand it back. She could see him at it. She could see his negligent smile. That smile she had learned too to hate. Always she loved him to distraction, but sometime she hated him to the death.

From Loftus for a moment her thoughts veered to Tambourini. The week previous suddenly, without warning, he had told her torrentially that he adored her. He was a good teacher. Yet, of course, after that she had been obliged to let him go.

But now her thoughts were interrupted. At the table where she sat she started, her head drawn abruptly in that attitude which deers have when surprised. In the door without had come the fumble of a key and, in the hall, she caught the almost noiseless tread of her lover. As he entered she got from her seat. Loftus had his hat on. He took it off, put it down on the table and taking a cigar from his pocket lit it at the chimney of a lamp that was there.

At the conclusion of the operation he looked at her. Her dress was canary. From the short loose sleeves lace fell that was repeated at the neck. There a yellow sapphire had been pinned. As he looked at her, she looked at him.

"I have something to say to you, Marie," he began.

With an uplift of the chin she answered: "And I, Royal, have something to say to you."

"The usual thing, I suppose. Well, shy a teacup at me if you like, but spare me a scene."

As he spoke he seated himself. "Marie," he at once resumed, "I shall have to take my mother up the Hudson shortly——"

The girl interrupted him. "Does Mrs. Annandale go too?"

The man's cigar had gone out. He relighted it. "No," he replied, "the last time I saw her she said something about going West."

"Ah!" Marie exclaimed, and immediately with that curious intuition which women that really love possess she added, "to Dakota?"

"Perhaps," replied Loftus with a puff. The surety of the shot amazed him, but of the amazement he gave no sign. "Perhaps, though I do not remember that she said just where she did intend to go." He drew in a large mouthful of smoke, which leisurely he blew forth. It circled about her. She moved away. "Oh, excuse me," he said, "I did not mean—" The girl made a gesture of indifference. "You see," he began again, "the point is just here. My mother is not well. She rather wants me with her this summer. In the circumstances I thought you might like to go abroad."

Marie, through half-closed eyes, cautiously peered at him. "Without you?" she asked.

Loftus nodded.

"For good?"

To this Loftus made no answer. Provided she went, though it were for bad, he did not much care.

Marie, who had been standing, crossed the room and recrossed it. A year before she had suggested the kitten. Where that had been the leopard had come. In her movements were the same supple ease, the same grace and alertness. Suddenly at the table where he sat she stopped, rested a hand on it and bending a little looked him in the face.

"Liar," she muttered. "Liar! I know and so do you. Yes, I knew it almost from the first, but, though I knew it, I tried as hard to deceive myself as you did to deceive me. You never intended to marry me, not for a moment, not even at the moment when you called God to witness that you would."

Her hand had gone from the table, from it and him she turned away.

Loftus, who at the arraignment had retreated a full inch in his chair, called after her. "It is untrue; what I said, I meant."

Marie turned back. "Then if you meant it, marry me this night. If you have any honor, any whatever, a spark of it, you will; if not——"

She paused and looked at him. It was not this at all she had meant to say. She had meant to entreat him, to picture what their life might be, to tell him of her enveloping love, and that failing, to go, but to go without words, without reproaches, without suffering that which had been between them to be marred by vituperation and, so marred, to descend to the level of some coarse intrigue. But something, his manner, the manifest lie about his mother, the apparition of that other woman, battening on nerves overwrought had irritated her into entire forgetfulness of what she had meant to do and say.

The pause Loftus noticed. What was behind it he misconstrued. "Don't mind me," he encouragingly interjected. "Threaten away. It is so nice and well-bred. Yet I must be allowed to say that while I did intend to marry you, the intention has been rather weakened through just such scenes as this. Though, to be frank, it is not so much that I object to scenes as it is that, if scenes there must be, I prefer to make them myself."

At the humor of that Marie ran her nails into her hands, dug them in. Without some such moxa it seemed to her that she might take and hurl the lamp at him, fire the place and, fate favoring, be calcinated with him there.

"And now that I have been frank," he went on, "let me be franker. You and I have ceased to be able to hit it off. The blame for that I will, if you like, assume."

Then he too paused. But not at all because he did not fully know what he meant to do and say.

"Marie," he continued, putting a hand in a pocket as he spoke, "in the past year we have been more than friends. Friends at least let us remain. Friends do part, and for awhile we must. Your voice, like yourself, is charming. If I may advise, go and study abroad. Though if you prefer remain here. But, of course, whatever you do you will need money. I have brought some."

In his hand now was a card case which he offered her. She took it, looked at it, opened it, then moving to a window she raised the sash and threw the card case into the night, yet so quickly and unexpectedly that Loftus had no time to interfere.

"That is an agreeable way of getting rid of twelve thousand dollars," he remarked.

Yet, however lightly he affected to speak, the action annoyed him. Like all men of large means he was close. It seemed to him beastly to lose such a sum. He got up, went to the window and looked down. He could not see the case and he much wanted to go and look for it. But that for the moment Marie prevented.

"If it were twelve times twelve million," she exclaimed, "I would do the same! Oh, Royal," she cried, "don't you know it is not your money I want; don't you know it is you?"

Loftus did know, but he did not care. The flinging away of the money was all he could think of. It was an act which he could not properly qualify as plebeian, but which seemed to him crazily courtesanesque. He returned to the table and picked up his hat. "I am going," he announced.

Marie sprang at him. "Is that your answer?"

He brushed her aside. She saw that he was going, saw too, or thought she saw, that he was going never to return, saw also that now at last she was at the gates.

"My God!" she cried. "My God!"

So resonant was the cry that Loftus turned, not to her but to the window. He closed it. But already the cry had passed elsewhere.

From regions beyond a fat negress waddled hurriedly in. Her eyes rolled whitely from the girl to Loftus and then again to the girl.

"Are you sick, miss?"

"Go away," said Loftus, "there is nothing the matter."

"Nothing?" exclaimed Marie. "Nothing!" she repeated in a higher key. "Nothing!" Then, visibly, anger enveloped her. "Do you call it nothing to be cheated and decoyed? Nothing to have faith and love and be gammoned of them by a living lie, by a perjury in flesh and blood? Is that what you call nothing? Is it? Then tell me what something is?"

At the moment she stared at Loftus, her lips still moving, her breast heaving, her small hands clenched, her face very white. And Loftus stared at her. In the vehemence and contempt of her anger he did not recognize at all the kitten of the year before. But it was very vulgar, he decided.

That vulgarity Blanche complicated at once. "What has he done, miss?" she asked, her hands on her hips.

"Done?" Marie echoed. "He has made me drink of shame. Now, tired of that, he is going."

"Not to leave you, miss?"

"To leave me for another woman."

"Then hanging is too good for him."

Loftus gestured at the negress. "I say," he called. "Did you hear what I told you? Go away and hold your tongue."

Blanche's eyes that had rolled whitely before were rolling now not merely whitely but wildly.

"I won't go away, sir. I won't hold my tongue, sir. I am as good as you, sir. I have a son that's better nor you, sir. He wouldn't treat a lady as you have her, sir. Staying away from her as you have, sir. Making her eat her heart out, sir. No, sir, I won't hold my tongue, sir."

And Blanche, mounting in paroxysms of indignation, shouted: "For the Lord's sake, sir. Hanging is too good for you, sir. You ought to have your ghost kicked. Yes, sir."

"Oh, hell!" muttered Loftus between his teeth, and turning on his heel, he stalked out, flecking from his sleeve as he went an imaginary speck.

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN OF THE YELLOW FAY

IN Fanny's drawing-room the next evening, at six minutes after eight, Loftus appeared. Although tolerably punctual, others had preceded him. On a sofa with Fanny was Sylvia Waldron. On another sofa were Mrs. Waldron and Melanchthon Orr. Annandale, who seemed to have lost flesh, was standing in the middle of the floor.

"How are you?" he asked as Loftus entered.

"And you?"

"They did me," Annandale answered. "Atch., U. P., St. Paul, Steel, I had the list." As he spoke he mopped himself. Then in confidential aside, he added, "It has affected my stomach. It is as though I had a hole there. Will you have a sherry and bitters?"

Loftus moved forward to where Sylvia and Fanny sat. Fanny gave him a finger; Sylvia, a little distant nod. She was dressed in white. About her neck was a string of pearls. Fanny was in a frock of tender asparagus green fluttered with lace, very cool to the eye and cut rather low.

"I hope Arthur isn't hurt much," said Loftus.

"Are you?" Fanny asked.

"No. I have been selling. Today I covered. It was not easy, though. Everybody was crazy. I have never seen a panic before."

"It will be a generation before you see another," Orr, from across the room, called out.

At the further end of the room Harris, Annandale's former valet, since promoted to the position of butler, appeared, smug-faced and solemn, in silent announcement of dinner.

For the time being the subject was abandoned, but presently when at table all were seated it was resumed.

"It will cost the country $50,000,000," said Orr. He was at Fanny's left. At her right was Loftus.

"Well," said Annandale, emptying a glass of Ruinart, "I am glad I don't have to produce it." Emptying another glass he added, "I have produced all I could."

"I think I do not quite understand," said Mrs. Waldron, who led a highly unspeculative life and seldom saw the evening papers.

Orr and Annandale both hastened to enlighten her.

Ever since the Presidential election there had been a boom in the Street, a soaring market in which the whole community, down to and including messenger boys and chorus girls, had joined. On this, the ninth of May, it had, in the slang of the Street, just "busted." Since the great black day of a generation previous, never had there been such a crash, so many landed gentry, so much paper profit sunk into such absolute loss.

In the flow of talk Fanny turned to Loftus.

"How is the lady?"

Loftus, whose mouth was full of jellied consomme, did not answer for a moment. Then he made a slight gesture. "She has gone."

"Already?"

"I had your orders!"

Fanny looked at him wonderingly. "How did she take it?"

"What difference does it make? She has gone. Is not that sufficient?"

"For you, no doubt. But for her! No; really I am sorry. When you told her that you loved her I am sure she thought you meant forever. I am sure, too, that you meant for a week. It is a shame to treat a girl like that and then turn her loose."

Loftus had begun to busy himself with some fish.

He put his fork down. "But, confound it, you told me to."

"Did I? I forgot. Besides, you are not usually so obedient."

Loftus turned to his fish. "It seems to me that there is rather a change in the temperature. Isn't there?" he asked.

"But, Royal, I cannot help feeling sorry for that girl. I cannot help feeling, too, that if you can get rid of her in this lively fashion you might do the same with me."

"In that case it only shows what a simpleton you are. If I have had anything to do with her at all it was only because I couldn't have anything to do with you."

"Well, hardly in that way. But you could have asked me to marry you."

"I have since."

"Say, rather, I asked you."

"Anyway, the other evening it was settled. If now you have changed your mind——"

"Regarding you my mind will never change. I shall speak to Arthur tonight."

"What's that?" called Annandale who, from the other end of the table, had caught the mention of his name. "What's that?"

"We were talking stocks," Loftus answered. "Do you know how money was today?"

"I know it was beastly tight."

"And that seems to me," Fanny with one of her limpid smiles remarked, "such a vulgar condition for money to be in."

"Did I hear you ask," Orr inquired, "how money was today? It was sixty per cent."

"Dear me, Melanchthon," Mrs. Waldron exclaimed. "I think I must get you to speak to the Trust Company. They only give me three. A mouse could not live in New York on that."

"The time is not distant," said Orr, "when the population of New York will be exclusively composed of mice and millionaires. Nobody but plutocrats and paupers will be able to live here. Already it is little more than a sordid hell with a blue sky. I can remember——"

Orr ran on. He had the table. In the impromptu which ensued other conversation was swamped. But during it, for a second, Loftus had Fanny's hand in his. It clasped it and in clasping thrilled. It was the first time in her life that she had permitted herself—or him—such a thing. It was the last.

Sylvia, happening at the moment to turn that way, could not help seeing what was going on. She colored and looked at Annandale.

During Orr's impromptu he had been attempting with plentiful champagne to fill the hole of which he had complained.

Later, the dinner at an end, the women gone, the hole still unfilled, he called for whisky and soda and monologued plaintively on the disasters of the day. As he talked he drank. But the monologue, which was becoming tedious, Harris interrupted. Mrs. Waldron had sent in to say that she and Miss Waldron were going, and would Mr. Orr be so good as to see them home.

At this Annandale got up. With the others he made for the room beyond. There, shortly, the guests of the evening departed; husband and wife were alone.

"Do you know, Fanny, how much I have lost to-day?" that husband began.

"No, Arthur," that wife replied. "Nor do I know that I particularly care. There is something more important to me than money just now. I want a divorce."

"Eh?" Annandale had been walking up and down the room, but at this he stopped short. He did not seem to have heard aright. "Eh?"

"Eh?" Fanny repeated in open mimic. "Yes, I want a divorce."

"A divorce?" Munching the syllables of the word, Annandale put a hand to his shirt front. "From me?" Had Fanny asked him to made good the fifty million loss to the country which Orr had mentioned his bewilderment could not have been more sheer.

He stared at Fanny. She was nodding at him. Influenced by that motion of her head, slowly, almost laboriously, he sat down. There the disasters of the day fusing with the alcohol of the night blent with the demand and bewildered him still more.

"What an odd thing to want," he said at last. Then rallying he added, "You must be j-joking. Yes—really, for you know you can't tell me why."

To this, Fanny who had been eyeing him narrowly, retorted severely: "I wonder are you in a condition to have me tell you anything at all?"

At the imputation the poor chap, after the fashion of poor chaps in similar shape, flared indignantly. "There is nothing the matter with me," he protested. Though very much mixed, he managed for the moment not to appear so. "Nothing," he reiterated.

"Then Arthur, to be quite frank, we are not suited to each other. If you will give me a divorce it will be nice of you. If not I shall go to Dakota and get one."

Annandale passed a hand over his forehead. He did not in the least understand what all this was about. Then suddenly the fumes of wine disclosed a retrospect of incidents garnered unconsciously, memories of Fanny and Loftus, the sense of her increasing aloofness, the knowledge of his constant presence. These things made pictures which he saw and, seeing, inflamed. At once, in answer not to her but to them, he got from his seat, pounded violently on an étagère and cried with the viciousness of drink: "I'll shoot him! I'll shoot Royal Loftus for the dog that he is!"

"Beg pardon, sir." Through the lateral entrance to the drawing-room Harris emerged, a tray in his hand. "A necklace, sir. It was under the dining-room table where Miss Waldron sat, sir."

Annandale strangled an oath. He glared at Fanny, glared at the man, glared at the pearls, took the latter, thrust them in his pocket, motioned to Harris, strode from the room, went upstairs, then down and out from the house, slamming the door after him with a noise in which there was the clatter of musketry and the din of oaths.

The night was black yet full of stars, the hour homicidal and serene. Annandale strode on. Before him was the park, about it a fence of high iron and within phantasmal peace. He did not notice it. He was wondering angrily what he would do, how he should act.

Had he been sober he would have known at once. When in his sphere of life a woman wants to go, it is a man's mere duty to open the doors, open the windows, run ahead, get a divorce and bring it back to her on a salver. Had he been sober he would have realized that. He would have recognized too the propriety of Fanny's frank request. After little more than five months of marriage it was perhaps precipitate. Yet considered simply as a request it was, in the world in which he moved, more common than the reverse.

Ordinarily he would have realized that. What is more, he would have realized that what Fanny had said was true. They were not suited for each other. When people are not so suited it is best that they should separate. But people that have bowed when they met might just as well bow when they part. In the life known as polite big words and little threats have long since gone out of fashion.

All of which ordinarily Annandale would have known. He was essentially urbane, of a nature far more inclined to inaction than anger. Ordinarily, he would have accepted the situation, without joy, no doubt, but certainly without raising the roof. Whereupon, having so accepted it, he would have turned in and gone to bed.

But alcohol plays strange tricks. It affects manners and memories. It affects, too, the imagination. Annandale was drunk. The Yellow Fay that lurks in liquor awoke in him the manger dog. He told himself that he was being robbed. And of what? The wife of his bosom! And by whom? His nearest friend! The outrage and the villainy of that loomed, or rather, the Yellow Fay aiding, seemed to loom so monstrously, that, beside it, the disasters of the Street dwindled into nothing, lost in the sense of this wrong.

It was damnable, he decided.

Putting a hand in a pocket his fingers encountered a string of pearls. It was not that which he was seeking. Besides, he had forgotten them. But finding them there it occurred to him that he ought to restore them at once. Circling the park he entered Irving Place and rang at Sylvia's door.

There, instead of the usual if brief delay, the door opened at once. Orr was coming out. Beyond in the hall Sylvia stood. Orr looked at Annandale, wondering what the dickens he was after. But Annandale brushed by. Orr passed on. Annandale entered the hall.

As the door closed the light revealed to Sylvia what

Orr in the semi-obscurity of the stoop had not observed and which, had he observed, would, in view of an anterior episode, have induced his return.

But Sylvia saw. In face and manner his excitement was obvious. Mindful of that episode she feared that he was again in his cups. Yet immediately, though for a moment, a question which he asked reassured her. She understood, or thought she did, why he had come.

"Did you know that you had lost your pearls?"

Instinctively the girl's hand went to her throat.

"Here they are. They were found somewhere. In the hall, I think."

"Thank you, Arthur. This is very good of you. But tomorrow would have done."

She did not ask him in and this omission he did not appear to notice. He looked about the hall and then at the girl. At the look her fear returned.

"Did you know about Fanny and Loftus?" he suddenly asked. "They're going to elope." As he spoke he leaned back heavily against the door. "I shall kill him," he added thickly.

Sylvia wrung her hands. "Oh, Arthur, you have been drinking again. You promised that you never would."

"I shall kill him," Annandale stubbornly repeated.

"Oh, don't say such things," the girl pleaded. "Don't say them. Go home."

Annandale turned sullenly, opened the door and looking back, muttered, "I have no home."

Closing the door after him he started down the steps. They were few and wide, easy of descent. But they had become unaccountably steep. He caught at a rail. It steadied him. He stood there a moment. Then, a bit uncertainly, he zigzagged on.

CHAPTER V

EXIT FANNY

"MURDER!"

On the morrow, through the thick streets newsboys were shouting the word engagingly, as though it were something nice. For further temptation they bawled, "In Gramercy Park!"

Orr was leaving his office. It was four o'clock. He was on his way home. But the name detained him. Murder in Gramercy Park was a novelty which no one aware of its sedateness could comfortably resist. He bought an extra. There, for his penny, in leaded type it stood. In ink, appropriately red, meagre details followed. As these sprang at him, mentally, he bolted. Other purchasers were absorbing them pleasurably. A good old-fashioned crime is so rare! Then, too, of all crimes murder in Gramercy Park is rarest. Yet when in addition the victim is a man of fashion what more would you have for a cent?

To Orr the information was excessive. It concerned Royal Loftus, who, the paper stated, had been found early that morning, near a bench in the park, doubled in a heap, a bullet through his handsome head.

No clues, no arrests. That was all. But was it not enough? To Orr, while excessive it was also incredible. Mechanically he read the account again. On his way uptown he bought other papers, less colorful but equally clear. Loftus had been identified. There was no mistake.

But the incredibility of it persisted. A man young, rich, handsome, without apparently an enemy in the world or an idea in his head, to be done for like that was a matter which Orr could not immediately digest.

He tried, however. In the effort he reached his house. There a telephone message awaited him. It asked would he please come to Irving Place. Presumably it concerned the murder. He went at once.

In the sombre parlor Sylvia stood.

"You know, I suppose," he began. Seeing that she did he added, "It is very odd."

Sylvia interrupted him. "There is worse."

"How worse? What do you mean?"

"Fanny was going to run off with him."

"With Loftus?"

Sylvia nodded. Her face, always pale, now was white.

"But," Orr expostulated, "you don't fancy that Annandale——?"

"No." The monosyllable fell longly from the girl. "No," she repeated. "But others may."

"I don't see why. There is nothing to go on. Is there though?"

Sylvia did not directly reply. She looked down at her hands and then at her cousin. "I think," she presently said, "that he must have learned of it last evening after we went away. At dinner I am sure he had no suspicions."

"Had you any?"

Sylvia raised her eyebrows. "I don't know," she remarked, "whether when you were going from here you noticed him particularly, but in the hall he had told her that he would shoot him."

Orr sniffed. "That is rather awkward."

"Then almost at once he went. But where?"

"Have you heard from him since?"

"No, and it is for that reason I sent for you. Won't you go to him and let me know?"

But Orr did not like the errand. It seemed to him that Annandale might be the man. "That, too, is rather awkward," he objected.

Against the objection Sylvia pleaded. Manifestly she was nervous. "If you won't go," she said at last, "I shall."

"Oh, well, if you put it in that way," Orr reluctantly replied, "I suppose I must."

"And you will come back?"

"As quickly as I can."

There is a line of Hugo descriptive of the earnestness with which people gape at a wall behind which something has occurred. Orr recalled it when he reached Gramercy Park. At one end of the park was a great crowd staring at the high fence of iron. It was behind the fence that Loftus had been found. The place itself was directly in front of Annandale's house.

On entering that house Orr was shown into the drawing-room. Shortly, from a room beyond, Annandale appeared.

"You have heard, have you not?" he asked. "But come in here."

Orr followed him to the other room. In it was a sideboard on which decanters stood.

"Will you have something?"

Orr thanked him. Annandale helped himself to a liquor. As he did so the decanter clicked against the glass and, as he raised the glass, Orr saw that his hand shook.

"It is very strange," said Annandale, repeating almost the words which Orr had used to Sylvia. "I had no cause to love the man, but——"

"I know," Orr interrupted. "My cousin told me. But if I were you I would not talk of it. She seemed worried lest you might."

Annandale put down the glass. He was quite flushed. "But," he exclaimed, "she does not suspect me!"

"Of course not. On the contrary. But then the fact suggests a motive which, coupled with any threat you may have made, might, in the absence of other clues, made a prima facie case, which to say the least, don't you see, would be nasty."

"Damnably so!" Annandale muttered dumbly. Then, raising the glass again, he threw out: "But what nonsense! A little after you had all gone from here I went to your cousin's——"

"Yes. I know you did. I met you on the stoop."

"Did you?" said Annandale with marked surprise.

"Why, yes. Don't you remember?"

Annandale passed a hand across his face and sat down.

"Don't you remember?" Orr reiterated.

Annandale shook his head.

"But you remember where you went afterward, don't you? Did you come directly here?"

Annandale made no answer.

"Can't you tell me?" Orr asked. "Or is it that you don't wish to?"

On a mantel opposite the sideboard a clock was ticking. For awhile in the room only that ticking could be heard.

"Can't you?" Orr asked again.

Annandale stood up. It was as though the question had prodded him. He moved to the sideboard. But Orr got in his way.

"Don't drink any more. Try to think."

"I can't," said Annandale. He moved back and sat down. In his face the flush had deepened. It looked mottled. He himself looked ill.

Orr, a hand extended on the sideboard, beat on it a brief tattoo.

"This is rather tedious," he said at last. "It is only a little less than a year ago that you had a similar lapse. Oddly enough, it began as this has, at my cousin's house. But we must try to keep her out of the matter. Were she asked what you said it might be embarrassing, don't you think?"

"What I said? What did I say?"

Annandale as he spoke looked so abject that Orr feared that he might go to pieces there and then. Humanely he changed the subject. "Of course, whoever did it will be nabbed. Meanwhile, it is only to prevent any stupid suspicions that I venture to advise. By the way, have you any idea who could have done it?"

Annandale again ran his hand across his eyes; then, looking up at Orr, he replied: "Not one—unless he did it himself."

"H'm. Well, yes. That might be. But what does Mrs. Annandale think?"

"She does not know. Or, at least, she did not at noon. I heard it then from Harris. I told him not to say anything to her. Shortly after, as I understood, she went out, to her mother's, I believe, though, of course, since then——"

The sentence was not completed. Fanny was entering the room. Orr had always admired her very much, but never so much as then. She was dressed in black, which is becoming to blonds, and richly dressed, he afterward thought, he could not be sure for he lacked the huckster's eye. But his admiration was not on this occasion induced by her looks, though a woman's looks, when she has any, are always notable if unnoticed factors. His admiration was caused by the way she took things.

With the air of one inquiring the time of day she glanced at Annandale and asked, almost with a lisp: "Why didn't you shoot me?"

Orr turned to Annandale. He was rising. From his face the flush had gone. He was lurid. The word lurid is used because it is more dramatic than its synonym, ghastly. And here was drama, real drama, in real life.

"Fanny, you don't think that I——"

Drama, real drama, is an enjoyable rarity. Orr longed to stay and see it out. But, obviously, anything of the kind would have been worse than indiscreet. He picked up his hat.

"Fanny," Annandale repeated, "you can't think——"

"Oh," she interrupted, "you see you made it quite unnecessary for me to think at all. You told me beforehand. Wasn't it considerate?" she added, turning to Orr.

"But I did not mean it," cried Annandale. "As God is my witness——"

"I am a witness," Fanny interjected, interrupting him again. But the interruption was effected without abruptness, without apparent emotion, sweetly, almost lispingly, with a modulation of the voice that was restful to the ear. "And," she added, in the same sugary, leisurely way, but raising now a slender finger gloved in white, "I will swear to what you said."

At this Orr swam, or tried to swim, to the rescue. "Surely," he protested, "you would not do that?"

"Wouldn't I?" she answered, addressing Orr and speaking in the same smiling, seductive fashion that she had to Annandale. "Wouldn't I, indeed! Really, believe me, you are quite in error."

Annandale fell back in the chair from which he had arisen. "Fanny," he gasped, "I did not know a woman could hate like that."

Fanny smiled afresh. "No? Is it possible? But, then, perhaps, you never knew how a woman could love."

She gave a little nod. It was as though she were adding, "Take that."

Orr was buttoning a glove, preparing to retreat. She turned to him: "Don't go. Stay and have a drink with Arthur. He looks as though he needed one."

She moved back.

"Yes, stay," she continued. "I am going." Once more the slender finger gloved in white was raised. "Arthur Annandale, never willingly will I see you again—except in court. For to court I shall go, if only to see you sentenced."

At that, at the splendid ferocity of it, Orr looked at Annandale. When he turned to look at Fanny, silently, no doubt smilingly, she had gone.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

THERE are occasions when speech is an intrusion and sympathy an affront. An occasion of this kind coincided with Fanny's exit. On the mantel the clock still ticked. Otherwise there was silence in that room.

Orr, finishing with his glove, made for the door. "If I can be of use," he said, "let me know."

Annandale stood up. "You can," he answered. For a moment he hesitated. He seemed lost and dizzy. Then, with an effort, he got himself together. "Tell Sylvia it is not true."

Orr passed out. But instead of returning at once to Irving Place he went up the steps of an adjoining house. There he was told that Mrs. Loftus could see no one. He had not expected to be received. But he felt for her, felt, too, how she must feel.

That a Loftus should die would, he knew, be enough. But that a Loftus should be murdered, and that Loftus be her son, there was something which, Orr thought, might perhaps overwhelm her. And, as Orr afterward learned, Mrs. Loftus was then sitting, her attendants about her, absently and ceaselessly shaking her head. Nor did the motion of it ever cease. She was palsied.

Before Orr learned of that other things supervened, primarily fresh extras. These of course were indicated. The imagination of the public had been stirred. Of all things mystery affects the imagination most. Here was one agreeably heightened by subsequent editions announcing the projection of the eternal feminine.

Then those that read these sheets felt that they were getting their money's worth. But the feeling was accentuated when one of the papers gratified them with a picture of a girl who they saw was an exceedingly fetching young woman and who they were informed had vanished from her residence, the Arundel, where she was known as Miss Leroy.

Her connection with Loftus, a connection which the neighborhood generally understood, was shown with reportorial ease. With the same ease it was established that he had been with her the evening preceding the night of his death. Bag and baggage the next morning she had flown.

That fact in itself was prodigiously interesting. A young and pretty assassin, what! It was quite like fiction. It was almost too good or too bad to be true. Besides, the picture displayed a girl not merely pretty but quasi-ideal, a face infinitely delicate, disdainful yet sad.

Orr saw the picture and saw too that, while perhaps rather flattering, it did not resemble Marie in the least. As a matter of fact it was an art editor's fake. But that, of course, the public did not know and being fed on fakes would not have cared if it had known.

Then more mystery followed. What were her antecedents? Who were her people? Whence had she come? No one could say. What alone could be said was that a year previous Loftus had taken for her an apartment at the Arundel, where she had resided in a manner otherwise genteel, though with, latterly, but one servant, a negress named Blanche.

At the time the police were as much interested in the servant as the public in the girl. The latter in departing had had the forethought to leave the former behind, and, from her, information relevant and irrelevant was obtained.

To Mr. Peacock for instance, one of the district attorneys, Blanche related that at dinner her mistress liked sweetbreads and sorrel with, now and then, a chocolate souffle.

Mr. Peacock was a florid man with the face of a cupid, the guile of a fox and the voice of an ogre. "I don't care for that," he told her.

"Nor I," Blanche agreeably replied.

"I mean," said Mr. Peacock, "that I don't care about her victuals. She was in love with the dead man, wasn't she?"

"I guess so," Blanche with profound if unconscious psychology replied. "She was always scrapping with him. She——"

"Tell me," Peacock interrupted, "what happened the last night he was there."

"It was awful. He was trying to get rid of her. He wasn't much and I told him so, but he was all she had. When I first came to her she said she was an orphan, that she hadn't anybody anywhere, that they were all dead."

"She may have meant," Peacock with even profounder psychology interjected, "that she was dead to them."

But this insinuation Blanche resented. "She could be lively enough when she liked."

"Who came to see her?"

"Mr. L."

"No one else?"

Blanche shook her head.

"Whom did she write to?"

"How do I know?"

"Didn't you ever see her write to anyone?"

"Well, the last night, after he had gone, she did write a letter and gave it to me to post. When I came back——"

"Whom was it addressed to?"

Blanche shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know, I can't read. When I came back she was crying and getting a few duds together and I helped her."

"Did she tell you where she was going?"

"Sure. To Europe. I saw her off the next day. She went in the sewerage."

"In the steerage, do you mean?" asked Peacock. "But she hadn't any money? Didn't Loftus give her any?"

"She wouldn't take his money, she threw it back at him. She would not take anything he had given her. She left a room full of dresses and jewelry. They are at the Arundel now. She told me——"

"Did you see her on board?"

Blanche nodded.

"Mightn't she have left the ship before it sailed?"

"Yes, if she had wanted. I wouldn't have stopped her. But I stood there and as the ship went out she waved her little hand at me and—and——"

"Do you remember the ship's name?"

But now Blanche was weeping profusely.

"No matter," said Peacock. "I can find out."

He did. He found out, too, that when Loftus was shot Marie Leroy was on the high seas. And there he was without a clue. What is worse, there was the eager public quite as deficient.

Yet though the clue which the girl represented was necessarily abandoned, there remained a theory. There remained even two theories. The first was robbery.

Loftus, when found, had about him not so much as a five-cent piece. The wad of bills which men of means are suppose to carry, and which, having credit everywhere, they never do, was absent. Absent too was the customary watch. The precise use which a man of means and particularly of leisure can have for a watch the police and press did not stop to consider. The absence of watch and money suggested a theory. That was enough.

The theory, however, like all theories, had its defects. Loftus had been found within the park, a few feet from the fence. The shooting might have occurred from without, but unless the assassin had a key or a ladder or a balloon or wings he could not possibly have got in to go through him. Eliminating ladder, balloon and wings, a key the assassin could not have had unless he were a resident in the neighborhood, the agent of a resident, or a caretaker of the park itself. People of this order are as eliminable as balloons and wings.

The theory therefore had its defects. It had, though, this in its favor—the lock of one of the gates might have been picked. It had something else in its favor. It suited the Loftus clan.

Mrs. Loftus, though childless now, was not otherwise alone. Behind her were all the Loftuses, a contingent of relatives socially eminent, ponderable politically, super-respectable, synonymous with the best. To them the death of Royal, however dismal, was not disgraceful—not disgraceful, that is, assuming that it was a footpad's work. On their escutcheon it put a mourning band but not a blackening blot. That blot they feared. They had cause to. The dark, donjuanesque story about Marie Leroy might have been followed by other stories darker still, dirtier if possible, that would begrime them all.

The footpad theory they accepted therefore at once. Had they been able, had circumstances favored them, had the man, for instance, been shot in some way or in some place unknowable to the police, they would have arranged to have had him die decorously, if suddenly, of some genteel complaint, of appendicitis or pleuro-pneumonia. Then there would have been no stories, no extras, no pictures, no notoriety, no fear of that blot.

The fear subsisting, they accepted the footpad theory, glad to find it ready-made, declining to consider any other, desisting from further effort, hushing the matter as well as they could, refusing, though urged, to offer a reward.

Yet, though the theory suited them it did not satisfy the public. It was too tame. They demanded something else. That demand the press, as was its duty, attempted to supply. Through methods unfathomably vidocqesque, the young gentleman connected with the *Chronicle*—one of the most enterprising sheets—discovered more about Loftus dead than Loftus living could himself have known. They discovered that in the panic he had dropped a bagatelle of five millions, and announced that he had committed suicide. But while at the autopsy it was not demonstrated that Loftus could not have shot himself, at the inquest it was shown that the obligatory instrument had not been found. Even to vidocqesque young gentlemen the suicide theory ceased then to appeal.

But that only deepened the mystery. To dissipate it and, at the same time, to display an endearing pro bono publicanism, the *Chronicle* offered a reward of five thousand dollars for such information as would lead to the arrest and conviction of the assassin.

Immediately there was a clue.

It was Harris who produced it. Under the guidance of a reporter he was led to the office of the *Chronicle,* where the young gentleman turned him over to the managing editor quite as though the clue were his own.

"Here, Mr. Digby, is a party that knows who shot Loftus."

Mr. Digby was a small man with a big beard, very well dressed, remarkably civil.

"Yes," he said. "And who did?"

"Mr. Arthur Annandale."

Mr. Digby smiled. He did not believe it. But it stirred him pleasurably. The *Chronicle* stood for the people. Annandale represented the predatory rich. Besides, it was in front of Annandale's house that Loftus had been found. At once he saw scoops, extras, headlines. Also the possible libel. Meanwhile at a glance he had taken Harris in.

"You are in his employment?"

"Yes, sir," Harris, amazed at such perspicacity, replied. "I am the butler."

"And you saw him do it?"

"No, sir, but I heard him say he would."

"When?"

"The night Mr. Loftus was shot."

"To whom did he say it? To you?"

"To Mrs. Annandale, sir."

"Oho! How was that?"

"It was after dinner, sir. I was in the dining-room. The second man was with me cleaning up. On the floor under the table he found a necklace. I took it in through the hall to the drawing-room. Mrs. Annandale was there with Mr. Annandale. When I was just at the door I heard him say, 'I'll kill Loftus.' I went in and gave him the necklace."

"But why?" Mr. Digby interrupted. "What was he going to kill him for? What was the motive?"

"Mr. Loftus had just gone, sir. He had been dining with us. He and several others."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, when I was in the hall I heard Mrs. Annandale say as how she wanted a divorce."

"Aha!" exclaimed Mr. Digby. "The plot thickens. Was she in love with Loftus?"

"She was that, sir. Anyone could see it."

"Then what?"

"Mr. Annandale went upstairs, came down again and went out."

"Did you attach any importance to his going upstairs?"

"He went to get his pistol, sir."

"Oho! He had a pistol, had he?"

"Yes, sir. A 32-calibre. I bought it for him myself."

"That is a very good story," said Mr. Digby, who was a judge.

CHAPTER VII

HELD WITHOUT BAIL

THE theories and clues in the now celebrated case Orr related to Sylvia one after another as they reached him through different channels. To the story of Marie Leroy she listened, her face averted, without a word. The footpad theory she dismissed. It was absurd. But the suicide theory impressed her. Even to her mind it was not logical. Loftus was too cavalier, too supremely indifferent, to make it plausible. On the other hand, it disposed of the whole matter. Moreover, as she put it to Orr, what is suicide but the sinful end of a sinful life? "Who knows," she asked, "what sudden remorse he may have experienced that last night when he was alone there in the park?"

"Suicide," Orr had replied, "is assassination driven in. It is the crisis of a pre-existing condition, a condition wholly pathological, one which remorse may complicate but which it cannot directly induce. There was nothing whatever the matter with Loftus. He may have been sinful, as you express it, but he was sound. Besides, the man had no more conscience than a tom cat."

Nevertheless Sylvia clung to the theory. She had no other. Hopelessly she hoped that time would verify it. But she suffered acutely. Orr's account of Fanny's attitude frightened her. What frightened her most was the tale that Harris told. The latter she learned from the press.

Meanwhile she had gone to Mrs. Loftus. The old lady had not recognized her, or, rather, had mistaken her for someone else. "My boy is away, Fanny," she said, her head shaking as she spoke. "He is away. I don't know where." She began to whimper.

Sylvia, too, had wept. It was pitiful. The proud, arrogant woman Fate had reduced to a cowering crone.

Meanwhile also Sylvia had tried to see Fanny. But at the hotel where Mrs. Price had been stopping she was informed that both were away. An address was given her to which she wrote. For a time no answer came. Finally from a different address Mrs. Price replied saying that Fanny was ill and asking that their whereabouts be a secret. In spite of the little threat Fanny was not anxious to be subpœnaed.

But that was much later, long after Harris had told the story which Mr. Digby declared to be very good.

This opinion, editorial and offhand though it was, was immediately and officially indorsed. For the story had a double merit. It supplied not merely a clue but a case. A very clear case, too. There was the antecedent threat, the opportunity, the instrument, everything even to the motive which was reasonable enough. The inevitable ensued. Annandale, arrested, was held without bail.

At the news of that Sylvia shuddered. Time touched her. Her eyes ringed themselves with sudden circles. The shuddering passed, but the rings remained. She became whiter, harder, more resolute, divining dimly that somewhere, somehow, there was a duty to be performed. What the duty was to be the press disclosed. Against Annandale was public opinion. There he was convicted instanter. At the injustice, or what seemed to her the injustice, of that she revolted.

But Orr, whom Annandale had immediately retained, dosed her with a platitude. "Public opinion be hanged," he said. "What is it but the stupidity of one multiplied by the stupidity of all. *Vox populi, vox* *stulti.* The majority is always cocksure and dead wrong."

In spite, though, of general stupidity there were people sufficiently indulgent to accord Annandale the benefit of extenuating circumstances. The reputation of Loftus, which left rather a little to be desired; the coupling of his name with that of Annandale's wife; the report that for his sake the latter had been preparing to leave her husband; the further report that for the convenience of both Marie Leroy had been shipped abroad; these things reduced the case in the minds of the indulgent to what the French call a *crime passionnel,* and which, as such, is psychologically and even legally defensible.

But French views are not our views. Besides, admitting their validity, that validity was impaired by the attitude which Annandale assumed. He omitted to admit, and thereby for the time being waived the right to plead, the circumstances advanced in his justification. When charged had he said, "Oh, yes, I did it, and so would you or any other man," there, don't you see, might have been an excuse. But not a bit of it. Up and down he denied that he was the culprit.

A denial such as that has, though, its merits. It puts on the prosecution the burden of proof. Moreover, if you have done anything you should not have it is only common sense to say that you have not done it, to say it in spite of facts, in spite of evidence, in spite of everything and everybody. For if you own up, there you are, while if you don't then no matter what is advanced you may succeed in raising a doubt and in planting it among the jury. But in this case the denial was more serviceable than ordinarily it might have been for the reason that thus far no one had been produced who could say they had been about while Annandale was at it.

These points Orr set before Sylvia. The sophistry of them displeased her. She did not like it, and said so.

"It will get him off, though," Orr confidently replied. "Unless," he hastened to add, "a witness to the act itself should pop up. Then, barring a miracle, he is a goner. But otherwise I will get him off. It may take a year or two, but I'll do it."

"I don't want you to get him off," Sylvia scornfully retorted. "I want him vindicated."

"You see, though," Orr with unruffleable calm continued, "if a witness should pop up, a witness, let us say, whom I cannot discredit, vindication will be difficult. It will be difficult to make twelve imbeciles in a pen believe that when Annandale shot Loftus——"

"He never shot him," Sylvia cried.

"My dear cousin," Orr with the same unruffleable calm pursued, "the beauty of your faith is wonderful. You must come to court and inject it among the jury. Faith that used to move mountains may yet move men. But I doubt it. I doubt that it could make them credit the incredible, the fact patent to me as it should be to you, that though Annandale shot Loftus he was, and for that matter still is, totally unconscious of it."

"He never shot him."

"My dear Sylvia, forgive me. He did. Though what I can say for him and, if needful, I shall say, is that he did not mean to. The intent is the essence of crime. There was no intent here. Of his own free will the man would not hurt a fly. But that night he was not a free agent. He was not even a conscious agent. Of all the cells of his brain but one was awake. In that cell was an incitement inciting him to kill. When the other cells awoke that one cell fell asleep. It has been dormant since then. Only through hypnosis could it awaken. In the interim he knew no more than a somnambulist what he was about. His condition, though, was not somnambulistic, it was a case of psychical epilepsy, a malady superinducible in certain natures by various poisons, of which anger is one and alcohol another."

Orr paused. He looked at his cousin. Incredulity, something else besides, was in her face. He affected not to notice it. "Now," he ran on, "go with a story like that to the average jury. Of course, if need be, I shall have experts, the very best experts, to substantiate it. But the prosecution will have other experts, experts who will be just as good, to deny the possibility of any such thing. In that event it will be only a pleasure to mix them up a bit and to show by their own testimony that they know no more than the law—I don't say allows but—pays them for. Do you mind if I smoke?"

They were seated in the sombre parlor in Irving Place. Meditatively Orr lit a cigarette. Meditatively Sylvia contemplated him.

"Would it not be better," she presently asked, "to show that Loftus committed suicide?"

"Yes, in the event that the pistol is found. It is rather late, though, for that."

Sylvia bent forward. "Melanchthon," she said, "I have heard you say—have I not—that everything is possible?"

"Indeed you have and you will hear me again."

"Then why not ask Miranda?"

Orr looked about for a *cendrier;* finding one he put his cigarette in it. "You mean the medium. Do you know, I would in a minute, were it not that it will be a long time, perhaps years, before she or any other spook could call Loftus up. When a man is snuffed out as abruptly as he was, he is so stunned and confused that it is quite a while before he can sufficiently collect his wits to reply to any communications from these latitudes. It is tedious that it should be so. The spirit world needs remodeling. But there you are. By the way, where are you to be this summer?"

Sylvia made a gesture. She did not know. It was then June. Fashion had fled. Fifth avenue was empty. The town was an oven. In that oven the girl would have preferred to remain. But at the preference her mother had rebelled. Against Newport Sylvia had rebelled also. She was in no mood for its gaiety. Finally a little place on Long Island suggested itself. Ultimately there they went.

It was in this place that Sylvia heard from Mrs. Price of Fanny's illness. Fanny had disappointed her exceedingly. That she could have so much as contemplated the step which she had in view seemed to Sylvia unspeakable. Her threat, too, in regard to testifying against her husband was in the circumstances but a flagrant avowal of love for the other man. Yet, for that love, how had she been punished! Perhaps now she repented of it. Perhaps now in her illness she needed someone to whom she could unburden her heart. At the thought of that Sylvia wrote at once to Mrs. Price asking might she not come to her. But to this Mrs. Price replied that Fanny after an attack of nervous prostration was now down with typhoid, though with every prospect and assurance of recovery. When she was up again, then, if Sylvia would come, it would, Mrs. Price added, be nice of her.

There is a saying trite yet true that we should hasten to cherish those whom we love lest they leave us forever before we have loved them enough. There is another saying less true and more trite that of those that do leave only good should be said. To Sylvia presently these sayings recurred. Two days after the receipt of the letter from Mrs. Price she read in the papers that Fanny was dead.

The paper fell from her. For an hour, which passed as only such hours do pass, incomprehensibly, without consciousness of time, she sat, still and stricken.

Through raveled skeins of thought of which the tangled threads refused to wholly straighten, she blamed herself for all that had occurred. Not indeed for Loftus. The man, his life, his death, everything concerning him was abhorrent to her. Of him, other than that pity which can mingle with disgust, she had no concern whatever. But when she should have stood most steadfastly by Annandale she had turned from him. Had he not implored her forgiveness, and did she not know that all that God requires is that forgiveness be asked? But no. She had been too proud and that pride she had nursed until it was too late, until Annandale had married, with this double tragedy for climax.

It was all her fault, Sylvia told herself. All her own. Had she not abandoned Annandale he would have had no cause to threaten, Fanny would have lived, there would have been no shock to debilitate her and leave her a prey to disease. Fanny's death was at her door.

Companioned by these thoughts for an hour she sat, still and stricken. When she aroused herself it seemed as though before her two figures stood. One said "I am Duty," the other, "I am Grief."

A message from the latter she imparted to Mrs. Price. Many messages not similar but cognate that lady received. Fanny had been very popular. Her popularity the rumor connecting her with Loftus had necessarily impaired. The arrest of her husband for shooting the man, and for shooting him, as it was generally understood, on her account, impaired it still more. In the upper circles the scandalous may be relished, but it is not indorsed. Had Fanny lived, those circles would have visited their displeasure in not visiting her at all. But death is a peacemaker. It comes and where there was war is a truce. By the worldly Fanny was immediately forgiven and by them as quickly forgot.

It was in July that she died. In September Sylvia returned to town. At once she asked Orr to arrange for her a visit to Annandale in the Tombs.

To that he objected. "You know," he said, "that you will have to testify against him."

"Against him!" Sylvia repeated with an air of utter surprise.

"Why, yes. He was here that night. He has admitted it. You will be asked to tell what he said."

In Sylvia's eyes both disdain and acquiescence surged. "And what of it?"

"But," Orr exclaimed, "there is the threat. He made it in the presence of Harris and repeated it in yours."

"He did nothing of the kind."

"But you told me so."

"You are mistaken. I know nothing of any threat whatever."

"Oh," said Orr with a bow, "this is magnificent."

But he meant heroic. In view of the girl's nature it was certainly that. What is more, it was helpful. With Fanny out of the way, the only one left that could testify to any threat was Harris, and Annandale's word was quite as good as his, better even, for the value of the servant's testimony would be weighed in scales in one of which would be the *Chronicle's* dollars.

Orr said as much to Sylvia, but apparently his views did not seem to her very novel. It became obvious to him that she had thought it all out for herself.

"Besides," she presently and irrelevantly continued, "I am to blame. If I had not been stupid with him, there would have been nothing to threaten about."

That, Orr thought, was rather putting the dots on the i's. But he did not mind. He was pleased with her. His respect for her had increased. Had she been the kind of a cousin to permit such a thing there and then he would have kissed her.

Yet some reward he felt was her due. As a result the interview which she asked he presently arranged. Under conditions which to her were as tragic as they were humiliating she saw Annandale in the visitors' room at the Tombs. The room itself was not absolutely appalling, and though there was a keeper present, he was quite out of earshot, very oblivious, extremely civil and, parenthetically, handsomely paid.

Orr awaited her at the door. When she rejoined him her eyes were wet.

Orr looked at her. A little tune occurred to him. "Sylvia, Sylvia, I'm a-thinking—" But after all, he reflected, Fanny is dead.

Instantly the girl reddened and very distantly, her head in the air, announced, "We are betrothed."

"Ah," said Orr, "ah, indeed! The engagement will be rather long, I fear."

"Oh, Melanchthon, don't say that. Arthur is as innocent as you are. I know you don't believe it, but——"

Orr interrupted her. "It is not a question of what I believe. Independent of your interest in the man he is my client. I owe him a duty. That duty is to get him off, or to do my best to."

"I know you will," Sylvia fervently replied; "I feel it. So does Arthur. Besides, the only one we have to fear is Harris."

Orr smiled grimly. "Harris, I understand, is not very well."

"Not well? What do you mean?" the girl wonderingly inquired.

"I mean," he enigmatically answered, "that next week when I have him on the stand I propose to give him a little medicine."

Then he smiled again, grimly as before, with an air of personal satisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEFENDANT TO THE BAR

"HATS off!"

Through the great white room the cry vibrated, followed instantly by another:

"Hear ye, hear ye, all ye having business with the Court of the General Sessions of the City and County of New York, draw near, give attention and ye shall be heard."

Within the Bar, restless as hyenas awaiting their prey, roamed the district attorneys. Against that Bar, crouching there, were Orr and his associate counsel, restless too, but prepared to spring. To the rear were reporters, the flower of newspaperdom, handsome young men dressed to the ears in resplendent collars and astounding cravats. Back of them were the spectators, a solid mass, ladies of every degree except the high one and, with or without them, men whom you would recognize as first-nighters, others whom you would not recognize at all. To the right of the Bar were witnesses for the prosecution, experts in various matters of which gastronomy evidently was one. To the left was the jury, and above, beneath the amber panoply of the Bench, the Recorder sat, an ascetic Solon.

The atmosphere of the room, high ceiled, close packed, was Senegambian. Without you could see, within you could feel, the heat and eagerness of the autumnal sun.

"Arthur Annandale to the Bar!"

Into the court, as though it were a theatre, the defendant strolled, perfectly groomed, the Tombs pallor on his face but none of its dust on his coat, an air of tranquil boredom about him. At his heels was a keeper. He shook hands with Orr, sat down beside him, turned and gave his hat to the keeper, turned again and looked over to a gated inclosure at the right of the Bench where, in a sort of proscenium box, Sylvia sat with her mother.

The entire settings were those of a play. With this difference, it was real, a drama of mud and blood without orchestral accompaniment. After months of preparation, after days of talesmen baiting, on this Indian Summer forenoon the curtain was rising. The jury it had been a job to get. A full hundred were examined, cross-questioned, challenged and rejected before the dozen were boxed. When the last, the twelfth, a cadaverous individual, was accepted the stage was set.

"May it please the Court; Mr. Foreman and gentlemen of the jury."

With three bows and these rituals, Peacock opened for the State, outlining the case of the People, describing the crime, detailing the motive, summarizing the evidence, expressing the wish that the jury would believe the defendant innocent until his guilt had been proved, but declaring that, personally, for his own part, of that guilt he was thoroughly convinced.

Before he had finished Orr was at him. "I object to the District Attorney prejudicing the jury against this gentleman, my client."

That gentleman did not appear to heed. From Sylvia and her mother he had turned to look at the spectators, from them to fabulous beasts that climbed the fluted columns on the walls.

The objection was not sustained.

"And I object to Your Honor's ruling," Orr with a bulldog look threw up at the Bench.

Peacock proceeded. "There, gentlemen, is the crime, there too, the motive. To finish the picture evidence will be adduced."

He sat down. Then getting up, he called the first witness for the People, the Gramercy Park caretaker, who had found the body. The witness was succeeded by others, by the policeman on the beat, by the coroner's physician, by experts and servants.

By turn Orr took them in hand. With some he was curiously perfunctory. Of the caretaker, a meagre old man, with shifty eyes, who appeared very uncomfortable, he asked but four questions.

"When you found the body what did you do?"

"Ran and got the policeman, sir."

"Where did you get him?"

"On Lexington avenue and Twenty-third street, sir."

"Did you find him at once?"

"No, sir, I had to hunt a bit."

"Between the time you found the body and the time you got back how many minutes would you say had elapsed?"

"About ten or fifteen minutes, sir."

"That's all," said Orr.

It was not much. Yet with the policeman, a fat man with a red face and a blue nose, he was even briefer.

"When you reached the park with the last witness, how did you get in?"

"Walked in, sir," the man answered with a grin.

"The gate was open was it?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do," said Orr.

It was not much either. But with other witnesses, notably with the experts, he fought, he fought with them, fought with Peacock, fought with the Court, would have fought with more had there been more to fight, fought pertinaciously, step by step, reducing testimony to nothing.

Meanwhile the court-room shimmered with silks. Wanderers from Fifth avenue who never in their lives had been in the General Sessions before begged and badgered their way there. It is great fun to see a man tried for his life. But when you have known him, when in addition elements supersensational blend like a halo about him, what more could be decently asked? Yet one thing disappointed. It was regrettable that the prisoner was not in chains, that he could sit there and yawn with every appearance of being at a matinee, a keeper for lackey behind him.

Otherwise the fun, if not fast, was furious. Peacock would ask a question, the lips of a witness would part but before more than a fraction of a syllable could issue Orr would hold him up, hold up the prosecution, hold up the Court. Generally he was overruled. But no overruling abashed him. He arose from opposition refreshing. There were times when Sylvia thought him bowed to the earth, utterly routed, hushed for good. But not a bit of it. At the moment when his ammunition seemed exhausted and his defeat assured, from an arsenal of books before him he pulled weapons wherewith not merely to renew the fight but to win.

In the course of one objection he was commanded by the Bench to sit down. He protested. The Recorder declined to listen to him further, reiterating the order that he be seated. Then with the air and manner of a little boy sent for misbehavior from the room, Orr half turned, hesitated, turned back, and through the exercise of guile unique and his own, succeeded in re-engaging the Court in conversation, protesting his respect, denying his contumacy and presently he was continuing the very objection because of which he had been told to sit down. He did sit down, but long after, when he was ready, when he had succeeded in having his say and his way. Then when at last he did sit down it was with an air of mastery that would have become Napoleon at Marengo. At the moment he was not a lawyer merely, he was an actor, quasi-Shakespearian, a compound of irony and good humor, Falstaff and Mercutio in one.

All this, however, was, to vary the metaphor, but the preliminary canter. That Loftus had been killed was shown and admitted. But it had not been shown nor was it admitted that the defendant was the man. This defect a star witness was to repair. The star was Harris.

Yet, though a star, he looked ghastly. Whether ill or not, he was at least ill at ease. The smug, household-servant air had gone. He seemed to have come from turmoils in Tatterdemalia. He was bruised, dirty, unshorn. But the story which he had brought to the *Chronicle* he repeated, with embellishments at that. After retailing the tale, precising the motive and elaborating on it, he declared that the love of the defendant's wife for Loftus was common talk—evidence which, though hearsay, Orr indifferently let pass.

Then, after identifying a pistol as the property of Annandale—an exhibit marked A which Peacock had already tried but, held up by Orr, had not wholly succeeded in fitting to the crime—Harris swore that on the night of the murder, at five minutes after twelve, in the room which he occupied at the top of Annandale's house and which overlooked Gramercy Park, he heard a shot; that going to the window he looked out, that he could distinguish nothing, but that going then to the hall he heard someone coming in the house and looking down saw the defendant enter.

"Ha!" said Orr, taking him in hand, or rather, by the throat. For he made no attempt at ordinary amenities. He questioned him ferociously, with an air of personal hatred, with an air of saying, "Damn you, I have got it in for you now."

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Richard Harris, sir."

Orr pounded on the table in front of him. "Your name! Your name! I want your name, not something that you have made up like the rest of your rubbish. How many times have you been in jail? You were once employed in Hill street, Berkeley Square, by the Duchess of Kincardine. When you absconded from there, where was it that the police caught you? Answer me."

From behind the rail objections exploded like shell. But through the running fire of them Orr held his own, sandbagging the man with one charge after another, charge of theft, charge of forgery, but particularly of boasting the week before, in a Sixth avenue saloon where grooms and footmen congregate, that he could testify to anything that he was paid for.

From ghastly Harris turned vermilion. The flush retreating left him livid. Had the fluted columns with their fabulous beasts fallen on him he could not have been more limp. At one question he swayed like an animal hit on the head. At another he hissed like a snake. There were times when he tried to hide from view. It was a curious example of the biter bit.

"That's all," said Orr with tigerish cheerfulness at last.

He had done him. He had given him the medicine. He had more in reserve. Peacock meanwhile had once jumped at Orr, his fist raised. Once he gave him the lie direct. Once he accused him of suborning. But Orr in sandbagging the witness with one hand, had another free for the prosecution. He was gluttonish, giving as good as was sent, very often better.

The Recorder, dismayed at the slugging, protested. "A human being is on trial for his life. I cannot try a case where only counsel are heard."

Immediately Orr supplied him with a diversion. One after another witness for the defense scaled the stand, sleuths from over seas, experts and servants.

In his corner before them Orr prowled. At the witnesses for the prosecution he had roared, sometimes he had bounded at the Bar, sometimes when a move of his succeeded he raised his right hand and looked at it as though surprised that it was not blood red. But now with his own witnesses he was serene, entirely calm, refreshingly civil.

That civility awoke in Peacock the hyena. The first witness Orr produced, a man who, as it afterward appeared, had had a rough and tumble with Harris that morning in the corridor, he partly devoured. What was left of him he sent to the Tombs. As fast as witnesses could be produced he ate them up. It was terrific. You could not help feeling that there are safer places than the witness stand in a murder trial, that you ran the risk of being killed yourself, talked to death if nothing worse.

"Don't go at him like a common scold," Orr engagingly pleaded at one stage of the game. "Why browbeat and bully a witness as you do?" he expostulated at another. "That's all, my friend," he said to one witness, "and let me apologize for the District Attorney's remarks." From his tone and manner never in the world would you have thought him the man who, but a little before, had so thoroughly sandbagged Harris.

Meanwhile questions coarse as oaths, answers frank as sword thrusts, clashed and resounded. One and all Orr's charges were substantiated. The testimony was damning to Harris, infecting everything he had said. From behind the rail Peacock volleyed and thundered. But truth when you get at it is a stubborn thing. So far as Harris was concerned there it stood and there too, during the production of it, Orr stood, quite like an Angora lapping milk. You could hear him purr. The eyes of Sylvia glistened like mica. Now and again Annandale laughed outright.

It is always insufficient to be innocent of a given charge. You must appear so. Annandale did not. Alternately he was bored and buoyant. But not dejected, never depressed. He did not seem to feel that his life was at stake. That is the attitude of the habitual ruffian. But sentiment was veering. Public opinion is a wave that thinks, thinks again, changes its mind, volatile as a woman. At the opening everybody knew that Annandale was guilty. Now nobody was quite so sure.

The Recorder caressed his beard. "I think," he announced, "that I will give the jury a recess."

CHAPTER IX

THE TWELFTH JUROR

TUMULTUOUSLY the session was resumed. At the door was a riot. There a squad of police fought back surging nondescripts clamoring for admission, fighting for entrance to the continuous show. A woman fainted. Another had her gown torn off. One man retired with a blackened eye.

During the recess Orr got for a moment with Sylvia and Mrs. Waldron. "Aren't you hungry?" he asked.

Sylvia took his hand and pressed it. In her eyes was victory, in her face delight. "I never knew before how Protean you are. You have won."

Orr tossed his head. "Not by a long shot. Besides, there is the jury. Eleven look imbecile and the twelfth looks ill. There is no telling at all what they will do or will not. But aren't you to eat anything?" He turned to Mrs. Waldron. "Aren't you hungry?"

"Very," said the lady, "but I can't do a thing with Sylvia. I——"

She would have said more, but the jury had filed in. The judge was entering, preceded by the cry "Hats off!"

Orr slipped back to his corner, to which Annandale, with his matinee air and the keeper for usher, had already returned. For a moment Orr bent to him, then to his associates but briefly. Bending again to Annandale he told him to take the stand.

The move, wholly unexpected, unusual, almost exceptional in murder cases, created an impression that was excellent, a sense of admiration for the fearlessness of the defense. From the prosecution came low growls of content. They were to be fed at last. In anticipation they licked their chops.

But the excellence of the impression dwindled. In the direct, Annandale denied, of course, that he had committed the murder, denied that he had ever contemplated it, swearing that to the best of his recollection he had made no threat at all.

"To the best of your recollection," Orr repeated after him. "Now please tell me, had anything occurred that night to impair your memory in any way?"

"Well—er—yes. Yes. I had been drinking."

"Had you any animosity toward the deceased?"

"Toward Loftus? None whatever. On the contrary, he was my best friend."

Peacock jumped. "I ask that that be stricken out."

Quietly Orr continued: "Had you known Loftus long?"

"All my life."

"Was he a friend of yours?"

"An intimate friend."

Orr turned to Peacock. "Your witness."

Peacock jumped again. "You say that on the night of the murder you had been drinking. Were you drunk?"

Paternally the Recorder looked over and down. "The witness need not answer that unless——"

Annandale interrupted him. "I am much obliged to Your Honor, but really I have nothing to conceal. I was drunk, deplorably so."

"Habit of yours, is it?" Peacock snapped.

Annandale took a monocle from a pocket, screwed it in his eye, looked through it at Peacock, smiled at him, with an air of fathomless good fellowship, answered: "Dear me, no. Is it one of yours?"

"Oho!" cried Peacock, pocketing the insult but pouncing at the point, "you were drunk on this occasion only. Got drunk for it, did you?"

"No," Annandale blandly and confidentially replied. "You see, don't you know, it was the day of the panic. I had dropped a good lot of money—a good lot, I mean, for me—and, as the saying is, I tried to drown my sorrows."

"But you found that they could swim, didn't you? Now, tell me, among these sorrows was not the greatest the one to which your former butler has testified, your late wife's desire for a divorce in order that she might marry Loftus? Is it not a fact that she told you so, and that you then said, 'I'll kill him, I'll kill Royal Loftus like the dog that he is' ?"

"I recall no such conversation."

"What, then, was the nature of the conversation that passed between you and your wife on this particular evening?"

"I don't remember."

"The conversation and the threat to which your butler has sworn may therefore have occurred without your now recalling it. Is that not so?"

"Everything is possible, you know," Annandale anwered with a phrase unconsciously borrowed of Orr. "But I doubt it very much for the reason——"

"Here," interrupted Peacock. "I don't want your doubts or your reasons or your haha airs. I want answers from you, direct answers. Where did you go and what did you do after your threat?"

To this Orr objected. A wrangle ensued. Orr was sustained. Peacock reconstructed his question. Annandale answered that he had gone to Miss Waldron's, but that he remembered nothing else.

"Is this yours?" Peacock suddenly asked, producing the pistol marked exhibit A.

"Probably," said Annandale, looking, not at it, but at the ceiling.

"That's all."

Annandale got from the stand. Others succeeded him there, experts for the defense, men who recited their qualities and degrees as though they were eating truffles to the sound of trumpets. One after another they testified that liquor can ablate memory partially, wholly; can ablate it regarding events antecedent and subsequent to a rememorated point between; can, moreover, leave the subject in a condition apparently normal yet actually in a state of trance.

"Do you really regard these people as experts?" Peacock with pitying contempt asked of Orr. Then at once in rebuttal were other experts, equally pleased with themselves, humorously disposing of psychical epilepsy, affecting to regard it as a medicolegal myth. Among the spectators the usual jest circulated. The mendacious were subdivided into liars, damned liars, expert witnesses. Yet there you were. But not Orr. Tortuously he involved the deponents in helpful contradictions, smiling at them, at Peacock and the jury, smiling with an air of saying "You see what confounded idiots these imbeciles are."

But the session was closing. One more witness remained to be called.

"Miss Waldron, will you take the stand?"

With the charming manner of the thoroughbred New York girl Sylvia circled the room. It was refreshing to see her, refreshing to hear the way in which she corroborated what Annandale had said.

"But," objected Peacock, "you had just gone from his house; what did he go to yours for?"

"To restore a string of pearls."

"Did he repeat to you anything that he had said to his wife?"

"Had he attempted to I should have refused to listen."

"Was he drunk?"

"I cannot say. I have never seen anyone in that condition."

"Did he make any threats regarding Loftus?"

"A gentleman does not make threats."

"Miss Waldron, I will thank you to answer me directly. Did he or did he not?"

"He did not."

"You swear to that?"

"I do."

It was perjury, of course. Yet if a girl may not perjure herself like a lady for the man she loves things have come to a pretty pass. That idea apparently struck Peacock.

"Prior to the defendant's marriage you were engaged to him, were you not?"

"I was."

"Are you engaged to him now?"

Very prettily and gracefully, without embarrassment, rather with pride, Sylvia answered: "I am."

"That's all," said Peacock. "The State rests." But as he said it he looked at the jury and sighed, sighed audibly, much as were he adding, "You may judge the value of her testimony from that."

The resting, however, was but figurative. In a moment the summing up began, a summing which, at first passionless as algebra, dealt with technical points.

"Gentlemen," said Peacock turning again to the jury, "the evidence in this case is of the kind known to you perhaps as circumstantial. Evidence of this nature can lead and often does lead to a conclusion more satisfactory than direct evidence can produce. Circumstances cannot lie any more than facts can. Unless we resort to them it is in vain that we attempt to detect and to punish crime. Crime shuns the light of day. It seeks darkness. It courts secrecy. The assassin moves stealthily. He calls no witness to see him shoot his victim down. If you wait for an eye-witness you grant impunity to crime. It is true, and probably you will be so told by counsel for the defense, that there are cases in which the innocent have been convicted. Yet if men have been erroneously convicted on circumstantial evidence, so have they been convicted on direct testimony also. That is not, though, a reason for declining to accept such testimony. The possibility of error exists alike. But because men may err do they refuse to act? Because wheat may be blighted does the farmer refuse to sow? No, gentlemen. Until we have means of knowledge beyond our present faculties we must accept this kind of evidence or grant practical immunity to crime."

The exordium concluded, Peacock warmed to his work. What he said he seemed to literally tear from his mouth. It was an arraignment not delivered but hurled, headlong, with the force and rush of a cavalry charge. Before it Orr's points sank overwhelmed. To replace them with others of his own Peacock made new ones, evolving them with a fire and lucidity that was pyrotechnic. They were like bombs exploding before the jury's eyes. He arraigned the defendant, arraigned the defense, stampeded their tactics, denounced Annandale's manner, which he declared to be that of a hardened criminal, and pictured him as a jealous husband who, in accordance with a plot long premeditated, had first lured his victim to his house, then following him thence had murdered him in the darkness, but who now swore that he was drunk and remembered nothing. "Assuming that he was drunk," Peacock shouted, "his intoxication was a feigned disguise, assumed for the purpose and legally an aggravation of his dastard crime."

Beneath, in the unlovely street, an organ was tossing a jig. The jolts of it mounted to the court, fusing with Peacock's voice, adding their vulgarity to his own, and it was to the wretchedness of them that he said at last: "My duty is done."

He had scored points by the dozen. In as many seconds Orr had their heads off by half.

"Harris, gentlemen, is the rock of the People's case. His hand fashioned it. Without him it crumbles. Let me array for you Harris against Harris."

Leisurely Orr began, showing the man's hand for what it was, not dirty and disreputable merely, but discredited.

"Apart from that hand where is the promised evidence? Where is it? Where is that evidence? Gentlemen, not a bit of evidence have you had, not a molecule, not a minim, not a mite. At best or at worst any evidence producible against this defendant would be circumstantial. In telling you the value of such testimony the District Attorney has been good enough to leave it to me to explain that testimony of this character must, to be conclusive, exclude every other reasonable hypothesis. The District Attorney has further told you that circumstances cannot lie. Of all his statements that one and that one alone is correct. Circumstances cannot lie. But witnesses can. It is from them that circumstances are obtained. And though they furnish a million circumstances, what are these circumstances worth if they themselves are unsound? How unsound that reptile Harris is, you have, I believe, been enabled to judge. But even otherwise, even though the testimony of that saurian seem to you probable, I may remind you that the most probable things often prove false, for the reason that if they were exempt from falsity they would cease to be probable; they would be certain.

"Now what certainty has the District Attorney brought you? Instead of excluding every other reasonable hypothesis, he has opened the door to a dozen hypotheses infinitely more reasonable than his own. Except that the obligatory instrument does not appear to have been found, he has adduced nothing to show that the deceased did not commit suicide. He has adduced nothing to show that he was not robbed. The caretaker has testified that he was away from the park ten or fifteen minutes. The policeman who returned with him has testified that when he got there the gate was open. In the interim anyone may have entered, gone through the suicide, bagged his pistol for further booty and away.

"No, the District Attorney has not excluded these hypotheses, he has confined himself to picturing this defendant as a husband jealous of the deceased. But assuming that he was, how many other husbands may not have been jealous of him also? The bullet in evidence, the bullet extracted from the brain of the deceased, is one which, from a calculation of its lands and grooves, may or may not have come from a thirty-two calibre pistol. Anyway a thirty-two calibre pistol is among the exhibits. But how many more such pistols are there in this great city? The ownership of one is not a proof of crime. Nor is the fact that the body of the deceased was found in front of this defendant's residence proof either. On the contrary. The park wherein it lay is a parallelogram, and a body in it would be practically in front of every other house in the square. How many jealous husbands reside in these houses I am not competent to say, but I am competent to tell you that the prosecution might just as well have arraigned any other resident there as this defendant; yes, and better, were it not for Harris."

Orr paused. "Reptile," he cried. "Knave, fraud, thief, liar——"

But the Court admonished him that his time was up. Without a murmur, in the middle of a sentence, he sat down. It was another point that he had scored.

"Gentlemen——"

The Recorder's charge to the jury followed, a charge clear, undeclamatory, without literature or bias, in which they were instructed regarding the law and left to determine the facts.

The jury filed out. The Recorder evaporated. Annandale sauntered away. Into adjacent corridors the great room emptied itself.

Orr, stationing associates on guard, went over to Sylvia, urging her to go.

But Sylvia refused at first to budge. The jury, she declared, would be back in five minutes.

"It may be five hours," said Orr. "You had far better go home. No? Well then I will take you to my offices and have something brought in."

"Is it far?" Sylvia warily asked. But presently she assented, stipulating however that Annandale should be brought there the moment he was freed.

Orr tossed his head. "That may not be for years, until after an appeal. I have not an idea what the jury will do. But I know one thing: the last of the lot, the twelfth, looked at me during my summing up with something that was a cross between a sneer and a scowl."

"Yes," Mrs. Waldron interjected, "I noticed him. But it seemed to me that he was not listening. It seemed to me that he was in pain. But do, Sylvia, let us go. It is cruel of you. I am starving."

In Orr's neighborly offices shortly the lady was fed. Sylvia too ate something. Orr himself would have bolted a bite, but he had to hurry away, though promising as he did so everything that Sylvia asked, promising to stand on his head if she wished it.

Once back in the court he found it still empty. In the corridors reporters and idlers lounged, speculating on the verdict, prophesying that the deliberations of the jury would be brief. But time limped. An hour passed, two hours, three. Enervated and empty Orr went down and out to a little restaurant across the street. Presently it was reported that the jury were coming in. Orr hurried back, but however he hurried, he was late. The court had refilled. As he entered he heard someone say:

"Not guilty."

Abruptly the room hummed like a wasps' nest. There were raps for order, commands for silence, threatened punishments for contempt.

The hubbub subsided, the Recorder thanked and dismissed the jury. He turned to Peacock. "Are there any further charges against the prisoner?"

"There are none, Your Honor."

The Recorder nodded at Annandale. "You are discharged."

Orr tried to get at him. But at that moment the crowd interfered. In making a circuit to reach Annandale, he found himself among the departing jury. They had all left the box, all save the twelfth, who apparently had stumbled.

About them reporters circled. The foreman was relating that they had been practically unanimous for conviction, but that one of them, the twelfth, had insisted so obstinately on the poverty of the evidence that with him finally they had voted to acquit.

"But where is he?" the foreman interrupted himself to ask. "Where is the twelfth juror? Where is Durand?"

Then only was it seen that he was still in the box, crouching there, his face ashen where it was not violet, a hand held to his side.

In a moment he was surrounded. To those nearest he looked and gasped.

"Give him some brandy," a reporter suggested. But now into the little group Peacock had forced his way. Orr edged nearer.

The juror gasped again. "I am dying," he groaned. "It is my heart. Send for a priest. I killed him. I am the man."

Skeptically Peacock sniffed. "You killed whom?"

"He is delirious," the reporter exclaimed.

"I killed him," Durand repeated.

"But whom? And why?" Peacock, bending a bit, impressed in spite of himself, inquired.

Slowly, laboriously, painfully at that, Durand from a pocket drew a picture.

"Curse him," he muttered. "There he is. He disgraced my *perle*, my daughter Marie, but she wrote me where to find him and I did; I found him in the park and I shot him there, through the head, through the h-head," he stammered and clutched at his heart.

From his hand the picture had slipped. Orr edged closer, stooped for it, recovered it, then in heightening wonder stared. The picture was a colored photograph that displayed the chiseled features, wonderful eyes and thin black mustache of one whom he had known. Above it was written "Marie's Husband."

"It is Loftus," he exclaimed.

Peacock wheeled. "Loftus," he cried. Instantly to question further, he turned to the juror again.

But even as he turned he saw that the trial was over. Spasmodically the man's mouth had twitched, his head had fallen; before a higher court he had gone.

Peacock, the marvel of it upon him, turned anew to Orr. Foes while the battle was raging, the two men now were like the commandants of opposing forces who, the conflict ended, meet and embrace.

Peacock rubbed his eyes. "What this confession means, Orr, you as well as I appreciate." Instinctively his voice had sunk into that undertone which Death, when it comes, exacts. "Yes," he continued, "Annandale is not merely acquitted, he is cleared. For that, believe me, I am glad. As for Loftus, he got from that dead father only what he deserved."

To this Orr, about whom the marvel of it all still also clung, assented. "Justice," he replied, "is rarely human, but sometimes it is divine."

He would have said more perhaps, but Annandale was approaching. Obviously the latter was as yet wholly unaware of this new climax to his case. He was looking doubtfully around.

"I can't find my hat," he announced. Then at once, detecting the unusual in the attitude of those that stood about, his eyes followed theirs to the box from which court officers, long trained to the lugubrious, swiftly and silently were removing the corpse.

A keeper appeared. In his hand was the hat. Annandale took it, his eyes still following the body that was being removed.

"There," said Orr abruptly, "there is the man that killed Loftus. But come," he added. "Sylvia is waiting. Good-bye, Peacock. We have both had a lesson in presumptive proof."

Astonishment lifted Annandale visibly like a flash. "What!" he exclaimed. "What! What's all this?"

Then Orr, a hand on his arm, led him away, and as they passed from the General Sessions, told him what had occurred.

CHAPTER X

THE VERDICT

IN the days of the Doges there was a Gold Book in which the First Families of Venice shone. In New York there is also a Gold Book, unprinted but otherwise familiar. The names that appear there have earned the cataloguing not from medieval prowess, but from money's more modish might.

At the Metropolitan Opera House, two years and a fraction after the trial, the Gold Bookers were on view—men who could have married the Adriatic, dowered her too, whose signatures were potenter than kings. There also were women fairer than the young empresses of old Rome, maidens in thousand-dollar frocks, matrons coroneted and tiaraed. On the grand tier they sat, a family-party air about them, nodding to each other, exhaling orris, talking animatedly about nothing at all. Into their boxes young men strolled, lolled awhile, sauntered away.

In one of these boxes was Sylvia, looking like an angel, only, of course, much better dressed. Behind her was Annandale. They were quite an old couple. They had been married fully a year. In the box with them was Orr.

On the stage a festival was in progress, a festival for ear and eye, the apogee of Italian art, a production of "Aïda." A quarter of a century and more ago when that opera was first given in Cairo, there was an accompanying splendor more lavish than it, or any other opera, has had since. But it was difficult to fancy that even then there was a better cast. Before the tenor had completed the opening romanza he had enthralled the house. Good-looking, as tenors should be, stout as tenors are, he suggested Mario resurrected and returned.

"Celeste Aïda!" he sang, and it was celestial. Then at once Amneris, enacted by a debutante, appeared and the house was treated to what it had not had since Scalchi was in her prime, a voice with a conservatory in the upper register, a cavern in the lower and, strewn between, rich loops of light, of opals, flowers, kisses and stars.

Princess she was and looked, yet, despite the glory of her raiment, rather a princess in a drawing-room than the daughter of a Pharaoh in a Memphian crypt. She seemed pleased, sure of her charm, and she pleased and charmed at sight. The house, the most apathetic —save Covent Garden—in the world, and, musically, the most ignorant as well, rose to her.

Sylvia turned to Orr. In his gloved hand was a program. "What a dear!" she murmured. "Who is she?"

Orr, before answering, looked at Annandale. The latter's eyes were on the roof. He may have been drinking the song, unconscious of the singer. But it is more probable that his thoughts were elsewhere, though hardly in the Tombs, where, during his relatively brief sojourn, he had lived at the relatively reasonable rate of a hundred dollars a day.

"A debutante," Orr answered. "She is billed as Dellarandi."

The curtain fell. The box was invaded. Men indebted to Mrs. Annandale for dinner, or who hoped to be, dropped in. Orr got up and went out.

The second act began. There was an alternating chorus. During it Amneris sat mirroring her beauty in a glass. Presently her voice mounted, mounting as mounts a bird and higher. She was joining in the incomparable duo that ensues. It passed. A march, blown from Egyptian trumpets, followed, preluding the dance of priestesses which precedes the tenor's return. As that progressed the leader of the orchestra shook like an epileptic. From his own musicians, from those on the stage, from chorus and singers, he drew wave after wave of melody, a full sea of transcendent accords that bathed Sylvia with harmony, filtered through her, penetrating blissfully from fingertips to spine.

Delightedly she turned to Annandale. The visitors had gone. Orr was entering. In his bulldog face was an expression vatic and amused.

"Yes," he resumed, seating himself at Sylvia's side, "she is billed as Dellarandi, but I knew her as Marie Leroy."

Sylvia started, her lips half parted, her eyes dilated with surprise.

Annandale bent forward. "What is it?" he asked.

"Amneris, the contralto. Do you know who she is?"

"I know she is a devilish pretty woman. What about her?"

"She is the girl whose father was the twelfth juror in your case."

Annandale, who had been standing, literally dropped with astonishment in a chair. But Sylvia was insatiable. She could not ask enough, she could not get the answers quickly enough in reply. Orr, however, knew very little, odds and ends merely that he gathered in the lobby, summarily that the girl had married Tambourini, the music teacher, and was regarded as destined to be one of the great queens of song.

So interested were all three that the third act was barely noticed. It took the melting beauty of the final duo to distract them from the debutante. But the witchery of that aria would distract a moribund. It was with the bewildering loveliness of it in their ears that they moved out from the box.

"Terra addio!" Orr repeated from it as they descended the stair.

"No, not addio," said Sylvia; "that poor girl may have said farewell to many hopes, but there are other and better ones for her now. I feel that she must have suffered terribly, and because of that suffering we should acquit her of what she did."

"That is the verdict, is it?" said Orr.

"That is my verdict," Sylvia answered. Then touching Annandale's arm she looked up at him and added, "It is yours, too, dear, is it not?"

THE END.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The publishers beg leave to state that The Perfume of Eros, in serial form, was entitled The Yellow Fay.

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MR. INCOUL'S
MISADVENTURE

WORKS OF EDGAR SALTUS

MR. INCOUL'S MISADVENTURE

> And thine eye shall not pity
> Deuteronomy xix : 21

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To
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I.

MR. INCOUL

CHAPTER I.

MR. INCOUL.

WHEN Harmon Incoul's wife died, the world in which he lived said that he would not marry again. The bereavement which he had suffered was known to be bitter, and it was reported that he might betake himself to some foreign land. There was, for that matter, nothing to keep him at home. He was childless, his tastes were too simple to make it necessary for him to reside as he had, hitherto, in New York, and, moreover, he was a man whose wealth was proverbial. Had he so chosen, he had little else to do than to purchase a ticket and journey wheresoever he listed, and the knowledge of this ability may have been to him not without its consolations. Yet, if he attempted to map some plan, and think which spot he would prefer, he probably reflected that whatever place he might choose, he would, in the end, be not unlike the invalid who turns over in his bed, and then turns back again on finding the second position no better than the first. However fair another sky might be, it would not make his sorrow less acute.

He was then one of those men whose age is difficult to determine. He had married when quite young, and at the time of his widowerhood he must have been nearly forty, but years had treated him kindly. His hair, it is true, was inclined to scantiness, and his skin was etiolated, but he was not stout, his teeth were sound, he held himself well, and his eyes had not lost their lustre. At a distance, one might have thought him in the thirties, but in conversation his speech was so measured, and about his lips there was a compression such that the ordinary observer fancied him older than he really was.

His position was unexceptionable. He had inherited a mile of real estate in a populous part of New York, together with an accumulation of securities sufficient for the pay and maintenance of a small army. The foundations of this wealth had been laid by an ancestor, materially increased by his grandfather, and consolidated by his father, who had married a Miss Van Tromp, the ultimate descendant of the Dutch admiral.

His boyhood had not been happy. His father had been a lean, taciturn, unlovable man, rigid in principles, stern in manner, and unyielding in his adherence to the narrowest tenets of Presbyterianism. His mother had died while he was yet in the nursery, and, in the absence of any softening influence, the angles of his earliest nature were left in the rough.

At school, he manifested a vindictiveness of disposition which made him feared and disliked. One day, a comrade raised the lid of a desk adjoining his own. The raising of the lid was abrupt and possibly intentional. It jarred him in a task. The boy was dragged from him senseless and bleeding. In college, he became aggrieved at a tutor. For three weeks he had him shadowed, then, having discovered an irregularity in his private life, he caused to be laid before the faculty sufficient evidence to insure his removal. Meanwhile, acting presumably on the principle that an avowed hatred is powerless, he treated the tutor as though the grievance had been forgotten. A little later, owing to some act of riotous insubordination, he was himself expelled, and the expulsion seemed to have done him good. He went to Paris and listened decorously to lectures at the Sorbonne, after which he strayed to Heidelberg, where he sat out five semesters without fighting a duel or making himself ill with beer. In his fourth summer abroad, he met the young lady who became his wife. His father died, he returned to New York, and thereafter led a model existence.

He was proud of his wife and indulgent to her every wish. During the years that they lived together, there was no sign or rumor of the slightest disagreement. She was of a sweet and benevolent disposition, and though beyond a furtive coin he gave little to the poor, he encouraged her to donate liberally to the charities which she was solicited to assist. She was a woman with a quick sense of the beautiful, and in spite of the simplicity of his own tastes, he had a house on Madison avenue rebuilt and furnished in such a fashion that it was pointed out to strangers as one of the chief palaces of the city. She liked, moreover, to have her friends about her, and while he cared as much for society as he did for the negro minstrels, he insisted that she should give entertainments and fill the house with guests. In the winter succeeding the fifteenth anniversary of their marriage, Mrs. Incoul caught a chill, took to her bed and died, forty-eight hours later, of pneumonia.

It was then that the world said that he would not marry again. For two years he gave the world no reason to say otherwise, and for two years time hung heavy on his hands. He was an excellent chess-player, and interested in archæological pursuits, but beyond that his resources were limited. He was too energetic to be a dilettante, he had no taste for horseflesh, the game of speculation did not interest him, and his artistic tendencies were few. Now and then, a Mr. Blydenburg, a florid, talkative man, a widower like himself, came to him of an evening, and the chess-board was prepared. But practically his life was one of solitude, and the solitude grew irksome to him.

Meanwhile his wound healed as wounds do. The cicatrix perhaps was ineffaceable, but at least the smart had subsided, and in its subsidence he found that the great house in which he lived had taken on the silence of a tomb. Soon he began to go out a little. He was seen at meetings of the Archæological

Society and of an afternoon he was visible in the Park. He even attended a reception given to an English thinker, and one night applauded Salvini.

At first he went about with something of that uncertainty which visits one who passes from a dark room to a bright one, but in a little while his early constraint fell from him, and he found that he could mingle again with his fellows.

At some entertainment he met a delicious young girl, Miss Maida Barhyte by name, whom for the moment he admired impersonally, as he might have admired a flower, and until he saw her again, forgot her very existence. It so happened, however, that he saw her frequently. One evening he sat next to her at a dinner and learning from her that she was to be present at a certain reception, made a point of being present himself.

This reception was given by Mrs. Bachelor, a lady, well known in society, who kept an unrevised list, and at stated intervals issued invitations to the dead, divorced and defaulted. When she threw her house open, she liked to have it filled, and to her discredit it must be said that in that she invariably succeeded. On the evening that Mr. Incoul crossed her vestibule, he was met by a hum of voices, broken by the rhythm of a waltz. The air was heavy, and in the hall was a smell of flowers and of food. The rooms were crowded. His friend Blydenburg was present and with him his daughter. The Wainwarings, whom he had always known, were also there, and there were other people by whom he had not been forgotten, and with whom he exchanged a word, but for Miss Barhyte he looked at first in vain.

He would have gone, a crowd was as irksome to him as solitude, but in passing an outer room elaborately supplied with paintings and bric-à-brac, he caught a glimpse of the girl talking with a young man whom he vaguely remembered to have seen in earlier days at his own home.

He walked in: Miss Barhyte greeted him as an old friend: there were other people near her, and the young man with whom she had been talking turned and joined them, and presently passed with them into another room.

Mr. Incoul found a seat beside the girl, and, after a little unimportant conversation asked her a question at which she started. But Mr. Incoul was not in haste for an answer, he told her that with her permission, he would do himself the honor of calling on her later, and, as the room was then invaded by some of her friends, he left her to them, and went his way.

II.

MISS BARHYTE AGREES TO CHANGE HER NAME

CHAPTER II.

MISS BARHYTE AGREES TO CHANGE HER NAME.

A DAY or two after Mrs. Bachelor's reception, Mr. Incoul walked down Madison avenue, turned into one of the adjacent streets and rang the bell of a private boarding-house.

As he stood on the steps waiting for the door to be opened, a butcher-boy passed, whistling shrilly. Across the way a nurse-maid was idling with a perambulator, a slim-figured girl hurried by, a well-dressed woman descended from a carriage and a young man with a flower in his button-hole issued from a neighboring house. The nurse-maid stayed the perambulator and scrutinized the folds of the woman's gown; the young man eyed the hurrying girl; from the end of the street came the whistle of the retreating butcher, and as it fused into the rumble of Fifth avenue, Mr. Incoul heard the door opening behind him.

"Is Miss Barhyte at home?" he asked.

The servant, a negro, answered that she was.

"Then be good enough," said Mr. Incoul, "to take her this card."

The drawing-room, long and narrow, as is usual in many New York houses, was furnished in that fashion which is suggestive of a sheriff's sale, and best calculated to jar the nerves. Mr. Incoul did not wince. He gave the appointments one cursory, reluctant glance, and then went to the window. Across the way the nurse-maid still idled, the young man with a flower was drawing on a red glove, stitched with black, and as he looked out at them he heard a rustle, and turning, saw Miss Barhyte.

"I have come for an answer," he said simply.

"I am glad to see you," she answered, "very glad; I have thought much about what you said."

"Favorably, I hope."

"That must depend on you." She went to a bell and touched it. "Archibald," she said, when the negro appeared, "I am out. If any visitors come take them into the other room. Should any one want to come in here before I ring, say the parlor is being swept."

The man bowed and withdrew. He would have stood on his head for her. There were few servants that she did not affect in much the same manner. She seemed to win willingness naturally.

She seated herself on a sofa, and opposite to her Mr. Incoul found a chair. Her dress he noticed was of some dark material, tailor-made, and unrelieved save by a high white collar and the momentary glisten of a button. The cut and sobriety of her costume made her look like a handsome boy, a young Olympian as it were, one who had strayed from the games and been arrayed in modern guise. Indeed, her features suggested that combination of beauty and sensitiveness which was peculiar to the Greek lad, but her eyes were not dark — they were the blue victorious eyes of the Norseman — and her hair was red, the red of old gold, that red which partakes both of orange and of flame.

"I hope — " Mr. Incoul began, but she interrupted him.

"Wait," she said, "I have much to tell you of which the telling is difficult. Will you bear with me a moment?"

"Surely," he answered.

"It is this: It is needless for me to say I esteem you; it is unnecessary for me to say that I respect you, but it is because I do both that I feel I may speak frankly. My mother wishes me to marry you, but I do not. Let me tell you, first, that when my father died he left very little, but the little that he left seems to have disappeared, I do not know how or where. I know merely that we have next to nothing, and that we are in debt beside. Something, of course, has had to be done. I have found a position. Where do you suppose?" she asked, with a sudden smile and a complete change of key.

But Mr. Incoul had no surmises.

"In San Francisco! The MacDermotts, you know, the Bonanza people, want me to return with them and teach their daughter how to hold herself, and what not to say. It has been arranged that I am to go next week. Since the other night, however, my mother has told me to give up the MacDermotts and accept your offer. But that, of course, I cannot do."

"And why not?"

To this Miss Barhyte made no answer.

"You do not care for me, I know; there is slight reason why you should. Yet, might you not, perhaps, in time?"

The girl raised her eyebrows ever so slightly. "So you see," she continued, "I shall have to go to San Francisco."

Mr. Incoul remained silent a moment. "If," he said, at last, "if you will do me the honor to become my wife, in time you will care. It is painful for me to think of you accepting a position which at best is but a shade better than that of a servant, particularly so when I am able — nay, anxious," he added, pensively — "to surround you with everything which can make life pleasant. I am not old," he went on to say, "at least not so old that a marriage between us should seem incongruous. I find that I am sincerely attached to you — unselfishly, perhaps, would be the better word — and, if the privilege could be mine, the endeavor to make you happy would be to me more grateful than a second youth. Can you not accept me?"

He had been speaking less to her than to the hat which he held in his hand. The phrases had come from him haltingly, one by one, as though he had sought to weigh each mentally before dowering it with the wings of utterance, but, as he addressed this question he looked up at her. "Can you not?" he repeated.

Miss Barhyte raised a handkerchief to her lips and bit the shred of cambric with the *disinvoltura* of an heiress.

"Why is it," she queried, "why is it that marriage ever was invented? Why cannot a girl accept help from a man without becoming his wife?"

Mr. Incoul was about to reply that many do, but he felt that such a reply would be misplaced, and he called a platitude to his rescue. "There are wives and wives," he said.

"That is it," the girl returned, the color mounting to her cheeks; "if I could but be to you one of the latter."

He stared at her wonderingly, almost hopefully. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"Did you ever read 'Eugénie Grandet'?"

"No," he answered, "I never have."

"Well, I read it years ago. It is, I believe, the only one of Balzac's novels that young girls are supposed to read. It is tiresome indeed; I had almost forgotten it, but yesterday I remembered enough of the story to help me to come to some decision. In thinking the matter over and over again as I have done ever since I last saw you it has seemed that I could not become your wife unless you were willing to make the same agreement with me that Eugénie Grandet's husband made with her."

"What was the nature of that agreement?"

"It was that, though married, they were to live as though they were not married — as might brother and sister."

"Always?"

"Yes."

"No," Mr. Incoul answered, "to such an agreement I could not consent. Did I do so, I would be untrue to myself, unmanly to you. But if you will give me the right to aid you and yours, I will — according to my lights — leave nothing undone to make you contented; and if I succeed in so doing, if you are happy, then the agreement which you have suggested would fall of itself. Would it not?" he continued. "Would it not be baseless? See —" he added, and he made a vague gesture, but before he could finish the phrase, the girl's hands were before her face and he knew that she was weeping.

Mr. Incoul was not tender-hearted. He felt toward Miss Barhyte as were she some poem in flesh that it would be pleasant to make his own. In her carriage as in her looks, he had seen that stamp of breeding which is coercive even to the dissolute. In her eyes he had discerned that promise of delight which it is said the lost goddesses could convey; and at whose conveyance, the legend says, the minds of men were enraptured. It was in this wise that he felt to her. Such exhilaration as she may have brought him was of the spirit, and being cold by nature and undemonstrative, her tears annoyed him. He would have had her impassive, as befitted her beauty. Beside, he was annoyed at his own attitude. Why should there be sorrow where he had sought to bring smiles? But he had barely time to formulate his annoyance into a thing even as volatile as thought — the girl had risen and was leaving the room.

As she moved to the door Mr. Incoul hastened to open it for her, but she reached it before him and passed out unassisted.

When she had gone he noticed that the sun was setting and that the room was even more hideous than before. He went again to the window wondering how to act. The entire scene was a surprise to him. He had come knowing nothing of the girl's circumstances, and suddenly he learned that she was in indigence, unable perhaps to pay her board bills and worried by small tradesmen. He had come prepared to be refused and she had almost accepted him. But what an acceptance! In the nature of it his thoughts roamed curiously: he was to be a little more than kin, a little less than kind. She would accept him as a husband for out-of-door purposes, for the world's sake she would bear his name — at arm's length. According to the terms of her proposition were she ever really his wife it would be tantamount to a seduction. He was to be with her, and yet, until she so willed it, unable to call her his own. And did he refuse these terms, she was off, no one knew whither. But he had not refused, he told himself, he had indeed not refused, he had merely suggested an amendment which turned an impossibility into an allurement. What pleasanter thing could there be than the winning of one's own wife? The idea was so novel it delighted him. For the moment he preferred it to any other; beside it his former experience seemed humdrum indeed. But why had she wept? Her reasons, however, he had then no chance to elucidate. Miss Barhyte returned as abruptly as she had departed.

"Forgive me," she said, advancing to where he stood, "it was stupid of me to act as I did. I am sorry — are we still friends?" Her eyes were clear as had she never wept, but there were circles about them, and her face was colorless.

"Friends," he answered, "yes, and more —" He hesitated a moment, and then hastily added, "It is agreed, then, is it not, you will be my wife?"

"I will be your wife?"

"As Balzac's heroine was to her husband?"

"You have said it."

"But not always. If there come a time when you care for me, then I may ask you to give me your heart as to-day I have asked for your hand?"

"When that day comes, believe me," she said, and her delicious face took on a richer hue, "when that day comes there will be neither asking nor giving, we shall have come into our own."

With this assurance Mr. Incoul was fain to be content, and, after another word or two, he took his leave.

For some time after his departure, Miss Barhyte stood thinking. It had grown quite dark. Before the window a street lamp burned with a small, steady flame, but beyond, the azure of the electric light pervaded the adjacent square with a suggestion of absinthe and vice. One by one the opposite houses took on some form of interior illumination. A newsboy passed, hawking an extra with a noisy, aggressive ferocity as though he were angry with the neighborhood, and dared it come out and wrestle with him for his wares. There was a thin broken stream of shop-girls passing eastward; at intervals, men in evening dress sauntered leisurely to their dinners, to restaurants, or to clubland, and over the rough pavement there was a ceaseless rattle of traps and of wagons; the air was alive with the indefinable murmurs of a great city.

Miss Barhyte noticed none of these things. She had taken her former seat on the sofa and sat, her elbow on her crossed knee, her chin resting in her hand, while the fingers touched and barely separated her lips. The light from without was just strong enough to reach her feet and make visible the gold clock on her silk stocking, but her face was in the shadow as were her thoughts.

Presently she rose and rang the bell. "Archibald," she said, when the man came, and who at once busied himself with lighting the gas, "I want to send a note; can't you take it? It's only across the square."

"I'll have to be mighty spry about it, miss. The old lady do carry on most unreasonable if I go for anybody but herself. She has laws that strict they'd knock the Swedes and Prussians silly. Why, you wouldn't believe if I told you how — "

And Archibald ran on with an unbelievable tale of recent adventure with the landlady. But the girl feigned no interest. She had taken a card from her case. On it she wrote, *Veins ce soir,* and after running the pencil through her name, she wrote on the other side, Lenox Leigh, esq., Athenæum Club.

"There," she said, interrupting the negro in the very climax of his story, "it's for Mr. Leigh; you are sure to find him, so wait for an answer."

A fraction of an hour later, when Miss Barhyte took her seat at the dinner table, she found beside her plate a note that contained a single line: "Will be with you at nine. I kiss your lips. L. L."

III.

AFTER DARKNESS

CHAPTER III.

AFTER DARKNESS.

WHEN Miss Barhyte was one year younger she had gone with her mother to pass the summer at Mt. Desert; and there, the morning of her arrival, on the monster angle of Rodick's porch, Lenox Leigh had caused himself to be presented.

A week later Miss Barhyte and her new acquaintance were as much gossiped about as was possible in that once unconventional resort.

Lenox Leigh was by birth a Baltimorean, and by profession a gentleman of leisure, yet as the exercise of that profession is considered less profitable in Baltimore than in New York, he had, for some time past, been domiciled in the latter city. From the onset he was well received; one of the Amsterdams had married a Leigh, his only sister had charmed the heart of Nicholas Manhattan, and being in this wise connected with two of the reigning families, he found the doors open as a matter of course. But even in the absence of potent relatives, there was no reason why he should not have been cordially welcomed. He was, it is true, better read than nineteen men out of twenty; when he went to the opera he preferred listening to the music to wandering from box to box; he declined to figure in cotillons and at no dinner, at no supper had he been known to drink anything stronger than claret and water.

But as an offset to these defects he was one of the most admirably disorganized young men that ever trod Fifth avenue. He was without beliefs and without prejudices; added to this he was indulgent to the failings of others, or perhaps it would be better to say that he was indifferent. It may be that the worst thing about him was that he was not bad enough; his wickedness, such as there was of it, was purely negative. A poet of the decadence of that period in fact when Rome had begun to weary of debauchery without yet acquiring a taste for virtue, a pre-mediæval Epicurean, let us say, could not have pushed a creedless refinement to a greater height than he. There were men who thought him a prig, and who said so when his back was turned.

It was in the company of this patrician of a later day that Miss Barhyte participated in the enjoyments of Mt. Desert. Leigh was then in his twenty-fifth year, and Miss Barhyte was just grazing the twenties. He was attractive in appearance, possessed of those features which now and then permit a man to do without beard or moustache, and his hair, which was black, clung so closely to his head that at a distance it might have been taken for the casque of a Saracen. To Miss Barhyte, as already noted, a full share of beauty had been allotted. Together they formed one of the most charming couples that it has ever been the historian's privilege to admire. And being a charming couple, and constantly together, they excited much interest in the minds of certain ladies who hailed from recondite Massachusettsian regions.

To this interest they were indifferent. At first, during the early evenings when the stars were put out by the Northern Lights, they rowed to the outermost shore of a neighboring island and lingered there for hours in an enchanted silence. Later, in the midsummer nights, when the harvest-moon was round and mellow, they wandered through the open fields back into the Dantesque forests and strayed in the clinging shadows and inviting solitudes of the pines.

From one such excursion they returned to the hotel at an hour which startled the night porter, who, in that capricious resort, should have lost his ability to be startled at anything.

That afternoon Mrs. Bunker Hill — one of the ladies to whom allusion has been made — approached Miss Barhyte on the porch. "And are you to be here much longer?" she asked, after a moment or two of desultory conversation.

"The holidays are almost over," the girl answered, with her radiant smile.

"*Holidays* do you call them? *Holidays* did I understand you to say? *I* should have called them *fast* days." And, with that elaborate witticism, Mrs. Bunker Hill shook out her skirts and sailed away.

Meanwhile an enveloping intimacy had sprung up between the two young people. Their conversation need not be chronicled. There was in it nothing unusual and nothing particularly brilliant; it was but a strain from that archaic duo in which we have all taken part and which at each repetition seems an original theme.

For the first time Miss Barhyte learned the intoxication of love. She gave her heart ungrudgingly, without calculation, without forethought, wholly, as a heart should be given and freely as had the gift been consecrated in the nave of a cathedral. If she were generous why should she be blamed? In the giving she found that mite of happiness, that one unclouded day that is fair as June roses and dawns but once.

In September Miss Barhyte went with her mother on a visit in the Berkshire Hills. Leigh journeyed South. A matter of business claimed his attention in Baltimore, and when, early in November, he reached New York the girl had already returned.

Since the death of Barhyte *père* she had lived with her mother in a small house in Irving Place, which they rented, furnished, by the year. But on this particular autumn affairs had gone so badly, some stock had depreciated, some railroad had been mismanaged, or some trustee had speculated — something, in fact, had happened of which no one save those personally interested ever know or ever care, and, as a result, the house in Irving Place was given up, and the mother and daughter moved into a boarding-house.

Of all this Lenox Leigh was made duly aware. Had he been able, and could such a thing have been proper and conventional, he would have been glad indeed to offer assistance; he was not selfish, but then he was not rich, a condition which always makes unselfishness easy. Matrimony was out of the question; his income was large enough to permit him to live without running into debt, but beyond that its flexibility did not extend, and in money matters, and in money matters alone, Lenox Leigh was the most scrupulous of men. Beside, as the phrase goes, he was not a marrying man — marriage, he was accustomed to assert, means one woman more and one man less, and beyond that definition he steadfastly declined to look, except to announce that, like some other institutions, matrimony was going out of fashion.

That winter Miss Barhyte was more circumspect. It was not that her affection had faltered, but in the monochromes of a great city the primal glamour that was born of the fields and of the sea lost its lustre. Then, too, Lenox in the correctness of evening dress was not the same adorer who had lounged in flannels at her side, and the change from the open country to the boarding-house parlor affected their spirits unconsciously.

And so the months wore away. There were dinners and routs which the young people attended in common, there were long walks on avenues unfrequented by fashion, and there were evenings prearranged which they passed together and during which the girl's mother sat up stairs and thought her own thoughts.

Mrs. Barhyte had been a pretty woman and inconsequential, as pretty women are apt to be. Her girlhood had been of the happiest, without a noteworthy grief. She married one whose perfection had seemed to her impeccable, and then suddenly without a monition the tide of disaster set in. After the birth of a second child, Maida, her husband began to drink, and drank, after each debauch with a face paler than before, until disgrace came and with it a plunge into the North River. Her elder child, a son, on whom she placed her remaining hopes, had barely skirted manhood before he was taken from her to die of small-pox in a hospital. Then came a depreciation in the securities which she held and in its train the small miseries of the shabby genteel. Finally, the few annual thousands that were left to her seemed to evaporate, and as she sat in her room alone her thoughts were bitter. The pretty inconsequential girl had developed into a woman, hardened yet unresigned. At forty-five her hair was white, her face was colorless as her widow's cap, her heart was dead.

On the night when her daughter, under the chaperonage of Mrs. Hildred, one of her few surviving relatives — returned from the reception, she was still sitting up. At Mrs. Hildred's suggestion a position, to which allusion has been made, had been offered to her daughter, and that position — the bringing up or rather the bringing out of a child of the West — she determined that her daughter should accept. Afterwards — well, perhaps for Maida there were other things in store, as for herself she expected little. She would betake herself to some Connecticut village and there wait for death.

When her daughter entered the room she was sitting in the erect impassibility of a statue. Her eyes indeed were restless, but her face was dumb, and in the presence of that silent desolation, the girl's tender heart was touched.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, "why did you wait up for me?" And she found a seat on the sofa near her mother and took her hand caressingly in her own. "Why are you up so late," she continued, "are you not tired? Oh, mother," the girl cried, impetuously, "if you only knew what happened to-night — what do you suppose?"

But Mrs. Barhyte shook her head, she had no thoughts left for suppositions. And quickly, for the mere sake of telling something that would arouse her mother if ever so little from her apathy, Maida related Mr. Incoul's offer. Her success was greater, if other, than she anticipated. It was as though she had poured into a parching throat the very waters of life. It was the post tenebras, lux. And what a light! The incandescence of unexpected hope. A cataract of gold pieces could not have been more dazzling; it was blinding after the shadows in which she had groped. The color came to her cheeks, her hand grew moist. "Yes, yes," she cried, urging the girl's narrative with a motion of the head like to that of a jockey speeding to the post; "yes, yes," she repeated, and her restless eyes flamed with the heat of fever.

"Wasn't it odd?" Maida concluded abruptly.

"But you accepted him?" the mother asked hoarsely, almost fiercely.

"Accepted him? No, of course not — he — why, mother, what is the matter?"

Engrossed in the telling of her story, the girl had not noticed her mother's agitation, but at her last words, at the answer to the question, her wrist had been caught as in a vise, and eyes that she no longer recognized — eyes dilated with anger, desperation and revulsion of feeling — were staring into her own. Instinctively she drew back — "Oh, mother, what is it?" And the mother bending forward, even as the daughter retreated, hissed, "You shall accept him — I say you shall!"

"Mother, mother," the girl moaned, helplessly.

"You shall accept him, do you hear me?"

"But, mother, how can I?" The tears were rolling down her cheeks, she was frightened — the acute, agonizing fright of a child pursued. She tried to free herself, but the hands on her wrist only tightened, and her mother's face, livid now, was close to her own.

"You shall accept him," she repeated with the insistence of a monomaniac. And the girl, with bended head, through the paroxisms of her sobs, could only murmur in piteous, beseeching tones, "Mother! mother!"

But to the plaint the woman was as deaf as her heart was dumb. She indeed loosened her hold and the girl fell back on the lounge from which they had both arisen, but it was only to summon from the reservoirs of her being some new strength wherewith to vanquish. For a moment she stood motionless, watching the girl quiver in her emotion, and as the sobbing subsided, she stretched forth her hand again, and caught her by the shoulder.

"Look up at me," she said, and the girl, obedient, rose from her seat and gazed imploringly in her mother's face. No Neapolitan fish-wife was ever more eager to barter her daughter than was this lady of acknowledged piety and refinement, and the face into which her daughter looked and shrank from bore no trace of pity or compassion. "Tell me if you dare," she continued, "tell me why it is that you refuse? What more do you want? Are you a princess of the blood? Perhaps you will say you don't love him! And what if you don't? I loved your father and look at me now! Beside, you have had enough of that — there, don't stare at me in that way. I know, and so do you. Now take your choice — accept this offer or get to your lover — and this very night. As for me, I disown you, I — "

But the flood of words was interrupted — the girl had fainted. The simulachre of death had extended its kindly arms, and into them she had fallen as into a grateful release.

By the morrow her spirit was broken. Two days later Mr. Incoul called with what success the reader has been already informed, and on that same evening in obedience to the note, came Lenox Leigh.

IV.

AN EVENING CALL

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WHEN Leigh entered the drawing-room he found Miss Barhyte already there.

"It is good of you to come," she said, by way of greeting.

The young man advanced to where she stood, and in a tender, proprietary manner, took her hand in his; he would have kissed her, but she turned her face aside.

"What is it?" he asked; "you are pale as Ophelia."

"And you, my prince, as inquisitive as Hamlet."

She led him to a seat and found one for herself. Her eyes rested in his own, and for a moment both were silent.

"Lenox," she asked at last, "do you know Mr. Incoul?"

"Yes, of course; every one does."

"I mean do you know him well?"

"I never said ten words to him, nor he to me."

"So much the better. What do you suppose he did the other evening after you went away?"

"Really, I have no idea, but if you wish me to draw on my imagination, I suppose he went away too."

"He offered himself."

"For what?"

"To me."

"Maida, that mummy! You are joking."

"No, I am not joking, nor was he."

"Well, what then?"

"Then, as you say, he went away."

"And what did you do?"

"I went away too."

"Be serious; tell me about it."

"He came here this afternoon, and I — well — I am to be Mrs. Incoul."

Lenox bit his lip. Into his face there came an expression of angered resentment. He stood up from his seat; the girl put out her hand as though to stay him: "Lenox, I had to," she cried. But he paid no attention to her words and crossed the room.

On the mantel before him was a clock that ticked with a low, dolent moan, and for some time he stood looking at it as were it an object of peculiar interest which he had never before enjoyed the leisure to examine. But the clock might have swooned from internal pain, he neither saw nor heard it; his thoughts circled through episodes of the winter back to the forest and the fringes of the summer sea. And slowly the anger gave way to wonder, and presently the wonder faded and in its place there came a sentiment like that of sorrow, a doubled sorrow in whose component parts there was both pity and distress.

It is said that the rich are without appreciation of their wealth until it is lost or endangered, and it was not until that evening that Lenox Leigh appreciated at its worth the loveliness that was slipping from him. He knew then that he might tread the highroads and faubourgs of two worlds with the insistence of the Wandering Jew, and yet find no one so delicious as she. And in the first flood of his anger he felt as were he being robbed, as though the one thing that had lifted him out of the brutal commonplaces of the every day was being caught up and carried beyond the limits of vision. And into this resentment there came the suspicion that he was not alone being robbed, that he was being cheated to boot, that the love which he had thought to receive as he had seemed to give love before, was an illusory representation, a phantom constructed of phrases.

But this suspicion faded; he knew untold that the girl's whole heart was his, had been his, was yet his and probably would be his for all of time, till the grave opened and closed again. And then the wonder came. He knew, none better, the purity of her heart, and knowing, too, her gentleness, the sweetness of her nature, her abnegation of self, he began to understand that some tragedy had been enacted which he had not been called upon to witness. Of her circumstances he had been necessarily informed. But in the sensitiveness of her refinement the girl had shrunk from unveiling to a lover's eyes the increasing miseries of her position, and of the poignancy of those miseries he had now, uninformed, an inkling. If she sold herself, surely it was because the sale was imperative. The white impassible face of the girl's mother rose before him and then, at once, he understood her cry, "Lenox, I had to."

As he moved from her, Maida had seen the anger, and knowing the anger to be as just as justice ever is, she shook her head in helpless grief, yet her eyes were tearless as had she no tears left to shed. She had seen the anger, but ignorant of the phases of thought by which it had been transfigured she stole up to where he stood and touched his arm with a shrinking caress.

He turned and would have caught her to him, but she drew back, elusively, as might a swan. "No, not that, Lenox. Only say that you do not hate me. Lenox, if you only knew. To me it is bitterer than death. You are the whole world to me, yet never must I see you again. If I could but tell you all. If I could but tell him all, if there were anything that I could do or say, but there is nothing, nothing," she added pensively, "except submission."

Her voice had sunk into a whisper: she was pleading as much with herself as with him. Her arms were pendant and her eyes downcast. On the mantel the clock kept up its low, dolorous moan, as though in sympathy with her woe. "Nothing," she repeated.

"But surely it need not be. Things cannot be so bad as that — Maida, I cannot lose you. If nothing else can be done, let us go away; at its best New York is tiresome; we could both leave it without a regret or a wish to return. And then, there is Italy; we have but to choose. Why, I could take a palace on the Grand Canal for less than I pay for my rooms at the Cumberland. And you would love Venice; and in winter there is Capri and Sorrento and Palermo. I have known days in Palermo when I seemed to be living in a haze of turquoise and gold. And the nights! You should see the nights! The stars are large as lilies! See, it would be so easy; in a fortnight we could be in Genoa, and before we got there we would have been forgotten."

He was bending forward speaking rapidly, persuasively, half hoping, half fearing, she would accept. She did not interrupt him, and he continued impetuously, as though intoxicated on his own words.

"When we are tired of the South, there are the lakes and that lovely Tyrol; there will be so much to do, so much to see. After New York, we shall really seem to live; and then, beyond, is Munich — you are sure to love that city." He hated Munich; he hated Germany. The entire land, and everything that was in it, was odious to him; but for the moment he forgot. He would have said more, even to praises of Berlin, but the girl raised her ringless hand and shook her head wearily.

"No, Lenox, it may not be. Did I go with you, in a year — six months, perhaps — we would both regret. It would be not only expatriation; it would, for me at least, be isolation as well, and, though I would bear willingly with both, you would not. You think so now, perhaps, I do not doubt" — and a phantom of a smile crossed her face — "and I thank you for so thinking, but it may not be."

Her hand fell to her side, and she turned listlessly away. "You must forget me, Lenox — but not too soon, will you?"

"Never, sweetheart — never!"

"Ah, but you must. And I must learn to forget you. It will be difficult. No one can be to me what you have been. You have been my youth, Lenox; my girlhood has been yours. I have nothing left. Nothing except regrets — regrets that youth should pass so quickly and that girlhood comes but once."

Her lips were tremulous, but she was trying to be brave.

"But surely, Maida, it cannot be that we are to part forever. Afterwards —" the word was vague, but they both understood — "afterwards I may see you. Such things often are. Because you feel yourself compelled to this step, there is no reason why I, of all others, should be shut out of your life."

"It is the fact of your being the one of all others that makes the shutting needful."

"It shall not be."

"Lenox," she pleaded, "it is harder for me than for you."

"But how can you ask me, how can you think that I will give you up? The affair is wretched enough as it is, and now, by insisting that I am not to see you again, you would make it even worse. People think it easy to love, but it is not; I know nothing more difficult. You are the only one for whom I have ever cared. It was not difficult to do so, I admit, but the fact remains. I have loved you, I have loved you more and more every day, and now, when I love you most, when I love you as I can never love again, you find it the easiest matter in the world to come to me and say, 'It's ended; *bon jour.*'"

"You are cruel, Lenox, you are cruel."

"It is you that are cruel, and there the wonder is, for your cruelty is unconscious, of your own free will you would not know how."

"It is not that I am cruel, it is that I am trying to do right. And it is for you to aid me. I have been true to you, do not ask me now to be false to myself."

If at that moment Mrs. Bunker Hill could have looked into the girl's face, her suspicions would have vanished into air. Maida needed only a less fashionable gown to look like a mediæval saint; and before the honesty that was in her eyes Lenox bowed his head.

"Will you help me?"

"I will," he answered.

"I knew you would; you are too good to try to make me more miserable than I am. And now, you must go; kiss me, it is the last time."

He caught her in his arms and kissed her full upon the mouth. He kissed her wet eyes, her cheeks, the splendor of her hair. And after a moment of the acutest pain of all her life, the girl freed herself from his embrace, and let him go without another word.

V.

A YELLOW ENVELOPE

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THERE is a peculiarity about Baden-Baden which no other watering-place seems to share — it has the aroma of a pretty woman. In August it is warm, crowded, enervating, tiresome as are all warm and crowded places, but the air is delicately freighted and a pervasive fragrance is discerned even by the indifferent.

In the summer that succeeded Maida's marriage Baden was the same tame, perfumed *zwei und funfzig* that it has ever been since the war. The ladies and gentlemen who were to regard it as a sort of continuation of the Bois de Boulogne had departed never to return. Gone was Benazet, gone, too, the click of the roulette ball. The echoes and uproars of the Second Empire had died away, as echoes and uproars ever must, and in place of the paint and cleverness of the *dames dulac* had come the stupid loveliness of the *schwärmerisch Mädchen.*

But though Paris had turned her wicked back, the attitude of that decadent capital in no wise affected other cities. On the particular August to which allusion is made, interminable dinners were consumed by contingents from the politest lands, and also from some that were semi-barbaric.

In the Lichenthal Allée and on the promenade in front of the Kursaal one could hear six languages in as many minutes, and given a polyglottic ear the number could have been increased to ten. Among those who added their little quota to this summer Babel were Mr. and Mrs. Incoul.

The wedding had been very simple. Mrs. Barhyte had wished the ceremony performed in Grace Church, and to the ceremony she had also wished that all New York should be bidden. To her it represented a glory which in the absence of envious witnesses would be lustreless indeed. But in this respect her wishes were disregarded. On a melting morning in early June, a handful of people, thirty at most, assembled in Mrs. Hildred's drawing-room. The grave service that is in usage among Episcopalians was mumbled by a diligent bishop, there was a hurried and heavy breakfast, and two hours later the bride and groom were on the deck of the "Umbria."

The entire affair had been conducted with the utmost dispatch. The *Sunday Sun* chronicled the engagement in one issue, and gave the date of the wedding in the next. It was not so much that Harmon Incoul was ardent in his wooing or that Miss Barhyte was anxious to assume the rank and privileges that belong to the wedded state. The incentives were other if equally prosaic. The ceremony if undergone needed to be undergone at once. Summer was almost upon them, and in the code which society has made for itself, summer weddings are reproved. There was indeed some question of postponing the rites until autumn. But on that Mrs. Barhyte put her foot. She was far from sure of her daughter, and as for the other contracting party, who could tell but that he might change his mind. Such changes had been, and instances of such misconduct presented themselves unsummoned to the woman's mind. The fish had been landed almost without effort, a fish more desirable than any other, a very prize among fishes, and the possibility that he might slip away and without so much as a gill awry float off into clearer and less troubled seas, nerved her to her task anew.

In the interview which she enjoyed with her prospective son-in-law she was careful, however, to display no eagerness. She was sedate when sedateness seemed necessary, but her usual attitude was one of conciliatory disinterestedness. Her daughter's choice she told him had met with her fullest approval, and it was to her a matter of deep regret that neither her husband nor her father — the late Chief Justice Hildred, with whose name Mr. Incoul was of course familiar — that neither of them had been spared to join in the expression of her satisfaction. Of Maida it was unnecessary to speak, yet this at least should be said, she was young and she was impressionable, as young people are apt to be, but she had never given her mother cause for the slightest vexation, not the slightest. "She is a sweet girl," Mrs. Barhyte went on to say, "and one with an admirable disposition; she takes after her father in that, but she has her grandfather's intellect."

"Her beauty, madam, comes from you."

To this Mrs. Barhyte assented. "She is pretty," she said, and then in the voice of an actress who feels her rôle, "Do be good to her," she pleaded, "she is all I have."

Mr. Incoul assured her that on that score she need give herself no uneasiness, and a few days before the wedding, begged as a particular favor to himself that after the ceremony she would take up her residence in his house. The servants, he explained, had been instructed in that respect, and a checkbook of the Chemical Bank would be handed her in defrayment of all expenses. "And to think," Mrs. Barhyte muttered to herself, "to think that I might have died in Connecticut!"

The voyage over was precisely like any other. There were six days of discomfort in the open, and between Queenstown and Liverpool unnumbered hours of gloomy and irritating delay. Mrs. Incoul grew weary of the captain's cabin and her husband was not enthusiastic on the subject of the quarters which the first officer had relinquished to him. But in dear old London, as all good Americans are wont to call that delightful city, Mrs. Incoul's spirits revived. The difference between Claridge's and Rodick's would have interested one far more apathetic than she, and as she had never before set her foot on Piccadilly, and as Rotten Row and Regent Circus were as unfamiliar to her as the banks of the Yang-tse-Kiang, she had none of that satiated feeling of the *dejà-vu* which besets the majority of us on our travels.

The notice of their arrival in the *Morning Post* had been followed by cards without limit and invitations without stint. An evening gazette published an editorial a column in length, in which after an historical review of wealth from Plutus to the Duke of Westminster, the reader learned that the world had probably never seen a man so rich and yet seemingly so unconscious of the power which riches give as was Harmon Incoul, esq., of New York, U. S. A.

During the few weeks that were passed in London the bride and groom were bidden to more crushes, dinners and garden parties than Maida had attended during the entire course of her bud-hood. There was the inevitable presentation and as the girl's face was noticeably fair she and her husband were made welcome at Marlborough House. Afterwards, yet before the season drooped, there was a trip to Paris, a city, which, after the splendors of London, seemed cheap and tawdry indeed, and then as already noted came the villegiatura at Babel-Baden.

Meanwhile Maida had come and gone, eaten and fasted, danced and driven in a constant chase after excitement. To her husband she had acted as she might have done to some middle-aged cousin with whom she was not precisely on that which is termed a familiar footing, one on whom chance not choice had made her dependent, and to whom in consequence much consideration was due. But her relations will be perhaps better understood when it is related that she had not found herself physically capable of calling him by his given name, or in fact anything else than You. It was not that she disliked him, on the contrary, in many ways he was highly sympathetic, but the well-springs of her affection had been dried, and the season of their refreshment was yet obscure.

In the face of this half-hearted platonism Mr. Incoul had displayed a wisdom which was peculiar to himself; he exacted none of those little tributes which are conceded to be a husband's due, and he allowed himself none of the familiarities which are reported to be an appanage of the married state. From the beginning he had determined to win his wife by the exercise of that force which, given time and opportunity, a strong nature invariably exerts over a weaker one. He was indulgent but he was also austere. The ordering of one gown or of five hundred was a matter of which he left her sole mistress. Had she so desired she might have bought a jewelry shop one day and given it back as a free gift on the morrow. But on a question of ethics he allowed no appeal. The Countess of Ex, a lady of dishonor at a popular court, had, during the London season, issued cards for a ball. On the evening on which it was to take place the bride and groom had dined at one house, and gone to a musicale at another. When leaving the latter entertainment Maida told her husband to tell the man "Park Lane." Mr. Incoul, however, ordered the carriage to be driven to the hotel.

"Did you not understand me?" she asked. "I am going to the Countess of Ex's."

"She is not a woman whom I care to have you know," he replied.

"But the Prince is to be there!"

To this he assented. "Perhaps." And then he added in a voice that admitted of no further argument, "But not my wife."

Maida sank back in the carriage startled by an unexperienced emotion. For the first time since the wedding she could have kissed the man whose name she bore. It was in this way that matters shaped themselves.

Soon after reaching Paris, Mr. Blydenburg called. He had brought his daughter abroad because he did not know what else to do with her, and now that he was on the Continent he did not know what to do with himself. He explained these pre-occupations and Mr. Incoul suggested that in the general exodus they should all go to Germany. To this suggestion Blydenburg gave a ready assent and that very day purchased a translation of Tacitus, a copy of Mr. Baring-Gould's Germany, a Baedeker, and a remote edition of Murray.

At the appointed date the little party started for Cologne, where, after viewing a bone of the fabulous virgin Undecemilla, they drifted to Frankfort and from there reached the Oos. In Baden, Blydenburg and his daughter elected domicile at the Englischerhof, while through the foresight of a courier, good-looking, polyglottic, idle and useful, the Incouls found a spacious apartment in the Villa Wilhelmina, a belonging of the Mesmer House.

In the drawer of the table which Maida selected as a suitable place for superfluous rings was a yellow envelope addressed to the Gräfin von Adelsburg. On the back was an attempt at addition, a double column of figures which evidently represented the hotel expenses of the lady to whom the envelope was addressed. The figures were marked carefully that no mistake should be possible, but the sum total had been jotted down in hurried numerals, as though the mathematician had been irritated at the amount, while under all, in an indignant scrawl, was the legend "S. T."

Maida was the least inquisitive of mortals, but one evening, a week or ten days after her arrival, when she happened to be sitting in company with the

Blydenburgs and her husband on the broad terrace that fronts the Kursaal, she alluded, for the mere sake of conversation, to the envelope which she had found. The Gräfin von Adelsburg it then appeared was the name with which the Empress of a neighboring realm was accustomed to veil her rank, and the legend it was suggested could only stand for *schrechlich theuer,* frightfully dear. The Empress had vacated the Villa Wilhelmina but a short time before and it seemed not improbable that the figures and conclusion were in her own imperial hand.

While this subject was under discussion the Prince of Albion sauntered down the walk. He was a handsome man, with blue projecting eyes, somewhat stout, perhaps, but not obese. In his train were two ladies and a few men. As he was about to pass Mrs. Incoul he stopped and raised his hat. It was of soft felt, she noticed, and his coat was tailless. He uttered a few amiable commonplaces and then moved on. The terrace had become very crowded. The little party had found seats near the musicians, and from either side came a hum of voices. A Saxon halted before them, designating with pointing finger the retreating back of the Prince, his companion, a pinguid woman who looked as though she lived on fish, shouted, "*Herr Jesus! ist es ja möglich,*" and hurried on for a closer view. Near by was a group of Brazilians and among them a pretty girl in a fantastic gown, whose voice was like the murmur of birds. To the left were some Russians conversing in a hard, cruel French. The girl seemed to have interested them. " But why," asked one, " but why is it that she wears such loud colors? " To which another, presumably the wit of the party, answered idly, " Who knows, she may be deaf." And immediately behind Mrs. Incoul were two young Americans, wonderfully well dressed, who were exchanging chaste anecdotes and recalling recent adventures with an accompaniment of smothered laughter that was fathomless in its good-fellowship.

Maida paid no attention to the conversation about her. She was thinking of the yellow envelope, and for the first time she began to form some conception of her husband's wealth. Apparently he thought nothing of prices that seemed exorbitant to one whose coffers notoriously overflowed. She had never spoken to him about money, nor he to her; she knew merely that his purse was open; yet, as is usual with one who has been obliged to count the pennies, she had in her recent shopping often hesitated and refused to buy. In Paris she had chaffered over handkerchiefs and been alarmed at Doucet's bill. Indeed at Virot's when she told that poetic milliner what she wished to pay for a bonnet, Virot, smiling almost with condescension, had said to her, " The *chapeau* that madame wants is surely a *chapeau en Espagne*."

And now for the first time she began to understand. She saw how much was hers, how ungrudgingly it was given, how easy her path was made, how pleasant it might be for the rest of her days, and she half-turned and looked at her husband. If she could only forget, she thought, only forget and begin anew. If she could but tell him all! She moaned to herself. The moon was shining behind the Kursaal and in the air was the usual caress. The musicians, who had just attacked and subdued the Meistersänger, began a sob of Weber's that had been strangled into a waltz, and as the measures flowed they brought her that pacification which music alone can bring.

The past was over and done, ill-done, she knew, but above it might grow such weeds of forgetfulness as would hide it even from herself. In a semi-unconsciousness of her surroundings she stared like a pretty sphinx into the future. The waltz swooned in its ultimate accords, but she had ceased to hear; it had lulled and left her; her thoughts roamed far off into distant possibilities; she was dreaming with eyes wide open.

Abruptly the orchestra attacked a score that was seasoned with red pepper — the can-can of an opéra-bouffe; the notes exploded like fire crackers, and in the explosion brought vistas of silk stockings, whirlwinds of disordered skirts, the heat and frenzy of an orgy. And then, as the riot mounted like a flame, suddenly in a clash and shudder of brass the uproar ceased.

Maida, aroused from her revery by the indecency of the music, looked idly about her. The Russians were drinking beer that was as saffron as their own faces. The Brazilians had departed. The young Americans were smoking Bond street cigarettes which they believed to be Egyptian, and discussing the relative merits of Hills and Poole.

"While I was getting measured for that top-coat you liked so much," said one, "Leigh came in."

"Lee? What Lee? Sumpter?"

"No; Lenox Leigh."

"Did he, though? How was he?"

"Finest form. Said he would take in Paris and Baden. He may be here now for all I know. Let's ask the waiter for a Fremden-List."

Maida had heard, and with the hearing there had come to her an enveloping dread. She felt that, did she see him, the love which she had tried to banish would return unfettered from its exile. Strength was not yet hers; with time, she knew, she could have sworn it would come; but, for the moment, she was helpless, and into the dread a longing mingled. At once, as though in search of a protection that should guard her against herself, she turned to her husband. To him, the Russians, Brazilians, and other gentry had been part of the landscape. He had little taste for music, and Blydenburg had bored him as that amiable gentleman was accustomed to bore every one with whom he conversed, yet, nevertheless, through that spirit of paradox which is common to us all, Mr.

Incoul liked the man, and for old association's sake took to the boredom in a kindlier fashion than had it come from a newer and more vivacious acquaintance. Blydenburg had been explaining the value of recent excavations in Tirynth, a subject which Mr. Incoul understood better than the informist, but he noticed Maida's movement and stopped short.

" Come, Milly," he said to his daughter, " let's be going."

Milly had sat by his side the entire evening, in stealthy enjoyment of secular music, performed for the first time in her hearing on the Lord's day. She was a pale, freckled girl, with hair of the shade of Bavarian beer. She was not beautiful, but then she was good — a sort of angel bound in calf.

When Milly and her father had disappeared, Maida turned to her husband again. " Do you mind leaving Baden? " she asked.

Mr. Incoul eyed her a moment. " Why? " he asked. He had a trick of answering one question with another, yet for the moment she wondered whether he too had heard the conversation behind them, and then comforted by the thought that in any case the name of Lenox Leigh could convey but little to him, she shrugged her shoulders. " Oh, I don't know," she said; " I don't like it; it's hot and crowded. I think I would like the seashore better."

" Very good," he answered; " whatever you prefer. I will speak to Karl to-night." (Karl was the courier.) "I don't suppose," he added, reflectively, "that you would care for Trouville — I know I should not."

He had risen, and Maida, who had risen with him, was looking down at the gravel, which she toyed nervously with her foot. The opera that had been given that evening was evidently over. A stream of people were coming from the direction of the theatre, and among them was the Prince. He was chatting with his companions, but his trained eye had marked Mrs. Incoul, and when he reached the place where she stood he stopped again.

"You didn't go in to-night," he said, collectively. "It was rather good, too." And then, without waiting for an answer, he continued: "Won't you both dine with us to-morrow?"

"Oh, we can't," Maida answered. She was tormented with the thought that at any moment Lenox might appear. "We can't; we are going away."

The Prince smiled in his brown beard. Americans were popular with him. He liked their freedom. There was, he knew, barely one woman in Baden, not utterly bedridden, who would have taken his invitation so lightly. "I am sorry," he said, and he spoke sincerely. Like any other sensible man, he liked beauty and he liked it near him. He knew that Mrs. Incoul had been recently married, and in his own sagacious way, *il posait des jalons.* "You are to be at Ballaster in the autumn, I hear." Ballaster was a commodious shooting-box in Scotland, the possession of an hospitable peer.

"Yes, I believe we are," Maida answered.

"I hope to see you there," and with these historic words, Prince Charming departed.

VI.

BIARRITZ

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BIARRITZ.

AFTER a frühstück of coffee and honey, to which the inn-keeper, out of compliment to the nationality of his guest, had added an ear of green corn — a combination, be it said, that no one but a German could have imagined — Mr. Incoul went in search of his friend.

He had questioned Karl, and the courier had spoken of Ostend with such enthusiasm that his employer suspected him of some personal interest in the place and struck it at once from the list of possible resorts which he had been devising. On the subject of other *bains de mer* the man was less communicative. There was, he said, nothing attractive about Travemunde, except the name; Scheveningen was apt to be chilly; Trouville he rather favored, but to his thinking Ostend was preferable.

When the courier had gone Mr. Incoul ran his eye down a mental map of the coast of France, and just as it reached the Spanish frontier he remembered that some one in his hearing had recently sounded the attractions of Biarritz. On that seaboard he ultimately decided, and it was with the idea that Blydenburg might go further and fare worse that he sought his friend and suggested the advantages of a trip to the Basque country.

Mr. Blydenburg had few objections to make. He had taken very kindly to the consumption of beer, but beer had not agreed with him, and he admitted, did he stay in Baden, that, in spite of the ill effects, he would still be unable to resist the allurements of that insidious beverage. "Act like a man, then," said Mr. Incoul, encouragingly; "act like a man and flee from it."

There was no gainsaying the value of this advice, but between its adoption and a journey to Biarritz the margin was wide. "It is true," he said, reflectively, "I could study the language at the fountainhead" (Mr. Blydenburg, it may be explained, was a gentleman who plumed himself on his familiarity with recondite tongues, but one whose knowledge of the languages that are current in polite society was such as is gleaned from the appendices of guide-books).

Mr. Incoul nodded approvingly, "Certainly there would be no difficulty about that."

Blydenburg looked at him musingly for a moment and nodded, too. "The name Biarritz," he said, "comes, I am inclined to believe, from bi haritz — two oaks. Minucius thinks that it comes from bi harri — two rocks; but I have detected Minucius in certain errors which has made me wary of accepting his opinion. For instance, he claims that the Basques are descendants of the Phœnicians. Nothing could be more preposterous. They are purely Iberian, and probably the most ancient race in Europe. Why, you would be surprised" —

Mr. Incoul interrupted him cruelly — "I often am," he said; "now tell me, will you be ready this afternoon?"

"The laundress has just taken my things."

"Send after them, then. I make no doubt that there you can find another on the Bay of Biscay."

"I wonder what Biscay comes from? bi scai, two currents, perhaps. Yes, of course, I will be ready." And as his friend moved away, he pursed his lips abstractedly and made a note of the derivation.

A courier aiding, the journey from Baden to Biarritz can be accomplished without loss of life or reason. It partakes something of the character of a zigzag, the connections are seldom convenient, the wayside inns are not of the best, but if people go abroad to be uncomfortable, what more can the heart desire? The Incoul-Blydenburg party, impeded by Karl, a body-servant, and two maids, received their alloted share of discomfort with the very best grace in the world. They reached Bayonne after five days, not, it is true, of consecutive motion, but of such consecutive heat that they were glad to descend at the station of that excitable little city and in the fresh night air drive in open carriages over the few kilometres that remained to be traversed.

It was many hours before the journey was sufficiently a part of the past to enable the travelers to look about them, but on the evening succeeding their arrival, after a dinner on the verandah of the Continental, they sat with much contentment of spirit enjoying the intermittent showers of summer stars and the boom and rustle of the waves. Baden was unregretted. To the left, high above, on the summit of a projecting eminence, the white and illuminated Casino glittered like an ærian palace. To the right was the gardened quadrangle of the former Empress of the French, in the air was the scent of seaweed and before them the Infinite.

"It's quite good enough for me," Blydenburg confided to his companions, and the confidence in its inelegant terseness conveyed the sentiments of them all.

A week passed without bringing with it any incident worthy of record. In the mornings they met at the Moorish Pavilion which stands on the shore and there lounged or bathed. Maida's beauty necessarily attracted much attention, and when she issued in a floating wrapper from the sedan-chair in which she allowed herself to be carried from the Pavilion to the sea, a number of amateurs who stood each day just out of reach of the waves, expressed their admiration in winning gutturals.

She was, assuredly, very beautiful, particularly so in comparison with the powdered sallowness of the ladies from Spain, and when, with a breezy gesture of her own, she tossed her wrap to the bather and with sandaled feet and a white and clinging costume of serge she stepped to the water there was one on-looker who bethought him of a nymph of the Ægean Sea. She was a good swimmer, as the American girl often is, and she breasted and dived through the wonderful waves with an intrepidity such as the accompanying *baigneur* had been rarely called upon to restrain.

From the shade of beach chairs, large and covered like wicker tents, her husband and the Blydenburgs would watch her prowess, and when, after a final ride on the crest of some great billow, she would be tossed breathless and deliciously disheveled into the steadying arms of the bather, the amateurs were almost tempted to applaud.

In the afternoons there were drives and excursions. One day to Bayonne along the white, hard road that skirts the Chambre d'Amour, through the peace and quiet of Aiglet and on through kilometres of pines to the Adour, a river so beautiful in itself that all the ingenuity of man has been unable to make it wholly hideous, and thence by its banks to the outlying gardens of the city.

On other days they would loiter on the cliffs that overhang the Côte des Basques, or push on to Bidart, a chromatic village where the inhabitants are so silent that one might fancy them enchanted by the mellow marvels of their afternoons.

But of all other places Maida preferred Saint Jean-de-Luz. It lies near the frontier on a bay of the tenderest blue, and for background it has the hazy amethyst of the neighborly Pyrenees. The houses are rainbows of blended colors; from the open doorways the passer, now and then, catches a whiff of rancid oil, the smell of victuals cooked in fat, from a mouldering square a cathedral casts an unexpected chill, but otherwise the town is charming, warm and very bright. On the shore stands an inn and next to it a toy casino.

To this exotic resort the little party drove one afternoon. It had been originally arranged to pass the day there, but on the day for which the excursion was planned, a *Course Landaise* was announced at Biarritz, and it was then decided that they should first view the *course* and dine afterwards at Saint Jean. At first both Maida and Miss Blydenburg refused to attend the performance and it was not until they were assured that it was a bullfight for ladies in which there was no shedding of blood that they consented to be present. The spectacle which they then witnessed was voted most agreeable. The bulls, which turned out to be heifers, very lithe and excitable, were housed in boxed stalls, which bore their respective names: Isabel, Rosa, Paquita, Adelaide, Carlota and Sofia. The ring itself was an improvised arrangement constructed in a great racquet court. The spectators, according to their means, found seats on either side, the poorer in the sun and the more wealthy in the shaded Tribune d'Honneur. After a premonitory blare from municipal brass the quadrille entered the arena. They were a good-looking set of men, more plainly dressed than their bloodier brothers of Spain, and very agile. Two of them carrying long poles stationed themselves at the sides, one, armed with a barb laid himself down a few feet from Isabel's door, and a fourth threw his soft hat in the middle of the ring, put his feet in it and stood expectant. In a moment a latch was drawn, Isabel leaped from her stall, bounded over the prostrate form that pricked her on the way and made a straight rush for the motionless figure in the centre of the ring. When she reached him he was in the air and over her with his feet still in the hat. Isabel was bewildered, instead of goring a man she had run her horns into empty space and in her annoyance she turned viciously at one of the pole-bearing gentlemen who vaulted over her as easily as were he crossing a gutter, but in vaulting the pole slipped from him, and amid the applause of the audience Isabel chased him across the ring to a high fence opposite, and to which he rose like a bird with Isabel's horns on his heels. There was more of this amusement, and then Isabel, a trifle tired, was lured back to her box; Rosa was loosed and the performance repeated.

The escapes seemed so hairbreadth that Mr. Blydenburg announced his intention of witnessing a genuine bullfight, and on the way to Saint Jean urged his companions to accompany him over the border and view the real article. " There is one announced for next Sunday," he said, " at San Sebastian, a stone's throw from here." The appetite of all had been whetted, and during the rest of the drive, Mr. Blydenburg discoursed on the subject with such learning and enthusiasm that even his daughter consented to forget her Sabbath principles and make one of the projected party.

When the meal was done, they went into the toy Casino. There was a band playing at one end of the hall, the which was so narrow that the director had been obliged to select thin musicians, and beyond was a paperless reading-room, a vague café, a dwarf theatre, and a salle-de-jeu in white and gamboge. In the latter division, where the high life of Saint Jean had assembled, stood a table that resembled a roulette. In its centre were miniature revolving bulls, which immediately attracted Mr. Blydenburg's attention, and on the green baize were painted the names of cities.

" Banderilla! Ruego! Sevilla! " the croupier called, as the party entered. In one hand he held a rake, with which he possessed himself of the stakes of those who had lost, and with the other hand he tossed out coin to those who had won. The machinery was again set in motion, and when the impulse had ceased to act he called out anew, " Espada! Nero! Madrid! "

Mr. Blydenburg was thoroughly interested. In the residue of twenty-five French lessons, which he had learned in his boyhood from a German, he made bold to demand information.

"It's the neatest game in the world," the croupier replied; "six for one on the cities, even on the colors, even on banderilla or espada, and twenty for one on Frascuelo." And, as he gave the latter information, he pointed to a little figure armed with a sword, which was supposed to represent that famous matador. "The minimum," he added, obligingly, "is fifty centimes; the maximum, forty sous."

"I'll go Frascuelo," said Blydenburg, and suiting the action to the word, he placed a coin on the table. Maida, meanwhile, had put money on everything — cities, colors, banderilla, espada, and Frascuelo as well. To the surprise of every one, but most to that of the croupier, Frascuelo won. Maida saw twenty francs swept from her and forty returned. Blydenburg, who had played a closer game, received forty also, but he lost nothing, and he beamed as joyously as had the University of Copenhagen crowned an essay of his own manufacture.

It was by means of these mild amusements that the first week of their sojourn was helped away. Through the kindness of an international acquaintance, Mr. Incoul had been made welcome at the Cercle de Biarritz, and in that charming summer club, where there is much high play and perfect informality, he had become acquainted with a Spaniard, the Marquis of Zunzarraga.

One day when the latter gentleman had wearied of the columns of the *Epoca* and Mr. Incoul, and sought in vain for some refreshment from *Galignani,* they drew their chairs together and exchanged cigarettes.

In answer to the question which is addressed to every new-comer, Mr. Incoul expressed himself pleased with the country, adding that were not hotel life always distasteful he would be glad to remain on indefinitely.

" You might take a villa," the marquis suggested. To this Mr. Incoul made no reply. The nobleman fluttered his fingers a moment and then said, " take mine, you can have it, servants and all."

The Villa Zunzarraga was near the hotel and its airy architecture had already attracted Mr. Incoul's eye. It was a modern improvement on a feudal château, there were turreted wings in which the matchicoulis were replaced by astrogals and a broad and double stairway of marble led up to the main entrance.

" If you have nothing better to do to-day," the marquis continued, " go in and take a look at it. I have never rented it before, but this summer the marquesa is with the queen, my mistress, and I would be glad to have it off my hands."

After consulting Maida in regard to her wishes, Mr. Incoul determined to act on the suggestion, and that afternoon they went together to view the villa. In its appointments there was little fault to be found. There was no vestibule, unless, indeed, the entrance hall, which was large enough to accommodate a small cotillon, could be so considered; on the right were reception-rooms, to the left a dining-room, all facing the sea, while at the rear, overlooking a quiet garden that seemed to extend indefinitely and lose itself in the lilac fringes of the tamaris, was a library. On the floor above were bed and sitting rooms. In one wing were the offices, kitchen and servants' quarters, in another was the coachhouse and stables.

Under the guidance of the host, Mr. Incoul went to explore the place, while Maida remained in the library. It was a satisfactory room, lined on three sides with low, well-filled book-cases, the windows were doors and extended nearly to the ceiling, but the light fell through pink awnings under which was a verandah with steps that led to the garden below. From the walls hung selections of Goya's Proverbios and Tauromaquia, a series of nightmares in black and white. Among them was a picture of a lake of blood haunted by evil spirits; a vertiginous flight of phantoms more horrible than any Doré ever saw; a reunion of sorcerers with cats for steeds; women tearing teeth from the mouths of the gibbeted; a confusion of demons and incubes; a disordered dance of delirious manolas; caricatures that held the soul of Hoffmann; the disembowelment of fantastic chulos; horses tossed by bulls with chimerical horns; but best of all, a skeleton leaning with a leer from the tomb and scrawling on it the significant legend, *Nada*, nothing.

In one corner, on a pedestal, there glittered a Buddha, the legs crossed and a smile of indolent apathy on its imbecile features. Behind it was a giant crucifix with arms outstretched like the wings of woe.

Maida wandered from book-case to book-case, examining the contents with incurious eye. The titles were strange to her and new. In one division were the works of Archilaus, Albert le Grand, Raymond Lulle, Armand de Villenova, Nostradamus, and Paracelsus, the masters of occult science. Another was given up to Spanish literature. There were the poems of Berceo, the romancero of the church; the codex of Alphonso X., the Justinian of mediæval Spain; El Tesoro, a work on alchemy by the same royal hand and the Conquista d'ultramar. There was the Libro de consejos, by Sanchez IV.; and Bicerro, the armorial of the nobility, by his son, Alphonso XI. Therewith was a collection of verse of the troubadours, the songs of Aimeric de Bellinsi, Foulque de Lunel, Carbonel, Nat de Tours, and Riquier, the last of the knight-errants. Then came the poems of Juan de Mena, the Dante of Castille; the Rabelaisian relaxations of the Archbishop of Hita; the cancionero of Ausias March, that of Baena, of Stuñiga, and that of Ixar.

Another book-case was filled with the French poets, from Villon to Soulary. The editions were delicious, a pleasure to hold, and many of them bore the imprint of Lemerre. Among them was the Fleurs du Mal, an unexpurgated copy, and by it were the poems of Baudelaire's decadent descendants, Paul Verlaine and Mallarmé.

There were other book-cases, and of these there was one of which the door was locked. In it were Justine and Juliette, by the Marquis de Sade; the works of Piron; the works of Beroalde de Verville; a copy of Mercius; a copy of Thérèse Philosophe; the De Arcanis Amoris; Mirabeau's Rideau-levé; Gamaini, by Alfred de Musset and George Sand; Boccaccio; the Heptameron; Paphian Days; Crébillon's Sopha; the Erotika Biblion; the Satyricon of Petronius; an illustrated catalogue of the Naples Museum; Voltaire's Pucelle; a work or two of Diderot's; Maiseroy's Deux Amies; the Clouds; the Curée; everything, in fact, from Aristophanes to Zola.

The collection was meaningless to Maida, and she turned aside and went out on the verandah. Below, on the gravel walk, was a cat with a tail like a banner, and a neck furred like a ruff. Maida crumpled a bit of paper and threw it down. The cat jumped at it at once, toyed with it for a moment, and then, sliding backwards with a crab-like movement, its back arched, and its ears drawn down, it caught a glimpse of Maida's unfamiliar figure, and fled to the bushes with a shriek of feigned terror. A servant passed, and ignorant of Maida's presence, apostrophized the retreating feline as a loafer and a liar.

A moment later Mr. Incoul and the marquis reappeared.

"I have been admiring your Angora," Maida said, "but I fear I startled it."

The marquis rubbed his hands together thoughtfully. "It is a wonderful animal," he answered, "but it is not an Angora, it is a Thibetian cat, and though it does not talk, at least it converses. It is so odd in its ways that I called it Mistigris, as one might a familiar spirit, but my children prefer Ti-Mi; they think it more Thibetian, I fancy." He coughed slightly and looking at the points of his fingers, he added, "I will leave it with you of course."

And then Maida understood that the matter was settled and that the house was hers.

VII.

WHAT MAY BE SEEN FROM A PALCO

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THE installation was accomplished without difficulty. The marquis migrated to other shores and it took Maida but a short time to discover the pleasures of being luxuriously housed. The apartment which she selected for herself was composed of four rooms: there was a sitting-room in an angle with windows overlooking the sea and others that gave on a quiet street which skirted one wing of the villa. Next to it was a bed-room also overlooking the street, while back of that, on the garden side, was a bath and a dressing-room. A wide hall that was like a haunt of echoes separated these rooms from those of her husband.

Through the street, which was too steep to be much of a thoroughfare, there came each morning the clinging strain of a pastoral melody, and a pipe-playing goat-herd would pass leading his black, long-haired flock to the doors of those who bought the milk. When he had gone the silence was stirred by another sound, a call that rose and fell with exquisite sweetness and died away in infinite vibrations: it came from a little old woman, toothless and bent, who, with summer in her voice, hawked crisp gold bread of crescent shape, vaunting its delicacy in birdlike trills. There were other venders who announced their wares in similar ways, and one, a fisher, chaunted a low and mournful measure which he must have caught from the sea.

It was pleasant to be waked in this wise, Maida thought, and as she lay in her great bed of odorous wood, she listened to the calls, and when they had passed, the boom and retreating rustle of the waves occupied and lulled her. In such moments the thoughts that visited her were impermanent and fleeting. She made no effort to stay them, preferring the vague to the outlined, watching the changes and transformations of fancy as though her soul and she were separate, as were her mind a landscape, some

Paysage choisi,
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jonant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

The room was an accomplice of her languor. The windows were curtained with filmy yellow. Before them were miniature balconies filled with flowers, and as the sun rose the light filtered through flesh-colored awnings striated with ochre. The floor was a mosiac of variegated and lacquered wood. On either side of the bed were silk rugs, sea green and pink, seductive to the foot; the ceiling was a summer sky at dawn, a fresco in cinnabar and smalt.

The Blydenburgs, less luxuriously inclined, remained at the hotel. Mr. Blydenburg had not as yet enjoyed an opportunity of conversing in Basque; he had indeed attempted to address a mildewed little girl whom he encountered one day when loitering on the cliffs, but the child had taken flight, and a mule that was pasturing on a bramble, threw back its ears, elongated its tail and curving its lips, brayed with such anguish that Mr. Blydenburg was fain to delay his studies until fortune offered a more favorable opportunity.

It was at San Sebastian, he thought, that such an opportunity would be found ready made, and on the morning of the projected excursion he was in great and expectant spirits.

The morning itself was one of those delicious forenoons that reminded one of Veronese. In the air was a caress and in the breeze an exhilaration and a tonic. In the streets and about the squares there was an unusual liveliness, much loud talking, a great many oaths, and the irritation and excitement which is the prelude to a festival. The entire summer colony seemed to be on its way to Spain.

In the court-yard of the Villa Zunzarraga four horses harnessed to a landau stood in readiness. On the box the driver glistened with smart buttons and silver braid. His coat was short, his culottes were white, his waistcoat red, and he had made himself operatic with the galloons and trappings of an eighteenth-century postilion. It was not every day in the year that he drove to a corrida. By way of preparation for the coming spectacle, Karl, who stood at the carriage door, had already engaged a palco.

When Blydenburg and Milly arrived, and the party had entered the landau, there was a brisk drive through the town and a long sweep down the Route d'Espagne than which even the Corniche is not more lovely. The vaporous Pyrenees seemed near enough to be in reach of the hand, the elms that lined the roadside were monstrous, like the elms in a Druid forest, the fields were as green as had they been painted. There were pink villas with blinds of pale yellow, white houses roofed with tiles of mottled red, gardens splendid with the scent of honeysuckle, and children, bright-eyed, clear-featured, devoured by vermin and greed, ran out in a bold, aggressive way and called for coin.

"*Estamos en España!*" The carriage had come to a sudden halt. In the beauties of the landscape the journey had been forgotten. But at the driver's word there came to each of them that sudden thrill which visits every one that crosses a new frontier. Blydenburg looked eagerly about him. He had expected to be greeted by alcaldes and alguacils, he had fancied that he would view a jota, or at the very least a roadside bolero. "Are we really in Spain?" he wondered. In places of ladies in mantillas and short skirts there was a group of mangy laborers, the alcaldes and alguacils were represented by a sullen aduenaro, and the only trace of local color was in a muttered "*Coño de Dios*" that came wearily from a bystander. Certainly they were in Spain.

The custom-house officer made a motion, and the carriage swept on. To the left was Fuenterrabia, dozing on its gulf of blue, and soon they were in Irun. There was another halt for lunch and a change of horses, and then, on again. The scenery grew wilder, and the carriage jolted, for the road was poor. They passed the Jayzquibel, the Gaïnchurisqueta, the hamlet of Lezo, Passaje, from whence Lafayette set sail; Renteria, a city outside of the year of our Lord; they crossed the Oyarzun, they passed Alza, another stream was bridged and at last the circus hove in sight.

The bull-ring of San Sebastian is sufficiently vast for a battalion to manœuvre in at its ease. It is circled by a barrier some five feet high, back of which is another and a higher one. Between the two is a narrow passage. Above the higher barrier rise the tendidos — the stone benches of the amphitheatre — slanting upwards until they reach a gallery, in which are the gradas — the wooden benches — and directly over these, on the flooring above, are the palcos or boxes. Each box holds twenty people. They are all alike save that of the President's, which is larger, decorated with hangings and furnished with chairs, the other boxes having only seats of board. Under the President's box, and beneath the tendidos, is the toril from which the bulls are loosed. Opposite, across the arena, is the matedero, the gateway through which the horses enter and the dead are dragged out. In the passage between the two barriers are stationed the "supes," who cover up the blood, unsaddle dead horses, and attend to other matters of a similar and agreeable nature. There, too, the carpenters stand ready to repair any injury to the woodwork, and among them is a man in black, who at times issues furtively and gives a *coup de grace* to a writhing beast. There also are usually a few privileged amateurs who seek that vantage ground much as the dilettanti seek the side scenes of the theatre.

These arrangements, which it takes a paragraph to describe, are absorbed at a glance, but with that glance there comes an aftershock — a riot of color that would take a library to convey. For the moment the eye is dazzled; a myriad of multicolored fans are fluttering like fabulous butterflies; there are unimagined combinations of insolent hues; a multitude of rainbows oscillating in a deluge of light. And while the eye is dazzled the ear is bewildered, the pulse is stirred. The excitement of ten thousand people is contagious; the uproar is as deafening as the thunder of cannon. And then, at once, almost without transition, a silence. The President has come, and the most magnificent of modern spectacles is about to begin.

Almost simultaneously with the appearance of the chief magistrate of the town, the Incouls and Blydenburgs entered their box. There was a blast from a trumpet and an official in the costume known as that of Henri IV. issued on horseback from the matedero. The ring which a moment before had been peopled with amateurs was emptied in a trice. The principal actor, the espada, Mazzantini, escorted by his cuadrilla and followed by the picadors, advanced to the centre of the arena and there amid an explosion of bravos, bowed with a grace like that which Talma must have possessed, first to the President, who raised his high hat in return, and then in circular wise to the spectators.

He was young and exceedingly handsome, blue of eye and clear-featured; he smiled in the contented way of one who is sure of his own powers, and the applause redoubled. The Basques have made a national idol of him, for by birth he is one of them and very popular in Guipuzcoa. He was dressed after the fashion of Figaro in the "Barbiere," his knee breeches were of vermilion silk seamed with a broad spangle, his stockings were of flesh color, he wore a short, close-fitting jacket, richly embroidered; the vest was very low but gorgeous with designs; about his waist was a scarlet sash; his shoulders were heavy with gold and on his head was a black pomponed turban, the torero variety of the Tam O'Shanter. His costume had been imitated by the chulos and banderilleros. Nothing more seductive could be imagined. They were all of them slight, lithe and agile, and behind them the picadors in the Moorish splendor of their dress looked like giants on horseback.

The President dropped from his box the key of the toril. The alguacil is supposed to catch it in his hat, but in this instance he muffed it; it was picked up by another; the alguacil fled from the ring, the picadors stationed themselves lance in hand at equal distances about the barrier, the chulos prepared their mantles, there was a ringing fanfare, the doors of the toril flew open, and a black monster with the colors of his *ganaderia* fastened to his neck shot into the arena.

If he hesitated no one knew it. There was a confused mass of horse, bull and man, he was away again, another picador was down, and then attracted by the waving cloak of a chulo he turned and chased it across the ring. The chulo was over the fence in a second, and the bull rose like a greyhound and crossed it, too. Truly a magnificent beast. The supes and amateurs were in the ring in an instant and back again when the bull had passed. A door was opened, and surging again into the ring he swept like an avalanche on a picador, and raising him horse and all into the air flung him down as it seemed into the very pits of death. The picador was under the horse and the bull's horns were seeking him, but the brute reckoned without the espada. Mazzantini had caught him by the tail, which he twisted in such exquisite fashion that he was fain to turn, and as he turned the espada turned with him. The chulos meanwhile raised the picador over the barrier, for his legs and loins were so heavy with iron that once down he could not rise unassisted. Across the arena a horse lay quivering in a bath of gore, his feet entangled in his entrails, and another, unmounted, staggered along dyeing the sand with zigzags of the blood that spouted, fountain-like, from his breast. And over all was the tender blue of the sky of Spain.

When Mazzantini loosed his hold, he stood a moment, folded his arms, gave the bull a glance of contempt, turned on his heel and sauntered away. The applause was such as no *cabotin* has ever received. It was the delirious plaudits of ten thousand people drunk with the sun, with excitement — intoxicated with blood. Mazzantini bowed as calmly as were he a tenor, whose *ut de poitrine* had found appreciation in the stalls. And while the applause still lasted, the bull caught the staggering, blindfolded, unprotected horse and tossed him sheer over the barrier, and would have jumped after him had he not perceived a fourth picador ambling cautiously with pointed lance. At him he made a fresh rush, but the picador's lance was in his neck and held him away. He broke loose, however, and with an under lunge disemboweled the shuddering horse.

There was another blast of the trumpets, the signal for the banderilleros whose office it is to plant barbs in the neck of the bull — a delicate operation, for the banderillero must face the bull, and should he trip he is dead. This ceremony is seldom performed until the bull shows signs of weariness; then the barbs act like a tonic. In this instance the bull seemed as fresh as were he on his native heath, and the spectators were clamorous in their indignation. They called for more horses; they accused the management of economy; men stood up and shook their fists at the President; it was for him to order out fresh steeds, and, as he sat impassible, *pollice verso,* as one may say, they shouted "*Fuego al presidente, perro de presidente*" — dog of a president; set him on fire. And there were cat-calls and the screech of tin horns, and resounding and noisy insults, until the general attention was diverted by the pose of the banderilleros and the leaping and kicking of the bull, seeking to free his neck from the torturing barbs. At last, when he had been punctured eight times, he sought the centre of the ring, and stood there almost motionless, his tufted tail swaying nervously, his tongue lolling from his mouth, a mist of vapor circling from his nostrils, seething about his splendid horns and wrinkled neck, and in his great eyes a look of wonder, as though amazed that men could be crueler than he.

Again the trumpets sounded. Mazzantini, with a sword concealed in a muleta of bright scarlet silk, and accompanied by the chulos, approached him. The chulos flaunted their vivid cloaks, and when the bull, roused by the hated colors to new indignation, turned to chase them, they slipped aside and in the centre of the ring stood a young man dressed as airily as a dancer in a ballet, in a costume that a pin would have perforated, and before him a maddened and a gigantic brute.

In a second the bull was on him, but in that second a tongue of steel leaped from the muleta, glittered like a silver flash in the air, and straight over the lowered horns it swept and then cleaved down through the parting flesh and touched the spring of life. At the very feet of the espada the bull fell; he had not lost a drop of blood; it was the supreme expression of tauromaquia, the recognition that skill works from force.

And then the applause! There was a whirl of hats and cigars and cigarettes, and had San Sebastian been richer there would have been a shower of coin. Women kissed their hands and men held out their arms to embrace him. It was the delirium of appreciation. And Mazzantini saluted and bowed and smiled. He was quite at home, and calmer and more tranquil than any spectator. Suddenly there was a rush of caparisoned mules, ropes were attached to the dead horses, the bull was dragged out, the blood was concealed with sand, the toilet of the ring was made, the trumpets sounded and the last act of the first of the wonderful cycle of dramas was done.

There were five more bulls to be killed that day, but with their killing the action with which these pages have to deal need not be further delayed. From the box in the sombra Mr. Incoul had watched the spectacle with unemotional curiosity. Blydenburg, who had fortified himself with the contents of a pocket flask, manifested his earliest delight by shouting Bravo, but with such a disregard of the first syllable, and such an explosion of the second, that Mr. Incoul mistaking the applause for an imitation of the bark of a dog had at last begged him to desist.

The adjoining box was crowded, and among the occupants was a delicious young girl, with the Orient in her eyes, and lips that said Drink me. To her the spectacle was evidently one of alluring pathos. "*Pobre caballo,*" she would murmur when a horse fell, and then with her fan she would hide the bridge of her nose as though that were her organ of vision. But no matter how high the fan might be raised she always managed to see, and with the seeing there came from her compassionate little noises, a mingling of "*ay*" and "*Dios mio,*" that was most agreeable to listen to. Miss Blydenburg, who sat so near her that she might have touched her elbow, took these little noises for signals and according to their rise and fall learned when and when not to look down into the terrible ring below.

In the momentary intermission that occurred after the duel between the espada and the first bull, a mozo, guided by Karl, appeared in the box bearing with him cool liquids from the caverns beneath. Blydenburg, whose throat was parched with brandy and the strain of his incessant shouts, swallowed a naranjada at a gulp. Mr. Incoul declined to take anything, but the ladies found much refreshment in a concoction of white almonds which affects the tonsils as music affects the ear.

It was not until this potion had been absorbed that Maida began to take any noticeable interest. She had been fatigued by the drive, enervated by the heat, and the noise and clamor was certainly not in the nature of a sedative. But the almonds brought her comfort. She changed her seat from the rear of the box to the front, and sat with one arm on the balustrade, her hand supporting her delicate chin, and as her eyes followed the prowess of the bull she looked like some fair Pasiphae in modern guise.

It must have been the novelty of the scene that interested her. The light, the unusual and brilliant costumes, the agility of the actors, and the wonder of the sky, entered, probably, as component parts into any pleasure that she experienced. Certainly it could have been nothing else, for she was quick to avert her eyes whenever blood seemed imminent. The second bull, however, was far less active than the first. He had indeed accomplished a certain amount of destruction, but his attacks were more perfunctory than angered, and it was not until he had been irritated by the colored barbs that he displayed any lively sense of resentment. Then one of the banderilleros showed himself either awkward or timid; he may have been both; in any event his success was slight, and as the Spanish audience is not indulgent, he was hissed and hooted at. "Give him a pistol," cried some — the acmé of sarcasm — "*Torero de las marinas*," cried others. He was offered a safe seat in the tendidos. One group adjured the President to order his instant imprisonment. One might have thought that the tortures of the Inquisition could not be too severe for such a lout as he.

Maida, who was ignorant of the duties of a banderillero, looked down curiously at the gesticulating crowd below. The cause of their indignation she was unable to discover, and was about to turn to Mr. Blydenburg for information, when there came a singing in her ears. The question passed unuttered from her thoughts. The ring, the people, the sky itself had vanished. Near the toril, on a bench of stone, was Lenox Leigh.

VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

GRADUALLY the whirling ceased, the singing left her ears. Leigh raised his hat and Maida bowed in return. His eyes lingered on her a moment, and then he turned and disappeared.

"A friend of mine, Mr. Leigh, is down there," the girl announced. Her husband looked over the rail. "He's gone," she added. "I fancy he is coming up here."

"Who's coming?" Blydenburg inquired, for he had caught the words.

"A friend of my wife's," Mr. Incoul answered. "A man named Leigh — do you know him?"

"Mrs. Manhattan's brother, isn't he? No, I don't know him, but Milly does, I think. Don't you, Milly?"

Milly waved her head vaguely. She indeed knew the young man in question, but she was not over-confident that he had ever been more than transiently aware of her maidenly existence. She had, however, no opportunity to formulate her uncertainty in words. There was a rap on the door and Leigh entered.

Mr. Incoul rose as becomes a host. The young man bowed collectively to him and the Blydenburgs.

He touched Maida's hand and found a seat behind her. A bull-fight differs from an opera in many things, but particularly in this, that there may be exclamations, but there is no attempt at continuous conversation. Lenox Leigh, though not one to whom custom is law, said little during the rest of the performance. Now and then he bent forward to Maida, but whatever he may have said his remarks were fragmentary and casual. This much Miss Blydenburg noticed, and she noticed also that Maida appeared more interested in her glove than in the spectacle in the ring.

When the sixth and last bull had been vanquished and the crowd was leaving the circus, Mr. Incoul turned to his guest, " We are to dine at the Inglaterra, will you not join us? "

" Thank you," Lenox answered, " I shall be glad to. I came here in the train and I have had nothing since morning. I have been ravenous for hours, so much so," he added lightly, " that I have been trying to poison my hunger by thinking of the dishes that I dislike the most, beer soup, for instance, stewed snails, carp cooked in sweetmeats or unseasoned salads of cactus hearts."

" I don't know," Mr. Incoul answered gravely, " I don't know what we will have to-night. The dinner was ordered last week. They may have cooked it then."

" Possibly they did. On a *fiesta* San Sebastian is impossible. There are seven thousand strangers here to-day and the accommodations are insufficient for a third of them."

"I want to know —" exclaimed Blydenburg, always anxious for information. They had moved out of the box and aided by the crowd were drifting slowly down the stair.

At the *salida* Karl stood waiting to conduct them to the carriage.

"If you will get in with the ladies," said Mr. Incoul, "Blydenburg and myself will walk. The hotel can't be far."

To this proposal the young man objected. He had been sitting all day, he explained, and preferred to stretch his legs. He may have had other reasons, but if he had he said nothing of them. At once, then, it was arranged that the ladies, under Karl's protection, should drive to the Inglaterra, and that the others should follow on foot.

Half an hour later the entire party were seated at a table overlooking the Concha. The sun had sunk into the ocean as though it were imbibing an immense blue syrup. On either side of the bay rose miniature mountains, Orgullo and Igueldo tiara'd with fortresses and sloped with green. To the right in the distance was a great unfinished casino, and facing it, beneath Orgullo, was a cluster of white ascending villas. The dusk was sudden. The sky after hesitating between salmon and turquoise had chosen a lapis lazuli, which it changed to indigo, and with that for flooring the stars came out and danced.

The dinner passed off very smoothly. In spite of his boasted hunger, Lenox ate but sparingly. He was frugal as a Spaniard, and in the expansion which the heavy wine of the country will sometimes cause, Mr. Blydenburg declared that he looked like one. Each of the party had his or her little say about the corrida and its emotions, and Blydenburg, after discoursing with much learning on the subject, declared, to whomsoever would listen, that for his part he regretted the gladiators of Rome. As a topic, the bull-fight was inexhaustible. Every thread of conversation led back to it, and necessarily, in the course of the meal, Lenox was asked how it was that he happened to be present.

"I arrived at Biarritz from Paris last night," he explained, "and when I learned this morning that there was to be a bull-fight, I was not in a greater hurry to do anything else than to buy a ticket and take the train."

"Was it crowded?" Blydenburg asked in his florid way.

"Rather. It was comfortable enough till we reached Irun, but there I got out for a Spanish cigar, and when I returned, the train was so packed that I was obliged to utilize a first-class ticket in a third-class car. None of the people who lunched at the buffet were able to get back. I suppose three hundred were left. There was almost a riot. The station-master said that Irun was the head of the line, and to reserve a seat one must sit in it. Of course those who had seats were hugely amused at those who had none. One man, a Frenchman, bullied the station-master dreadfully. He said it was every kind of an outrage; that he ought to put on more cars; that he was incompetent; that he was imbecile; that he didn't know his business. 'It's the law,' said the station-master. 'I don't care that for your law!' cried the Frenchman. 'But the Préfet, sir.' 'To blazes with your Préfet!' But that was too strong. The Frenchman might abuse what he saw fit, but the Préfet evidently was sacred. I suppose it was treasonable to speak of him in that style. In any event, the station-master called up a file of soldiers and had the Frenchman led away. The onlookers were simply frantic with delight. If the Frenchman had only been shot before their eyes it would indeed have been a charming prelude to a bullfight." And then with an air that suggested retrospects of unexpressed regret, he added pensively, "I have never seen a man shot."

"No?" said Milly, boldly; "no more have I. Not that I want to, though," she hastened to explain. "It must be horrid."

Lenox looked up at her and then his eyes wandered to Maida, and rested caressingly in her own. But the caress was transient. Immediately he turned and busied himself with his plate.

"Are you to be in Biarritz long?" Mr. Incoul asked. The tone was perfectly courteous, friendly, even, but at the moment from the very abruptness of the question Lenox feared that the caress had been intercepted and something of the mute drama divined. Mentally he arranged Mr. Incoul as one constantly occupied in repeating *J'ai de bon tabac, tun'n auras pas,* and it was his design to disarm that gentleman of any suspicion he might harbor that his good tobacco, in this instance at least, was an envied possession or one over which he would be called to play the sentinel. The rôle of *mari sage* was frequent enough on the Continent, but few knew better than Lenox Leigh that it is rarely enacted in the States, and his intuitions had told him long before that it was one for which Mr. Incoul was ill adapted. Yet between the *mari sage* and the suspicionless husband there is a margin, and it was on that margin that Lenox determined that Mr. Incoul should tread. "No," he answered at once, and without any visible sign of preoccupation. "No, a day or two at most; I am on my way to Andalucia."

Blydenburg, as usual, was immediately interested. "It's very far, isn't it?" he panted.

"Not so far as it used to be. Nowadays one can go all the way in a sleeping car. Gautier, who discovered it, had to go in a stage-coach, which must have been tedious. But in spite of the railways the place is pretty much the same as it has been ever since the Middle Ages. Even the cholera has been unable to banish the local color. There are trains in Seville precisely as there are steamboats on the Grand Canal. But the sky is the same, and in the Sierra Morena there are still Moors and as yet no advertisements."

"You have been there then?"

"Yes, I was there some years ago. You ought to go yourself. I know of nothing so fabulous in its beauty. It is true I was there in the spring, but the autumn ought not to be a bad time to go. The country is parched perhaps, but then you would hardly camp out."

"What do you say, Incoul?" Blydenburg asked. "Wouldn't you like it?" he inquired of Maida.

"I could tell better when we get there," she answered; "but we might go," she added, looking at her husband.

"Why," said Blydenburg, "we could see Madrid and Burgos and Valladolid. It's all in the way."

Lenox interrupted him. "They are tiresome cities though, and gloomy to a degree. Valladolid and Burgos are like congeries of deserted prisons, Madrid is little different from any other large city. Fuenterrabia, next door here, is a thousand times more interesting. It is Cordova you should visit and Ronda and Granada and Sevilla and Cadix." And, as he uttered the names of these cities, he aromatized each of them with an accent that threw Blydenburg into stupors of admiration. Pronounced in that way they seemed worth visiting indeed.

"Which of them do you like the best?"

"I liked them all," Lenox answered, "I liked each of them best."

"But which is the most beautiful?"

"That depends on individual taste. I prefer Ronda, but Granada, I think, is most admired. If you will let me, I will quote a high authority:

"'Grenade efface en tout ses rivales; Grenade
Chante plus mollement la molle sérénade:
Elle peint ses maisons des plus riches couleurs,
Et l'on dit, que les vents suspendent leurs haleines,
Quand, par un soir d'été, Grenade dans ses plaines,
Répand ses femmes et ses fleurs.'"

In private life, verse is difficult of recitation, but Lenox recited well. He made such music of the second line that there came with his voice the sound of guitars; the others he delivered with the vowels full as one hears them at the Comédie, and therewith was a little pantomime so explanatory and suggestive that Blydenburg, whose knowledge of French was of the most rudimentary description, understood it all, and, in consequence, liked the young man the better.

The dinner was done, and they moved out on the terrace. The moon had chased the stars, the Concha glittered with lights, and before the hotel a crowd circled in indolent coils as though wearied with the holiday. There were many people, too, on the terrace, and in passing from the dining-room the little party, either by accident or design, got cut in twain. For the first time since the spring evening, Maida and Lenox were alone. Their solitude, it is true, was public, but that mattered little.

Maida utilized the earliest moment by asking her companion how he got there. "You should not have spoken to me," she added, before he could have answered.

"Maida!"

"No, you must go, you—"

"But I only came to find you," he whispered.

"To find me? How did you know where I was?"

"The *Morning News* told me. I was in Paris, on my way to Baden, for I heard you were there, and then, of course, when I saw in the paper that you were here, I followed after."

"Then you are not going to Andalucia?"

"No, not unless you do."

The girl wrung her hand. "Oh, Lenox, do go away!"

"I can't, nor do you wish it. You must let me see you. I will come to you tomorrow—he has an excellent voice, not so full as Gayarré's, but his method is better."

Mr. Incoul had suddenly approached them, and as suddenly Lenox's tone had changed. To all intents and purposes he was relating the merits of a tenor.

"The carriage is here," said Maida's husband, "we must be going; I am sorry we can't offer you a seat, Mr. Leigh, we are a trifle crowded as it is."

"Thank you, you are very kind. The train will take me safely enough."

He walked with them to the carriage, and aided Maida to enter it. Karl, who had been standing at the door, mounted to the box. When all were seated, Mr. Incoul added: "You must come and see us."

"Yes, come and see us, too," Blydenburg echoed. "By the way, where are you stopping?"

"I shall be glad to do so," Lenox answered; "I am at the Grand." He raised his hat and wished them a pleasant drive. The moon was shining full in his face, and Miss Blydenburg thought him even handsomer than Mazzantini. His good wishes were answered in chorus, Karl nudged the driver, and in a moment the carriage swept by and left him standing in the road.

"What a nice, frank fellow he is," Blydenburg began; "so different from the general run of young New Yorkers. There, I forgot to tell him I knew his sister; I am sorry, it would have seemed sort of friendly, made him feel more at home, don't you think? Not but that he seemed perfectly at his ease as it was. I wonder why he doesn't marry? None of those Leighs have money, have they? He could pick up an heiress, though, in no time, if he wanted to. Perhaps he prefers to be a bachelor. If he does I don't blame him a bit, a good-looking young fellow — "

And so the amiable gentleman rambled on. After a while finding that the reins of conversation were solely in his own hands, he took the fullest advantage of his position and discoursed at length on the bullfight, its history, its possibilities, the games of the Romans, how they fared under the Goths, what improvements came with the Moors, and wound up by suggesting an immediate visit to Fuenterrabia.

For the moment no enthusiasm was manifested. Mr. Incoul admitted that he would like to go, but the ladies said nothing, and presently the two men planned a little excursion by themselves.

Miss Blydenburg had made herself comfortable and fallen into a doze, but Maida sat watching the retreating uplands with unseeing eyes. Her thoughts had wandered, the visible was lost to her. Who knows what women see or the dreams and regrets that may come to the most matter-of-fact? Not long ago at the opera, in a little Italian town, the historian noticed an old lady, one who looked anything but sentimental, for that matter rather fierce than otherwise, but who, when Cherubino had sung his enchanting song, brushed away a furtive and unexpected tear. *Voi che sapete* indeed! Perhaps to her own cost she had learned and was grieving dumbly then over some ashes that the strain had stirred, and it is not impossible that as Maida sat watching the retreating uplands her own thoughts had circled back to an earlier summer when first she learned what Love might be.

IX.

MR. INCOUL DINES IN SPAIN

CHAPTER IX.

MR. INCOUL DINES IN SPAIN.

ON the morrow Mr. Blydenburg consulted his guide-books. The descriptions of Fuenterrabia were vague but alluring. The streets, he learned, were narrow; the roofs met; the houses were black with age; the doors were heavy with armorials; the windows barred — in short, a mediæval burg that slept on a blue gulf and let Time limp by unmarked. Among the inhabitants were some, he found, who accommodated travelers. The inns, it is true, were unstarred, but the names were so rich in suggestion that the neglect was not noticed. Mr. Blydenburg had never passed a night in Spain, and he felt that he would like to do so. This desire he succeeded in awakening in Mr. Incoul, and together they agreed to take an afternoon train, explore the town, pass the evening at the Casino and return to Biarritz the next morning. The programme thus arranged was put into immediate execution; two days after the bullfight they were again on their way to the frontier, and, as the train passed out of the station on its southern journey, Maida and Lenox Leigh were preparing for a stroll on the sands.

There is at Biarritz a division of the shore which, starting from the ruins of a corsair's castle, extends on to Saint-Jean-de-Luz. It is known as the Côte des Basques. On one side are the cliffs, on the other the sea, and between the two is a broad avenue which almost disappears when the tide is high. The sand is fine as face powder, *nuance* Rachel, packed hard. From the cliffs the view is delicious: in the distance are the mountains curving and melting in the haze; below, the ocean, spangled at the edges, is of a milky blue. Seen from the shore, the sea has the color of absinthe, an opalescent green, entangled and fringed with films of white; here the mountains escape in the perspective, and as the sun sinks the cliffs glitter. At times the sky is flecked with little clouds that dwindle and fade into spirals of pink; at others great masses rise sheer against the horizon, as might the bastions of Titan homes; and again are gigantic cathedrals, their spires lost in azure, their turrets swooning in excesses of vermilion grace. The only sound is from the waves, but few come to listen. The Côte des Basques is not fashionable with the summer colony; it is merely beautiful and solitary.

It was on the downs that Maida and Lenox first chose to walk, but after a while a sloping descent invited them to the shore below. Soon they rounded a projecting cliff, and Biarritz was hidden from them. The background was chalk festooned with green; afar were the purple outlines of the Pyrenees, and before them the ocean murmured its temptations of couch and of tomb.

They had been talking earnestly with the egotism of people to whom everything save self is landscape. The encircling beauty in which they walked had not left them unimpressed, yet the influence had been remote and undiscerned; the effect had been that of accessories. But now they were silent, for the wonder of the scene was upon them.

Presently Maida, finding a stone conveniently placed, sat down on the sand and used the stone for a back. Lenox threw himself at her feet. From the downs above there came now and then the slumberous tinkle of a bell, but so faintly that it fused with the rustle of the waves; no one heard it save a little girl who was tending cattle and who knew by the tinkle where each of her charges browsed. She was a ragged child, barefooted and not very wise; she was afraid of strangers with the vague fear that children have. And at times during the summer, when tourists crossed the downs where her cattle were, she would hide till they had passed.

On this afternoon she had been occupying herself with blades of grass, which she threw in the air and watched float down to the shore below, but at last she had wearied of this amusement and was about to turn and bully the cows in the shrill little voice which was hers, when Maida and her companion appeared on the scene. The child felt almost secure;

nothing but a bird could reach her from the shore and of birds she had no fear, and so, being curious and not very much afraid, she watched the couple with timid, inquisitive eyes.

For a long time she watched and for a long time they remained motionless in the positions which they had first chosen. At times the sound of their voices reached her. She wished she were a little nearer that she might hear what they said. She had never seen people sit on the beach before, though she had heard that people sometimes did so, all night, too, and that they were called smugglers. But somehow the people beneath her did not seem to belong to that category. For a moment she thought that they might be guarding the coast, and at that thought an inherent instinctive fear of officials beat in her small breast. She had indeed heard of female smugglers; there was her own aunt, for instance; but no, she had never heard of a coast-guard in woman's clothes. That idea had to be dismissed, and so she wondered and watched until she forgot all about them, and turned her attention to a white sail in the open.

The white sail fainted in sheets of cobalt. The sun which had neared the horizon was dying in throes of crimson and gamboge. It was time she knew to drive the cattle home. She stood up and brushed her hair aside, and as she did so, her eyes fell again on the couple below. The man had moved; he was not lying as he had been with his back to the bluff; he was kneeling by his companion, her head was on his shoulder, her arms were about his neck, and his mouth was close to hers. The little maid smiled knowingly; she had seen others in much the same attitude; the mystery was dissolved; they were neither guards nor smugglers — they were lovers; and she ran on at once through the bramble and called shrilly to the cows.

The excursionists, meanwhile, had reached Hendaye and had been ferried across the stream that flows between it and Fuenterrabia. At the landing they were met by a gentleman in green and red who muttered some inquiry. The boatman undid the straps of the valise which they bore, and this rite accomplished, the gentleman in green and red looked idly in them and turned as idly away. The boatman shouldered the valises again, and started for the inn.

Mr. Incoul and his friend were both men to whom the visible world exists and they followed with lingering surprise. They ascended a sudden slope, bordered on one side by a high white wall in which lizards played, and which they assumed was the wall of some monastery, but which they learned from the boatman concealed a gambling-house, and soon entered a small grass-grown plaza. To the right was a church, immense, austere; to the left were some mildewed dwellings; from an upper window a man with a crimson turban looked down with indifferent eyes and abruptly a bird sang.

From the plaza they entered the main street and soon were at the inn. Mr. Incoul and Blydenburg were both men to whom the visible world exists, but they were also men to whom the material world has much significance. In the hall of the inn a chicken and two turkeys clucked with fearless composure. The public room was small, close and full of insects. At a rickety table an old man, puffy and scornful, was quarreling with himself on the subject of a *peseta* which he held in his hand. The inn-keeper, a frowsy female, emerged from some remoter den, eyed them with unmollifiable suspicion and disappeared.

"We can't stop here," said Blydenburg with the air of a man denying the feasibility of a trip to the moon.

On inquiry they learned that the town contained nothing better. At the Casino there were roulette tables, but no beds. Travelers usually stopped at Hendaye or at Irun.

"Then we will go back to Biarritz."

They sent their valises on again to the landing place and then set out in search of Objects of Interest. The palace of Charlemagne scowled at them in a tottering, impotent way. When they attempted to enter the church, a chill caught them neck and crop and forced them back. For some time they wandered about in an aimless, unguided fashion, yet whatever direction they chose that direction led them firmly back to the landing place. At last they entered the Casino.

The grounds were charming, a trifle unkempt perhaps, the walks were not free from weeds, but the air was as heavy with the odor of flowers as a perfumery shop in Bond street. In one alley, in a bower of trees, was a row of tables; the covers were white and the glassware unexceptionable.

"We could dine here," Blydenburg said in a self-examining way. A pretty girl of the manola type, dressed like a soubrette in a vaudeville, approached and decorated his lapel with a tube-rose. "We certainly can dine here," he repeated.

The girl seemed to divine the meaning of his words. "*Ciertamente, Caballero,*" she lisped.

Mr. Blydenburg had never been called *Caballero* before, and he liked it. "What do you say, Incoul?" he asked.

"I am willing, order it now if you care to."

But the ordering was not easy. Mr. Blydenburg had never studied pantomime, and his gestures were more indicative of a patient describing a toothache to a dentist than of an American citizen ordering an evening meal. "*Kayry-Oostay,*" he repeated, and then from some abyss of memory he called to his aid detached phrases in German.

The girl laughed blithely. Her mouth was like a pomegranate cut in twain. She took a thin book bound in morocco from the table and handed it to the unhappy gentleman. It was, he found, a list of dishes and of wines. In his excitement, he pointed one after another to three different soups, and then waving the book at the girl as who should say, "I leave the rest to you," he dared Mr. Incoul to go into the Casino and break the bank for an appetizer.

The Casino, a low building of leprous white, stood in the centre of the garden. At the door, a lackey, in frayed, ill-fitting livery, took their sticks and gave them numbered checks in exchange. The gambling-room was on the floor above, and occupied the entire length of the house. There, about a roulette table, a dozen men were seated playing in a cheap and vicious way for small stakes. They looked exactly what they were, and nothing worse can be said of them. "A den of thieves in a miniature paradise," thought Mr. Blydenburg, and his fancy was so pleasured with the phrase that he determined to write a letter to the *Evening Post*, in which, with that for title, he would give a description of Fuenterrabia. He found a seat and began to play. Mr. Incoul looked on for a moment and then sought the reading-room. When he returned Blydenburg had a heap of counters before him.

"I have won all that!" he exclaimed exultingly. He looked at his watch, it was after seven. He cashed the counters and together they went down again to the garden.

The dinner was ready. They had one soup, not three, and other dishes of which no particular mention is necessary. But therewith was a bottle of Val de Peñas, a wine so delicious that a temperance lecturer suffering from hydrophobia would have drunk of it. The manola with the pomegranate mouth fluttered near them, and toward the close of the meal Mr. Blydenburg chucked her under the chin. "Nice girl that," he announced complacently.

"I dare say," his friend answered, "but I have never been able to take an interest in women of that class."

Blydenburg was flushed with winnings and wine. He did not notice the snub and proceeded to relate an after-dinner story of that kind in which men of a certain age are said to luxuriate. Mr. Incoul listened negligently.

"God knows," he said at last, "I am not a Puritan, but I like refinement, and refinement and immorality are incompatible."

"Fiddlesticks! Look at London, look at Paris, New York even; there are women whom you and I both know, women in the very best society, of whom all manner of things are said and known. You may call them immoral if you want to, but you cannot say that they are not refined."

"I say this, were I related in any way, were I the brother, father, the husband of such a woman, I would wring her neck. I believe in purity in women, and I believe also in purity in men."

"Yes, it's a good thing to believe in, but it's hard to find."

Mr. Incoul had spoken more vehemently than was his wont, and to this remark he made no answer. His eyes were green, not the green of the cat but the green of a tiger, and as he sat with fingers clinched, and a cheerless smile on his thin lips, he looked a modern hunter of the Holy Grail.

The night train leaves Hendaye a trifle after ten, and soon a *sereno* was heard calling the hour, and declaring that all was well. It was time to be going, they knew, and without further delay they had themselves ferried again across the stream. The return journey was unmarked by adventure or incident. Mr. Blydenburg fell into a doze, and after dreaming of the pomegranate mouth awoke at Biarritz, annoyed that he had not thought to address the manola in Basque. At the station they found a carriage, and, as Blydenburg entered it, he made with himself a little consolatory pact that some day he would go back to Fuenterrabia alone.

The station at Biarritz is several miles from the town, and as the horses were slow it was almost twelve o'clock before the Continental was reached. Blydenburg alighted there and Mr. Incoul drove on alone to the villa. As he approached it he saw that his wife's rooms were illuminated. For the moment he thought she might be waiting for him, but at once he knew that was impossible, for on leaving he had said he would pass the night in Spain.

The carriage drew up before the main entrance. He felt for small money to pay the driver, but found nothing smaller than a louis. The driver, after a protracted fumbling, declared that in the matter of change he was not a bit better of. Where is the cabman who was ever supplied? Rather than waste words Mr. Incoul gave him the louis and the man drove off, delighted to find that the old trick was still in working order.

Mr. Incoul looked up again at his wife's window, but during his parley with the driver the lights had been extinguished. He entered the gate and opened the door with a key. The hall was dark; he found a match and lit it. On the stair was Lenox Leigh. The match flickered and went out, but through the open door the moon poured in.

The young man rubbed his hat as though uncertain what to do or say. At last he reached the door, "I am at the Grand, you know," he hazarded.

"Yes, I know," Mr. Incoul answered, "and I hope you are comfortable."

Leigh passed out. Mr. Incoul closed and bolted the door behind him. For a moment he stood very still. Then turning, he ascended the stair.

X.

THE POINT OF VIEW

CHAPTER X.

THE POINT OF VIEW.

ON leaving the villa Lenox Leigh experienced a number of conflicting emotions, and at last found relief in sleep. The day that followed he passed in chambered solitude; it was possible that some delegate from Mr. Incoul might wish to exchange a word with him, and in accordance with the unwritten statutes of what is seemly, it behooved him to be in readiness for the exchange of that word. Moreover, he was expectant of a line from Maida, some word indicative of the course of conduct which he should pursue, some message, in fact, which would aid him to rise from the uncertainty in which he groped. As a consequence he remained in his room. He was not one to whom solitude is irksome, indeed he had often found it grateful in its refreshment, but to be enjoyable solitude should not be coupled with suspense; in that case it is uneasiness magnified by the infinite. And if fear be analyzed, what is it save the dread of the unknown? When the nerves are unstrung a calamity is often a tonic. The worst that can be has been done, the blow has fallen, and with the falling fear vanishes, hope returns, the healing process begins at once.

The uneasiness which visited Lenox Leigh came precisely from his inability to determine whether or not a blow was impending. As to the blow, he cared, in the abstract, very little. It it were to be given, let it be dealt and be done with; that which alone troubled him was his ignorance of what had ensued after his meeting with Mr. Incoul, and his incapacity to foresee in what manner the consequences of that meeting would affect his relations with Mr. Incoul's wife.

In this uncertainty he looked at the matter from every side, and, that he might get the broadest view, he recalled the incidents connected with the meeting. The facts of the case seemed then to resolve themselves into this: Mr. Incoul had unexpectedly returned to his home after midnight, and had met a friend of his wife's descending the stair. Their greeting, if formal, had been perfectly courteous. The departing guest had informed the returning husband at what hotel he was stopping, and that gentleman had expressed the hope that he was comfortable. Certainly there was nothing extraordinary in that. People who dwelled in recondite regions might see impropriety in a call that extended up to and beyond midnight, whereas others who lived in more liberal centres might consider it the most natural thing in the world. It was, then, merely the point of view, and what was the point of view which Mr. Incoul had adopted? If he considered it an impropriety why had he seemed so indifferent? And, if he considered it natural and proper, why should he have been so damned civil? Why should he have expressed the hope that his wife's guest was comfortable at a hotel? Was the expression of that hope merely a commonplace rejoinder, or was it an intentional slur? Surely, every one possessed of the brain of a medium-sized rabbit feels that it is as absurd to expect an intelligent being to be comfortable in a hotel as it is to suppose that he can find enjoyment in an evening party or amusement in a comic paper. Then again, and this, after all, was the great question: was the return of Mr. Incoul intentional or accidental? If it was intentional, if he had gone away intending that he would be absent all night merely that by an unexpected return he might verify any suspicions which he may have harbored, then in driving to his door in a rumbling coach he had shown himself a very poor plotter. On the other hand, if the return were accidental had it served to turn a suspicionless husband into a suspicious one, and if it had so served, how far did those suspicions extend? Did he think that his wife and her guest had been occupied with aimless chit-chat, or did he believe that their conversation had been of a personal and intimate nature?

As Lenox pondered over these things it seemed to him that, let Mr. Incoul suspect what he might, the one and unique cause for apprehension lay in the attitude which Maida had assumed when her husband, after closing the door, had gone to her in search of an explanation. That he had so gone there was to him no possible doubt. And it was in the expectancy of tidings as to the result of that explanation that he waited the entire day in his room.

But the afternoon waned into dusk and still no tidings came. As the hours wore on his uneasiness decreased. "Bah!" he muttered to himself at last, "in the winter I gave all my mornings to Pyrrho and Ænesidemus, and here six months later during an entire day I bother myself about eventualities."

He sighed wearily with an air of self-disgust, and rising from the sofa on which his meditations had been passed he went to the window. The Casino opposite was already illuminated. "They will be there to-night," he thought. "I have been a fool for my pains. If Maida hasn't written it is because there has been nothing to write. I will look them up after dinner and everything will be as before." He took off his morning suit and got himself into evening dress. He tied his white cravat without emotion, with a precision that was geometric in its accuracy, and to hold the tie in place he ran a silver pin through the collar without so much as pricking his neck. He was thoroughly at ease. The fear of the blow had passed. Pyrrho, Ænesidemus, the whole corps of ataraxists had surged suddenly and rescued him from the toils of the inscrutable.

At a florist's in the street below he found an orchid with which he decked his button-hole, and then in search of dinner he sauntered into Helder's, a restaurant on the main street, a trifle above the Grand Hôtel. It was crowded; there did not seem to be a single table unoccupied. He hesitated for a moment, and was about to go elsewhere when he noticed some one signaling to him from the remoter end of the garden. He could not at first make out who it was and it was not until he had made use of a monocle that he recognized a fellow Baltimorean, Mr. Clarence May, with whom in days gone by he had been on terms approaching those of intimacy.

Mr. Clarence May, more familiarly known as Clara, was a pigeon-shooter who for some years past had been promenading the side scenes of continental life. He was well known in the penal colonies of the Riviera, and hand-in-glove with some of the most distinguished *rastaquouères,* yet did he happen in a proscenium it was by accident. In appearance he was not beautiful: he was a meagre little man, possessed of vague features and an allowance of sandy hair so undetermined that few were able to remember whether or not he wore any on his face. When he spoke it was with a slight stutter, a trick of speech which he declared he had inherited from his wet-nurse.

He rose from his seat, and hurrying forward, greeted Lenox as though he had seen him the week before. He was anything but an idealist, yet he treated Time as though it were the veriest fiction of the non-existent, and he bombarded no one with questions as to what had become of them, or where had they been.

"I have just ordered dinner," he said, in his amusing stammer, "you must share it with me." And Lenox, who had not a prejudice to his name, accepted the invitation as readily as it was made.

"I don't know," May continued, when they were seated — "I don't know whether you will like the dinner — I have ordered very little. No soup, too hot, don't you think? No oysters, there are none; all out visiting, the man said; for fish I have substituted a melon; fish, at the seaside, is never good; then we are to have white truffles, with a plain sauce, a chateaubriand, salad, a bit of cheese — *voilà!* How will that suit you?"

Lenox nodded, as who should say, had I ordered it myself it could not be more to my taste, and thus encouraged, May offered him a glass of Amer Picon, a beverage that smells like an orange and looks like ink.

The dinner passed off pleasantly enough. The white truffles were excellent, and the chateaubriand cooked to a turn. The only fault to be found was with the Brie, which May seemed to think was not as flowing as it should be.

"By the way," he said at last when coffee was served, "you know Mirette is here?"

"Mirette? Who is Mirette?"

"Why, good gad! My dear fellow, Mirette is

Mirette; the one adorable, unique, divine Mirette. You don't mean to say you never heard of her! "

" I do, though perhaps she may have had the good fortune to hear of me."

" Heavens alive, man! don't you read the papers? "

Lenox smiled. " Why should I? I am not interested in the community. It might be stricken with dry-rot, elephantiasis and plica polonica for ought I care. Besides, there is nothing in them; the English papers are all advertisements and aridity, the French are frivolous and obscene. I mind neither frivolity nor obscenity; both have their uses, as flowers and cesspools have theirs; but I object to them served with my breakfast. I think if once a year a man would read a summary of the twelvemonth, he would get in ten minutes a digest of all that might be necessary to know, and what is more to the point, he would have to his credit a clear profit of two hundred hours at the very least, and two hundred hours rightly employed are sufficient for the acquirement of such a knowledge of a foreign language as will permit a man to make love in it gracefully. No, I seldom read the papers, so forgive my ignorance as to Mirette."

" After such an explanation I shall have to. But if you care to learn by word of mouth that which you decline to read in print, Mirette is *premier sujet.*"

" In the ballet, you mean."

" Yes, in the ballet, and I can't for the life of me think of a ballet without her."

"She must have gone to your head."

"And to every one's who has seen her."

"You say she is here?"

"Yes, she'll be at the Casino to-night; I'll present you if you say so."

"I might take a look at her, but I fancy I shall be occupied elsewhere."

"As you like." May drew out his watch. "It's after nine," he added, "if we are going to the Casino we had better be t-toddling."

On the way there May entered a tobacconist's, and Lenox waited for him without. As he loitered on the curb, Blydenburg rounded an adjacent corner.

"Well," exclaimed the latter, "you didn't see our friends off."

"What friends?"

"The Incouls of course; didn't you know that they had gone?"

Lenox looked at him blankly. "Gone," he echoed.

"Yes, they must have sent you word. Incoul seemed to expect you. They have gone up to Paris. If I had known beforehand —"

Mr. Blydenburg rambled on, but Lenox no longer listened. It was for this then that he had been bothering himself the entire day. The abruptness of the departure mystified him, yet he comforted himself with the thought that had there been anything abnormal, it could not have escaped Blydenburg's attention.

"And you say they expected me?" he asked at last.

"Yes, they seemed to. Incoul left good-bye for you. When you get to Paris look them up."

While he was speaking May came out from the tobacconist's.

"I will do so," Lenox said, and with a parting nod he joined his friend.

As he walked on down the road to the Casino, Mr. Blydenburg looked musingly after him. He would not be a bad match for Milly, he told himself, not a bad match at all; and thinking that perhaps it might be but a question of bringing the two young people together, he presently started off in search of his daughter and led her, lamblike, to the Casino. But once there he felt instinctively that for that evening at least any bringing together of the young people was impossible. Lenox was engaged in an animated conversation with a conspicuously dressed lady, whom, Mr. Blydenburg learned on inquiry, was none other than the notorious Mlle. Mirette, of the Théâtre National de l'Opéra.

XI.

THE HOUSE IN THE PARC MONCEAU

Chapter XI.

THE HOUSE IN THE PARC MONCEAU.

THERE had been a crash in Wall street. Two of the best houses had gone under. Of one of these the senior partner had had recourse to the bare bodkin. For several years previous his wife had dispensed large hospitality from a charming hôtel just within the gates of the Parc Monceau. At the news of her ruined widowhood she fled from Paris. In a week it was only her creditors that remembered her. The hôtel was sold under the hammer. A speculator bought it and while waiting a chance to sell it again at a premium, offered it for rent, fully furnished, as it stood. This by the way.

After the dinner in Spain, Mr. Incoul passed some time in thought. The next morning he sent for Karl, and after a consultation with him, he went to the square that overhangs the sea, entered the telegraph office, found a blank, wrote a brief message, and after attending to its despatch, returned to the villa. His wife was in the library, and as he entered the room the *maître d'hôtel* announced that their excellencies were served.

Maida had never been more bewildering in her beauty. Her lips were moist, and under her polar-blue eyes were the faintest of semicircles.

"Did you enjoy your trip to Fuenterrabia?" she asked.

"Exceedingly," he answered. But he did not enter into details and the breakfast was done before either of them spoke again.

At last as Maida rose from the table Mr. Incoul said: "We leave for Paris at five this afternoon. I beg you will see to it that your things are ready."

She steadied herself against a chair, she would have spoken, but he had risen also and left the room.

For the time being her mind refused to act. Into the fibres of her there settled that chill which the garb and aspect of a policeman produces on the conscience of a misdemeanant. But the chill passed as policemen do, and a fever came in its place.

To hypnotize her thoughts she caught up an English journal. She read of a cocoa that was grateful and comforting, the praises of Pear's Soap, an invitation from Mr. Streeter to view his wares, a column of testimonials on the merits of a new pill, appeals from societies for pecuniary aid. She learned that a Doré was on exhibition in New Bond street, that Lady Grenville, The Oaks, Market Litchfield, was anxious to secure a situation for a most excellent under-housemaid, that money in large amounts or small could be obtained without publicity on simple note of hand by applying personally or by letter to Moss & Lewes, Golden Square. She found that a harmless, effective and permanent cure for corpulency would be sent to any part of the world, post-paid, on receipt of twelve stamps, and that the Junior Macready Club would admit a few more members without entrance fee. She read it all determinedly, by sheer effort of will, and at last in glancing over an oasis her eye fell upon a telegram from Madrid which stated cholera had broken out afresh.

She took the paper with her and hurried from the room. In the hall her husband stood talking to Karl. She went to him and pointed to the telegram. "Is it for this we are to leave?" she asked.

He read the notice and returned it. "Yes," he answered, "it is for that." And then it was that both chill and fever passed away.

The journey from Biarritz was accomplished without incident. On their previous visit to Paris, they had put up at the Bristol and to that hostelry they returned. The manager had been notified and the yellow suite overlooking the Place Vendôme was prepared for their reception. On arriving, Maida went at once with her maid to her room. Mr. Incoul changed his clothes, passed an hour at the Hamman, breakfasted at Voisin's, and then had himself driven to a house-agent.

The clerk, a man of fat and greasy presence, gave him a list of apartments, marking with a star those which he thought might prove most suitable. Mr. Incoul visited them all. He had never lived in an apartment in Paris and the absence of certain conveniences perplexed him. The last apartment of those that were starred was near the Arc de Triomphe. When he had been shown it over he found a seat, and heedless of the volubility of the concierge, rested his head in his hand and thought. For the moment it seemed to him as though it would be best to return to New York, but there were objections to that, and reflecting that there might be other and better arranged apartments, he left the chattering concierge and drove again to the agent's.

"I have seen nothing I liked," he said simply.

At this the clerk expressed his intense surprise. The apartment in the Avenue Montaigne was everything that there was of most fine, and wait, the Hospodar of Wallachia had just quitted the one in the Rue de Presbourg. "It astonishes me much," he said.

The astonishment of the clerk was to Mr. Incoul a matter of perfect indifference. "Have you any private houses?" he asked.

"Ah, yes, particular hôtels." Yes, there was one near the Trocadero, but for his part he found that the apartment in the Avenue Montaigne would fit him much better. "But now that I am there," he continued, "I recall myself of one that is enchanter as a subjunctive. I engage you to visit it." And thereupon he wrote down the address of the house in the Parc Monceau.

It was not, Mr. Incoul discovered, a large dwelling, but the appointments left little to be desired. In the dressing-rooms was running water, and each of the bed-rooms was supplied with gas-fixtures. He touched one to see if it were in working order, and immediately the escaping ether assured him that it was. He sniffed it with a feeling akin to pleasure. One would have thought that since he left Madison avenue he had not enjoyed such a treat. There was gas to be found in the dining-room, but the reception-rooms were furnished with lamps and candelabras. The bed-rooms were on the floor above. One of these overlooked the park. There was a dressing-room next to it, but to the two rooms there was but one entrance, and that from the hall. This little suite, Mr. Incoul resolved, should be occupied by his wife. Beyond, across the hall, was a sitting-room, and at the other end of the house was a second suite, which Mr. Incoul mentally selected for himself.

He returned to the agent, and informed him that the house suited him, an announcement which the man received with an air of personal sympathy.

"Is it not!" he exclaimed, "it made the mouth champagne nothing but to think there. And again, one was at home with one's self. Truly, the hôtel was beautiful as a boulevard. Monsieur would never regret himself of it. And had Monsieur servants?

No, good then. Let Monsieur not disquiet himself. He who spoke knew of a cook, veritably a blue ribbon, and as to masters of hôtel, why, anointed name of a dog, not later than yesterday, he had heard that Baptiste — he who had served the family of Cantacuzène — Monsieur knew her, without doubt, came to be free."

In many respects Paris is not what it might be. The shops are vulgar in their ostentation. Were Monte Cristo to return he would find his splendor cheap and commonplace. In a city where Asiatic magnificence is sold from misfit and remnant counters by the ton, where emeralds large as swallows' eggs are to be had in the side-streets at a discount, where agents are ready to provide everything from an opéra-seria to a shoelace, the *badauds* have lost their ability to be startled. Paris, moreover, is not what it was. The suavity and civility for which it was proverbial have gone the way of other old-fashioned virtues; the wit which used to run about the streets never by any chance enters a salon; save in China a more rapacious set of bandits than the restauranteurs and shop-keepers do not exist; the theatres are haunts of ennui; the boulevards are filled with the worst-dressed set of people in the world. As for Parisian gaiety, there is nothing duller — no, not even a carnival. In winter the city is a tomb; in summer a furnace. In fact, there are dozens and dozens of places far more attractive, but there is not one where housekeeping is easier. The butcher and baker are invisible providers of the best of fare. The servants understand their duties and attend to them, and, given a little forethought and a good bank account, the palace of the White Cat is there the most realizable of constructions.

In a week's time the house in the Parc Monceau ran in grooves. To keep it running the tenants had absolutely nothing to do but to pay the bills. For this function Mr. Incoul was amply prepared, and, that the establishment should be on a proper footing, he furnished an adjacent stable with carriages, grooms and horse.

XII.

MR. INCOUL IS PREOCCUPIED

CHAPTER XII.

MR. INCOUL IS PREOCCUPIED.

MR. INCOUL'S attitude to his wife had, meanwhile, in no wise altered. To an observer, nay, to Maida herself, he was as silent, methodical and self-abnegatory as he had been from the first. He had indeed caused her to send a regret to Ballister without giving any reason why the regret should be sent, but otherwise he showed himself very indulgent.

He cared little for the stage, yet to gratify Maida he engaged boxes for the season at the Français and at the Opéra. Now and then in the early autumn when summer was still in the air he took her to dine in the Bois, at Madrid or Armenenville, and drove home with her in the cool of the evening, stopping, perhaps, for a moment at some one of the different concerts that lined the Champs Elysées. And sometimes he went with her to Versailles and at others to Vincennes, and one Sunday to Bougival. But there Maida would never return; it was crowded with a set of people the like of which she had never seen before, with women whose voices were high pitched and unmodulated, and men in queer coats who stared at her and smiled if they caught her eye.

But with the first tingle that accompanies the falling leaves, the open-air restaurants and concerts closed their doors. There was a succession of new plays which Vitu always praised and Sarcey always damned. The verdict of the latter gentleman, however, did not affect Maida in the least. She went bravely to the Odéon and liked it, to the Cluny where she saw a shocking play that made her laugh till she cried. She went to the Nations and saw Lacressonière and shuddered before the art of that wonderful actor. At the Gymnase she saw the "Maître des Forges" and when she went home her eyes were wet; she saw "Nitouche" and would have willingly gone back the next night to see it again; even Mr. Incoul smiled; nothing more irresistibly amusing than Baron could be imagined; she saw, too, Bartet and Delaunay, and for the first time heard French well spoken. But of all entertainments the Opéra pleasured her most. Already, under Mapleson's reign, she had wearied of mere sweetness in music; she felt that she would enjoy Wagner and even planned a pilgrimage to Bayreuth, but meanwhile Meyerbeer had the power to intoxicate her very soul. The septette in the second act of "L'Africaine" affected her as had never anything before; it vibrated from her finger-tips to the back of her neck; the entire score, from the opening notes of the overture to the farewell of Zuleika's that fuses with the murmur of the sea, thrilled her with abrupt surprises, with series and excesses of delight.

There were, of course, many evenings when neither opera nor theatre was attractive, and on such evenings invitations from resident friends and acquaintances were sometimes accepted and sometimes open house was held.

On these occasions, Maida found herself an envied bride. It was not merely that her husband was rich enough to buy a principality and hand it over for charitable purposes, it was not merely that he was willing to give her everything that feminine heart could desire, it was that, however crowded the halls might be, he seemed conscious of the existence of but one woman, and that woman was his wife. There were triflers who said that this attitude was *bourgeois;* there were others — more witty — who said that it was immoral; but, be this as it may, the South American highwaymen, who called themselves generals, the Russian princesses, the Roumanian boyards, the attachés, embassadors, and other accredited bores, the contingent from the Faubourg, the American residents, who, were they sent in a body to the rack, could not have confessed to an original thought among them, all these, together with a sprinkling of Spaniards and English, the Tout-Paris, in fact, agreed, as it was intended they should, on this one point, to wit, that Mr. Incoul was the most devoted of husbands.

And such apparently he was. If Maida had any lingering doubts as to the real reason of their return to Paris, little by little they faded. After her fright she made with herself several little compacts, and that she might carry them out the better she wrote to Lenox a short, decisive note. She determined that he should never enter her life again. It was no longer his, he had let it go without an effort to detain it, and in Biarritz if it had seemed that he still held the key of her heart, it was owing as much to the unexpectedness of his presence as to the languors of the afternoons. In marrying, she had meant to be brave; indeed, she had been so — when there was no danger; and if in spite of her intentions she had faltered, the faltering had at least served as a lesson which she would never need to learn again. Over the cinders of her youth she would write a Requiescat. Her girlhood had been her own to give, but her womanhood she had pledged to another.

As she thought of these things she wondered at her husband. He had done what she had hardly dared to expect — he had observed their ante-nuptial agreement to the letter. A brother could not have treated her with greater respect. Surely if ever a man set out to win his wife's affection he had chosen the surest way. And why had he so acted if it were not as he had said, that given time and opportunity, he *would* win her affection. He was doing so, Maida felt, and with infinitely greater speed that she had ever deemed possible. Beside, if the mangled remnants of her heart seemed attractive, why should he be debarred from their possession? Yet, that was precisely the point;

he did not know of the mangled remnants, he thought her heart-whole and virginal. But what would he do if he learned the truth? And as she wondered, suddenly the consciousness came to her that she was living with a stranger.

Heretofore she had not puzzled over the possible intricacies of her husband's inner nature. She had known that he was of a grave and silent disposition, and as such she had been content to accept him, without question or query. But as she collected some of the scattered threads and memories of their life in common, it seemed to her that latterly he had become even graver and more silent than before. And this merely when they were alone. In the presence of a third person, when they went abroad as guests, or when they remained at home as hosts, he put his gravity aside like a garment. He encouraged her in whatever conversation she might have engaged in, he aided her with a word or a suggestion, he made a point of consulting her openly, and smiled approvingly at any bright remark she chanced to make.

But when they were alone, unless she personally addressed him, he seldom spoke, and the answers that he gave her, while perfectly courteous in tone and couching, struck her, now that she reflected, as automatic, like phrases learned by rote. It is true they were rarely alone. In the mornings he busied himself with his correspondence, and in the afternoons she found herself fully occupied with shops and visits, while in the evenings there was usually a dinner, a play, or a reception, sometimes all three. Since the season had begun, it was only now and then, once in ten days perhaps, that an evening was passed *en tête-à-tête*. On such occasions he would take up a book and read persistently, or he would smoke, flicking the ashes from the cigar abstractedly with his little finger, and so sit motionless for hours, his eyes fixed on the cornice.

It was this silence that puzzled her. It was evident that he was thinking of something, but of what? It could not be archæology, he seemed to have given it up, and he was not a metaphysician, the only thinker, be it said, to whom silence is at all times permissible.

At first she feared that his preoccupation might in some way be connected with the episodes at Biarritz, but this fear faded. Mr. Incoul had been made a member of the Cercle des Capucines, and now and then looked in there ostensibly to glance at the papers or to take a hand at whist. One day he said casually, "I saw your friend Leigh at the club. You might ask him to dinner." The invitation was sent, but Lenox had regretted. After that incident it was impossible for her to suppose that her husband's preoccupation was in anywise connected with the intimacy which had subsisted between the young man and herself.

There seemed left to her then but one tenable supposition. Her husband had been indulgence personified. He had been courteous, refined and foreseeing, in fact a gentleman, and, if silent, was it not possible that the silence was due to a self-restraining delicacy, to a feeling that did he speak he would plead, and that, perhaps, when pleading would be distasteful to her?

To this solution Maida inclined. It was indeed the only one at which she could arrive, and, moreover, it conveyed that little bouquet of flattery which has been found grateful by many far less young and feminine than she. And so, one evening, for the further elucidation of the enigma, and with the idea that perhaps it needed but a word from her to cause her husband to say something of that which was on his mind, and which she was at once longing and dreading to hear — one evening when he had seemed particularly abstracted, she bent forward and said, "Harmon, of what are you thinking?"

She had never called him by his given name before. He started, and half turned.

"Of you," he answered.

But Maida's heart sank. She saw that his eyes were not in hers, that they looked over and beyond her, as though they followed the fringes of an escaping dream.

XIII.

WHAT MAY BE HEARD IN A GREEN ROOM

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT MAY BE HEARD IN A GREENROOM.

ONE evening in November a new ballet was given at the Opéra. Its production had been heralded in the manner which has found most favor with Parisian impressarii. The dead walls of the capital were not adorned with colored lithographs. The advertising sheets held no notice of the coming performance. But for several weeks previous the columns of the liveliest journals had teemed with items and discreet indiscretions.

Through these measures the curiosity of the Tout-Paris had been coerced afresh, and, when the curtain, after falling on the second act of the "Favorite," parted again before the new ballet, there was hardly a vacant seat in the house.

The box which Mr. Incoul had taken for the season was on what is known as the grand tier. It was roomy, holding eight comfortably and twelve if need be. But Maida, who was adverse to anything that suggested crowding, was always disinclined to ask more than five or six to share it with her, and on the particular evening to which allusion is made she extended her hospitality to but four people: Mr. and Mrs. Wainwaring and their daughter, New Yorkers like herself, and the Duc de la Dèche, a nobleman who served as figurehead to the Cercle des Capucines, and who, so ran the gossip, was anxious to effect an exchange of his coroneted freedom for the possession of Miss Wainwaring and a bundle or two of her father's securities.

During the *entr'acte* that preceded the ballet the box was invaded by a number of visitors, young men who were indebted to Maida for a dinner or a cup of tea and by others who hoped that such indebtedness was still in store for them; there came, too, a popular artist who wished to paint Maida's portrait for the coming Salon and an author who may have had much cleverness, but who never displayed it to any one.

As the invasion threatened to continue Mr. Incoul went out in the corridor, where he was presently joined by the duke, who suggested that they should visit the foyer. They made their way down the giant stair and turning through the lobby passed on through the corridor that circles the stalls until they reached a door guarded from non-subscribers by a Suisse about whose neck there drooped a medallioned chain of silver. By him the door was opened wide and the two men passed on through a forest of side scenes till the *foyer de la danse* was reached.

It was a spacious apartment, well lighted and lined with mirrors; the furniture was meagre, a dozen or more chairs and lounges of red plush. It was not beautiful, but then what market ever is? To Mr.

Incoul it was brilliant as a café, and equally vulgar. From dressing-rooms above and beyond there came a stream of willowy girls. Few among them were pretty, and some there were whose faces were repulsive, but the majority were young; some indeed, the rats, as they are called, were mere children. Here and there was a mother of the Mme. Cardinal type, armed with an umbrella and prepared to listen to offers. As a rule, however, the young ladies of the ballet were quite able to attend to any little matter of business without maternal assistance. The Italian element was easily distinguishable. There was the ultra darkness of the eye, the faint umber of the skin, the richer vitality, in fact, of which the anemic daughters of Paris were unpossessed. And now and then the Gothic gutturals of the Spanish were heard, preceded by a wave of garlic.

That night the subscribers to the stalls were out in full force. There were Jew bankers in plenty, there were detachments from the Jockey and the Mirletons, one or two foreign representatives, a few high functionaries, the Minister of the Interior, and he of the Fine Arts, a member of the imperial family of Russia, a number of stock brokers and an Arab Shiek flanked by an interpreter.

Before the curtain rose, battalions of ballerines formed on the stage, and after the performance began they were succeeded by others, the first contingent returning to the dressing-rooms or loitering in the foyer. In this way there was a constant coming and going accompanied by the murmur of the spectators beyond and the upper notes of the flute.

Mr. Incoul was growing weary; he would have returned to the box, but he was joined by acquaintances that he had made at the club, Frenchmen mainly, friends of his companion, and presently he found himself surrounded by a group of *viveurs,* men about town, who had their Paris at the end of their gloves, and to whom it held no secrets. They had dined and talked animatedly in ends and remnants of phrases in a sort of verbal telegraphy; an exclamation helped by a gesture sufficing as often as not for the full conveyance of their thought.

Mr. Incoul spoke French with tolerable ease, but having nothing of moment to say, he held his tongue, contenting himself with listening to the words of those who stood about him. And as he listened, the name of Mirette caught his ear. The programme had already informed him that it was she who was to assume the principal rôle in the new ballet, consequently he was not unfamiliar with it, but of the woman herself he knew nothing, and he listened idly, indifferent to ampler information. But at once his interest quickened; his immediate neighbor had mentioned her in connection with one whom he knew.

"They came up from Biarritz together," he heard him say. "She went there with Chose, that Russian."

"Balaguine?"

"Precisely."

"What did she do with him?"

"Found the Tartar, I fancy."

"And then?"

"*Voilà*, this young American is mad about her."

"He is rich then?"

"What would you? An American! They are it all."

"Yes, a rich one always wins."

"How mean you?"

"This: he plays bac at the Capucines. His banks are fructuous."

"Ah, as to that —" And the first speaker shrugged his shoulders.

A rustle circled through the foyer, men stood aside and nodded affably. The light took on a fairer glow. "Stay," murmured the second speaker, "she is there."

Through the parting crowd Mirette passed with a carriage such as no queen, save perhaps Semiramis, ever possessed. She moved from the hips, her body was erect and unswayed. It was the perfection of artificial grace. Her features were not regular, but there was an expression in them that stirred the pulse. "*Je suis l'Amour*," she seemed to say, and to add "*prends garde à toi*." As she crossed the room men moistened their lips, and when she had gone they found them still parched.

Mr. Incoul followed her with his eyes. She had not left him unimpressed, but his impression differed from that of his neighbors. In her face his shrewdness had discerned nothing but the animal and the greed of unsatiated appetites. He watched her pass, and stepped from the group in which he had been standing that he might the better follow her movements.

From the foyer she floated on into a side scene, yet not near enough to the stage to be seen by the audience. A few machinists moved aside to let her pass, and as they did so Mr. Incoul saw Lenox Leigh. It was evident that he had been waiting there for her coming. There was a scarf about her neck, and as the young man turned to greet her, she took it off and gave it into his keeping. They whispered together. Beyond, Mr. Incoul could see the tulle of the ballet rising and subsiding to the rhythm of the orchestra. Then came a sudden blare of trumpets, the measure swooned, and as it recovered again the ballet had faded to the back of the stage. Abruptly, as though sprung from a trapdoor, a *régisseur* appeared, and at a signal from him Mirette, with one quick backward stroke to her skirt, bounded from the side scene and fluttered down to the footlights amid a crash and thunder of applause.

Mr. Incoul had heard and seen enough. His mind was busy. He felt the need of fresh air and of solitude. He turned into the corridor and from there went through the vestibule until he reached an outer door, which he swung open and passed out into the night. He was thinly clad, in evening dress, and the air was chilly, but he thought nothing of his dress nor of the warmth or chill of the air. He walked up and down before the building with his head bent and his hands behind his back. A *camelot* offered him a pack of transparent cards, a vender of programmes pestered him to buy, but he passed them unheeding. For fully half an hour he continued his walk, and when he re-entered the box, Maida, who of late had given much attention to his moods, noticed that his face was flushed, and that about his lips there played the phantom of a smile.

XIV.

KARL GROWS A MOUSTACHE

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KARL GROWS A MOUSTACHE.

FOR several days Mr. Incoul was much occupied. He left the house early and returned to it late. One afternoon he sent for Karl. Since the return to Paris the courier's duties had not been arduous; they consisted chiefly in keeping out of the way. On this particular afternoon he was not immediately discoverable, and when at last he presented himself it was in the expectation that the hour of his dismissal had struck. He bowed, nevertheless, with the best grace in the world, and noticing that his employer's eyes were upon him, gazed deferentially at the carpet.

Mr. Incoul looked at him in a contemplative way for a moment or two. "Karl," he said at last, and Karl raised his eyes.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any objections to shaving your whiskers?"

"I, sir? not the slightest."

"I will be obliged if you will do so. This afternoon you might go to Cumberland's and be measured. I have left orders there. Then take a room at the Meurice; you have money, have you not? Very good, keep an account of your expenditures. In a week I will send you my instructions. That will do for to-day."

An hour later Mr. Incoul was watching a game of baccarat at the Cercle des Capucines.

Meanwhile Lenox Leigh had given much of his time to the pleasures of Mirette's society. In making her acquaintance at Biarritz he had been actuated partly by the idleness of the moment and partly by the attracting face of celebrity. He had never known a danseuse; indeed, heretofore, his acquaintance with women had been limited to those of his own *monde*, and during the succeeding days he hovered about her more that he might add a new photograph to a mental album than with any idea of conquest. She amused him extremely. In her speech she displayed a recklessness of adjective such as he had never witnessed before. It was not that she was brilliant, but she possessed that stereotyped form of repartee which is known as *bagou*, and which the Parisian takes to naturally and without effort. Mirette seemed to have acquired it in its supremest expression. One day, for instance, the curiosity of her circle of admirers was aroused by a young actress who, while painfully plain, squandered coin with remarkable ease. "Whom do you suppose she gets the money from?" some one asked, and Mirette without so much as drawing breath answered serenely, "A blind man." In spite of the *bagou* Mirette was not a Parisian. She was born in the provinces, at Orléans, and was wont to declare herself a lineal descendant of Joan of Arc. She lied with perfect composure; if reproached she curled her lips. "Lies whiten the teeth," she would say, an argument which it was impossible to refute.

Under the empire she would have been a success; under a republic she complained of the difficulty of making two ends meet. Now Lenox was not rich, but he was an American, and the Americans have assumed in Paris the position which the English once held. Their coffers are considered inexhaustible. On this subject, thanks to Mrs. Mackay, Mr. Incoul, the Vanderbilts, the Astors and a dozen others, there is now no doubt in the mind of the French. To be an American is to be a Vesuvius of gold pieces.

As a native of the land of millions, Lenox found that his earliest attentions were received with smiles, and in time when a Russian became so scratched that the Tartar was visible, Mirette welcomed him with undisguised favor.

Like many another, Lenox had his small vanities; he would have liked to have thought himself indispensable to Maida's happiness, but in her absence he did not object to being regarded as the *cavaliere servente* of the first lady of the ballet. Between the two women the contrast was striking. Mirette, as has been hinted, was reckless of adjective; she was animal, imperious, and at times frankly vulgar. Maida was her antithesis. She shrank from coarseness as from a deformity. Both represented Love, but they represented the extremes. One was as ignorant of virtue as the other was unconscious of vice. One was Mylitta, the other Psyche. Had the difference been less accentuated, it would have jarred. But the transition was immeasurable. It was like a journey from the fjords of Norway to the jungles of Hindustan. That Psyche was regretted goes without the need of telling, but Mylitta has enchantments which are said to lull regret.

In the second week of October the bathing was still delicious. The waves encircled one in a large, abrupt embrace. Mirette would have liked to remain, the beach was a daily triumph for her. There was not a woman in the world who could have held herself in the scantiest of costumes, under the fire of a thousand eyes, as gracefully as she. No sedan-chair for her indeed. No hurrying, no running, no enveloping wrap. No pretense or attempt to avoid the scrutiny of the bystanders. There was nothing of this for her. She crossed the entire width of sand, calmly, slowly, an invitation on her lips and with the walk and majesty of a queen. The amateurs as usual were tempted to applaud. It was indeed a triumph, an advertisement to boot, and one which she would have liked to prolong. But she was needed at the Opéra and so she returned to Paris accompanied by Lenox Leigh.

In Paris it is considered inconvenient for a pretty woman to go about on foot, and as for cabs, where is the self-respecting chorus-girl who would consent to be seen in one? Mirette was very positive on this point and Lenox agreed with her thoroughly. He did not, however, for that reason offer to provide an equipage. Indeed the wherewithal was lacking. He had spent more money at Biarritz than he had intended, perhaps ten times the amount that he would have spent at Newport or at Cowes, and his funds were nearly exhausted.

As every one is aware a banker is the last person in the world to be consulted on matters of finance. If a client has money in his pocket a banker can transfer it to his own in an absolutely painless manner, but if the client's pocket is empty what banker, out of an opera-bouffe, was ever willing to fill it? Lenox reflected over this and was at a loss how to act. The firm on whom his drafts were drawn held nothing on their ledgers to his credit. He visited them immediately on arriving and was given a letter which for the moment he fancied might contain a remittance. But it bore the Paris postmark and the address was in Maida's familiar hand. As he looked at it he forgot his indigence, his heart gave an exultant throb. He had promised himself that when he met her again matters should go on very much as they had before, and he had further promised himself that so soon as his former footing was re-established he would give up Mirette. He was therefore well pleased when the note was placed in his hands. It had a faint odor of orris, and he opened it as were he unfolding a lace handkerchief. But from what has gone before it will be understood that his pleasure was short lived. The note was brief and categoric, he read it almost at a glance, and when he had possessed himself of the contents he felt that the determination conveyed was one from which there was no appeal, or rather one from which any appeal would be useless. He looked at the note again. The handwriting suggested an unaccustomed strength, and in the straight, firm strokes he read the irrevocable. "It is done," he muttered, "I can write Finis over that." He looked again at the note and then tore it slowly into minute scraps, and watched them flutter from him.

He went out to the street and there his earlier preoccupation returned. It would be a month at least before a draft could be sent, and meanwhile, though he had enough for his personal needs, he had nothing with which to satisfy Mirette's caprices. *Et elle en avait, cette dame!* The thought of separating from her did not occur to him, or if it did it was in that hazy indistinguishable form in which eventualities sometimes visit the perplexed. If Maida's note had been other, he would have washed his hands of Mirette, but now apparently she was the one person on the Continent who cared when he came and when he went. In his present position he was like one who, having sprained an ankle, learns the utility of a crutch. The idea of losing it was not agreeable. Beside, the knowledge that his intimacy with the woman had been envied by grandees with unnumbered hats was to him a source of something that resembled consolation.

Presently he reached the boulevard. He was undecided what to do or where to turn, and as he loitered on the curb the silver head of a stick was waved at him from a passing cab; in a moment the vehicle stopped. May alighted and shook him by the hand.

"I am on my way to the Capucines," he explained, in his blithesome stutter. "There's a big game on; why not come, too?"

"A big game of what?"

"B-b, why baccarat of course. What did you suppose? M-marbles?"

Lenox fumbled in his waistcoat pocket. "Yes, I'll go," he said.

Five minutes later he was standing in a crowded room before a green table. He had never gambled, and hardly knew one card from another but baccarat can be learned with such facility that after two deals a raw recruit can argue with a veteran as to whether it is better to stand on five or to draw. Lenox watched the flight of notes, gold and counters. He listened to the monotonous calls: *J'en donne! Carte! Neuf!* The end of the table at which he stood seemed to be unlucky. He moved to the other, and presently he leaned over the shoulder of a gamester and put down a few louis. In an hour he left the room with twenty-seven thousand francs.

A fraction of it he put in his card-case, the rest he handed to Mirette. It was not a large sum, but its dimensions were satisfactory to her. "*Ce p'tit chat,*" she said to herself, "*je savais bien qu'il ne ferait pas le lapin.*" And of the large azure notes she made precisely one bite.

Thereafter for some weeks things went on smoothly enough. Mirette's mornings were passed at rehearsals, but usually the afternoons were free, and late in the day she would take Lenox to the Cascade, or meet him there and drive back with him to dinner. In the evenings there was the inevitable theatre, with supper afterwards at some *cabaret à la mode.* And sometimes when she was over-fatigued, Lenox would go to the club and try a hand at baccarat.

He was not always so fortunate as on the first day, but on the whole his good luck was noticeable. It is possible, however, that he found the excitement enervating. He had been used to a much quieter existence, one that if not entirely praiseworthy was still outwardly decorous, and suddenly he had been pitchforked into that narrowest of circles which is called Parisian life. He may have liked it at first, as one is apt to like any novelty, but to nerves that are properly attuned a little of its viciousness goes a very great way.

It may be that it was beginning to exert its usual dissolvent effect. In any event Lenox, who all his life had preferred water to wine, found absinthe grateful in the morning.

One afternoon, shortly after the initial performance of the new ballet, he went from his hôtel to the apartment which Mirette occupied in the Rue Pierre-Charon. He was informed that she was not at home. He questioned the servant as to her whereabouts, but the answers he received were vague and unsatisfactory. He then drove to the Cascade, but Mirette did not appear. After dinner he made sure of finding her. In this expectation he was again disappointed.

The next day his success was no better. He questioned the servant uselessly. "Madame was not at home, she had left no word." To each of his questions the answer was invariable. It was evident that the servant had been coached, and it was equally evident that at least for the moment his companionship was not a prime necessity to the first lady of the ballet.

As he left the house he bit his lip. That Mirette should be capricious was quite in the order of things, but that she should treat him like the first comer was a different matter. When he had last seen her, her manner had left nothing to be desired, and suddenly, without so much as a p. p. c., her door was shut, and not shut as it might have been by accident; no, it was persistently, purposely closed.

Presently he reached the Champs Elysées. It was Sunday. A stream of carriages flooded the avenue, and the sidewalks were thronged with ill-dressed people. The crowd increased his annoyance. The possibility of being jostled irritated him, the spectacle of dawdling shop-keepers filled him with disgust. He hailed a cab in which to escape; the driver paid no attention; he hailed another; the result was the same, and then in the increasing exasperation of the moment he felt that he hated Paris. A fat man with pursed lips and an air of imbecile self-satisfaction brushed against him. He could have turned and slapped him in the face.

Without, however, committing any overt act of violence, he succeeded in reaching his hotel. There he sought the reading-room, but he found it fully occupied by one middle-aged Englishwoman, and leaving her in undisturbed possession of the *Times,* he went to his own apartment. A day or two before he had purchased a copy of a much applauded novel, and from it he endeavored to extract a sedative. Mechanically he turned the pages. His eyes glanced over and down them, resting at times through fractions of an hour on a single line, but the words conveyed no message to his mind, his thoughts were elsewhere, they surged through vague perplexities and hovered over shadowy enigmas, until at last he discovered that he was trying to read in the dark.

He struck a light and found that it was nearly seven. "I will dress," he told himself, "and dine at the club." In half an hour he was on his way to the Capucines. The streets were still crowded and the Avenue de l'Opéra in which his hotel was situated, vibrated as were it the main artery of the capital. As he approached the boulevard he thought that it would perhaps be wiser to dine at a restaurant; he was discomfited and he was not sure but that the myriad tongue of gossip might not be already busy with the cause of his discomfiture. He did not feel talkative, and were he taciturn at the club he knew that it would be remarked. Bignon's was close at hand. Why not dine there? In his indecision he halted before an adjacent shop and stood for a moment looking in the window, apparently engrossed by an assortment of strass and imitation pearls. The proprietress was lounging in the doorway. "*Si Monsieur veut entrer*" — she began seductively, but he turned from her; as he did so, a brougham drew up before the curb and Mirette stepped from it.

Lenox, in his surprise at the unexpected, did not at first notice that a man had also alighted. He moved forward and would have spoken, but Mirette looked him straight in the eyes, as who should say *Allez vous faire lanlaire, mon cher,* and passed on into the restaurant.

Her companion had hurried a little in advance to open the door, and as he swung it aside and Mirette entered Lenox caught a glimpse of his face. It was meaningless enough, and yet not entirely unfamiliar. "Who is the cad," he wondered. Yet, after all, what difference did it make? He could not blame the man. As for jealousy, the word was meaningless to him. It was his *amour propre* that suffered. He smiled a trifle grimly to himself and continued his way.

At the corner was a large picture shop. An old man wrapped in a loose fur coat stood at the window looking at the painting of a little girl. The child was alone in a coppice and seemingly much frightened at the approach of a flock of does. Unconsciously Lenox stopped also. He had been so bewildered by the suddenness of the cut that he did not notice whether he was walking or standing still.

And so it was for this, he mused, that admittance had been denied him. But why could she not have had the decency to tell him not to come instead of letting him run there like a tradesman with a small bill? Certainly he had deserved better things of her than that. It was so easy for a woman to break gracefully. A note, a word, and if the man insists a second note, a second word; after that the man, if he is decently bred, can do nothing but raise his hat and speed the parting guest. Beside, why would she want to break with him and take up with a fellow who looked like a barber from the Grand Hôtel? Who was he any way?

His eyes rested on the picture of the little girl. The representation of her childish fright almost diverted his thoughts, but all the while there was an undercurrent which in some dim way kept telling him that he had seen the man's face before. And as he groped in his memory the picture of the child faded as might a picture in a magic lantern, and in its place, vaguely at first and gradually better defined, he saw, standing in the moonlight, on a white road, a coach and four. To the rear was the terrace of a hôtel, and beyond was a shimmering bay like to that which he had seen at San Sebastian.

"My God," he cried aloud, "it's Incoul's courier!"

The old man in the fur coat looked at him nervously, and shrank away.

XV.

MAY EXPOSTULATES

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MAY EXPOSTULATES.

THAT evening the Wainwarings and the Blydenburgs dined at the house in the Parc Monceau. The Blydenburgs had long since deserted Biarritz, but the return journey had been broken at Luchon, and in that resort the days had passed them by like chapters in a stupid fairy tale.

They were now on their way home; the pleasures of the Continent had begun to pall, and during the dinner, Mr. Blydenburg took occasion to express his opinion on the superiority of American institutions over those of all other lands, an opinion to which he lent additional weight by repeating from time to time that New York was quite good enough for him.

There were no other guests. Shortly before ten the Wainwarings left, and as Blydenburg was preparing to take his daughter back to the hotel, Mr. Incoul said that he would be on the boulevard later, and did he care to have him he would take him to the club, a proposition to which Blydenburg at once agreed.

"Harmon," said Maida, when they were alone, "are you to be away long?"

During dinner she had said but little. Latterly she had complained of sleeplessness, and to banish the insomnia a physician had recommended the usual bromide of potassium. As she spoke, Mr. Incoul noticed that she was pale.

"Possibly not," he answered.

She had been standing before the hearth, her bare arm resting on the velvet of the mantel, and her eyes following the flicker of the burning logs — but now she turned to him.

"Do you remember our pact?" she asked.

He looked at her but said nothing. She moved across the room to where he stood; one hand just touched his sleeve, the other she raised to his shoulder and rested it there for a second's space. Her eyes sought his own, her head was thrown back a little, from her hair came the perfume of distant oases, her lips were moist and her neck was like a jasmine.

"Harmon," she continued in a tone as low as were she speaking to herself, "we have come into our own."

And then the caress passed from his sleeve, her hand fell from his shoulder, she glided from him with the motion of a swan.

"Come to me when you return," she added. Her face had lost its pallor, it was flushed, but her voice was brave.

Yet soon, when the door closed behind him, her courage faltered. In the eyes of him whose name she bore and to whom for the first time she had made offer of her love, she had seen no answering affection

— merely a look which a man might give who wins a long-contested game of chess. But presently she reassured herself. If at the avowal her husband had seemed triumphant, in very truth what was he else? She turned to a mirror that separated the windows and gazed at her own reflection. Perhaps he did think the winning a triumph. Many another would have thought so, too. She was entirely in white; her arms and neck were unjeweled. "I look like a bride," she told herself, and then, with the helplessness of regret, she remembered that brides wear orange blossoms, but she had none.

The idler in Paris is apt to find Sunday evenings dull. There are many houses open, it is true, but not infrequently the idler is disinclined to receptions, and as to the theatres, it is *bourgeois* to visit them. There is, therefore, little left save the clubs, and on this particular Sunday evening, when Mr. Incoul and Blydenburg entered the Capucines, they found it tolerably filled.

A lackey in silk knee breeches and livery of pale blue came to take their coats. It was not, however, until Blydenburg had been helped off with his that he noticed that Mr. Incoul had preferred to keep his own on.

The two men then passed out of the vestibule into a room in which was a large table littered with papers, and from there into another room where a man whom Mr. Incoul recognized as De la Dèche was dozing on a lounge, and finally a room was reached in which most of the members had assembled.

"It reminds me of a hotel," said Blydenburg.

"It is," his friend answered shortly. He seemed preoccupied as were he looking for some one or something; and presently, as they approached a green table about which a crowd was grouped, Blydenburg pulled him by the sleeve.

"That's young Leigh dealing," he exclaimed.

To this Mr. Incoul made no reply. He put his hand in a lower outside pocket of his overcoat and assured himself that a little package which he had placed there had not become disarranged.

On hearing his name, Lenox looked up from his task. A Frenchman who had just entered the room nodded affably to him and asked if he were lucky that evening.

"Lucky!" cried some one who had caught the question, "I should say so. His luck is something insolent; he struck a match a moment ago and *it lit*."

The whole room roared. French matches are like French cigars in this, there is nothing viler. It is just possible that the parental republic has views of its own as to the injuriousness of smoking, and seeks to discourage it as it would a vice. But this is as it may be. Every one laughed and Lenox with the others. Mr. Incoul caught his eye and bowed to him across the table. Blydenburg had already smiled and bowed in the friendliest way. He did not quite care to see Mrs. Manhattan's brother dealing at baccarat, but after all, when one is at Rome —

"Do you care to play?" Mr. Incoul asked.

"Humph! I might go a louis or two for a flyer."

They had both been standing behind the croupier, but Mr. Incoul then left his companion, and passing around the table stopped at a chair which was directly on Lenox's left. In this chair a man was seated, and before him was a small pile of gold. As the cards were dealt the gold diminished, and when it dwindled utterly and at last disappeared, the man rose from his seat and Mr. Incoul dropped in it.

From the overcoat pocket, in which he had previously felt, he drew out a number of thousand-franc notes; they were all unfolded, and under them was a little package. The notes, with the package beneath them, were placed by Mr. Incoul where the pile of gold had stood. One of the notes he then threw out in the semicircle. A man seated next to him received the cards which Lenox dealt.

"I give," Lenox called in French.

"Card," the man answered.

It was a face card that he received.

"Six," Lenox announced.

Mr. Incoul's neighbor could boast of nothing. The next cards that were dealt on that end of the table went to a man beyond. Mr. Incoul knew that did that man not hold higher cards than the banker the cards in the succeeding deal would come to him.

He took a handful of notes and reached them awkwardly enough across the space from which Lenox dealt; for one second his hand rested on the talion, then he said, "*A cheval.*" Which, being interpreted, means half on one side and half on the other. The croupier took the notes, and placed them in the proper position. "Nine," Lenox called; he had won at both ends of the table.

The croupier drew in the stakes with his rake. "Gentlemen," he droned, "make your game."

Mr. Incoul pushed out five thousand francs. The next cards on the left were dealt to him.

"Nine," Lenox called again.

And then a very singular thing happened. The croupier leaned forward to draw in Mr. Incoul's money, but just as the rake touched the notes, Mr. Incoul drew them away.

"*Monsieur!*" exclaimed the croupier.

The eyes of every one were upon him. He pushed his chair back, and stood up, holding in his hand the two cards which had been dealt him, then throwing them down on the table, he said very quietly, but in a voice that was perfectly distinct, "These cards are marked."

A moment before the silence had indeed been great, but during the moment that followed Mr. Incoul's announcement, it was so intensified that it could be felt. Then abruptly words leapt from the mouths of the players and bystanders. The croupier turned, protesting his innocence of any complicity. There may have been some who listened, but if there were any such, they were few; the entire room was sonorous with loud voices; the hubbub was so great that it woke De la Dèche; he came in at one door rubbing his eyes; at another a crowd of lackeys, startled at the uproar, had suddenly assembled. And by the chair which he had pushed from him and which had fallen backwards to the ground, Mr. Incoul stood, motionless, looking down at Lenox Leigh.

In the abruptness of the accusation Lenox had not immediately understood that it was directed against him, but when he looked into the inimical faces that fronted and surrounded him, when he heard the anger of the voices, when he saw hands stretched for the cards which he dealt, and impatient eyes examining their texture, and when at last, though the entire scene was compassed in the fraction of a minute, when he heard an epithet and saw that he was regarded as a Greek, he knew that the worst that could be had been done.

He turned, still sitting, and looked his accuser in the face, and in it he read a message which to all of those present was to him alone intelligible. He bowed his head. In a vision like to that which is said to visit the last moments of a drowning man, he saw it all: the reason of Maida's unexplained departure, the coupling of Mirette with a servant, and this supreme reproach made credible by the commonest of tricks, the application of a cataplasm, a new deck of cards on those already in use. It was vengeance indeed.

He sprang from his seat. He was a handsome fellow and the pallor of his face made his dark hair seem darker and his dark eyes more brilliant. "It is a plot," he cried. He might as well have asked alms of statues. The cards had been examined, the *maquillage* was evident. "Put him out!" a hundred voices were shouting; *"à la porte!"*

Suddenly the shouting subsided and ceased. Lenox craned his neck to discover who his possible defender might be, and caught a glimpse of De la Dèche, brushing with one finger some ashes from his coat-sleeve, and looking about him with an indolent, deprecatory air.

"Gentlemen," he heard him say, "the committee will act in the matter; meanwhile, for the honor of the club, I beg you will not increase the scandal."

He turned to Lenox and said, with perfect courtesy, "Sir, do me the favor to step this way."

Through the parting crowd Lenox followed the duke. In crossing the room he looked about him. On his way he passed the Frenchman who had addressed him five minutes before. The man turned aside. He passed other acquaintances. They all seemed suddenly smitten by the disease known as *Noli me tangere.* In the doorway was May. Of him he felt almost sure, but the brute drew back. "Really," he said, "I must exp-postulate."

"Expostulate and be damned," Lenox gnashed at him, "I am as innocent as you are."

In an outer room, where he presently found himself, De la Dèche stood lighting a cigar; that difficult operation terminated, he said, slowly, with that rise and fall of the voice which is peculiar to the Parisian when he wishes to appear impressive:

"You had better go now, and if you will permit me to offer you a bit of advice, I would recommend you to send a resignation to any clubs of which you may happen to be a member."

He touched a bell; a lackey appeared.

"Maxine, get this gentleman's coat and see him to the door."

XVI.

THE BARE BODKIN

Chapter XVI.

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PRESENTLY Lenox found himself on the boulevard. There was a café near at hand, and he sat down at one of the tables that lined the sidewalk. He was dazed as were he in the semi-consciousness of somnambulism. He gave an order absently, and when some drink was placed before him, he took it at a gulp.

Under its influence his stupor fell from him. The necessity, the obligation of proving his innocence presented itself, but, with it, hand in hand, came the knowledge that such proof was impossible. Even his luck at play would be taken as corroboratory of the charge. Were he to say that the marked cards had been placed on the talion by Incoul, who was there outside the aisles of the insane that would listen to such a defense? To compel attention, he would be obliged to explain the act, and state its reason. And that explanation he could never give. He could not exculpate himself at the cost of a woman's fame. Which ever way he turned, dishonor stood before him. The toils into which he had fallen had been woven with a cunning so devilish in its clairvoyance that every avenue of escape was closed. He was blockaded in his own disgrace.

He rested his head in his hand, and moaned aloud. Presently, with the instinct of a hunted beast, he felt that people were looking at him. He feared that some of his former acquaintances, on leaving the club, had passed and seen him sitting there, and among them, perhaps Incoul.

He threw some money in the saucer and hurried away. There were still many people about. To avoid them he turned into a side street and walked on with rapid step. Soon he was in the Rue de la Paix. It was practically deserted. On a corner, a young ruffian in a slouch hat was humming, "*Ugène, tu m'fais languir,*" and beating time to the measure with his foot. Just above the Colonne Vendôme the moon rested like a vagrant, weary of its amble across the sky. But otherwise the street was solitary. Through its entire length but one shop was open, and as Lenox approached it a man came out to arrange the shutters. From the doorway a thin stream of light still filtered on the pavement. In the window were globes filled with colored liquids, and beyond at a counter a clerk was tying a parcel.

Lenox entered. "Give me a Privas," he said, and when the clerk had done so, he asked him to make up a certain prescription. But to this the man objected; he could not, he explained, without a physician's order.

"Here are several," said Lenox, and he took from his card-case a roll of azure notes.

The clerk eyed them nervously. They represented over a year's salary. He hesitated a moment, "I don't know," — and he shook his head, as were he arguing with himself — "I don't know whether I am doing right." And at once prepared the mixture.

Ten minutes later Lenox was mounting the stair of the hotel at which he lodged. On reaching his room he put his purchases on a table, poured out a glass of absinthe, lit a cigarette, and threw himself down on a lounge. For a while his thoughts roamed among the episodes of the day, but gradually they drifted into less personal currents. He began to think of the early legends: of Chiron, the god, renouncing his immortality; of the Hyperboreans, that fabled people, famous for their felicity, who voluntarily threw themselves into the sea; of Juno bringing death to Biton and Cleobis as the highest recompense of their piety; of Agamedes and Trophonius, praying Apollo for whatever gift he deemed most advantageous, and in answer to the prayer receiving eternal sleep.

He reflected on the meaning of these legends, and, as he reflected, he remembered that the Thracians greeted birth with lamentations and death with welcoming festivals. He thought of that sage who pitied the gods because their lives were unending, and of Menander singing the early demise of the favored. He remembered how Plato had preached to the happiest people in the world the blessedness of ceaseless sleep; how the Buddha, teaching that life was but a right to suffer, had found for the recalcitrant no greater menace than that of an existence renewed through kalpas of time. Then he bethought him of the promise of that peace which passeth all understanding, and which the grave alone fulfills, and he repeated to himself Christ's significant threat, "In this life ye shall have tribulation."

And, as these things came to him, so, too, did the problem of pain. He reviewed the ravages of that ulcer which has battened on humanity since the world began. History uncoiled itself before him in a shudder. In its spasms he saw the myriads that have fought and died for dogmas that they did not understand, for invented principles of patriotism and religion, for leaders that they had never seen, for gods more helpless than themselves.

He saw, too, Nature's cruelty and her snares. The gift to man of appetites, which, in the guise of pleasure, veil immedicable pain. Poison in the richest flowers, the agony that lurks in the grape. He knew that whoso ate to his hunger, or drank to his thirst, summoned to him one or more of countless maladies — maladies which parents gave with their vices to their children, who, in turn, bring forth new generations that are smitten with all the ills to which flesh is heir. And he knew that even those who lived most temperately were defenceless from disorders that come unawares and frighten away one's nearest friends. While for those who escaped miasmas and microbes; for those who asked pleasure, not of the flesh, but of the mind; for those whose days are passed in study, who seek to learn some rhyme for the reason of things, who try to gratify the curiosity which Nature has given them; for such as they, he remembered, there is blindness, paralysis, and the asylums of the insane.

He thought of the illusions, of love, hope and ambition, illusions which make life seem a pleasant thing worth living, and which, in cheating man into a continuance of his right to suffer, make him think pain an accident and not the rule.

"Surely," he mused, "the idiot alone is content. He at least has no illusions; he expects nothing in this world and cares less for another. Nor is the stupidity of the ordinary run of men without its charm. It must be a singularly blessed thing not to be sensitive, not to know what life might be, and not to find its insufficiency a curse. But there's the rub. When the reforms of the utopists are one and all accomplished, what shall man do in his Icaria? A million years hence, perhaps, physical pain will have been vanquished. Diseases of the body will no longer exist. Laws will not oppress. Justice will be inherent. Love will be too far from Nature to know of shame. The earth will be a garden of pleasure. Industry will have enriched every home. Through an equitable division of treasures acquired without toil, each one will be on the same footing as his neighbor. Even envy will have disappeared. In place of the trials, terrors and superstitions of to-day, man will enjoy perfect peace. He will no longer labor. When he journeys it will be through the air. He will be in daily communication with Mars, he will have measured the Infinite and know the bounds of Space. And in this Eden in which there will be no forbidden fruit, no ignorance, no tempter, but where there will be larger flowers, new perfumes, and a race whose idea of beauty stands to mine as mine does to that of prehistoric man, a race whose imagination has crossed the frontiers of the impossible, who have developed new senses, who see colors to which I am blind, who hear music to which I am deaf, who speak in words of tormented polish, who have turned art into a plaything and learning into a birthright, a race that has no curiosity and who accept their wonderful existence as the rich to-day accept their wealth, in this Eden, Boredom will be King. The Hyperboreans will have their imitators. The one surcease will be in death. Yet even that may not be robbed of its grotesqueness."

A candle flickered a moment and expired in a splutter of grease. The agony of the candle aroused him from his revery. "Bah," he muttered, "I am becoming a casuist, I argue with myself."

He mixed himself another absinthe, holding the *carafe* high in the air, watching the thin stream of water coalesce with the green drug and turn with it into an opalescent milk. He toyed for a moment with the purchases that he had made in the Rue de la Paix, and presently, in answer to some query which they evoked, the soliloquy began anew.

"After what has happened there is nothing left. I might change my name. I might go to Brazil or Australia, but with what object? I could not get away from myself.

Da me stesso
Sempre fuggendo, avrò me sempre appresso.

Beside I don't care for transplantation. If I had an ambition it would be a different matter. If I could be a pretty woman up to thirty, a cardinal up to fifty, and after that the Anti-Christ, it might be worth while. Failing that I might occupy myself with literature. If I have not written heretofore, it is because it seems more original not to do so. But it is not too late. The manufacture of trash is easy, and it must be a pleasure to the manufacturer to know that it is trash and that it sells. It must give him a high opinion of the intellect of his contemporaries. Or when, as happens now and then, a work of enduring value is produced, and it is condemned, as such works usually are, the author must take immense delight in the reflection that the disapproval of imbeciles is the surest acknowledgment of talent, as it is also its sweetest mead of praise. For me, of course, such praise is impossible. Were I to write successful failures, it must needs be under a pseudonym. In which case I would have the consciousness of being scorned as Lenox Leigh, and admired as John Smith. Beside, what is there to write about? There is nothing to prove, there is no certainty, there is not even a criterion of truth. To-morrow contradicts yesterday, next week will contradict this. On no given subject are there two people who think and see exactly alike. The book which pleases me bores my neighbor, and *vice versâ.* One man holds to the Episcopal Church, another to the Baptist; one man is an atheist, another a Jew; one man thinks a soprano voice a delicious gift, another says it is a disease of the larynx, and whatever the divergence of opinion may be, each one is convinced that he alone is correct. Supposing, however, that through some chance I were to descend to posterity in the garb and aspect of a great man. What is a great man? The shadow of nothing. The obscurest *privat docent* in Germany could to-day give points to Newton. And even though Newton's glory may still subsist, yet such are the limitations of fame that the great majority have never heard of it or of him. The foremost conqueror of modern times, he who fell not through his defeats, but through his victories, is entombed just across the Seine. And the other day as I passed the Invalides I heard an intelligent-looking woman ask her companion who the Napoleon was that lay buried there. Her companion did not know.

"But, even were glory more substantial, what is the applause of posterity to the ears of the dead? To them honor and ignominy must be alike unmeaning. No, decidedly, ambition does not tempt me. And what is there else that tempts? Love seems to me now like hunger, an unnecessary affliction, productive far more of pain than of pleasure; the most natural, the most alluring thing of all, see in what plight it has brought me. Yet it is, I have heard, the ultimate hope of those who have none. If I relinquish it, what have I left? The satisfaction of my curiosity as to what the years may hold? But I am indifferent. To revenge myself on Incoul. Certainly, I would like to cut his heart out and force it down his throat! But how would it better me? If I could be transported to the multicolored nights of other worlds, and there taste of inexperienced pleasures, move in new refinements, lose my own identity, or pursue a chimera and catch it, it might be worth while, but, as it is — "

The clock on the mantel rang out four times. Again Lenox started from his revery. He smiled cynically at himself. " If I continue in that strain," he muttered, " it must be that I am drunk."

But soon his eyes closed again in mental retrospect. " And yet," he mused, " life is pleasant; ill spent as mine has been, many times I have found it grateful. In books, I have often lost the consciousness of my own identity; now and then music has indeed had the power to take me to other worlds, to show me fresh horizons and larger life. Maida herself came to me like a revelation. She gave me a new conception of beauty. Yes, I have known very many pleasant hours. I was younger then, I fancy. After all, it is not life that is short, it is youth. When that goes, as mine seems to have done, outside of solitude there is little charm in anything. And what is death but isolation? The most perfect and impenetrable that Nature has devised. And whether that isolation come to me to-night or decades hence, what matters it? It is odd, though, how the thought of it unnerves one, and yet, to be logical, I suppose one should be as uneasy of the chaos which precedes existence as of the unknowable that follows it. The proper course, I take it, is to imitate the infant, who faces death without a tremor, and enters it without regret."

He stood up, and drawing the curtains aside, looked out into the night. From below came the rumble of a cart on its way to the Halles, but otherwise the street was silent. The houses opposite were livid. There was a faint flicker from the street lamps, and above were the trembling stars. The moon had gone, but there was yet no sign of coming dawn.

He left the window. The candles had burned down; he found fresh ones and lighted them. As he did so, he caught sight of himself in the glass. His eyes were haggard and rimmed with circles. It was owing to the position of the candles, he thought, and he raised them above his head and looked again. There was something on his forehead just above the temple, and he put the candles down to brush that something away. He looked again, it was still there. He peered into the glass and touched it with his hand. It was nothing, he found, merely a lock of hair that had turned from black to white.

He poured out more absinthe, and put the bottle down empty. Before drinking it he undid the package which he had bought from the chemist. First he took from it a box about three inches long. In it was a toy syringe, and with it two little instruments. One of these he adjusted in the projecting tube, and with his finger felt carefully of the point. It was sharp as a needle, and beneath the point was an orifice like a shark's mouth, in miniature.

Then he took from the package a phial that held a brown liquid, in which he detected a shade like to that of gold. The odor was dull and heavy. He put the phial down and stood for a moment irresolute. He had looked into the past and now he looked into the future. But in its Arcadias he saw nothing, save his own image suspended from a gibbet. He looked again almost wistfully; no, there was nothing. He threw off his coat and rolled up his sleeve. From the phial he filled the syringe, and with the point pricked the bare arm and sent the liquid spurting into the flesh. Three times he did this. He reached for the absinthe and left it untasted.

Into his veins had come an unknown, a delicious languor. He sank into a chair. The walls of the room dissolved into cataracts of light and dazzling steel. The flooring changed to running crimson, and from that to black, and back to red again. From the ceiling came flood after flood of fused, intermingled and oscillating colors. His eyes closed. The light became more intense, and burned luminous through the lids. In his ears filtered a harmony, faint as did it come from afar, and singular as were it won from some new consonance of citherns and clavichords, and suddenly it rose into tumultuous vibrations, striated with series of ascending scales. Then as suddenly ceased, drowned in claps of thunder.

The lights turned purple and glowed less vividly, as though veils were being lowered between him and them. But still the languor continued, sweeter ever and more enveloping, till from very sweetness it was almost pain.

The room grew darker, the colors waned, the lights behind the falling veils sank dim, and dimmer, fading, one by one; a single spark lingered, it wavered a moment, and vanished into night.

XVII.

MAIDA'S NUPTIALS

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FOR some time after Lenox had gone there was much excitement at the Capucines. But gradually the excitement wore itself out, as excitement always does. Baccarat for that night, at least, had lost its allurement. The habitués dispersed, some to other clubs, some to their homes, and soon the great rooms were deserted by all, save one deaf man, who, undisturbed by the commotion, had given himself up to the task of memorizing Sarcey's feuilleton.

Among the earliest to leave was Mr. Incoul. "Come," he said to Blydenburg, "you have seen enough for one evening," and Blydenburg got into his coat and followed his companion to the street. They walked some distance before either of them spoke, but when they reached the hotel at which Blydenburg was stopping, that gentleman halted at an adjacent lamp-post.

"I must say, Incoul," he began, "and I hope you will take it very kindly — I must say that I think you might have left that matter for some one else to discover. Why, hang it all! Leigh is a friend of your wife's; you know all his people; to you the money was nothing. Really, Incoul, damn me if I don't think it hard-hearted. I don't care that for what those frog-eaters say; the cards you said were marked, don't weigh with me in the least; no, not an atom; it is my opinion that the young man was just as innocent as a child unborn. No, sir, you can't make me believe that he — that he — I hate to say the word — that he cheated. Why, man alive! I had my eyes on him the whole time. A better-looking fellow never breathed, and he just chucked out the cards one after another without so much as looking at them; it seemed to me that he didn't care a rap whether he won or lost. I put down a louis or two myself, and he never noticed it; he left the whole thing to the croupier, and now that I come to think of it — "

"Yes, I know," Mr. Incoul interrupted, "I am sorry myself."

"Well, then, I'll be shot if you look so. Good-night to you," and with that Blydenburg stamped up to the hotel, rang the bell, and slammed the door behind him.

Mr. Incoul walked on. The annoyance of his friend affected him like a tonic; he continued his way refreshed. Presently he reached a cab stand. The clock marked 11.50. He had other duties, and he let himself into an Urbaine and told the man to drive to the Parc Monceau. On arriving he tossed a coin to the cabby and entered the house.

In the vestibule a footman started from a nap. Mr.

Incoul went up to the floor above and waited, the door ajar. For a little space he heard the man moving about, whispering to a fellow footman. But soon the whispering ceased. Evidently the men had gone. Assured of this, he opened a drawer and took from it a steel instrument, one that in certain respects resembled a key; the haft, however, was unusually large, the end was not blunt but hollow, yet fashioned like a pincer, and the projecting tongue which, in the case of an ordinary key serves to lock and unlock, was absent. This he put in his pocket. He went out in the hall and listened again. The house was very quiet. He made sure that the footmen had really gone, and walking on tip-toe to his wife's door, rapped ever so noiselessly.

"Is it you, Harmon?" he heard her ask. Had he wished he had no time to answer. A key turned in the lock, the door was opened, and before him Maida stood, smiling a silent welcome to his first visit to her room.

As he entered and closed the door her lips parted; she would have spoken, but something in his face repelled her; the smile fell from her face and the words remained unuttered.

He stood a moment rubbing his hands frigidly, as were he cold, yet the room was not chilly. There was no fire in the grate, but two gas fixtures gave out sufficient heat to warm it unassisted. Then presently he looked at her. She had thrown herself on a lounge near the hearth, and was certainly most fair to see. Her white gown had been replaced by one of looser cut; her neck and arms were no longer bare, but one foot shod in fur that the folds of the skirt left visible was stockingless and the wonder of her hair was unconfined.

He found a chair and seated himself before her. "Madame," he said at last, "I am here at your request."

The girl started as were she stung.

"You were obliging enough this evening to inform me that we had come into our own. What is it?" His eyebrows were raised and about his thin lips was just the faintest expression of contempt. "What is it into which we have come?"

Maida grew whiter than the whitest ermine; she moved her hand as would she answer, but he motioned her to be silent.

"I will tell you," he continued in his measured way, "and you will pardon me if the telling is long. Before it was my privilege to make your acquaintance I was not, as you know, a bachelor; my wife" — and he accentuated the possessive pronoun as had he had but one — "was to me very dear. When I lost her, I thought at first there was nothing left me, but with time I grew to believe that life might still be livable. It is easy for you to understand that in my misfortune I was not dogmatic. I knew that no one is perfect, and I felt that if my wife had seemed perfection to me it was because we understood and loved one another. Then, too, as years passed I found my solitude very tedious. I was, it is true, no longer young, but I was not what the world has agreed to call old; and I thought that among the gracious women whom I knew it might be possible for me to find one who would consent to dispel the solitude, and who might perhaps be able to bring me some semblance of my former happiness. It was under these conditions that I met you. You remember what followed. I saw that you were beautiful, more so, indeed, than my wife, and I imagined that you were honest and self-respecting — in fact, a girl destined to become a noble woman. It was then that I ventured to address you. You told me of your poverty; I begged you to share the money which was mine; you told me that you did not love me. I answered that I would wait. I was glad to share the money with you. I was willing to wait. I knew that you would adorn riches; I believed that I could win your love, and I felt that the winning would be pleasant. I even admired you for the agreement which you suggested. I thought it could not come from any one not wholly refined and mistress of herself. In short, believing in your frankness, I offered you what I had to give. In return what did I ask? The opportunity to be with you, the opportunity of winning your affection and therewith a little trust, a little confidence and the proper keeping of my name. Surely I was not extravagant in my demands. And you, for all your frankness, omitted to tell me the one thing essential: you omitted to tell me — "

" Do not say it," the girl wailed; " do not say it." The tears were falling, her form was rocked with sobs. She was piteous before him who knew not what pity was.

He had risen and she crouched as though she feared he had risen to strike her.

" Of your lover whom I caught to-night cheating at cards."

He had struck her indeed. She looked up through her tears astonished at the novelty of the blow, and yet still she did not seem to understand. She stared at him vacantly as though uncertain of the import of his words.

" Of your lover," he repeated; " the blackleg."

She rose from her seat. She was trembling from head to foot. To support herself she stretched a hand to the mantel and clutching it, she steadied herself. Then, still looking him in the face, she said huskily, " You tell me Lenox Leigh cheated at cards? It is not true! "

" He *is* your lover, then! " hissed Incoul, and into his green, dilated eyes there came a look of such hideous hate that the girl shrank back.

In her fear she held out her arms as though to shield herself from him, and screamed aloud. " You are going to kill me? " she cried.

"Be quiet," he answered, "you will wake the house."

But the order was needless. The girl fell backwards on the lounge. He stood and looked at her without moving. Presently she moaned; her eyes opened and her sobs broke out afresh. And still he gazed as though in enjoyment of a hope fulfilled.

"Now get to your bed," he said, at last.

His eyes searched the room. On a table was a pink box labeled bromide of potassium, and filled with powders wrapped in tin foil. He opened and smelled of one and then opened another and poured the contents of both into a glass which he half filled with water.

"Drink it," he said.

She obeyed dumbly. The tears fell into the glass as she drank. But in a little while her sobs came only intermittently. "I will sleep now," she murmured, helplessly, "I think I will sleep now." Yet still he waited. Her head had fallen far back on the sofa, her hair drooped about her shoulders, her lips were gray.

He took her in his arms and carried her to the bed. One of her furred slippers dropped on the way, the other he took from her. The foot it held hardly filled his palm. He loosened her gown. He would have taken it off but he feared to awake her. Was she really asleep, he wondered. He peered down at her eyelids but they did not move. Surely she slept. A door that led to a dressing-room was open. He closed it. The chair in which he had sat he restored to its original position. Then he turned out the gas. On each of the fixtures his fingers rested the fraction of a minute longer than was necessary. He groped to the door, opened it noiselessly and listened. There was no sound. The house was still as a tomb. He closed the door behind him and drawing the nameless instrument from his pocket he inserted it carefully in the keyhole, gave it a quick turn and went to his room.

XVIII.

MR. INCOUL GOES OVER THE ACCOUNTS

Chapter XVIII.

MR. INCOUL GOES OVER THE ACCOUNTS.

THERE is a saying to the effect that any one who walks long enough in front of the Grand Hôtel will, in the course of time, encounter all his acquaintances, past, present and to be. On the second day after the dinner in the Parc Monceau, Mr. Blydenburg crossed the boulevard. It was an unpleasant afternoon of the kind which is frequent in the early winter: the air was damp and penetrating, and the sky presented that unrelieved and cheerless pallor of which Paris is believed to be the unique possessor. Mr. Blydenburg's spirits were affected; he was ill at ease and inclined to attribute his depression to the rawness of the air and the blanched sky above him. He was to leave Paris on the morrow, and he felt that he would be glad to shake its mud from his feet. He was then on the way to his banker's to close an account, and as he trudged along, with an umbrella under his arm and his trousers turned up, in spite of the prospect of departure he was not in a contented or satisfied frame of mind.

For many hours previous he had cross-questioned himself in regard to Incoul. He knew that in speaking out his mind he had done right, yet he could not help perceiving that right-doing and outspokenness are not always synonymous with the best breeding. Truth certainly is attractive, particularly to him who tells it, but one has to be hospitably inclined to receive it at all times as a welcome guest. Beside, he told himself, Incoul was a man to whom remonstrance was irksome, he chafed at it no matter what its supporting truths might be. Perhaps then it would have been better had he held his tongue. Incoul was his oldest friend, he could not afford to lose him; at his time of life the making of new ones was difficult. And yet did he seek him in a conciliatory mood it would be tantamount to acknowledging that Incoul had been in the right, and the more he thought the matter over the more convinced he became that Incoul was in the wrong. Leigh, he could have sworn, was innocent. The charge that had been brought against him was enough to make a mad dog blush. It was preposterous on the face of it. Then, too, the young man had been given no opportunity to defend himself. The honest-hearted gentleman did not make it plain to his own mind how Leigh could have defended himself even had the opportunity been offered, but he waived objections; his faith was firm. He was enough of a logician to understand that circumstantial evidence, however strong, is not unrebuttable proof, and he assured himself, unless the young man confessed his guilt, that he at least would never believe it.

He was not, therefore, in a contented or satisfied frame of mind; he was irresolute how to act to Incoul; he did not wish to lose an old friend and he was physically unable to be unjust to a new one. After crossing the boulevard he passed the Grand Hôtel and just as he left the wide portals behind him he saw Mr. Wainwaring, with whom two days before he had dined in the Parc Monceau. He bowed and would have continued his way, but Mr. Wainwaring stopped him.

"You have heard, have you not?" he asked excitedly, "you have heard about Mrs. Incoul?"

"Heard what?"

"It appears that on going to bed on Sunday night she turned the gas on instead of turning it off. They smelled the gas in the hall and tried to get into the room, but the door was locked; finally they broke it down. They found her unconscious though still breathing; they worked over her for five hours, but it was no use."

Blydenburg grounded his umbrella on the pavement for support. "Good God!" he muttered, "Good God!"

"Yes," Mr. Wainwaring continued, "it is terrible! A sweeter girl never lived. My daughter knew her intimately; she went there this morning to see her and learned of it at the door. I have just been up there myself. I thought Incoul might see me, but he couldn't. Utterly prostrated I suppose. I can understand that. We all know how devoted he was. He will never get over it — never."

Blydenburg still held to his umbrella for support.

"I must go there," he said.

"Yes, go by all means; he will see you, of course. Poor Incoul! I am heartily sorry for him. After all, wealth is not happiness, is it?"

At this platitude Blydenburg would have gone, but Mr. Wainwaring had more news to impart. "You know about young Leigh, Mrs. Manhattan's brother, don't you?" he continued.

Blydenburg looked down at his umbrella in a weary way.

"Yes, I was there," he answered, "but I don't believe it."

"Oh, you mean that affair at the club. Well, it appears that it is true. From what I make out of the papers, he went to his hotel afterwards, and took a dose of morphine. It was his only way out of it. I couldn't bear him, could you?"

Blydenburg nodded vacantly. "He must have been guilty."

"As to that there is no doubt. De la Dèche says it is a wonder he was not caught before. Well, good-day; tell Incoul how profoundly grieved we all are. Good-day."

Presently Blydenburg found himself in a cab. He was a trifle dazed at what he had heard. He was not brilliant; he was very tiresome at times, the sort of a man that likes big words and small dictionaries, yet somehow he was lovable and more human than many far cleverer than he. To his own misfortune he had a heart, and in disasters like these it bled. He would have crossed the Continent to bring a moment's pleasure to the girl that had been asphyxiated in her bed, and he would have given his daughter to the man who had been choked down to the grave. Then, too, as nearly as he could see, he had wronged Incoul and Incoul was in great grief. As the Urbaine rolled on, his thoughts did not grow nimbler. In his head was a full, aching sensation; he felt benumbed, and raised the collar of his coat. Soon the cab stopped before the house in the Parc Monceau. He had no little set speech prepared; he wanted merely to take his friend by the hand and let him feel his sympathy unspoken, but when the footman came in answer to his ring, he was told that Mr. Incoul could see no one. He went back to his cab. It had begun to rain, but he did not notice it, and left the window open.

As the cab rolled down the street again, Mr. Incoul, who had been occupied with the morning paper, sent for the courier.

"Karl," he said, when the man appeared, "I will go over your accounts."

PARIS, *January–March*, 1887.

THE END.

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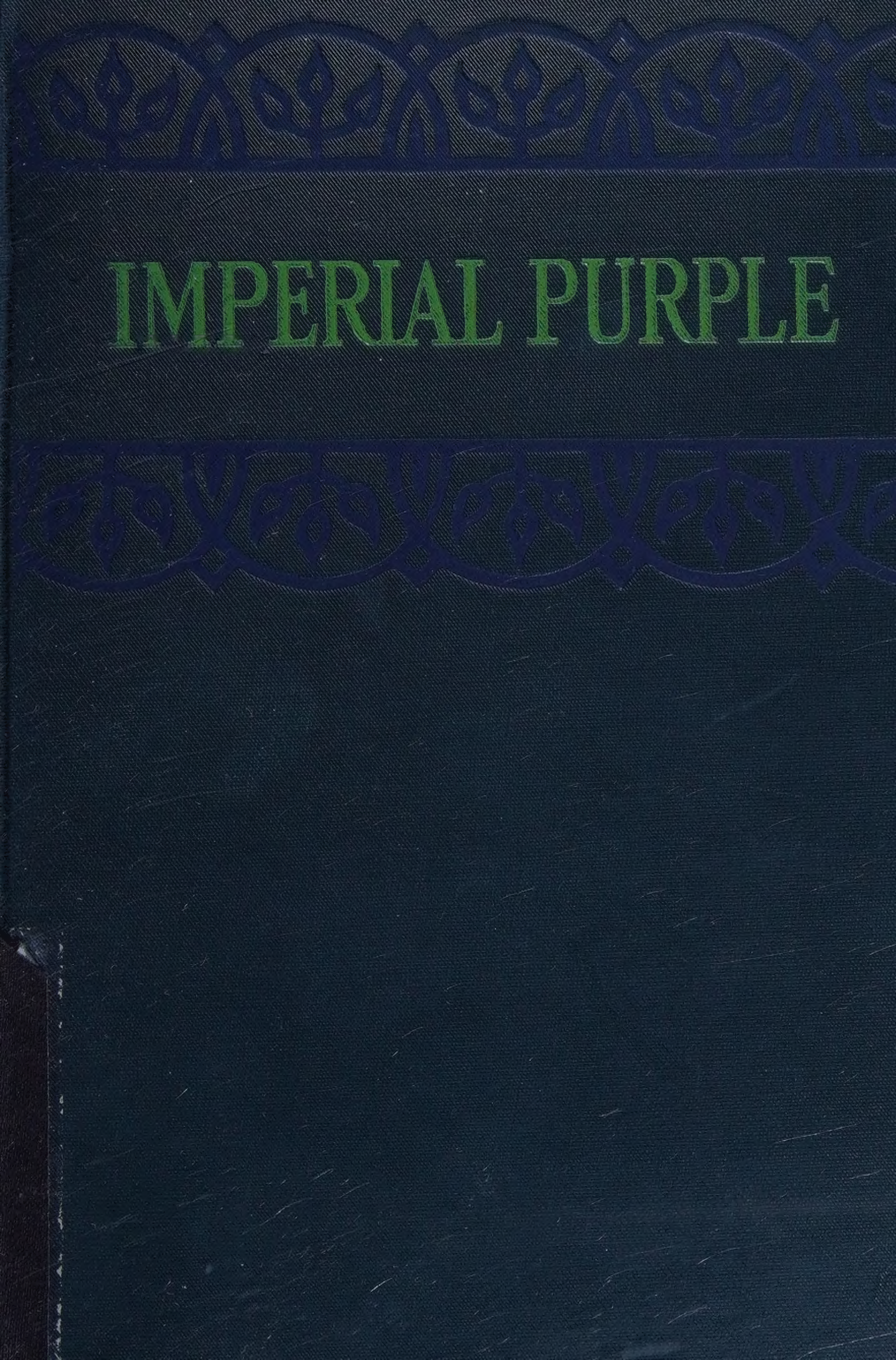

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IMPERIAL PURPLE

I

THAT WOMAN

When the murder was done and the heralds shouted through the thick streets the passing of Cæsar, it was the passing of the republic they announced, the foundation of Imperial Rome.

There was a hush, then a riot which frightened a senate that frightened the world. Cæsar was adored. A man who could give millions away and sup on dry bread was apt to conquer, not provinces alone, but hearts. Besides, he had begun well and his people had done their best. The House of Julia, to which he belonged, descended, he declared, from Venus. The ancestry was less legendary than typical. Cinna drafted a law giving him the right to marry as often as he chose. His mistresses were queens. After the episodes in Gaul, when he entered Rome his legions warned the citizens to have an eye on their wives. At seventeen he fascinated pirates. A shipload of the latter had caught him and demanded twenty talents ransom. " Too little," said the lad; " I will give you fifty, and impale you too," which he did, jesting with them meanwhile, reciting verses of his own composition, calling them barbarians when they did not applaud, ordering them to be quiet when he wished to sleep, captivating them by the effrontery of his assurance, and, the ransom paid, slaughtering them as he had promised.

Tall, slender, not handsome, but superb and therewith so perfectly sent out that Cicero mistook him for a fop from whom the republic had nothing to fear; splendidly lavish, exquisitely gracious, he was born to charm, and his charm was such that it still subsists. Cato alone was unenthralled. But Cato was never pleased; he laughed but once, and all Rome turned out to see him; he belonged to an earlier day, to an austerer, perhaps to a better one, and it may be that in "that woman," as he called Cæsar, his clearer vision discerned beneath the plumage of the peacock, the beak and talons of the bird of prey. For they were there, and needed only a vote of the senate to batten on nations of which the senate had never heard. Loan him an army, and "that woman" was to give geography such a twist that to-day whoso says Cæsar says history.

Was it this that Cato saw, or may it be that one of the oracles which had not ceased to speak had told him of that coming night when he was to take his own life, fearful lest "that woman" should overwhelm him with the magnificence of his forgiveness? Cato walks through history, as he walked through the Forum, bare of foot—too severe to be simple, too obstinate to be generous—the image of ancient Rome.

In Cæsar there was nothing of this. He was wholly modern; dissolute enough for any epoch, but possessed of virtues that his contemporaries could not spell.

A slave tried to poison him. Suetonius says he merely put the slave to death. The "merely" is to the point. Cato would have tortured him first. After Pharsalus he forgave everyone. When severe, it was to himself. It is true he turned over two million people into so many dead flies, their legs in the air, creating, as Tacitus has it, a solitude which he described as Peace; but what antitheses may not be expected in a man who, before the first century was begun, divined the fifth, and who in the Suevians—that terrible people beside whom no nation could live—foresaw Attila!

Save in battle his health was poor. He was epileptic, his strength undermined by incessant debauches; yet let a nation fancying him months away put on insurgent airs, and on that nation he descended as the thunder does. In his campaigns time and again he overtook his own messengers. A phantom in a ballad was not swifter than he. Simultaneously his sword flashed in Germany, on the banks of the Adriatic, in that

Ultima Thule where the Britons lived. From the depths of Gaul he dominated Rome, and therewith he was penetrating impenetrable forests, trailing legions as a torch trails smoke, erecting walls that a nation could not cross, turning soldiers into marines, infantry into cavalry, building roads that are roads to-day, fighting with one hand and writing an epic with the other, dictating love-letters, chronicles, dramas; finding time to make a collection of witticisms; overturning thrones while he decorated Greece; mingling initiate into orgies of the Druids, and, as the cymbals clashed, coquetting with those terrible virgins who awoke the tempest; not only conquering, but captivating, transforming barbarians into soldiers and those soldiers into senators, submitting three hundred nations and ransacking Britannia for pearls for his mistresses' ears.

Each epoch has its secret, and each epoch-maker his own. Cæsar's secret lay in the power he had of projecting a soul into the ranks of an army, of making legions and their leader one. Disobedience only he punished; anything else he forgave. After a victory his soldiery did what they liked. He gave them arms, slaves to burnish them, women, feasts, sleep. They were his comrades; he called them so; he wept at the death of any of them, and when they were frightened, as they were in Gaul before they met the Germans, and in Africa before they encountered Juba, Cæsar frightened them still more. He permitted no questions, no making of wills. The cowards could hide where they liked; his old guard, the Tenth, would do the work alone; or, threat still more sinister, he would command a retreat. Ah, that, never! Fanaticism returned, the legions begged to be punished.

Michelet says he would like to have seen him crossing Gaul, bareheaded, in the rain. It would have been as interesting, perhaps, to have watched him beneath the shade of the velarium pleading the cause of Masintha against the

Numidian king. Before him was a crowd that covered not the Forum alone, but the steps of the adjacent temples, the roofs of the basilicas, the arches of Janus, one that extended remotely to the black walls of the Curia Hostilia beyond. And there, on the rostrum, a musician behind him supplying the *la* from a flute, the air filled with gold motes, Cæsar, his toga becomingly adjusted, a jewelled hand extended, opened for the defence. Presently, when through the exercise of that art of his which Cicero pronounced incomparable, he felt that the sympathy of the audience was won, it would have been interesting, indeed, to have heard him argue point after point—clearly, brilliantly, wittily; insulting the plaintiff in poetic terms; consigning him gracefully to the infernal regions; accentuating a fictitious and harmonious anger; drying his forehead without disarranging his hair; suffocating with the emotions he evoked; displaying real tears, and with them a knowledge, not only of law, rhetoric, philosophy, but of geometry, astronomy, ethics and the fine arts; blinding his hearers with the coruscations of his erudition; stirring them with his tongue, as with the point of a sword, until, as though abruptly possessed by an access of fury, he seized the plaintiff by the beard and sent him spinning like a leaf which the wind had caught.

It would have bored no one either to have assisted at his triumph when he returned from Gaul, when he returned after Spain, after Pharsalus, when he returned from Cleopatra's arms.

On that day the Via Sacra was curtained with silk. To the blare of twisted bugles there descended to it from the turning at the hill a troop of musicians garmented in leather tunics, bonneted with lions' heads. Behind them a hundred bulls, too fat to be troublesome, and decked for death, bellowed musingly at the sacrifants, who, naked to the waist, a long-handled hammer on the shoulder, maintained them with colored cords. To the rumble of wide wheels and the thunder of spectators the prodigious booty passed, and with it triumphs of war, vistas of conquered countries, pictures of battles, lists of the vanquished, symbols of cities that no longer were; a stretch of ivory on which shone three words, each beginning with a V; images of gods disturbed, the Rhine, the Rhone, the captive Ocean in massive gold; the glitter of three thousand crowns offered to the dictator by the army and allies of Rome. Then came the standards of the republic, a swarm of eagles, the size of pigeons, in polished silver upheld by lances which ensigns bore, preceding the six hundred senators who marched in a body, their togas bordered with red, while to the din of incessant insults, interminable files of prisoners passed, their wrists chained to iron collars, which held their heads very straight, and to the rear a litter, in which crouched the Vercingetorix of Gaul, a great moody giant, his menacing eyes nearly hidden in the tangles of his tawny hair.

When they had gone the street was alive with explosions of brass, aflame with the burning red cloaks of laureled lictors making way for the coming of Cæsar. Four horses, harnessed abreast, their manes dyed, their forelocks puffed, drew a high and wonderfully jewelled car; and there, in the attributes and attitude of Jupiter Capitolinus, Cæsar sat, blinking his tired eyes. His face and arms were painted vermilion; above the Tyrian purple of his toga, above the gold work and palms of his tunic, there oscillated a little ball in which there were charms against Envy. On his head a wreath concealed his increasing baldness; along his left arm the sceptre lay; behind him a boy admonished him noisily to remember he was man, while to the rear for miles and miles there rang the laugh of trumpets, the click of castanets, the shouts of dancers, the roar of the multitude, the tramp of legions, and the cry, caught up and repeated, " *Io! Triomphe!* "

Presently, in the temple of the god of gods, side by side with the statue of Jupiter, Cæsar found his own statue with " Cæsar, demi-god," at its base. The captive chiefs disappeared in the Tullianum, and a herald called, " They have lived! " Through the squares jesters circulated, polyglot and obscene; across the Tiber, in an artificial lake, the flotilla of Egypt fought against that of Tyr; in the amphitheatre there was a combat of soldiers, infantry against cavalry, one that indemnified those that had not seen the massacres in Thessaly and in Spain. There were public feasts, gifts to everyone. Tables were set in the Forum, in the circuses and theatres. Falernian circulated in amphoræ, Chios in barrels. When the populace was gorged there were the red feathers to enable it to gorge again. Of the Rome of Romulus there was nothing left save the gaunt she-wolf, her wide lips curled at the descendants of her nursling.

Later, when in slippered feet Cæsar wandered through those lovely gardens of his that lay beyond the Tiber, it may be that he recalled a dream which had come to him as a lad; one which concerned the submission of his mother; one which had disturbed him until the soothsayers said: "The mother you saw is the earth, and you will be her master." And as the memory of the dream returned, perhaps with it came the memory of the hour when as simple quæstor he had wept at Gaddir before a statue that was there. Demi-god, yes; he was that. More, even; he was dictator, but the dream was unfulfilled. There were the depths of Hither Asia, the mysteries that lay beyond; there were the glimmering plains of the Caucasus; there were the Vistula and the Baltic; the diadems of Cyrus and of Alexander defying his ambition yet, and what were triumphs and divinity to one who would own the world!

It was this that preoccupied him. The immensity of his successes seemed petty and Rome very small. Heretofore he had forgiven those who had opposed him. Presently his attitude changed, and so subtly that it was the more humiliating; it was not that he no longer forgave, he disdained to punish. His contempt was absolute. The senate made his office of pontifix maximus hereditary and accorded the title of Imperator to his heirs. He snubbed the senate and the honors that it brought. The senate was shocked. Composed of men whose fortunes he had made, the senate was not only shocked, its education in ingratitude was complete. Already there had been murmurs. Not content with disarranging the calendar, outlining an empire, drafting a code while planning fresh beauties, new theatres, bilingual libraries, larger temples, grander gods, Cæsar was at work in the markets, in the kitchens of the gourmets, in the jewel-boxes of the virgins. Liberty, visibly, was taking flight. Besides, the power concentrated in him might be so pleasantly distributed. It was decided that Cæsar was in the way. To put him out of it a pretext was necessary.

One day the senate assembled at his command. They were to sign a decree creating him king. In order not to, Suetonius says, they killed him, wounding each other in the effort, for Cæsar fought like the demon that he was, desisting only when he recognized Brutus, to whom, in Greek, he muttered a reproach, and, draping his toga that he might fall with decency, sank backward, his head covered, a few feet from the bronze wolf that stood, its ears pointed at the letters S. P. Q. R. which decorated a frieze of the Curia.

Brutus turned to harangue the senate; it had fled. He went to the Forum to address the people; there was no one. Rome was strangely empty. Doors were barricaded, windows closed. Through the silent streets gladiators prowled. Night came, and with it whispering groups. The groups thickened, voices mounted. Cæsar's will had been read. He had left his gardens to the people, a gift to every citizen, his wealth and power to his butchers. The body, which two slaves had removed, an arm hanging from the litter, had never been as powerfully alive. Cæsar reigned then as never before. A mummer mouthed:

> "I brought them life, they gave me death."

And willingly would the mob have made Rome the funeral pyre of their idol. In the sky a comet appeared. It was his soul on its way to Olympus.

II

CONJECTURAL ROME

"I RECEIVED Rome in brick; I shall leave it in marble," said Augustus, who was fond of fine phrases, a trick he had caught from Vergil. And when he looked from his home on the Palatine over the glitter of the Forum and the glare of the Capitol to the new and wonderful precinct which extended to the Field of Mars, there was a stretch of splendor which sanctioned the boast. The city then was very vast. The tourist might walk in it, as in the London of to-day, mile after mile, and at whatever point he placed himself, Rome still lay beyond; a Rome quite like London—one that was choked with mystery, with gold and curious crime.

But it was not all marble. There were green terraces and porphyry porticoes that leaned to a river on which red galleys passed; there were theatres in which a multitude could jeer at an emperor, and arenas in which an emperor could watch a multitude die; there were bronze doors and garden roofs, glancing villas and temples that defied the sun; there were spacious streets, a Forum curtained with silk, the glint and evocations of triumphal war, the splendor of a host of gods, but it was not all marble; there were rents in the magnificence and tatters in the laticlave of state.

In the Subura, where at night women sat in high chairs, ogling the passer with painted eyes, there was still plenty of brick; tall tenements, soiled linen, the odor of Whitechapel and St. Giles. The streets were noisy with match-peddlers, with vendors of cake and tripe and coke; there were touts there too, altars to unimportant divinities, lying Jews who dealt in old clothes, in obscene pictures and unmentionable wares; at the crossings there were thimbleriggers, clowns and jugglers, who made glass balls appear and disappear surprisingly; there were doorways decorated with curious invitations, gossipy barber shops, where, through the liberality of politicians, the scum of a great city was shaved, curled and painted free; and there were public houses, where vagabond slaves and sexless priests drank the mulled wine of Crete, supped on the flesh of beasts slaughtered in the arena, or watched the Syrian women twist to the click of castanets.

Beyond were gray quadrangular buildings, the stomach of Rome, through which, each noon, ediles passed, verifying the prices, the weights and measures of the market men, examining the fish and meats, the enormous cauliflowers that came from the suburbs, Veronese carrots, Arician pears, stout thrushes, suckling pigs, eggs embedded in grass, oysters from Baiæ, boxes of onions and garlic mixed, mountains of poppies, beans and fennel, destroying whatever had ceased to be fresh and taxing that which was.

On the Via Sacra were the shops frequented by ladies; bazaars where silks and xylons were to be had, essences and unguents, travelling boxes of scented wood, switches of yellow hair, useful drugs such as hemlock, aconite, mandragora and cantharides; the last thing of Ovid's and the improper little novels that came from Greece.

On the Appian Way, through green afternoons and pink arcades, fashion strolled. There wealth passed in its chariots, smart young men that smelt of cinnamon instead of war, nobles, matrons, cocottes.

At the other end of the city, beyond the menagerie of the Pantheon, was the Field of Mars, an open-air gymnasium, where every form of exercise was to be had, even to that simple promenade in which the Romans delighted, and which in Cæsar's camp so astonished the Verronians that they thought the promenaders crazy and offered to lead them to their tents. There was tennis for those who liked it; racquets, polo, football, quoits, wrestling, everything apt to induce perspiration and prepare for the hour when a gong of bronze announced the opening of the baths—those wonderful baths, where the Roman, his slaves about him, after pasing through steam and water and the hands of the masseur, had every hair plucked from his arms, legs and armpits; his flesh rubbed down with nard, his limbs polished with pumice; and then, wrapped in a scarlet robe, lined with fur, was sent home in a litter. "Strike them in the face!" cried Cæsar at Pharsalus, when the young patricians made their charge; and the young patricians, who cared more for their looks than they did for victory, turned and fled.

It was to the Field of Mars that Agrippa came, to whom Rome owed the Pantheon and the demand for a law which should inhibit the private ownership of a masterpiece. There, too, his eunuchs about him, Mecænas lounged, companioned by Varus, by Horace and the mime Bathylle, all of whom he was accustomed to invite to that lovely villa of his which overlooked the blue Sabinian hills, and where suppers were given such as those which Petronius has described so alertly and so well.

In the hall like that of Mecænas', one divided against itself, the upper half containing the couches and tables, the other reserved for the service and the entertainments that follow, the ceiling was met by columns, the walls hidden by panels of gems. On a frieze twelve pictures, surmounted by the signs of the zodiac, represented the dishes of the different months. Beneath the bronze beds and silver tables mosaics were set in imitation of food that had fallen and had not been swept away. And there, in white ungirdled tunics, the head and neck circled with coils of amaranth—the perfume of which in opening the pores neutralizes the fumes of wine — the guests lay, fanned by boys, whose curly hair they used for napkins. Under the supervision of butlers the courses were served on platters so large that they covered the tables; sows' breasts with Lybian truffles; dormice baked in poppies and honey, peacock-tongues flavored with cinnamon; oysters stewed in garum—a sauce made of the intestines of fish—sea-wolves from the Baltic; sturgeons from Rhodes; fig-peckers from Samos; African snails; pale beans in pink lard; and a yellow pig cooked after the Troan fashion, from which, when carved, hot sausages fell and live thrushes flew. Therewith was the mulsum, a cup made of white wine, nard, roses, absinthe and honey; the delicate sweet wines of Greece; and crusty Falernian of the year six hundred and thirty-two. As the cups circulated, choirs entered, chanting sedately the last erotic song; a clown danced on the top of a ladder, which he maintained upright as he danced, telling meanwhile untellable stories to the frieze; and host and guests, unvociferously, as good breeding dictates, chatted through the pauses of the service; discussed the disadvantages of death, the value of Nœvian iambics, the disgrace of Ovid, banished because of Livia's eyes.

Such was the Rome of Augustus. "Cæsar," cried a mime to him one day, "do you know that it is important for you that the people should be interested in Bathylle and in myself?"

The mime was right. The sovereign of Rome was not the Cæsar, nor yet the aristocracy. The latter was dead. It had been banished by barbarian senators, by barbarian gods; it had died twice, at Pharsalus, at Philippi; it was the people that was sovereign, and it was important that that sovereign should be amused—flattered, too, and fed. For thirty years not a Roman of note had died in his bed; not one but had kept by him a slave who should kill him when his hour had come; anarchy had been continuous; but now Rome was at rest and its sovereign wished to laugh. Made up of every nation and every vice, the universe was ransacked for its entertainment. The mountain sent its lions, the desert giraffes; there were boas from the jungles, bulls from the plains, and hippopotami from the waters of the Nile. Into the arenas patricians descended; in the amphitheatre there were criminals from Gaul; in the Forum philosophers from Greece. On the stage there were tragedies, pantomimes and farce; there were races in the circus, and in the sacred groves girls with the Orient in their eyes and slim waists that swayed to the crotals. For the thirst of the sovereign there were aqueducts, and for its hunger Africa, Egypt, Sicily contributed grain. Syria unveiled her altars, Persia the mystery and magnificence of her gods.

Such was Rome. Augustus was less noteworthy; so unnecessary even that every student must regret Actium, Antony's defeat, the passing of Cæsar's dream. For Antony was made for conquests; it was he who, fortune favoring, might have given the world to Rome. A splendid, an impudent bandit, first and foremost a soldier, calling himself a descendant of Hercules whom he resembled; hailed at Ephesus as Bacchus, in Egypt as Osiris; Asiatic in lavishness, and Teuton in his capacity for drink; vomiting in the open Forum, and making and unmaking kings; weaving with that viper of the Nile a romance which is history; passing initiate into the inimitable life, it would have been curious to have watched him that last night when the silence was stirred by the hum of harps, the cries of bacchantes bearing his tutelary god back to the Roman camp, while he said farewell to love, to empire and to life.

Augustus resembled him not at all. He was a colorless monarch; an emperor in everything but dignity, a prince in everything but grace; a tactician, not a soldier; a superstitious braggart, afraid of nothing but danger; seducing women to learn their husband's secrets; exiling his daughter, not because she had lovers, but because she had other lovers than himself; exiling Ovid because of Livia, who in the end poisoned her prince, and adroitly, too;

illiterate, blundering of speech, and coarse of manner—a hypocrite and a comedian in one—so guileful and yet so stupid that while a credulous moribund ordered the gods to be thanked that Augustus survived him, the people publicly applied to him an epithet which does not look well in print.

After Philippi and the suicide of Brutus; after Actium and Antony's death, for the first time in ages, the gates of the Temple of Janus were closed. There was peace in the world; but it was the sword of Cæsar, not of Augustus, that brought the insurgents to book. At each of the victories he was either asleep or ill. At the time of battle there was always some god warning him to be careful. The battle won, he was brave enough, considerate even. A father and son begged for mercy. He promised forgiveness to the son on condition that he killed his father. The son accepted and did the work; then he had the son despatched. A prisoner begged but for a grave. "The vultures will see to it," he answered. When at the head of Cæsar's legions, he entered Rome to avenge the latter's death, he announced beforehand that he would imitate neither Cæsar's moderation nor Sylla's cruelty. There would be only a few proscriptions, and a price—and what a price, liberty!—was placed on the heads of hundreds of senators and thousands of knights. And these people, who had more slaves than they knew by sight, slaves whom they tossed alive to fatten fish, slaves to whom they affected never to speak, and who were crucified did they so much as sneeze in their presence—at the feet of these slaves they rolled, imploring them not to deliver them up. Now and then a slave was merciful; Augustus never.

Successes such as these made him ambitious. Having vanquished with the sword, he tried the pen. "You may grant the freedom of the city to your barbarians," said a wit to him one day, "but not to your solecisms." Undeterred he began a tragedy entitled *Ajax*, and discovering his incompetence, gave it up. "And what has become of Ajax?" a parasite asked. "Ajax threw himself on a sponge," replied Augustus, whose father, it is to be regretted, did not do likewise. Nevertheless, it were pleasant to have assisted at his funeral.

A couch of ivory and gold, ten feet high, draped with purple, stood for a week in the atrium of the palace. Within the couch, hidden from view, the body of the emperor lay, ravaged by poison. Above was a statue, recumbent, in wax, made after his image and dressed in imperial robes. Near by a little slave with a big fan protected the statue from flies. Each day physicians came, gazed at the closed wax mouth, and murmured, "He is worse." In the vestibule was a pot of burning ilex, and stretching out through the portals a branch of cypress warned the pontiffs from the contamination of the sight of death.

At high noon on the seventh day the funeral crossed the city. First were the flaming torches; the statues of the House of Octavia; senators in blue; knights in scarlet; magistrates; lictors; the pick of the prætorian guard. Then, to the alternating choruses of boys and girls, the rotting body passed down the Sacred Way. Behind it Tiberius in a travelling-cloak, his hands unringed, marched meditating on the curiosities of life, while to the rear there straggled a troop of dancing satyrs, led by a mime dressed in resemblance of Augustus, whose defects he caricatured, whose vices he parodied and on whom the surging crowd closed in.

On the Field of Mars the pyre had been erected, a great square structure of resinous wood, the interior filled with coke and sawdust, the exterior covered with illuminated cloths, on which, for base, a tower rose, three storeys high. Into the first storey flowers and perfumes were thrown, into the second the couch was raised, then a torch was applied.

As the smoke ascended an eagle shot from the summit, circled a moment, and disappeared. For the sum of a million sesterces a senator swore that with the eagle he had seen the emperor's soul.

III

FABULOUS FIELDS

MENTION Tiberius, and the name evokes a taciturn tyrant, devising in the crypts of a palace infamies so monstrous that to describe them new words were coined.

In the Borghese collection Tiberius is rather good-looking than otherwise, not an Antinous certainly, but manifestly a dreamer; one whose eyes must have been almost feline in their abstraction, and in the corners of whose mouth you detect pride, no doubt, but melancholy as well. The pride was congenital, the melancholy was not.

Under Tiberius there was quiet, a romancer wrote, and the phrase in its significance passed into legend. During the dozen or more years that he ruled in Rome, his common sense was obvious. The Tiber overflowed, the senate looked for a remedy in the Sibyline Books. Tiberius set some engineers to work. A citizen swore by Augustus and swore falsely. The senate sought to punish him, not for perjury but for sacrilege. It is for Augustus to punish, said Tiberius. The senate wanted to name a month after him. Tiberius declined. "Supposing I were the thirteenth Cæsar, what would you do?" For years he reigned, popular and acclaimed, caring the while nothing for popularity and less for pomp. Sagacious, witty even, believing perhaps in little else than fate and mathematics, yet maintaining the institutions of the land, striving resolutely for the best, outwardly impassable and inwardly mobile, he was a man and his patience had bounds. There were conspirators in the atrium, there was death in the courtier's smile; and finding his favorites false, his life threatened, danger at every turn, his conception of rulership changed. Where moderation had been suddenly there gleamed the axe.

Tacitus, always dramatic, states that at the time terror devastated the city. It so happened that under the republic there was a law against whomso diminished the majesty of the people. The republic was a god, one that had its temple, its priests, its altars. When the republic succumbed, its divinity passed to the emperor; he became Jupiter's peer, and, as such, possessed of a majesty which it was sacrilege to slight. Consulted on the subject, Tiberius replied that the law must be observed. Originally instituted in prevention of offences against the public good, it was found to change into a crime, a word, a gesture or a look. It was a crime to undress before a statue of Augustus, to mention his name in the latrinæ, to carry a coin with his image into a lupanar. The punishment was death. Of the property of the accused, a third went to the informer, the rest to the state. Then abruptly terror stalked abroad. No one was safe except the obscure, and it was the obscure that accused. Once an accused accused his accuser; the latter went mad. There was but one refuge—the tomb. If the accused had time to kill himself before he was tried, his property was safe from seizure and his corpse from disgrace. Suicide became endemic in Rome. Never among the rich were orgies as frenetic as then. There was a breathless chase after delights, which the summons, "It is time to die," might at any moment interrupt.

Tiberius meanwhile had gone from Rome. It was then his legend began. He was represented living at Capri in a collection of twelve villas, each of which was dedicated to a particular form of lust, and there with the paintings of Parrhasius for stimulant the satyr lounged. He was then an old man; his life had been passed in public, his conduct unreproved. If no one becomes suddenly base, it is rare for a man of seventy to become abruptly vile. "Whoso," Sakya Muni announced—"whoso discovers that grief comes from affection, will retire into the jungles and there remain." Tiberius had made the discovery. The jungles he selected were the gardens by the sea. And in those gardens, gossip represented him devising new forms of old vice. On the subject every doubt is permissible, and even otherwise, morality then existed in but one form, one which the entire nation observed, wholly, absolutely; that form was patriotism. Chastity was expected of the vestal, but of no one else. The matrons had certain traditions to maintain, certain appearances to preserve, but otherwise morality was unimagined and matrimony unpopular.

When matrimony occurred, divorce was its natural consequence. Incompatibility was sufficient cause. Cicero, who has given it to history that the best women counted the years not numerically, but by their different husbands, obtained a divorce on the ground that his wife did not idolize him.

Divorce was not obligatory. Matrimony was. According to a recent law whoso at twenty-five was not married, whoso, divorced or widowed, did not remarry, whoso, though married, was without children, was regarded as a public enemy and declared incapable of inheriting or of serving the state. To this law, one of Augustus' stupidities which presently fell into disuse, only a technical observance was paid. Men married just enough to gain a position or inherit a legacy; next day they got a divorce. At the moment of need a child was adopted; the moment passed, the child was disowned. But if the law had little value, at least it shows the condition of things. Moreover, if in that condition Tiberius participated, it was not because he did not differ from other men.

"*Ho sempre amato la solitaria vita,*" Petrarch, referring to himself, declared, and Tiberius might have said the same thing. He was in love with solitude; ill with efforts for the unattained; sick with the ingratitude of man. Presently it was decided that he had lived long enough. He was suffocated—beneath a mattress at that. Cæsar had dreamed of a universal monarchy of which he should be king; he was murdered. That dream was also Antony's; he killed himself. Cato had sought the restoration of the republic, and Brutus the attainment of virtue; both committed suicide. Under the empire dreamers fared ill. Tiberius was a dreamer.

In a palace where a curious conception of the love of Atalanta and Meleager was said to figure on the walls, there was a door on which was a sign, imitated from one that overhung the Theban library of Osymandias—Pharmacy of the Soul. It was there Tiberius dreamed.

On the ivory shelves were the philtres of Parthenius, labelled *De Amatoriis Affectionibus*, the *Sybaris* of Clitonymus, the *Erotopægnia* of Lævius, the maxims and instructions of Elephantis, the nine books of Sappho. There also were the pathetic adventures of Odatis and Zariadres, which Chares of Mitylene had given to the world; the astonishing tales of that early Cinderella, Rhodopis; and with them those romances of Ionian nights by Aristides of Milet, which Crassus took with him when he set out to subdue the Parthians, and which, found in the booty, were read aloud to the people that they might judge the morals of a nation that pretended to rule the world.

Whether such medicaments are serviceable to the soul is problematic. Tiberius had other drugs on the ivory shelves—magic preparations that transported him to fabulous fields. There was a work by Hecatæus, with which he could visit Hyperborea, that land where happiness was a birthright, inalienable at that; yet a happiness so sweet that it must have been cloying; for the people who enjoyed it, and with it the appanage of limitless life, killed themselves from sheer ennui. Theopompus disclosed to him a stranger vista—a continent beyond the ocean—one where there were immense cities, and where two rivers flowed—the River of Pleasure and the River of Pain. With Iambulus he discovered the Fortunate Isles, where there were men with elastic bones, bifurcated tongues; men who never married, who worshipped the sun, whose life was an uninterrupted delight, and who, when overtaken by age, lay on a perfumed grass that produced a voluptuous death. Evhemerus, a terrible atheist, whose Sacred History the early bishops wielded against polytheism until they discovered it was double-edged, took him to Panchaia, an island where incense grew; where property was held in common; where there was but one law —Justice, yet a justice different from our own, one which Hugo must have intercepted when he made an entrancing yet enigmatical apparition exclaim:

> "Tu me crois la Justice, je suis la Pitié."

And in this paradise there was a temple, and before it a column, about which, in Panchaian characters, ran a history of ancient kings, who, to the astonishment of the tourist, were found to be none other than the gods whom the universe worshipped, and who in earlier days had announced themselves divinities, the better to rule the hearts and minds of man.

With other guides Tiberius journeyed through lands where dreams come true. Aristeas of Proconnesus led him among the Arimaspi, a curious people who passed their lives fighting for gold with griffons in the dark. With Isogonus he descended the valley of Ismaus, where wild men were, whose feet turned inwards. In Albania he found a race with pink eyes and white hair; in Sarmatia another that ate only on alternate days. Agatharcides took him to Libya, and there introduced him to the Psyllians, in whose bodies was a poison deadly to serpents, and who, to test the fidelity of their wives, placed their children in the presence of snakes; if the snakes fled they knew their wives were pure. Callias took him further yet, to the home of the hermaphrodites; Nymphodorus showed him a race of fascinators who used enchanted words. With Apollonides he encountered women who killed with their eyes those on whom they looked too long. Megasthenes guided him to the Astomians, whose garments were the down of feathers, and who lived on the scent of the rose.

In his cups they all passed, confusedly, before him; the hermaphrodites whispered to the rose-breathers the secrets of impossible love; the griffons bore to him women with magical eyes; the Albanians danced with elastic feet; he heard the shrill call of the Psyllians, luring the serpents to death; the column of Panchaia unveiled its mysteries; the Hyperboreans the reason of their fear of life, and on the wings of the chimera he set out again in search of that continent which haunted antiquity and which lay beyond the sea.

IV

THE PURSUIT OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

"ANOTHER Phaethon for the universe," Tiberius is reported to have muttered, as he gazed at his nephew Caius, nicknamed Caligula, who was to suffocate him with a mattress and rule in his stead.

To rule is hardly the expression. There is no term in English to convey that dominion over sea and sky which a Cæsar possessed, and which Caligula was the earliest to understand. Augustus was the first magistrate of Rome, Tiberius the first citizen. Caligula was the first emperor, but an emperor hallucinated by the enigma of his own grandeur, a prince for whose sovereignty the world was too small.

Each epoch has its secret, sometimes puerile, often perplexing; but in its maker there is another and a more interesting one yet. Eliminate Caligula, and Nero, Domitian, Commodus, Caracalla and Heliogabalus would never have been. It was he who gave them both *raison d'être* and incentive. The lives of all of them are horrible, yet analyze the horrible and you find the sublime.

Fancy a peak piercing the heavens, shadowing the earth. It was on a peak such as that the young emperors of old Rome balanced themselves, a precipice on either side. Did they look below, a vertigo rose to meet them; from above delirium came, while the horizon, though it hemmed the limits of vision, could not mark the frontiers of their dream. In addition there was the exaltation that altitudes produce. The valleys have their imbeciles; it is from mountains the poet and madman come. Caligula was both, sceptred at that; and with what a sceptre! One that stretched from the Rhine to the Euphrates, dominated a hundred and fifty million people; one that a mattress had given and a knife was to take away; a sceptre that lashed the earth, threatened the sky, beckoned planets and ravished the divinity of the divine.

To wield such a sceptre securely requires grace, no doubt, majesty too, but certainly strength; the latter Caligula possessed, but it was the feverish strength of one who had fathomed the unfathomable, and who sought to make its depths his own. Caligula was haunted by the intangible. His sleep was a communion with Nature, with whom he believed himself one. At times the Ocean talked to him; at others the Earth had secrets which it wished to tell. Again there was some matter of moment which he must mention to the day, and he would wander out in the vast galleries of the palace and invoke the Dawn, bidding it come and listen to his speech. The day was deaf, but there was the moon, and he prayed her to descend and share his couch. Luna declined to be the mistress of a mortal; to seduce her Caligula determined to become a god.

Nothing was easier. An emperor had but to open his veins, and in an hour he was a divinity. But the divinity which Caligula desired was not of that kind. He wished to be a god, not on Olympus alone, but on earth as well. He wished to be a palpable, tangible, living god; one that mortals could see, which was more, he knew, than could be said of the others. The mere wish was sufficient—Rome fell at his feet. The patent of divinity was in the genuflections of a nation. At once he had a temple, priests and flamens. Inexhaustible Greece was sacked again. The statues of her gods, disembarked at Rome, were decapitated, and on them the head of Caius shone.

Heretofore his dress had not been Roman, nor, for that matter, the dress of a man. On his wrists were bracelets; about his shoulders was a mantle sewn with gems; beneath was a tunic, and on his feet were the high white slippers that women wore. But when the god came the costume changed. One day he was Apollo, the nimbus on his curls, the Graces at his side; the next he was Mercury, wings at his heels, the caduceus in his hand; again he was Venus. But it was as Jupiter Latialis, armed with the thunderbolt and decorated with a great gold beard, that he appeared at his best.

The rôle was very real to him. After the fashion of Olympians he became frankly incestuous, seducing vestals, his sisters too, and gaining in boldness with each metamorphosis, he menaced the Capitoline Jove. "Prove your power," he cried to him, "or fear my own!" He thundered at him with machine-made thunder, with lightning that flashed from a pan. "Kill me," he shouted, "or I will kill you!" Jove, unmoved, must have moved his assailant, for presently Caligula lowered his voice, whispered in the old god's ear, questioned him, meditated on his answer, grew perplexed, violent again, and threatened to send him home.

These interviews humanized him. He forgot the moon and mingled with men, inviting them to die. The invitation being invariably accepted, he became a connoisseur in death, an artist in blood, a ruler to whom cruelty was not merely an aid to government but an individual pleasure, and therewith such a perfect lover, such a charming host!

"Dear heart," he murmured to his mistress Pryallis, as she lay one night in his arms, "I think I will have you tortured that you may tell me why I love you so." But of that the girl saw no need. She either knew the reason or invented one, for presently he added: "And to think that I have but a sign to make and that beautiful head of yours is off!" Musings of this description were so humorous that one evening he explained to guests whom he had startled with his laughter, that it was amusing to reflect how easily he could have all of them killed.

But even to a god life is not an unmixed delight. Caligula had his troubles. About him there had settled a disturbing quiet. Rome was hushed, the world was very still. There was not so much as an earthquake. The reign of Augustus had been marked by the defeat of Varus. Under Tiberius a falling amphitheatre had killed a multitude. Caligula felt that through sheer felicity his own reign might be forgot. A famine, a pest, an absolute defeat, a terrific conflagration—any prodigious calamity that should sweep millions away and stamp his own memory immutably on the chronicles of time, how desirable it were! But there was nothing. The crops had never been more abundant; apart from the arenas and the prisons, the health of the empire was excellent; on the frontiers not so much as the rumor of an insurrection could be heard, and Nero was yet to come.

Perplexed, Caligula reflected, and presently from Baiæ to Puzzoli, over the waters of the bay, he galloped on horseback, the cuirass of Alexander glittering on his breast. The intervening miles had been spanned by a bridge of ships and on them a road had been built, one of those roads for which the Romans were famous, a road like the Appian Way, in earth and stone, bordered by inns, by pink arcades, green retreats, forest reaches, the murmur of trickling streams. So many ships were anchored there that through the unrepleted granaries the fear of famine stalked. Caligula, meanwhile, his guests behind him, made cavalry charges across the sea, or in a circus-chariot held the ribbons, while four white horses, maddened by swaying lights, bore him to the other shore. At night the entire coast was illuminated; the bridge was one great festival, brilliant but brief. Caligula had wearied of it all. At a signal the multitude of guests he had assembled there were tossed into the sea.

By way of a souvenir, Tiberius, whom he murdered, had left him the immensity of his treasure. "I must be economical or Cæsar," Caligula reflected, and tipped a coachman a million, rained on the people a hail of coin, bathed in essences, set before his guests loaves of silver, gold omelettes, sausages of gems; sailed to the hum of harps on a ship that had porticoes, gardens, baths, bowers, spangled sails and a jewelled prow; removed a mountain, and put a palace where it had been; filled in a valley and erected a temple on the top; supplied a horse with a marble home, with ivory stalls, with furniture and slaves; contemplated making him consul; made him a host instead, one that in his own equine name invited the fashion of Rome to sup with Incitatus.

In one year Tiberius' legacy, a sum that amounted to four hundred million of our money, was spent. Caligula had achieved the impossible; he was a bankrupt god, an emperor without a copper. But the very splendor of that triumph demanded a climax. If Caligula hesitated, no one knew it. On the morrow the palace of the Cæsars was turned into a lupanar, a little larger, a little handsomer than the others, but still a brothel, one of which the inmates were matrons of Rome and the keeper Jupiter Latialis.

After that, seemingly, there was nothing save apotheosis. But Caligula, in the nick of time, remembered the ocean. At the head of an army he crossed Gaul, attacked it, and returned refreshed. Decidedly he had not exhausted everything yet. He recalled Tiberius' policy, and abruptly the world was filled again with accusers and accused. Gold poured in on him, the earth paid him tribute. In a vast hall he danced naked on the wealth of nations. Once more he was rich, richer than ever; there were still illusions to be looted, other dreams to be pierced; yet, even as he mused, conspirators were abroad. He loosed his pretorians. "Had Rome but one head!" he muttered. "Let them *feel* themselves die," he cried to his officers. "Let me be hated, but let me be feared."

One day, as he was returning from the theatre, the dagger did its usual work. Rome had lost a genius; in his place there came an ass.

There is a verse in Greek to the effect that the blessed have children in three months. Livia and Augustus were blessed in this pleasant fashion. Three months after their marriage a child was born—a miracle which surprised no one aware of their previous intimacy. The child became a man, and the father of Claud, an imbecile whom the pretorians, after Caligula's death, found in a closet, shaking with fright, and whom for their own protection they made emperor in his stead.

Caligula had been frankly adored; there was in him an originality, and with it a grandeur and a mad magnificence that enthralled. Then, too, he was young, and at his hours what the French call *charmeur*. If at times he frightened, always he dazzled. Of course he was adored; the prodigal emperors always were; so were their successors, the wicked popes. Man was still too near to nature to be aware of shame, and infantile enough to care to be surprised. In that was Caligula's charm; he petted his people and surprised them too. Claud wearied. Between them they assimilate every contradiction, and in their incoherences explain that incomprehensible chaos which was Rome. Caligula jeered at everybody; everybody jeered at Claud.

The latter was a fantastic, vacillating, abstracted, cowardly tyrant, issuing edicts in regard to the proper tarring of barrels, and rendering absurd decrees; declaring himself to be of the opinion of those who were right; falling asleep on the bench, and on awakening announcing that he gave judgment in favor of those whose reasons were the best; slapped in the face by an irritable plaintiff; held down by main force when he wanted to leave; inviting to supper those whom he had killed before breakfast; answering the mournful salute of the gladiators with a grotesque *Avete vos*—"Be it well too with you," a response, parenthetically, which the gladiators construed as a pardon and refused to fight; dowering the alphabet with three new letters which lasted no longer than he did; asserting that he would give centennial games as often as he saw fit; an emperor whom no one obeyed, whose eunuchs ruled in his stead; whose lackeys dispensed exiles, death, consulates and crucifixions; whose valets insulted the senate, insulted Rome, insulted the sovereign that ruled the world; whose people shared his consort's couch; a slipshod drunkard in a tattered gown —such was the imbecile that succeeded Caligula and had Messalina for wife.

It were curious to have seen that woman as Juvenal did, a veil over her yellow wig, hunting adventures through the streets of Rome, while her husband in the Forum censured the dissoluteness of citizens. And it were curious, too, to understand whether it was her audacity or his stupidity which left him the only man in Rome unacquainted with the prodigious multiplicity and variety of her lovers. History has its secrets, yet, in connection with Messalina, there is one that historians have not taken the trouble to probe; to them she has been an imperial strumpet. Messalina was not that. At heart she was probably no better and no worse than any other lady of the land, but pathologically she was an unbalanced person, who to-day would be put through a course of treatment, instead of being put to death. When Claud at last learned, not the truth, but that some of her lovers were conspiring to get rid of him, he was not indignant; he was frightened. The conspirators were promptly disposed of, Messalina with them. Suetonius says that, a few days later, as he went in to supper, he asked why the empress did not appear.

Apart from the neurosis from which she suffered, were it possible to find an excuse for her conduct, the excuse would be Claud. The purple which made Caligula mad, made him an idiot; and when in course of time he was served with a succulent poison, there must have been many conjectures in Rome as to what the empire would next produce.

The empire was extremely fecund, enormously vast. About Rome extended an immense circle of provinces and cities that were wholly hers. Without that circle was another, the sovereignty exercised over vassals and allies; beyond that, beyond the Rhine on one side, were the silenced Teutons; beyond the Euphrates on the other, the hazardous Parthians, while remotely to the north there extended the enigmas of barbarism; to the south, those semi-fabulous regions where geography ceased to be.

Little by little, through the patience of a people that felt itself eternal, this immensity had been assimilated and fused. A few fortresses and legions on the frontiers, a stretch of soldiery at any spot an invasion might be feared; a little tact, a maternal solicitude, and that was all. Rome governed unarmed, or perhaps it might be more exact to say she did not govern at all; she was the mistress of a federation of realms and republics that governed themselves, in whose government she was content, and from whom she exacted little, tribute merely, and obeisance to herself. Her strength was not in the sword; the lioness roared rarely, often slept; it was the fear smaller beasts had of her awakening that made them docile; once aroused those indolent paws could do terrible work, and it was well not to excite them. When the Jews threatened to revolt, Agrippa warned them: " Look at Rome; look at her well; her arms are invisible, her troops are afar; she rules, not by them, but by the certainty of her power. If you rebel, the invisible sword will flash, and what can you do against Rome armed, when Rome unarmed frightens the world? "

The argument was pertinent and suggestive, but the secret of Rome's ascendency consisted in the fact that where she conquered she dwelt. Wherever the eagles pounced, Rome multiplied herself in miniature. In the army was the nation, in the legion the city. Where it camped, presto! a judgment seat and an altar. On the morrow there was a forum; in a week there were paved avenues; in a fortnight, temples, porticoes; in a month you felt yourself at home. Rome built with a magic that startled as surely as the glint of her sword. Time and again the nations whom Cæsar encountered planned to eliminate his camp. When they reached it the camp had vanished; in its place was a walled, impregnable town.

As the standards lowered before that town, the pomœrium was traced. Within it the veteran found a home, without it a wife; and the family established, the legion that had conquered the soil with the sword, subsisted on it with the plow. Presently there were priests there, aqueducts, baths, theatres and games, all the marvel of imperial elegance and vice. When the aborigine wandered that way, his seduction was swift.

The enemy that submitted became a subject, not a slave. Rome commanded only the free. If his goods were taxed, his goods remained his own, his personal liberty untrammelled. His land had become part of a new province, it is true, but provided he did not interest himself in such matters as peace and war, not only was he free to manage his own affairs, but that land, were it at the uttermost end of the earth, might, in recompense of his fidelity, come to be regarded as within the Italian territory; as such, sacred, inviolate, free from taxes, and he a citizen of Rome, senator even, emperor!

Conquest once solidified, the rest was easy. Tattered furs were replaced by the tunic and uncouth idioms by the niceties of Latin speech. In some cases, where the speech had been beaten in with the hilt of the sword, the accent was apt to be rough, but a generation, two at most, and there were sweethearts and swains quoting Horace in the moonlight, naïvely unaware that only the verse of the Greeks could pleasure the Roman ear.

The principalities and kingdoms that of their own wish [a wish often suggested, and not always amicably either] became allies of Rome and mingled their freedom with hers, entered into an alliance whereby in return for Rome's patronage and protection they agreed to have a proper regard for the dignity of the Roman people and to have no other friends or enemies than those that were Rome's—a formula exquisite in the civility with which it exacted the renunciation of every inherent right. A king wrote to the senate: "I have obeyed your deputy as I would have obeyed a god." "And you have done wisely," the senate answered, a reply which, in its terseness, tells all.

Diplomacy and the plow, such were Rome's methods. As for herself she fought, she did not till. Italy, devastated by the civil wars, was uncultivated, cut up into vast unproductive estates. From one end to the other there was barely a trace of agriculture, not a sign of traffic. You met soldiers, cooks, petty tradesmen, gladiators, philosophers, patricians, market gardeners, lazzaroni and millionaires; the merchant and the farmer, never. Rome's resources were in distant commercial centres, in taxes and tribute; her wealth had come of pillage and exaction. Save her strength, she had nothing of her own. Her religion, literature, art, philosophy, luxury and corruption, everything had come from abroad. In Greece were her artists; in Africa, Gaul and Spain, her agriculturists; in Asia her artisans. Her own breasts were sterile. When she gave birth it was to a litter of monsters, sometimes to a genius, by accident to a poet. She consumed, she did not produce. It was because of that she fell.

V

NERO

"SAVE a monster, what can you expect from Agrippina and myself?"

It was Domitius, Nero's father, who made this ingenious remark. He was not a good man; he was not even good-looking, merely vicious and rich. But his viciousness was benign beside that of Agrippina, who poisoned him when Nero's birth ensured the heritage of his wealth.

In all its galleries history has no other portrait such as hers. Caligula's sister, his mistress as well, exiled by him and threatened with death, her eyes dazzled and her nerves unstrung by the impossibilities of that fabulous reign, it was not until Claud, her uncle, recalled her and Messalina disappeared, that the empress awoke. She too, she determined, would rule, and the *jus osculi* aiding, she married out of hand that imbecile uncle of hers, on whose knee she had played as a child.

The day of the wedding a young patrician, expelled from the senate, killed himself. Agrippina had accused him of something not nice, not because he was guilty, nor yet because the possibility of the thing shocked her, but because he was betrothed to Octavia, Claud's daughter, who, Agrippina determined, should be Nero's wife. Presently Caligula's widow, an old rival of her own, a lady who had thought she would like to be empress twice, and whom Claud had eyed grotesquely, was disencumbered of three million worth of emeralds, with which she heightened her beauty, and told very civilly that it was time to die. So, too, disappeared a Calpurina, a Lepida; women young, rich, handsome, impure, and as such dangerous to Agrippina's peace of mind. The legality of her crimes was so absolute that the mere ownership of an enviable object was a cause for death. A senator had a villa which pleased her; he was invited to die. Another had a pair of those odorous murrhine vases, which Pompey had found in Armenia, and which on their first appearance set Rome wild; he, too, was invited to die.

But, though Agrippina dealt in death, she dealt in seductions too. Rome, that had adored Caligula, promptly fell under his sister's sway. There was a splendor in her eyes, which so many crimes had lit; in her carriage there was such majesty, the pomp with which she surrounded herself was so magnificent, that Rome, enthralled, applauded. Beyond, on the Rhine, a city which is today Cologne, rose in honor of her sovereignty. To her wishes the senate was subservient, to her indiscretions blind. Claud, who meanwhile had been wholly sightless, suddenly showed signs of discernment. A woman, charged with illicit commerce, was brought to his tribunal. He condemned her, of course. "In my case," he explained, "matrimony has not been successful, but the fate that destined me to marry impure women destined me also to punish them." It was then that Agrippina ordered of Locusta that famous stew of poison and mushrooms, which Nero, in allusion to Claud's apotheosis, called the food of the gods. The fate that destined Claud to marry Agrippina destined her to kill him.

It was under her care, between a barber and a ballerine, amid the shamelessness of his stepfather's palace, where any day he could have seen his mother beckon indolently to a centurion and pointing to some lover who had ceased to please, make the gesture which signified Death, that the young Enobarbus —Nero, as he subsequently called himself—was trained for the throne.

He had entered the world like a tiger cub, feet first; a circumstance which is said to have disturbed his mother, and well it might. During his adolescence that lady made herself feared. He was but seventeen when the pretorians called upon him to rule the world; and at the time an ingenuous lad, one who blushed like Lalage, very readily, particularly at the title of Father of the Country, which the senate was anxious to give him; endowed with excellent instincts, which he had got no one knew whence; a trifle *petit maître*, perhaps, perfuming the soles of his feet, and careful about the arrangement of his yellow curls, but withal generous, modest, sympathetic—in short, a flower in a cesspool, a youth not over well-fitted to reign. But his mother was there; as he developed so did his fear of her, to such proportions even that he gave certain orders, and his mother was killed. That duel between mother and son, terrible in its intensity and unnameable horror, even the Borgias could not surpass. Tacitus has told it, dramatically, as was his wont, but he told it in Latin, in which tongue it had best remain.

At that time the ingenuous lad had disappeared. The cub was full-grown. Besides, he had tasted blood. Octavia, who with her brother, Britannicus, and her sister, Antonia, had been his playmates; who was almost his own sister; whose earliest memories interlinked with his, and who had become his wife, had been put to death; not that she had failed to please, but because a lady, Sabina Poppœa, who, Tacitus says, lacked nothing except virtue, had declined to be his mistress. At the time Sabina was married. But divorce was easy. Sabina got one at the bar; Nero with the axe. The twain were then united. Nero seems to have loved her greatly, a fact, as Suetonius puts it, which did not prevent him from kicking her to death. Already he had poisoned Britannicus, and with Octavia decapitated and Agrippina gone, of the imperial house there remained but Antonia and himself. The latter he invited to marry him; she declined. He invited her to die. He was then alone, the last of his race. Monsters never engender. A thinker who passed that way thought him right to have killed his mother; her crime was in giving him birth.

Therewith he was popular; more so even than Caligula, who was a poet, and as such apart from the crowd, while Nero was frankly canaille—well-meaning at that—which Caligula never was. During the early years of his reign he could not do good enough. The gladiators were not permitted to die; he would have no shedding of blood; the smell of it was distasteful. He would listen to no denunciations; when a decree of death was brought to him to sign, he regretted that he knew how to write. Rome had never seen a gentler prince, nor yet one more splendidly lavish. The people had not only the necessities of life, but the luxuries, the superfluities, too. For days and days in the Forum there was an incessant shower of tickets that were exchangeable, not for bread or trivial sums, but for gems, pictures, slaves, fortunes, ships, villas and estates. The creator of that shower was bound to be adored.

It was that, no doubt, which awoke him. A city like Rome, one that had over a million inhabitants, could make a terrific noise, and when that noise was applause, the recipient found it heady. Nero got drunk on popularity, and heredity aiding where the prince had been emerged the cad, a *poseur* that bored, a beast that disgusted, a caricature of the impossible in a crimson frame.

"What an artist the world is to lose!" he exclaimed as he died; and artist he was, but in the Roman sense; one that enveloped in the same contempt the musician, acrobat and actor. It was the artist that played the flute while gladiators died and lovers embraced; it was the artist that entertained the vulgar.

As an artist Nero might have been a card. Fancy the attraction—an emperor before the footlights; but fancy the boredom also. The joy at the announcement of his first appearance was so great that thanks were offered to the gods; and the verses he was to sing, graven in gold, were dedicated to the Capitoline Jove. The joy was brief.

The exits of the theatre were closed. It was treason to attempt to leave. People pretended to be dead in order to be carried out, and well they might. The star was a fat man with a husky tenorino voice, who sang drunk and half-naked to a protecting claque of ten thousand hands.

But it was in the circus that Nero was at his best; there, no matter though he were last in the race, it was to him the palm was awarded, or rather it was he that awarded the palm to himself, and then quite magnificently shouted, "Nero, Cæsar, victor in the race, gives his crown to the People of Rome!"

On the stage he had no rivals, and by chance did one appear, he was invited to die. In that respect he was artistically susceptible. When he turned acrobat, the statues of former victors were tossed in the latrinæ. Yet, as competitors were needed, and moreover as he, singly, could fill neither a stage nor a track, it was the nobility of Rome that he ordered to appear with him. For that the nobility never forgave him. On the other hand, the proletariat loved him the better. What greater salve could it have than the sight of the conquerors of the world entertaining the conquered, lords amusing their lackeys?

Greece meanwhile sent him crowns and prayers; crowns for anticipated victories, prayers that he would come and win them. Homage so delicate was not to be disdained. Nero set forth, an army at his heels; a legion of claquers, a phalanx of musicians, cohorts of comedians, and with these for retinue, through sacred groves that Homer knew, through intervales which Hesiod sang, through a year of festivals he wandered, always victorious. It was he who conquered at Olympia; it was he who conquered at Corinth. No one could withstand him. Alone in history he won in every game, and with eighteen hundred crowns as trophies of war he repeated Cæsar's triumph. In a robe immaterial as a moonbeam, the Olympian wreath on his curls, the Isthmian laurel in his hand, his army behind him, the clown that was emperor entered Rome. Victims were immolated as he passed, the Via Sacra was strewn with saffron, the day was rent with acclaiming shouts. Throughout the empire sacrifices were ordered. Old people that lived in the country fancied him, Philostratus says, the conqueror of new nations, and sacrificed with delight.

But if as artist he bored everybody, he was yet an admirable impresario. The spectacles he gave were unique. At one which was held in the Taurian amphitheatre it must have been delightful to assist. Fancy eighty thousand people on ascending galleries, protected from the sun by a canopy of spangled silk; an arena three acres large carpeted with sand, cinnabar and borax, and in that arena death in every form, on those galleries colossal delight.

The lowest gallery, immediately above the arena, was a wide terrace where the senate sat. There were the dignitaries of the empire, and with them priests in their sacerdotal robes; vestals in linen, their hair arranged in the six braids that were symbolic of virginity; swarms of Oriental princes, rainbows of foreign ambassadors; and in the centre, the imperial pulvinar, an enclosed pavilion, in which Nero lounged, a mignon at his feet.

In the gallery above were the necklaced knights, their tunics bordered with the augusticlave, their deep-blue cloaks fastened to the shoulder; and there, too, in their wide white togas, were the citizens of Rome.

Still higher the people sat. In the topmost gallery were the women, and in a separate enclosure a thousand musicians answered the cries of the multitude with the blare and the laugh of brass.

Beneath the terraces, behind the barred doors that punctuated the marble wall which circled the arena, were Mauritian panthers that had been entrapped with rotten meat; hippopotami from Saïs, lured by the smell of carrots into pits; the rhinoceros of Gaul, taken with the net; lions, lassoed in the deserts; Lucanian bears, Spanish bulls; and, in remoter dens, men, unarmed, that waited.

By way of foretaste for better things, a handful of criminals, local desperadoes, an impertinent slave, a machinist, who in a theatre the night before had missed an effect—these, together with a negligent usher, were tossed one after the other naked into the ring, and bound to a scaffold that surmounted a miniature hill. At a signal the scaffold fell, the hill crumbled, and from it a few hyenas issued, who indolently devoured their prey.

With this for prelude, the gods avenged and justice appeased, a rhinoceros ambled that way, stimulated from behind by the point of a spear; and in a moment the hyenas were disembowelled, their legs quivering in the air. Throughout the arena other beasts, tied together with long cords, quarrelled in couples; there was the bellow of bulls, and the moan of leopards tearing at their flesh, a flight of stags, and the long, clean spring of the panther.

Presently the arena was cleared, the sand reraked and the Bestiarii advanced — Sarmatians, nourished on mares' milk; Sicambrians, their hair done up in chignons; horsemen from Thessaly, Ethiopian warriors, Parthian archers, huntsmen from the steppes, their different idioms uniting in a single cry—" Cæsar, we salute you." The sunlight, filtering through the spangled canopy, chequered their tunics with burning spots, danced on their spears and helmets, dazzled the spectators' eyes. From above descended the caresses of flutes; the air was sweet with perfumes, alive with multicolored motes; the terraces were parterres of blending hues, and into that splendor a hundred lions, their tasselled tails sweeping the sand, entered obliquely.

The mob of the Bestiarii had gone. In the middle of the arena, a band of Ethiopians, armed with arrows, knives and spears, knelt, their oiled black breasts uncovered.

Leisurely the lions turned their huge,

intrepid heads; to their jowls wide creases came. There was a glitter of fangs, a shiver that moved the mane, a flight of arrows, mounting murmurs; the crouch of beasts preparing to spring, a deafening roar, and, abruptly, a tumultuous mass, the suddenness of knives, the snap of bones, the cry of the agonized, the fury of beasts transfixed, the shrieks of the mangled, a combat hand to fang, from which lions fell back, their jaws torn asunder, while others retreated, a black body swaying between their terrible teeth, and, insensibly, a descending quiet.

At once there was an eruption of bellowing elephants, painted and trained for slaughter, that trampled on wounded and dead. At a call from a keeper the elephants disappeared. There was a rush of mules and slaves; the carcasses and corpses vanished, the toilet of the ring was made; then came a plunge of bulls, mists of vapor about their long, straight horns, their anxious eyes dilated. Beyond was a troop of Thessalians. For a moment the bulls snorted, pawing the sand with their fore-feet, as though trying to realize what they were doing there. Yet instantly they seemed to know, and with lowered heads, they plunged on the point of spears. But no matter, horses went down by the hundred; and as the bulls tired of gorging the dead, they fought each other; fought rancorously, fought until weariness overtook them, and the surviving Thessalians leaped on their backs, twisted their horns, and threw them down, a sword through their throbbing throats.

Successively the arena was occupied by bears, by panthers, by dogs trained for the chase, by hunters and hunted. But the episode of the morning was a dash of wild elephants, attacked on either side; a moment of sheer delight, in which the hunters were tossed up on the terraces, tossed back again by the spectators, and trampled to death.

With that for bouquet the first part of the performance was at an end. By way of interlude, the ring was peopled with acrobats, who flew up in the air like birds, formed pyramids together, on the top of which little boys swung and smiled. There was a troop of trained lions, their manes gilded, that walked on tight-ropes, wrote obscenities in Greek, and danced to cymbals which one of them played. There were geese-fights, wonderful combats between dwarfs and women; a chariot race, in which bulls, painted white, held the reins, standing upright while drawn at full speed; a chase of ostriches, and feats of *haute école* on zebras from Madagascar.

The interlude at an end, the sand was reraked, and preceded by the pomp of lictors, interminable files of gladiators entered, holding their knives to Nero that he might see that they were sharp. It was then the eyes of the vestals lighted; artistic death was their chiefest joy, and in a moment, when the spectacle began and the first gladiator fell, above the din you could hear their cry "*Hic habet!*" and watch their delicate thumbs reverse.

There was no cowardice in that arena. If by chance any hesitation were discernible, instantly there were hot irons, the sear of which revivified courage at once. But that was rare. The gladiators fought for applause, for liberty, for death; fought manfully, skilfully, terribly, too, and received the point of the sword or the palm of the victor, their expression unchanged, the face unmoved. Among them, some provided with a net and prodigiously agile, pursued their adversaries hither and thither, trying to entangle them first and kill them later. Others, protected by oblong shields and armed with short, sharp swords, fought hand-to-hand. There were still others, mailed horsemen, who fought with the lance, and charioteers that dealt death from high Briton cars.

As a spectacle it was unique; one that the Romans, or more exactly, their predecessors, the Etruscans, had devised to train their children for war and allay the fear of blood. It had been serviceable, indeed, and though the need of it had gone, still the institution endured, and in enduring constituted the chief delight of the vestals and of Rome. By means of it a bankrupt became consul and an emperor beloved. It had stayed revolutions, it was the tax of the proletariat on the rich. Silver and bread were for the individual, but these things were for the crowd.

During the pauses of the combats the dead were removed by men masked as Mercury, god of hell; red irons, that others, masked as Charon, bore, being first applied as safeguard against swoon or fraud. And when, to the kisses of flutes, the last palm had been awarded, the last death acclaimed, a ballet was given; that of Paris and Venus, which Apuleius has described so well, and for afterpiece the romance of Pasiphæ and the bull. Then, as night descended, so did torches, too; the arena was strewn with vermilion; tables were set, and to the incitement of crotals, Lydians danced before the multitude, toasting the last act of that wonderful day.

It was with such magnificence that Nero showed the impresario's skill, the politician's adroitness. Where the artist, which he claimed to be, really appeared, was in the refurbishing of Rome.

In spite of Augustus' boast, the city was not by any means of marble. It was filled with crooked little streets, with the atrocities of the Tarquins, with houses unsightly and perilous, with the moss and dust of ages; it compared with Alexandria as London compares with Paris; it had a splendor of its own, but a splendor that could be heightened.

Whether the conflagration which occurred at that time was the result of accident or design is uncertain and in any event immaterial. Tacitus says that when it began Nero was at Antium, in which case he must have hastened to return, for admitting that he did not originate the fire, it is a matter of agreement that he collaborated in it. In quarters where it showed symptoms of weakness it was by his orders coaxed to new strength; colossal stone buildings, on which it had little effect, were battered down with catapults.

Fire is a perfect poet. No designer ever imagined the surprises it creates, and when, at the end of the week, three-fourths of the city was in ruins, the beauty that reigned there must have been sublime. That it inspired Nero is presumable. The palace on the Palatine, which Tiberius embellished and Caligula enlarged, had gone; in its place rose another, aflame with gold. Before it Neropolis extended, a city of triumphal arches, enchanted temples, royal dwellings, shimmering porticoes, glittering roofs, and wide, hospitable streets. It was fair to the eye, purely Greek; and on its heart, from the Circus Maximus to the Forum's edge, the new and gigantic palace shone. Before it was a lake, a part of which Vespasian drained and replaced with an amphitheatre that covered eight acres. About that lake were separate edifices that formed a city in themselves; between them and the palace, a statue of Nero in gold and silver mounted precipitately a hundred and twenty feet—a statue which it took twenty-four elephants to move. About it were green savannahs, forest reaches, the call of bird and deer, while in the distance, fronted by a stretch of columns a mile in length, the palace stood—a palace so ineffably charming that on the day of reckoning may it outbalance a few of his sins. Even the cellars were frescoed. The baths were quite comfortable; you had waters salt or sulphurous at will. The dining halls had ivory ceilings from which flowers fell, and wainscots that changed at each service. The walls were alive with the glisten of gems, with marbles rarer than jewels. In one hall was a dome of sapphire, a floor of malachite, crystal columns and red-gold walls.

"At last," Nero murmured, "I am lodged like a man."

No doubt. Yet in a mirror he would have seen a bloated beast in a flowered gown, the hair done up in a chignon, the skin covered with eruptions, the eyes circled and yellow; a woman who had hours when she imitated a virgin at bay, others when she was wife, still others when she expected to be a mother, and that woman, a senatorial patent of divinity aiding, was god—Apollo's peer, imperator, chief of the army, pontifix maximus, master of the world, with the incontestable right of life and death over every being in the dominions.

It had taken the fresh-faced lad who blushed so readily, just fourteen years to effect that change. Did he regret it? And what should Nero regret? Nothing, perhaps, save that at the moment when he declared himself to be lodged like a man, he had not killed himself like one. But of that he was incapable. Had he known what the future held, possibly he might have imitated that apotheosis of vulgarity in which Sardanapalus eclipsed himself, but never could he have died with the good breeding and philosophy of Cato, for neither good breeding nor philosophy was in him. Nero killed himself like a coward, yet that he did kill himself, in no matter what fashion, is one of the few things that can be said in his favor.

Those days differed from ours. There were circumstances in which suicide was regarded as the simplest of duties. Nero did his duty, but not until he was forced to it, and even then not until he had been asked several times whether it was so hard to die. The empire had wearied of him. In Neropolis his popularity had gone as popularity ever does; the conflagration had killed it.

Even as he wandered, lyre in hand, a train of Lesbians and pederasts at his heels, through those halls which had risen on the ruins, and which inexhaustible Greece had furnished with a fresh crop of white immortals, the world rebelled. Afar on the outskirts of civilization a vassal, ashamed of his vassalage, declared war, not against Rome, but against an emperor that played the flute. In Spain, in Gaul, the legions were choosing other chiefs. The provinces, depleted by imperial exactions, outwearied by the increasing number of accusers, whose accusations impoverishing them served only to multiply the prodigalities of their Cæsar, revolted.

Suddenly Nero found himself alone. As the advancing rumor of rebellion reached him, he thought of flight; there was no one that would accompany him. He called to the pretorians; they would not hear. Through the immensity of his palace he sought one friend. The doors would not open. He returned to his apartment; the guards had gone. Then terror seized him. He was afraid to die, afraid to live, afraid of his solitude, afraid of Rome, afraid of himself; but what frightened him most was that everyone had lost their fear of him. It was time to go, and a slave aiding, he escaped in disguise from Rome, and killed himself, reluctantly, in a hovel.

" *Qualis artifex pereo!* " he is reported to have muttered. Say rather, *qualis mæchus.*

VI

THE HOUSE OF FLAVIA

It was in those days that the nebulous figure of Apollonius of Tyana appeared and disappeared in Rome. His speech, a commingling of puerility and charm, Philostratus has preserved. Rumor had preceded him. It was said that he knew everything, save the caresses of women; that he was familiar with all languages; with the speech of bird and beast; with that of silence, for silence is a language too; that he had prayed in the Temple of Jupiter Lycœus, where men lost their shadows, their lives as well; that he had undergone eighty initiations of Mithra; that he had perplexed the magi; confuted the gymnosophists; that he foretold the future, healed the sick, raised the dead; that beyond the Himalayas he had encountered every species of ferocious beast, except the tyrant, and that it was to see one that he had come to Rome.

Nero was quite free from prejudice. Apart from a doll which he worshipped he had no superstitions. He had the plain man's dislike of philosophy; Seneca had sickened him of it, perhaps; but he was sensitive, not that he troubled himself particularly about any lies that were told of him, but he did object to people who went about telling the truth. In that respect he was not unique; we are all like him, but he had ways of stilling the truth which were imperial and his own.

Promptly on Apollonius he loosed his bull-dog, Tigellin, prefect of police.

Tigellin caught him. "What have you with you?" he asked.

"Continence, Justice, Temperance, Strength and Patience," Apollonius answered.

"Your slaves, I suppose. Make out a list of them."

Apollonius shook his head. "They

are not my slaves; they are my masters."

"There is but one," Tigellin retorted —"Nero. Why do you not fear him?"

"Because the god that made him terrible made me without fear."

"I will leave you your liberty," muttered the startled Tigellin, "but you must give bail."

"And who," asked Apollonius superbly, "would bail a man whom no one can enchain?" Therewith he turned and disappeared.

At that time Nero was in training to suffocate a lion in the arena. A few days later he killed himself. Simultaneously there came news from Syracuse. A woman of rank had given birth to a child with three heads. Apollonius examined it.

"There will be three emperors at once," he announced. "But their reign will be shorter than that of kings on the stage."

Within that year Galba, who was emperor for an instant, died at the gates of Rome. Vitellius, after being emperor in little else than dream, was butchered in the Forum; and Otho, in that fine antique fashion, killed himself in Gaul. Apollonius meanwhile was in Alexandria, predicting the purple to Vespasian, the rise of the House of Flavia; invoking Jupiter in his protégé's behalf; and presently, the prediction accomplished, he was back in Rome, threatening Domitian, warning him that the House of Flavia would fall.

The atmosphere was then charged with the marvellous; the world was filled with prodigies, with strange gods, beckoning chimeras and credulous crowds. Belief in the supernatural was absolute; the occult sciences, astrology, magic, divination, all had their adepts. In Greece there were oracles at every turn, and with them prophets who taught the art of adultery and how to construe the past. On the banks of the Rhine there were girls who were regarded as divinities, and in Gaul were men who were held wholly divine.

Jerusalem too had her follies. There was Simon the Magician, founder of gnosticism, father of every heresy, Messiah to the Jews, Jupiter to the Gentiles—an impudent self-made god, who pretended to float in the air, and called his mistress Minerva—a deification, parenthetically, which was accepted by Nicholas, his successor, a deacon of the church, who raised her to the eighth heaven as patron saint of lust. To him, as to Simon, she was Ennoia, Prunikos, Helen of Troy. She had been Delilah, Lucretia. She had prostituted herself to every nation; she had sung in the by-ways, and hidden robbers in the vermin of her bed. But by Simon she was rehabilitated. It was she, no doubt, of whom Caligula thought when he beckoned to the moon. In Rome she had her statue, and near it was one to Simon, the holy god.

But of all manifestations of divinity the most patent was that which haloed Vespasian. He expected it, Suetonius says, but it is doubtful if any one else did. One night he dreamed that an era of prosperity was to dawn for him and his when Nero lost a tooth. The next day he was shown one which had been drawn from the emperor's mouth. But that was nothing. Presently at Carmel the Syrian oracle assured him that he would be successful in whatever he undertook. From Rome word came that, while the armies of Vitellius and Otho were fighting, two eagles had fought above them, and that the victor had been despatched by a third eagle that had come from the East. In Alexandria Serapis whispered to him. The entire menagerie of Egypt proclaimed him king. Apis bellowed, Anubis barked. Isis visited him unveiled. The lame and the blind pressed about him; he cured them with a touch. There could be no reasonable doubt now; surely he was a god. On his shoulders Apollonius threw the purple, and Vespasian set out for Rome.

His antecedents were less propitious. The descendant of an obscure centurion, he had been a veterinary surgeon; then, having got Caligula's ear, he flattered it abominably. Caligula disposed of, he flattered Claud, or what amounted to the same thing, Narcissus, Claud's chamberlain. Through the influence of the latter he became a lieutenant, fought on remote frontiers—fought well, too—so well even that, Narcissus gone, he felt Agrippina watching him, and knowing the jealousy of her eyes, prudently kept quiet until that lady did.

With Nero he promenaded through Greece—sat at the Olympian games and fell asleep when his emperor sang. Treason of that high nature—sacrilege, rather, for Nero was then a god—might have been overlooked, had it occurred but once, for Nero could be magnanimous when he chose. But it always occurred. To Nero's tremolo invariably came the accompaniment of Vespasian's snore. He was dreaming of that tooth, no doubt. "I am not a soporific, am I?" Nero gnashed at him, and sent the blasphemer away.

For a while Vespasian lived in constant expectation of some civil message inviting him to die. Finally it came, only he was invited to die at the head of an army which Nero had projected against seditious Jews. When he returned, leaving his son Titus to attend to Jerusalem, it was as emperor.

Only a moment before Vitellius had been disposed of. That curious glutton, whom the Rhenish legions had chosen because of his coarse familiarity, would willingly have fled had the soldiery let him. But not at all; they wanted a prince of their own manufacture. They knew nothing of Vespasian, cared less; and into the Capitol they chased the latter's partisans, his son Domitian as well. The besieged defended themselves with masterpieces, with sacred urns, the statues of gods, the pedestals of divinities. Suddenly the Capitol was aflame. Simultaneously Vespasian's advance guard beat at the gates. The besiegers turned, the mob was with them, and together they fought, first at the gates, then in the streets, in the Forum, retreating always, but like lions, their face to the foe. The volatile mob, noting the retreat, turned from combatant into spectator. Let the soldiers fight; it was their duty, not theirs; and, as the struggle continued, from roof and window they eyed it with that artistic delight which the arena had developed, applauding the clever thrusts, abusing the vanquished, robbing the dead, and therewith pillaging the wine-shops, crowding the lupanars. During the orgy, Vitellius was stabbed. The Flavians had won the day, the empire was Vespasian's.

The use he made of it was very modest. In spite of his manifest divinity he had nothing in common with the Cæsars that had gone before; he had no dreams of the impossible, no desire to frighten Jupiter or seduce the moon. He was a plain man, tall and ruddy, very coarse in speech and thought, open-armed and close-fisted, slapping senators on the back and keeping a sharp eye on the coppers; taxing the latrinæ, and declaring that money had no smell; yet still, in comparison with Claud and Nero, almost the ideal; absolutely uninteresting also, yet doing what good he could; effacing at once the traces of the civil war, rebuilding the Capitol, calming the people, protecting the provinces, restoring to Rome the gardens of Nero, clipping the wings of the Palace of Gold, throwing open again the Via Sacra, over which the Palace had spread; draining the lake that had shimmered before it, and erecting the Colosseum in its place.

In spite of Serapsis, Anubis and Isis, he had not the faintest odor of myth about him; absolutely bourgeois, he lacked even that atmosphere of burlesque that surrounded Claud; he was not even vicious. But he was a soldier, a brave one; and if, with the acquired economy of a subaltern who has been obliged to live on his pay, he kept his purse-strings tight, they were loose enough if a friend were in need, and he paid no one the compliment of a lie. He was projected sheer out of the republic. The better part of his life had been passed under arms; the delicate sensuality of Rome was foreign to him. It was there that Domitian had lived.

It were interesting to have watched that young man killing flies by the hour, while he meditated on the atrocities he was to commit—atrocities so numberless and needless that in the red halls of the Cæsars he has left a portrait which is unique. Slender, graceful, handsome, as were all the young emperors of old Rome, his blue, troubled eyes took pleasure, if at all, only in the sight of blood.

In accordance with the fashion which Caligula and Nero had set, Domitian's earliest manners were those of an urbane and gentle prince. Later, when he made it his turn to rule, informers begged their bread in exile. Where they are not punished, he announced, they are encouraged. The sacrifices were so distressing to him that he forbade the immolation of oxen. He was disinterested, too, refusing legacies when the testator left nearer heirs, and therewith royally generous, covering his suite with presents, and declaring that to him avarice of all vices was the lowest and most vile. In short, you would have said another adolescent Nero come to Rome; there was the same silken sweetness of demeanor, the same ready blush, in addition to a zeal for justice and equity which other young emperors had been too thoughtless to show.

His boyhood, too, had not been above reproach. The same things were whispered about him that had been shouted at Augustus. Manifestly he lacked not one of the qualities which go to the making of a model prince. Vespasian alone had his doubts.

"Mushrooms won't hurt you," he cried one day, as Domitian started at the sight of a *ragoût à la Sardanapale*, which he fancied, possibly, was *à la Locuste*. "It is steel you should fear."

At that time, with a father for emperor and a brother who was sacking Jerusalem, Domitian had but one cause for anxiety, to wit—that the empire might escape him. It was then he began his meditations over holocausts of flies. For hours he secluded himself, occupied solely with their slaughter. He treated them precisely as Titus treated the Jews, enjoying the quiver of their legs, the little agonies of their silent death.

Tiberius had been in love with solitude, but never as he. Night after night he wandered on the terraces of the palace, watching the red moon wane white, companioned only by his dreams, those waking dreams that poets and madmen share, that Pallas had him in her charge, that Psyche was amorous of his eyes.

Meanwhile he was a nobody, a young gentleman merely, who might have moved in the best society, and who preferred the worst—his own. The sudden elevation of Vespasian preoccupied him, and while he knew that in the natural course of events his father would move to Olympus, yet there was his brother Titus, on whose broad shoulders the mantle of purple would fall. If the seditious Jews only knew their business! But no. Forty years before a white apparition on the way to Golgotha had cried to a handful of women, " The days are coming in which they shall say to the mountains, ' Fall on us '; to the hills, ' Cover us.' " And the days had come. A million of them had been butchered. From the country they had fled to the city; from Acra they had climbed to Zion. When the city burst into flames their blood put it out. Decidedly they did not know their business. Titus, instead of being stabbed before Jerusalem's walls, was marching in triumph to Rome.

The procession that presently entered the gates was a stream of splendor; crowns of rubies and gold; garments that glistened with gems; gods on their sacred pedestals; prisoners; curious beasts; Jerusalem in miniature; pictures of war; booty from the Temple, the veil, the candelabra, the cups of gold and the Book of the Law. To the rear rumbled the triumphal car, in which laurelled and mantled Titus stood, Vespasian at his side; while, in the distance, on horseback, came Domitian—a supernumerary, ignored by the crowd.

When the prisoners disappeared in the Tullianum and a herald shouted, "They have lived!" Domitian returned to the palace and hunted morosely for flies. The excesses of the festival in which Rome was swooning then had no delights for him. Presently the moon would rise, and then on the deserted terrace perhaps he would bathe a little in her light, and dream again of Pallas and of the possibilities of an emperor's sway, but meanwhile those blue troubled eyes that Psyche was amorous of were filled with envy and with hate. It was not that he begrudged Titus the triumph. The man who had disposed of a million Jews deserved not one triumph, but ten. It was the purple that haunted him.

Domitian was then in the early twenties. The Temple of Peace was ascending; the Temple of Janus was closed; the empire was at rest. Side by side with Vespasian, Titus ruled. From the Euphrates came the rumor of some vague revolt. Domitian thought he would like to quell it. He was requested to keep quiet. It occurred to him that his father ought to be ashamed of himself to reign so long. He was requested to vacate his apartment. There were dumb plots in dark cellars, of which only the echo of a whisper has descended to us, but which at the time were quite loud enough to reach Vespasian's ears. Titus interceded. Domitian was requested to behave.

For a while he prowled in the moonlight. He had been too precipitate, he decided, and to allay suspicion presently he went about in society, mingling his hours with those of married women. Manifestly his ways had mended. But Vespasian was uneasy. A comet had appeared. The doors of the imperial mausoleum had opened of themselves, besides, he was not well. The robust and hardy soldier, suddenly without tangible cause, felt his strength give way. "It is nothing," his physician said; "a slight attack of fever." Vespasian shook his head; he knew things of which the physician was ignorant. "It is death," he answered, "and an emperor should meet it standing."

Titus' turn came next. A violent, headstrong, handsome, rapacious prince, terribly prodigal, thoroughly Oriental, surrounded by dancers and mignons, living in state with a queen for mistress, startling even Rome with the uproar of his debauches—no sooner was Vespasian gone than presto! the queen went home, the dancers disappeared, the debauches ceased, and a ruler appeared who declared he had lost a day that a good action had not marked; a ruler who could announce that no one should leave his presence depressed.

Though Vespasian had gone, his reign continued. Not long, it is true, and punctuated by a spectacle of which Caligula, for all his poetry, had not dreamed—the burial of Pompeii. But a reign which, while it lasted, was fastidious and refined, and during which, again and again, Titus, who commanded death and whom death obeyed, besought Domitian to be to him a brother.

Domitian had no such intention. He had a party behind him, one made up of old Neronians, the army of the discontented, who wanted a change, and greatly admired this charming young prince whose hours were passed in killing flies and making love to married women. The pretorians too had been seduced. Domitian could make captivating promises when he chose.

As a consequence Titus, like Vespasian, was uneasy, and with cause. Dion Cassius, or rather that brute Xiphilin, his abbreviator, mentions the fever that overtook him, the same his father had met. It was mortal, of course, and the purple was Domitian's.

For a year and a day thereafter you

would have thought Titus still at the helm. There was the same clemency, the same regard for justice, the same refinement and fastidiousness. The morose young poet had developed into a model monarch. The old Neronians were perplexed, irritated too; they had expected other things. Domitian was merely feeling the way; the hand that held the sceptre was not quite sure of its strength, and, tentatively almost, this Prince of Virtue began to scrutinize the morals of Rome. For the first time he noticed that the cocottes took their airing in litters. But litters were not for them! That abuse he put a stop to at once. A senator manifested an interest in ballet-girls; he was disgraced. The vestals, to whose indiscretions no one had paid much attention, learned the statutes of an archaic law, and were buried alive. The early distaste for blood was diminishing. Domitian had the purple, but it was not bright enough; he wanted it red, and what Domitian wanted he got. Your god and master orders it, was the formula he began to use when addressing the Senate and People of Rome.

To that the people were indifferent. The spectacles he gave in the Flavian amphitheatre were too magnificently atrocious not to be a compensation in full for any eccentricity in which he might indulge. Besides, under Nero, Claud, Caligula, *on en avait vu bien d'autres.* And at those spectacles where he presided, crowned with a tiara, on which were the images of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, while grouped about him the college of Flavian flamens wore tiaras that differed therefrom merely in this, that they bore his image too, the people right royally applauded their master and their god.

And it was just as well they did; Domitian was quite capable of ordering everybody into the arena. As yet, however, he had appeared little different from any other prince. That Rome might understand that there was a difference, and also in what that difference consisted, he gave a supper. Everyone worth knowing was bidden, and, as is usual in state functions, everyone that was bidden came. The supper hall was draped with black; the ceiling, the walls, the floor, everything was basaltic. The couches were black, the linen was black, the slaves were black. Behind each guest was a broken column with his name on it. The food was such as is prepared when death has come. The silence was that of the tomb. The only audible voice was Domitian's. He was talking very wittily and charmingly about murder, about proscriptions, the good informers do, the utility of the headsman, the majesty of the law. The guests, a trifle ill at ease, wished their host sweet dreams. "The same to you," he answered, and deplored that they must go.

On the morrow informers and headsmen were at work. Any pretext was sufficient. Birth, wealth, fame, or the lack of them—anything whatever—and there the culprit stood, charged not with treason to an emperor, but with impiety to a god. On the judgment seat Domitian sat. Before him the accused passed, and under his eyes they were questioned, tortured, condemned and killed. At once their property passed into the keeping of the prince.

Of that he had need. The arena was expensive, but the drain was elsewhere. A little before, a quarrelsome people, the Dacians, whom it took a Trajan to subdue, had overrun the Danube, and were marching down to Rome. Domitian set out to meet them. The Dacians retreated, not at all because they were repulsed, but because Domitian thought it better warfare to pay them to do so. On his return after that victory he enjoyed a triumph as fair as that of Cæsar. And each year since then the emperor of Rome had paid tribute to a nation of mongrel oafs.

Of course he needed money. The informers were there and he got it, and with it that spectacle of torture and of blood which he needed too. Curiously, his melancholy increased; his good looks had gone; Psyche was no longer amorous of his eyes. Something else haunted him, something he could not define; the past, perhaps, perhaps the future. To his ears came strange sounds, the murmur of his own name, and suddenly silence. Then, too, there always seemed to be something behind him; something that when he turned disappeared. The room in which he slept he had covered with a polished metal that reflected everything, yet still the intangible was there. Once Pallas came in her chariot, waved him farewell, and disappeared, borne by black horses across the black night.

The astrologers consulted had nothing pleasant to say. They knew, as Domitian knew, that the end was near. So was theirs. To one of them, who predicted his immediate death, he inquired, "What will your end be?" "I," answered the astrologer—"I shall be torn by dogs." "To the stake with him!" cried Domitian; "let him be burned alive!" Suetonius says that a storm put out the flames, and dogs devoured the corpse. Another astrologer predicted that Domitian would die before noon on the morrow. In order to convince him of his error, Domitian ordered him to be executed the subsequent night. Before noon on the morrow Domitian was dead.

Philostratus and Dion Cassius both unite in saying that at that hour Apollonius was at Ephesus, preaching to the multitude. In the middle of the sermon he hesitated, but in a moment he began anew. Again he hesitated, his eyes half closed; then, suddenly he shouted, "Strike him! Strike him once more!" And immediately to his startled audience he related a scene that was occurring at Rome, the attack on Domitian, his struggle with an assailant, his effort to tear out his eyes, the rush of conspirators, and finally the fall of the emperor, pierced by seven knives.

The story may not be true, and yet if it were!

VII

THE POISON IN THE PURPLE

Rome never was healthy. The tramontana visited it then as now, fever, too, and sudden death. To emperors it was fatal. Since Cæsar a malaria had battened on them all. Nerva escaped, but only through abdication. The mantle that fell from Domitian's shoulders on to his was so dangerous in its splendor, that, fearing the infection, he passed it to Ulpius Trajanus, the lustre undimmed.

Ulpius Trajanus, Trajan for brevity, a Spaniard by birth, a soldier by choice; one who had fought against Parthian and Jew, who had triumphed through Pannonia and made it his own; a general whose hair had whitened on the field; a consul who had frightened nations, was afraid of the sheen of that purple which dazzled, corroded and killed. He bore it, indeed, but at arm's-length. He kept himself free from the subtlety of its poison, from the microbes of Rome as well.

He was in Cologne when Domitian died and Nerva accepted and renounced the throne. It was a year before he ventured among the seven hills. When he arrived you would have said another Augustus, not the real Augustus, but the Augustus of legend, and the late Mr. Gibbon. When he girt the new prefect of the pretorium with the immemorial sword, he addressed him in copy-book phrases—"If I rule wisely, use it for me; unwisely, against me."

Rome listened open-mouthed. The change from Domitian's formula, "Your god and master orders it," was too abrupt to be immediately understood. Before it was grasped Trajan was off again; this time to the Danube and beyond it, to Dacia and her fens.

Many years later—a century or two, to be exact—a Persian satrap loitered in a forum of Rome. "It is here," he declared, "I am tempted to forget that man is mortal."

He had passed beneath a triumphal arch; before him was a glittering square, grandiose, yet severe; a stretch of temples and basilicas, in which masterpieces felt at home—the Forum of Trajan, the compliment of a nation to a prince. Dominating it was a column, in whose thick spirals you read to-day the one reliable chronicle of the Dacian campaign. Was not Gautier well advised when he said only art endures?

There were other chronicles in plenty; there were the histories of Ælius Maurus, of Marius Maximus, and that of Spartian, but they are lost. There is a page or two in the abbreviation which Xiphilin made of Dion; Aurelius Victor has a little to add, so also has Eutropus, but, practically speaking, there is, apart from that column, nothing save conjecture.

Campaigns are wearisome reading, but not the one that is pictured there.

You ask a curve a question, and in the next you find the reply. There is a point, however, on which it is dumb—the origin of the war. But if you wish to know the result, not the momentary and transient result, but the sequel which futurity held, look at the ruins at that column's base.

The origin of the war was Domitian's diplomacy. The chieftain whom he had made king, and who had been surprised enough at receiving a diadem instead of the point of a sword, fancied, and not unreasonably, that the annuity which Rome paid him was to continue forever. But Domitian, though a god, was not otherwise immortal. When he died abruptly the annuity ceased. The Dacian king sent word that he was surprised at the delay, but he must have been far more so at the promptness with which he got Trajan's reply. It was a blare of bugles, which he thought forever dumb; a flight of eagles, which he thought were winged.

In the spirals of the column you see

the advancing army, the retreating foe; then the Dacian dragon saluting the standards of Rome; peace declared, and an army, whose very repose is menacing, standing there to see that peace is kept. And was it? In the ascending spiral is the new revolt, the attempt to assassinate Trajan, the capture of the conspirators, the advance of the legions, the retreat of the Dacians, burning their cities as they go, carrying their wounded and their women with them, and at last pressing about a huge cauldron that is filled with poison, fighting among themselves for a cup of the brew, and rolling on the ground in the convulsions of death. Farther on is the treasure of the king. To hide it he had turned a river from its source, sunk the gold in a vault beneath, and killed the workmen that had labored there. Beyond is the capture of the capital, the suicide of the chief, a troop of soldiers driving captives and cattle before them, the death of a nation and the end of war.

The subsequent triumph does not appear on the column. It is said that ten thousand beasts were slaughtered in the arenas, slaughtering, as they fell, a thousand of their slaughterers. But the spectacle, however fair, was not of a nature to detain Trajan long in Rome. The air there had not improved in the least, and presently he was off again, this time on the banks of the Euphrates, arguing with the Parthians, avoiding danger in the only way he knew, by facing it.

It was then that the sheen of the purple glowed. If lustreless at home, it was royally red abroad. In a campaign that was little more than a triumphant promenade he doubled the empire. To the world of Cæsar he added that of Alexander. Allies he turned into subjects, vassals into slaves. Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, were added to the realm. Trajan's footstools were diadems. He had moved back one frontier, he moved another. From Britain to the Indus, Rome was mistress of the earth. Had Trajan been younger, China, whose very name was unknown, would have yielded to him her corruption, her printing press, her powder and her tea.

That he would have enjoyed these things is not at all conjectural. He was then an old man, but he was not a good one—at least not in the sense we use the term to-day. He had habits which are regarded now less as vices than perversions, but which at that time were taken as a matter of course and accepted by everyone, even by the stoics, very calmly, with a grain of Attic salt at that. Men were regarded as virtuous when they were brave, when they were honest; the idea of using the expression in its later sense occurred, if at all, in jest merely, as a synonym for the eunuch. It was the matron and the vestal who were supposed to be straight, and their straightness was wholly supposititious. The ceremonies connected with the phallus, and those observed in the worship of the Bona Dea, were of a nature that no virtue could withstand.

Every altar, Juvenal said, had its Clodius, and even in Clodius' absence there were always those breaths of Sapphic song that blew through Mitylene.

It is just that absence of a quality which we regard as an added grace; one, parenthetically, which dowered the world with a new conception of beauty that makes it difficult to picture Rome. Modern ink has acquired Nero's blush; it comes very readily, yet, however sensitive a writer may be, once Roman history is before him, he may violate it if he choose; he may even give it a child, but never can he make it immaculate. He may skip, indeed, if he wish; and it is because he has skipped so often that one fancies that Augustus was all right. The rain of fire which fell on the cities that mirrored their towers in the Bitter Sea, might just as well have fallen on him, on Vergil, too, on Caligula, Claud, Nero, Otho, Vitellius, Titus, Domitian, and particularly on Trajan.

As lieutenant in the latter's triumphant promenade, was a nephew, Ælius

Hadrianus, a young man for whom Trajan's wife is rumored to have had more than a platonic affection, and who in younger days was numbered among Trajan's mignons. During the progress of that promenade Trajan fell ill. The command of the troops was left to Hadrian, and Trajan started for Rome. On the way he died. In what manner is not known; his wife, however, was with him, and it was in her hand that a letter went to the senate stating that Trajan had adopted Hadrian as his heir. Trajan had done nothing of the sort. The idea had indeed occurred to him, but long since it had been abandoned. He had even formally selected someone else, but his wife was with him, and her lover commanded the troops. The lustre of the purple, always dazzling, had fascinated Hadrian's eyes. Did he steal it? One may conjecture, yet never know. In any event it was his, and he folded it very magnificently about him.

Still young, a trifle over thirty, handsome, unusually accomplished, grand seigneur to his finger-tips, endowed with a manner which is rumored to have been one of great charm, possessed of the amplest appreciation of the elegancies of life, he had precisely the figure which purple adorns. But, though the lustre had fascinated, he too knew its spell; and presently he started off on a journey about the world, which lasted fifteen years, and which, when ended, left the world the richer for his passing, decorated with the monuments he had strewn. Before that journey began, at the earliest rumor of Trajan's death, the Euphrates and Tigris awoke, the cinders of Nineveh flamed. The rivers and land that lay between knew that their conqueror had gone. Hadrian knew it also, and knew too that, though he might occupy the warrior's throne, he never could fill the warrior's place. To Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria, freedom was restored. Dacia could have had it for the asking. But over Dacia the toga had been thrown; it was as Roman as Gaul. A corner of it is Roman still; the Roumanians are there. But though Dacia was quiet, in its neighborhood the restless Sarmatians prowled and threatened. Hadrian, who had already written a book on tactics, knew at once how to act. Domitian's policy was before him; he followed the precedent, and paid the Sarmatians to be still. It requires little acumen to see that when Rome permitted herself to be blackmailed the end was near.

For the time being, however, there was peace, and in its interest Hadrian set out on that unequalled journey over a land that was his. Had fate relented, Trajan could have made a wider one still. But in Trajan was the soldier merely; when he journeyed it was with the sword. In Hadrian was the dilettante, the erudite too; he travelled not to conquer, but to learn, to satisfy an insatiable curiosity, for self-improvement, for glory too. Behind him was an army, not of soldiers, but of masons, captained by architects, artists and engineers. Did a site please him, there was a temple at once, or if not that, then a bridge, an aqueduct, a library, a new fashion, sovereignty even, but everywhere the spectacle of an emperor in flesh and blood. For the first time the provinces were able to understand that a Cæsar was not necessarily a brute, a phantom and a god.

It would have been interesting to have made one of that court of poets and savants that surrounded him; to have dined with him in Paris, eaten oysters in London; sat with him while he watched that wall go up before the Scots, and then to have passed down again through a world still young—a world beautiful, ornate, unutilitarian; a world to which trams, advertisements and telegraph poles had not yet come; a world that still had illusions, myths and mysteries; one in which religion and poetry went hand in hand—a world without newspapers, hypocrisy and cant.

Hadrian, doubtless, enjoyed it. He was young enough to have enthusiasms and to show them; he was one of the best read men of the day; he was poet, painter, sculptor, musician, erudite and emperor in one. Of course he enjoyed it. The world, over which he travelled, was his, not by virtue of the purple alone, but because of his knowledge of it. The prince is not necessarily cosmopolitan; the historian and antiquarian are. Hadrian was an early Quinet, an earlier Champollion; always the thinker, sometimes the cook. And to those in his suite it must have been a sight very unique to see a Cæsar who had published his volume of erotic verse, just as any other young man might do; who had hunted lions, not in the arena, but in Africa, make researches on the plain where Troy had been, and a *suprême* of sow's breast, peacock, pheasant, ham and boar, which he called Pentapharmarch, and which he offered as he had his Catacriani—the erotic verse—as something original and nice.

Insatiably inquisitive, verifying a history that he was preparing in the lands which gave that history birth, he passed through Egypt and Asia, questioning sphinxes, the cerements of kings, the arcana of the temples; deciphering the sacred books, arguing with magi, interrogating the stars. For the thinker, after the fashion of the hour, was astrologer too, and one of the few anecdotes current concerning him is in regard to a habit he had of drawing up on the 31st of December the events of the coming year. After consulting the stars on that 31st of December which occurred in the twenty-second year of his reign, he prepared a calendar which extended only to the 10th of July. On that day he died.

The calendar does not seem to have been otherwise serviceable. It was in Bithynia he found a shepherd whose appearance which, in its perfection, was quite earthly, suggested neither heaven nor hell, but some planet where the atmosphere differs from ours; where it is pink, perhaps, or faintly ochre; where birth and death have forms higher than here.

Hadrian, captivated, led the lad in leash. The facts concerning that episode have been so frequently given that the repetition is needless here. Besides, the point is elsewhere. Presently the lad fell overboard. Hadrian lost a valet, Rome an emperor, and Olympus a god. But in attempting to deify the lost lackey, the grief of Hadrian was so immediate, that it is permissible to fancy that the lad's death was not one of those events which the emperor-astrologer noted beforehand on his calendar. The lad was decently buried, the Nile gave up her dead, and on the banks a fair city rose, one that had its temples, priests, altars and shrines; a city that worshipped a star, and called that star Antinous. Hadrian then could have congratulated himself. Even Caligula would have envied him. He had done his worst; he had deified not a lad, but a lust. And not for the moment alone. A half century later Tertullian noted that the worship still endured, and subsequently the Alexandrine Clement discovered consciences that Antinous had reproached.

Antinous, deified, was presently forgot. A young Roman, wonderfully beautiful, Dion says, yet singularly effeminate; a youth who could barely carry a shield; who slept between rose-leaves and lilies; who was an artist withal; a poet who had written lines that Martial might have mistaken for his own, Cejonius Verus by name, succeeded the Bithynian shepherd. Hadrian, who would have adopted Antinous, adopted Verus in his stead. But Hadrian was not happy in his choice. Verus died, and singularly enough, Hadrian selected as future emperor the one ruler against whom history has not a reproach, Pius Antonin.

Meanwhile the journey continued. The Thousand and One Nights were realized then if ever. The beauty of the world was at its apogee, the glory of Rome as well; and through secrets and marvels Hadrian strolled, note-book in hand, his eyes unwearied, his curiosity unsatiated still. To pleasure him the intervales took on a fairer glow; cities decked themselves anew, the temples unveiled their mysteries; and when he passed to the intervales liberty came; to the cities, sovereignty; to the temples, shrines. The world rose to him as a woman greets her lover. His travels were not fatigues; they were delights, in which nations participated, and of which the memories endure as though enchanted still.

It would have been interesting, no doubt, to have dined with him in Paris; to have quarried lions in their African fens; to have heard archaic hymns ripple through the rushes of the Nile; to have lounged in the Academe, to have scaled Parnassus, and sailed the Ægean Sea; but, a history and an arm-chair aiding, the traveller has but to close his eyes and the past returns. Without disturbing so much as a shirt-box, he may repeat that promenade. Triremes have foundered; litters are out of date; painted elephants are no more; the sky has changed, climates with it; there are colors, as there are arts, that have gone from us forever; there are desolate plains, where green and yellow was; the shriek of steam where gods have strayed; advertisements in sacred groves; Baedekers in ruins that never heard an atheist's voice; solitudes where there were splendors; the snarl of jackals where once were birds and bees—yet, history and the arm-chair aiding, it all returns. Any traveller may follow in Hadrian's steps; he is stayed but once—on the threshold of the Temple of Eleusis. It is there history gropes, impotent and blind, and it is there the interest of that journey culminated.

Beyond the episode connected with Antinous, Hadrian's journey was marked by another, one which occurred in Judæa. Both were infamous, no doubt, but, what is more to the point, both mark the working of the poison in the purple that he bore.

Since Titus had gone, despairful Judæa had taken heart again. Hope in that land was inextinguishable. The walls of Jerusalem were still standing; in the Temple the offices continued. Though Rome remained, there was Israel too. Passing that way one afternoon, Hadrian mused. The city affected him; the site was superb. And as he mused it occurred to him that Jerusalem was less harmonious to the ear than Hadrianopolis; that the Temple occupied a position on which a Capitol would look far better; in brief, that Jehovah might be advantageously replaced by Jove. The army of masons that were ever at his heels were set to work at once. They had received similar orders and performed similar tasks so often that they could not fancy anyone would object. The Jews did. They fought as they had never fought before; they fought for three years against a Nebuchadnezzar who created torrents of blood so abundant that stones were carried for miles, and who left corpses enough to fertilize the land for a decade. The survivors were sold. Those for whom no purchasers could be found had their heads amputated. Jerusalem was razed to the ground. The site of the Temple was furrowed by the plow, sown with salt, and in place of the City of David rose Ælia Capitolina, a miniature Rome, whose gates, save on one day in the year, Jews were forbidden under penalty of death to pass, were forbidden to look at, and over which were images of swine, pigs with scornful snouts, the feet turned inward, the tail twisted like a lie.

It was not honorable warfare, but it was effective; then, too, it was Hadrianesque, the mad insult of a madman to a race as mad as he. The purple had done its work. History has left the rise of this emperor conjectural; his fall is written in blood. As he began he ended, a poet and a beast.

Presently he was in Rome. It was not homesickness that took him there; he was far too cosmopolitan to suffer from any such malady as that. It was the accumulations of a fifteen-year excursion through the metropoles of art which demanded a gallery of their own. Another with similar tastes and similar power might have ordered everything which pleasured his eye to be carted to Rome, but in his quality of *artifex omnipotens* Hadrian embellished and never sacked. There were painters and sculptors enough in that army at his heels, and whatever appealed to him was copied on the spot. So much was copied that a park of ten square miles was just large enough to form the open-air museum which he had designed, one which centuries of excavation have not exhausted yet.

The museum became a mad-house. Hadrian was ill; tired in mind and body, smitten with imperialia. It was then the young Verus died, leaving for a wonder a child behind, and more wonderful still, Antonin was adopted. Through Rome, meanwhile, terror stalked. Hadrian, in search of a remedy against his increasing confusion of mind, his visible weakness of body, turned from physicians to oracles; from them to magic, and then to blood. He decimated the senate. Soldiers, freemen, citizens, anybody and everybody were ordered off to death. He tried to kill himself and failed; he tried again, wondering, no doubt, why he who commanded death for others could not command it for himself. Presently he succeeded, and Antonin—the pious Antonin, as the senate called him—marshalled from cellars and crypts the senators and citizens whom Hadrian had ordered to be destroyed.

VIII

FAUSTINE

ANYONE who has loitered a moment among the statues in the Salle des Antonins at the Louvre will recall the bust of the Empress Faustine. It stands near the entrance, coercing the idler to remove his hat; to stop a moment, to gaze and dream. The face differs from that which Mr. Swinburne has described. In the poise of the head, in the expression of the lips, particularly in the features which, save the low brow, are not of the Roman type, there is a commingling of just that loveliness and melancholy which must have come to Psyche when she lost her god. In the corners of the mouth, in the droop of the eyelids, in the moulding of the chin, you may see that rarity—beauty and intellect in one—and with it the heightening shadow of an eternal regret. Before her Marcus Aurelius, her husband, stands, decked with the purple, with all the splendor of the *imperator*, his beard in overlapping curls, his questioning eyes dilated. Beyond is her daughter, Lucille, less fair than the mother, a healthy girl of the dairymaid type. Near by is the son, Commodus. Across the hall is Lucius Verus, the husband of Lucille; in a corner, Antonin, Faustine's father, and, more remotely, his wife. Together they form quite a family group, and to the average tourist they must seem a thoroughly respectable lot. Antonin certainly was respectable. He was the first emperor who declined to be a brute. Referring to his wife he said that he would rather be with her in a desert than without her in a palace; the speech, parenthetically, of a man who, though he could have cited that little Greek princess, Nausicaa, as a precedent, was too well-bred to permit so much as a fringe of his household linen to flutter in public. Besides, at his hours, he was a poet, and it is said that if a poet tell a lie twice he will believe it. Antonin so often declared his wife to be a charming person that in the end no doubt he thought so. She was not charming, however, or if she were, her charm was not that of exclusiveness.

It was in full sight of this lady's inconsequences that Faustine was educated. Wherever she looked, the candors of her girlhood were violated. The phallus then was omnipresent. Iamblicus, not the novelist, but the philosopher, has much to say on the subject; as has Arnobius in the *Adversus gentes*, and Lactance in the *De falsa religione*. If Juvenal, Martial, Petronius, are more reticent, it is because they were not Fathers of the Church, nor yet antiquarians. No one among us exacts a description of a spire. The phallus was as common to them, commoner even. It was on the coins, on the doors, in the gardens. As a preservative against Envy it hung from children's necks. On sun-dials and water clocks it marked the flight of time. The vestals worshipped it. At weddings it was used in a manner which need not be described.

It was from such surroundings that Faustine stepped into the arms of the severe and stately prince whom her father had chosen. That Marcus Aurelius adored her is certain. His notebook shows it. A more tender-hearted and perfect lover romance may show, but history cannot. He must have been the quintessence of refinement, a thoroughbred to his finger-tips; one for whom that purple mantle was too gaudy, and yet who bore it, as he bore everything else, in that self-abnegatory spirit which the higher reaches of philosophy bring.

He was of that rare type that never complains and always consoles.

After Antonin's death, his hours ceased to be his own. On the Euphrates there was the wildest disorder. To the north new races were pushing nations over the Danube and the Rhine. From the catacombs Christ was emerging;

from the Nile, Serapis. The empire was in disarray. Antonin had provided his son-in-law with a coadjutor, Lucius Verus, the son of Hadrian's mignon, a magnificent scoundrel; a tall, broad-shouldered athlete, with a skin as fresh as a girl's and thick curly hair, which he covered with a powder of gold; a *viveur*, whose suppers are famous still; whose guests were given the slaves that served them, the plate off which they had eaten, the cups from which they had drunk—cups of gold, cups of silver, jewelled cups, cups from Alexandria, murrhine vases filled with nard—cars and litters to go home with, mules with silver trappings and negro muleteers. Capitolinus says that, while the guests feasted, sometimes the magnificent Verus got drunk, and was carried to bed in a coverlid, or else, the red feather aiding, turned out and fought the watch.

It was this splendid individual to whom Marcus Aurelius entrusted the Euphrates. They had been brought up together, sharing each others tutors, writing themes for the same instructor, both meanwhile adolescently enamored of the fair Faustine. It was to Marcus she was given, the empire as a dower; and when that dower passed into his hands, he could think of nothing more equitable than to ask Verus to share it with him. Verus was not stupid enough to refuse, and at the hour when the Parthians turned ugly, he needed little urging to set out for the East, dreaming, as he did so, of creating there an empire that should be wholly his.

At that time Faustine must have been at least twenty-eight, possibly thirty. There were matrons who had not seen their fifteenth year, and Faustine had been married young. Her daughter, Lucille, was nubile. Presently Verus, or rather his lieutenants, succeeded, and the girl was betrothed to him. There was a festival, of course, games in abundance, and plenty of blood.

It would have been interesting to have seen her that day, the iron ring of betrothal on her finger, her brother, Commodus, staring at the arrangement of her hair, her mother prettily perplexed, her father signing orders which messengers brought and despatched while the sand took on a deeper red, and Rome shrieked its delight. Yes, it would have been interesting and typical of the hour. Her hair in the ten tresses which were symbolic of a *fiancée's* innocence, must have amused that brute of a brother of hers, and the iron ring on the fourth finger of her left hand must have given Faustine food for thought; the vestals, in their immaculate robes, must have gazed at her in curious, sisterly ways, and because of her fresh beauty surely there were undertones of applause. Should her father disappear she would make a gracious imperatrix indeed.

But, meanwhile, there was Faustine, and at sight of her legends of old imperial days returned. She was not Messalina yet, but in the stables there were jockeys whose sudden wealth surprised no one; in the arenas there were gladiators that fought, not for liberty, nor for death, but for the caresses of her eyes; in the side-scenes there were mimes who spoke of her; there were senators who boasted in their cups, and in the theatre Rome laughed colossally at the catchword of her amours.

Marcus Aurelius then was occupied with affairs of state. In similar circumstances so was Claud—Messalina's husband—so, too, was Antonin. But Claud was an imbecile, Antonin a man of the world, while Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher. When fate links a woman to any one of these varieties of the husband, she is blessed indeed. Faustine was particularly favored.

The stately prince was not alone a philosopher—a calling, by the way, which was common enough then, and has become commoner since—he was a philosopher who believed in philosophy, a rarity then as now. The exact trend of his thought is difficult to define. His note-book is filled with hesitations; materialism had its allurements, so also had pantheism; the advantages of the

Pyrrhonic suspension of judgment were clear to him too; according to the frame of mind in which he wrote, you might fancy him an agnostic, again an akosmist, sometimes both, but always the ethical result is the same.

" Revenge yourself on your enemy by not resembling him. Forgive; forgive always; die forgiving. Be indulgent to the wrong-doer; be compassionate to him; tell him how he should act; speak to him without anger, without sarcasm; speak to him affectionately. Besides, what do you know of his wrong-doing? Are all his thoughts familiar to you? May there not be something that justifies him? And you, are you entirely free from reproach? Have you never done wrong? And if not, was it fear that restrained you? Was it pride, or what? "

In the synoptic gospels similar recommendations appear. Charity is the New Testament told in a word. Christians read and forget it. But Christians are not philosophers. The latter are charitable because they regard evil as a part of the universal order of things, one which it is idle to blame, yet permissible to rectify.

From whatever source such a tenet springs, whether from materialism, stoicism, pyrrhonism, epicureanism, atheism even, is of small matter; it is a tenet which is honorable to the holder. This sceptred misanthrope possessed it, and it was in that his wife was blessed. Years later he died, forgiving her in silence, praising her aloud. Claud, referring to Messalina, shouted through the Forum that the fate which destined him to marry impure women destined him to punish them. Marcus Aurelius said nothing. He did not know what fate destined him to do, but he did know that philosophy taught him to forgive.

It was this philosophy that first perplexed Faustine. She was restless, frivolous, perhaps also a trifle depraved. Frivolous because all women were, depraved because her mother was, and restless because of the curiosity that inflammable imaginations share—in brief, a Roman princess. Her husband differed from the Roman prince. His youth had not been entirely circumspect; he, too, had his curiosities, but they were satisfied, he had found that they stained. When he married he was already the thinker; doubtless, he was tiresome; he could have had little small-talk, and his hours of love-making must have been rare. Presently the affairs of state engrossed him. Faustine was left to herself; save a friend of her own sex, a woman can have no worse companion. She, too, discovered she had curiosities. A gladiator passed that way—then Rome; then Lesbos; then the Lampsacene. "You are my husband's mistress," her daughter cried at her. "And you," the mother answered, "are your brother's." Even in the aridity of a chronicle the accusation and rejoinder are dramatic. Fancy what they must have been when mother and daughter hissed them in each other's teeth. Whether the argument continued is immaterial. Both could have claimed the sanction of religion. In those days a sin was a prayer. Religion was then, as it always had been, purely political. With the individual, with his happiness or aspirations, it concerned itself not at all. It was the prosperity of the empire, its peace and immortality, for which sacrifices were made, and libations offered. The god of Rome was Rome, and religion was patriotism. The antique virtues, courage in war, moderation in peace, and honor at all times, were civic, not personal. It was the state that had a soul, not the individual. Man was ephemeral; it was the nation that endured. It was the permanence of its grandeur that was important, nothing else.

To ensure that permanence each citizen labored. As for the citizen, death was near, and he hastened to live; before the roses could fade he wreathed himself with them. Immortality to him was in his descendants, the continuation of his name, respect to his ashes. Any other form of future life was a speculation, infrequent at that. In anterior epochs Fright had peopled Tartarus, but Fright had gone. The Elysian Fields were vague, wearisome to contemplate; even metempsychosis had no adherents. "After death," said Cæsar, "there is nothing," and all the world agreed with him. The hour, too, in which three thousand gods had not a single atheist, had gone, never to return. Old faiths had crumbled. None the less was Rome the abridgment of every superstition. The gods of the conquered had always been part of her spoils. The Pantheon had become a lupanar of divinities that presided over birth, and whose rites were obscene; an abattoir of gods that presided over death, and whose worship was gore. To please them was easy. Blood and debauchery was all that was required. That the upper classes had no faith in them at all goes without the need of telling; the atmosphere of their atriums dripped with metaphysics. But of the atheism of the upper classes the people knew nothing; they clung piously to a faith which held a theological justification of every sin, and in the temples fervent prayers were murmured, not for future happiness, for that was unobtainable, nor yet for wisdom or virtue, for those things the gods neither granted nor possessed; the prayers were that the gods would favor the suppliant in his hatreds and in his lusts.

Such was Rome when Verus returned to wed Lucille. Before his car the phallus swung; behind it was the pest. A little before, the Tiber overflowed. Presently, in addition to the pest, famine came. It was patent to everyone that the gods were vexed. There was blasphemy somewhere, and the Christians were tossed to the beasts. Faustine watched them die. At first they were to her as other criminals, but immediately a difference was discerned. They met death, not with grace, perhaps, but with exaltation. They entered the arena as though it were an enchanted garden, the color of the emerald, where dreams came true. Faustine questioned. They were enemies of state, she was told. The reply left her perplexed, and she questioned again. It was then her eyes became inhabited by regret. The past she tried to put from her, but remorse is physical; it declines to be dismissed. She would have killed herself, but she no longer dared. Besides, in the future there was light. In some ray of it she must have walked, for when at the foot of Mount Taurus, in a little Cappadocian village, years later, she died, it was at the sign of the cross.

IX

THE AGONY

The high virtues are not complaisant, it is the cad the canaille adore. In spite of everything, Nero had been beloved by the masses. For years there were roses on his tomb. Under Vespasian there was an impostor whom Greece and Asia acclaimed in his name. The memory of his festivals was unforgettable; regret for him refused to be stilled. He was more than a god; he was a tradition. His second advent was confidently expected; the Jews believed in his resurrection; to the Christian he had never died, and suddenly he reappeared.

Rome had declined to accept the old world tenet that the soul has its avatars, yet, when Commodus sauntered from that distant sepulchre, into which, poison aiding, he had placed his putative father, Rome felt that the Egyptians were wiser than they looked; that the soul did migrate, and that in the blue eyes of the young emperor Nero's spirit shone.

Herodian, who has written very agreeably on the subject, describes him as another Prince Charming. His hair, which was very fair, glistened like gold in the sun; he was slender, not at all effeminate, exceedingly graceful, exceedingly gracious; endowed with the promptest blush, with the best intentions; studious of the interests of his people; glad of advice, seeking it even; courteous and deferential to the senate and his father's friends—in short, an adolescent Nero—a trifle more guileful, however; already a parricide, a comedian as well; one who in a moment would toss the mask aside and disclose the mongrel; the offspring, not of an empress and an emperor, but the tiger-cub that Faustine had got by a gladiator.

The tender-hearted philosopher, who in a campaign against some fretful

Teutons, had taken Commodus with him, knew that he was not his son; knew, too, when the agony seized him, from whose hand the agony came; but in earlier life he had jotted in his notebook, "Forgive, forgive always; die forgiving"; and, as he forgave the mother, so he forgave the child, recommending him with his last breath to the army and to Rome.

As the people had loved Nero, so did the aristocracy love Marcus Aurelius; his foster-father Antonin excepted, he was the only gentleman that had sat on the throne. No wonder they loved him; and seeing this early edition of the prince in the fairy tale emerge from the bogs of Germany, his fair face haloed by the glisten and gold of his hair, hearts went out to him; the wish of his putative father was ratified, and the son of a gladiator was emperor of Rome.

Lampridus—or Spartian was it? The title-page bears Lampridus' name, but there is some doubt as to the authorship. However, whoever made the abridgment of the life of Commodus which appears among the chronicles of the *Scriptores Historiæ Augustæ*, says that before his birth Faustine dreamed she had engendered a serpent. It is not impossible that Faustine had been reading Ctzias, and had stumbled over his account of the Martichoras, a serpent with a woman's face and the talons of a bird of prey. For it was that she conceived.

It would have been interesting to have seen that young man, the mask removed, frightening the senate into calling Rome Commodia, and then in a linen robe promenading in the attributes of a priest of Anubis through a seraglio of six hundred girls and mignons embracing as he passed. There was a spectacle, which Nero had not imagined. But Nero was *vieux jeu*. Commodus outdid him, first in debauchery, then in the arena. Nero had died while in training to kill a lion; Commodus did not take the trouble to train. It was the lions that were trained, not he. A skin on his shoulders, a club in his hand, he descended naked into the ring, and there felled beasts and men. Then, acclaimed as Hercules, he returned to the pulvina, and a mignon on one side, a mistress on the other, ordered the guard to massacre the spectators and set fire to Rome. After entering the arena six or seven hundred times, and there vanquishing men whose eyes had been put out and whose legs were tied, the colossal statue which Nero had made after his own image was altered; to the top came the bust of Commodus, to the base this legend: *The victor of ten thousand gladiators, Commodus-Hercules, Imperator.*

Meanwhile conspirators were at work. Like Nero, Commodus could have sought in vain for a friend. His life was attempted again and again; he escaped, but never the plotters; only when they had gone there were more. He knew he was doomed. There was the usual comet; the statue of Hercules had perspired visibly; an owl had been caught above his bedroom, and once he had wiped in his hair the hand which he had plunged in the warm wound of a gladiator, dead at his feet. These omens could mean but one thing. None the less, if he were doomed, so were others. One day one of those miserable children that the emperors kept about them found a tablet. It was as good as anything else to play with; and, as the child tossed it through the hall, the one woman that had loved Commodus caught it and read on it that she and all the household were to die. Within an hour Commodus was killed.

There is a page in Lampridus, which he quotes as coming from the lost chronicles of Marius Maximus, and which contains the joy of the senate at the news. It is too long for transcription, but as a bit of realism it is unique. There is a shiver in every line. You hear the voices of hundreds, drunk with fury, frenzied with delight; the fierce welcome that greeted Pertinax—a slave's grandson, who was emperor for a minute—the joy of hate assuaged.

The delight of the senate was not shared by the pretorians. Pertinax was promptly massacred; the throne was put up at auction; there were two or three emperors at once, and presently the purple was seized by Septimus Severus, a rigid, white-haired disciplinarian, who, in his admiration for Marcus Aurelius, founded that second dynasty of the Antonins with which antiquity may be said to end.

When he had gone, his elder son, Bastian, renamed Aurelius Antonin, and because of a cloak he had invented nicknamed Caracalla, bounded like a panther on the throne. In a moment he was gnawing at his brother's throat, and immediately there occurred a massacre such as Rome had never seen. Xiphilin says the nights were not long enough to kill all of the condemned. Twenty thousand people were slaughtered in twenty hours. The streets were emptied, the theatres closed.

The blood that ran then must have been in rillets too thin to slake Caracalla's thirst, for simultaneously almost, he was in Gaul, in Dacia—wherever there was prey. African by his father, Syrian on his mother's side, Caracalla was not a panther merely; he was a herd of them. He had the cruelty, the treachery and guile of a wilderness of tiger-cats. No man, said a thinker, is wholly base. Caracalla was. He had not a taste, not a vice, even, which was not washed and rewashed in blood. In a moment of excitement Commodus set his guards on the spectators in the amphitheatre; the damage was slight, for the Colosseum was so constructed that in two minutes the eighty or ninety thousand people which it held could escape. Caracalla had the exits closed. Those who escaped were naked; to bribe the guards they were forced to strip themselves to the skin. In the circus a vestal caught his eye. He tried to violate her, and failing impotently, had her buried alive. "Caracalla knows that I am a virgin, and knows why," the girl cried as the earth swallowed her, but there was no one there to aid.

Such things show the trend of a temperament, though not, perhaps, its force. Presently the latter was displayed. For years those arch-enemies of Rome, the unconquerable Parthians, had been quiet; bound, too, by treaties which held Rome's honor. Not Caracalla's, however; he had none. An embassy went out to Artobane, the king. Caracalla wished a bride, and what fairer one could he have than the child of the Parthian monarch? Then, too, the embassy was charged to explain, the marriage of Rome and Parthia would be the union of the Orient and the Occident, peace by land and sea. Artobane hesitated, and with cause; but Caracalla wooed so ardently that finally the king said yes.

The news went abroad. The Parthians, delighted, prepared to receive the emperor. When Caracalla crossed the Tigris, the highroad that led to the capital was strewn with sacrifices, with altars covered with flowers, with welcomings of every kind. Caracalla was visibly pleased. Beyond the gates of the capital, there was the king; he had advanced to greet his son-in-law, and that the greeting might be effective, he had assembled his nobles and his troops. The latter were armed with cymbals, with hautbois, and with flutes; and as Caracalla and his army approached, there was music, dancing and song; there were libations too, and as the day was practically the wedding of East and West, there was not a weapon to be seen —gala robes merely, brilliant and long. Caracalla saluted the king, gave an order to an adjutant, and on the smiling defenceless Parthians the Roman eagles pounced. Those who were not killed were made prisoners of war. The next day Caracalla withdrew, charged with booty, firing cities as he went.

A little before, rumor reached him that a group of the citizens of Alexandria had referred to him as a fratricide.

After the adventure in Parthia he bethought him of the city which Alexander had founded, and of the temple of Serapis that was there. He wished to honor both, he declared, and presently he was at the gates. The people were enchanted; the avenues were strewn with flowers, lined with musicians. There were illuminations, festivals, sacrifices, torrents of perfumes, and through it all Caracalla passed, a legion at his heels. To see him, to participate in the succession of prodigalities, the surrounding country flocked there too. In recognition of the courtesy with which he was received, Caracalla gave a banquet to the magnates and the clergy. Before his guests could leave him they were killed. Through the streets the legion was at work. Alexandria was turned into a cemetery. Herodian states that the carnage was so great that the Nile was red to its mouth.

In Rome at that time was a prefect, Macrin by name, who had dreamed the purple would be his. He was a swarthy liar, and his promises were such that the pretorians were willing that the dream should come true. Emissaries were despatched, and Caracalla was stabbed. In his luggage poison was found to the value of five million five hundred thousand drachmæ. What fresh turpitude he was devising no one knew, and the discovery might serve as an epitaph, were it not that by his legions he was adored. No one had abandoned to the army such booty as he.

Meanwhile, in a chapel at Emissa, a boy was dancing indolently to the kiss of flutes. A handful of Caracalla's soldiers passed that way, and thought him Bacchus. In his face was the enigmatic beauty of gods and girls—the charm of the dissolute and the wayward heightened by the divine. On his head was a diadem; his frail tunic was of purple and gold, but the sleeves, after the Phœnician fashion, were wide, and he was shod with a thin white leather that reached to the thighs. He was fourteen, and priest of the Sun. The chapel was roomy and rich. There was no statue—a black phallus merely, which had fallen from above, and on which, if you looked closely, you could see the image of Elagabal, the Sun.

The rumor of his beauty brought other soldiers that way, and the lad, feeling that Rome was there, ceased to dance, strolling through pauses of the worship, a troop of galli at his heels, surveying the intruders with querulous, feminine eyes.

Presently a whisper filtered that the lad was Caracalla's son. There were centurions there that remembered Semiamire, the lad's mother, very well; they had often seen her, a superb creature with scorching eyes, before whom fire had been carried as though she were empress. It was she who had put it beyond Caracalla's power to violate that vestal when he tried. She was his cousin; her life had been passed at court; it was Macrin who had exiled her. And with the whisper filtered another—that she was rich; that she had lumps of gold, which she would give gladly to whomso aided in placing her Antonin on the throne. There were gossips who said ill-natured things of this lady; who insinuated that she had so many lovers that she herself could not tell who was the father of her child; but the lumps of gold had a language of their own. The disbanded army espoused the young priest's cause; there was a skirmish, Macrin was killed, and Heliogabalus was emperor of Rome.

"I would never have written the life of this Antonin Impurissimus," said Lampridus, "were it not that he had predecessors." Even in Latin the task was difficult. In English it is impossible. There are subjects that permit of a hint, particularly if it be masked to the teeth, but there are others that no art can drape. "The inexpressible does not exist," Gautier remarked, when he finished a notorious romance, nor does it; but even his pen would have balked had he tried it on Heliogabalus.

In his work on the Cæsars, Suetonius

drew breath but once—he called Nero a monster. Subsequently he must have regretted having done so, not because Nero was not a monster, but because it was sufficient to display the beast without adding a descriptive placard. In that was Suetonius' advantage; he could describe. Nowadays a writer may not, or at least not Heliogabalus. It is not merely that he was depraved, for all of that lot were; it was that he made depravity a pursuit; and, the purple favoring, carried it not only beyond the limits of the imaginable, but beyond the limits of the real. At the feet of that painted boy, Elephantis and Parrhasius could have sat and learned a lesson. Apart from that phase of his sovereignty, he was a little Sardanapalus, an Asiatic mignon, who found himself great.

It would have been curious to have seen him in that wonderful palace, clothed like a Persian queen, insisting that he should be addressed as Imperatrix, and quite living up to the title.

It would not only be interesting, it would give one an insight into just how much the Romans could stand. It would have been curious, also, to have assisted at that superb and poetic ceremonial, in which, having got Tanit from Carthage as consort for Elagabal, he presided, girt with the pomp of church and state, over the nuptials of the Sun and Moon.

He had read Suetonius, and not an eccentricity of the Cæsars escaped him. He would not hunt flies by the hour, as Domitian had done, for that would be mere imitation; but he could collect cobwebs, and he did, by the ton. Caligula and Vitellius had been famous as hosts, but the feasts that Heliogabalus gave outranked them for sheer splendor. From panels in the ceiling such masses of flowers fell that guests were smothered. Those that survived had set before them glass game and sweets of crystal. The menu was embroidered on the table-cloth—not the mere list of dishes, but pictures drawn with the needle of the dishes themselves. And presently, after the little jest in glass had been enjoyed, you were served with camel's heels; combs torn from living cocks; platters of nightingale tongues; ostrich brains, prepared with that garum sauce which the Sybarites invented, and of which the secret is lost; therewith were peas and grains of gold; beans and amber peppered with pearl dust; lentils and rubies; spiders in jelly; lion's dung, served in pastry. The guests that wine overcame were carried to bedrooms. When they awoke, there staring at them were tigers and leopards—tame, of course; but some of the guests were stupid enough not to know it, and died of fright.

All this was of a nature to amuse a lad who had made the phallus the chief object of worship; who had banished Jupiter, dismissed Isis; who, over paths that were strewn with lilies, had himself, in the attributes of Bacchus, drawn by tigers; by lions as Mother of the Gods; again, by naked women, as Heliogabalus on his way to wed a vestal, and procure for the empire a child that should be wholly divine.

It amused Rome, too, and his prodigalities in the circus were such that Lampridus admits that the people were glad he was emperor. Neither Caligula nor Nero had been as lavish, and neither Caligula nor Nero as cruel. The atrocities he committed, if less vast than those of Caracalla's, were more acute. Domitian even was surpassed in the tortures invented by a boy, so dainty that he never used the same garments, the same shoes, the same jewels, the same woman twice.

In spite of this, or perhaps precisely on that account, the usual conspirators were at work, and one day this little painted girl, who had prepared several devices for a unique and splendid suicide, was taken unawares and tossed in the latrinæ.

In him the glow of the purple reached its apogee. Rome had been watching a crescendo that had mounted with the years. Its culmination was in that hermaphrodite. But the tension had been too great—something snapped; there was nothing left—a procession of colorless bandits merely, Thracians, Gauls, Pannonians, Dalmatians, Goths, women even, with Attila for a climax and the refurbishing of the world.

Rome was still mistress, but she was growing very old. She had conquered step by step. When one nation had fallen, she garrotted another. To vanquish her, the earth had to produce not only new races, but new creeds. The parturitions, as we know, were successful. Already the blue, victorious eyes of Vandal and of Goth were peering down at Rome; already they had whispered together, and over the hydromel had drunk to her fall. The earth's new children fell upon her, not one by one, but all at once, and presently the colossus tottered, startling the universe with the uproar of her agony; calling to gods that had vacated the skies; calling to Jupiter; calling to Isis; calling in vain. Where the thunderbolt had gleamed, a crucifix stood. On the shoulders of a prelate was the purple that had dazzled the world.

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TALES BEFORE SUPPER

FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER AND
PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

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John Kendrick Bangs,
Profile House.

TALES BEFORE SUPPER

FROM

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER AND
PROSPER MÉRIMÉE

TOLD IN ENGLISH BY MYNDART VERELST

AND

DELAYED WITH A PROEM

BY

EDGAR SALTUS
AUTHOR OF "THE ANATOMY OF NEGATION," ETC.

BRENTANOS
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NEW YORK   CHICAGO
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To

E. G. R.

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

A SHORT time ago, in the green room of the Paris Opéra, an old gentleman in an ill-fitting coat announced to whomsoever would listen that the most beautiful thing in the world was a beautiful edition of Gautier. He looked boldly about as though hoping for a contradiction or the chance of an argument, but the remark passed unchallenged, and nodding sagaciously to himself he went back to the stalls.

The old gentleman perhaps was wrong. There are, doubtless, many things in the world more beautiful than that which pleasured his book-lover fancy, but in literature at least the number is small. Théophile Gautier is the Delacroix of prose.

It is related of Anne Boleyn that one of her eyes was green and the other black. Gautier's were even more chromatic; they received and reflected with the exactitude of a prism every hue from argent to basaltic. His mental retina was an oscillating rainbow; and, were it possible to sum him up in a phrase, it might be said that of French writers he it was who possessed the clearest perception of color.

Gautier first entered the drawing-room of letters at the age of nineteen. Under his arm he carried a volume of verse. The cover was of pink paper, and its publication had been paid for in advance.

This event occurred in 1830. Romanticism was then at fever heat. Scott had been translated, and, what is more, was being read; Shakespeare had been unearthed; Byron was delighting the world; Goethe glowed in Olympian majesty. It was an era of great deeds, of sonorous adjectives, and exuberant enthusiasm: it was the coming of age of the nineteenth century. It had been found, but a little before, that French literature, if not next door to a pauper, lived practically in the same street. At once the death warrant of classicism was signed. Through the vivifying influence of Chateaubriand, and under the creative hand of Hugo, there leaped into life, as suddenly as the soldiery of Cadmus, a new generation — a race of poets that were virile in their ardor, intoxicated with their own theories, rich in ideas, opulent in fancies, and feverish in the determination to turn the indigence of their country's book shelves into the wealth of a millionnaire. Among them no one was more resolute than Gautier. In aid of the cause he subscribed page after page of luxuriant prose, and line after line of impeccable verse. His ideas were born duchesses. No one could torment a fancy more delicately than he; he had the gift of adjective; he scented a new one afar like a truffle; and from the Morgue of the dictionary he dragged forgotten beauties. He dowered the language of his day with every tint of dawn and every convulsion of sunset; he invented metaphors that were worth a king's ransom, and figures of speech that deserve the Prix Montyon. Then reviewing his work, he formulated an axiom which will go down with a nimbus through time: Whomsoever a thought however complex, a vision however apocalyptic, surprises without words to convey it, is not a writer. The inexpressible does not exist.

When he first set out to charm that gracious lady whose name is Fame, he was as fabulously handsome as a Merovingian prince. He was tall and robust; his hair was a wayward flood; his eyes were blue and victorious. He was the image of Young France. His strength was proverbial; he outdid Danté; he swam from Marseilles to the Château d'If, and then swam back. Had it been necessary, he would have breasted the Hellespont. But of that there was no need. There were hearts nearer home that he won without effort; women fell in love with him at once; the Muse smiled, and

Glory stretched her hand. His conquests were so numerous that to give an exact account of them the historian would have to write in Latin. In comparison Mardoche was a Puritan; and yet, through a charming contradiction, no one has ever been better supplied with beliefs: he had no less than three hundred and sixty-five, one for every day in the calendar; and it was only on leap year that he allowed himself for twenty-four hours the privilege of believing in nothing at all.

At a comparatively early age he was sunstruck by Victor Hugo. To him Hugo was Phœbus indeed. He has given it to the world that when he was first brought in the Presence, like Esther before Ahasuerus, he almost swooned. Envy being cheap and the negation of genius easy, the incident is worth noting; it helps to an understanding of the man, and of the poet that was in him. Throughout those riotous days he was Hugo's henchman. Of the little army that fought for him, Gautier was the most demoniac. His contempt of the humdrum, his enthusiasm for the untried, for Liberty in Art, for Hugo, was resplendent in the fantasy of its ornate charm. To talk poetry with Hugo, he said, is like talking theology with God. He did everything for the master. His pen was a scimitar; his ink Greek fire; he defended, lauded, and worshiped. And when years later, "so many that the head he bowed had turned to gray," when Hugo came back from exile, Gautier hastened with a greeting. "Yes," he said on his return, "yes, I really think he remembered me." Hugo, it may be noted, rhymes with ego, not richly, perhaps, but well.

Gautier was a satrap of song: as such his position is not difficult to define. Hugo is the voice of a century; De Musset the sob; Balzac the echo; Baudelaire the sneer; and Gautier the smile, — the smile of youth, health, and good looks, the smile of one who held aristocracy to be beauty in woman and intellect in man. He had little in common with the lyric agony of De Musset; his hand was not large enough to wield the thunderbolts which Hugo hurled; he lacked Baudelaire's appreciation of shades of leprous brown; and Balzac's stenographic talent was unpossessed by him. But his *facture* is irreproachable, which De Musset's is not; his effects are never unintentionally grotesque, as Hugo's often are; his notes are always natural, where Baudelaire's are sometimes forced; and, being a poet, it was easier for him to invent than transcribe.

Gautier wrote in verse before he discovered that it is more difficult to write in prose. Then abandoning one Muse, he set out to caress the peplum of another. In this commerce he produced "Mademoiselle de Maupin," and, later, "Avatar." Concerning "Avatar" little need be said; the reader is the best of critics. But on the subject of the former work, a momentary digression may perhaps be permitted.

To the average reader "Mademoiselle de Maupin" is a hymn to Love. To the student it is the account of a chase after the Ideal. Through its pages whoso listens hears a strain from Flaubert's immortal duo between Chimera and the Sphinx. That duo in which the crouching beast calls: "Ici, Chimère, arrête-toi," and the Chimera, unstayed in her flight, answers, "Non: jamais."

The Ideal, truly, is intangible, but the fact of its intangibility can hardly be said to make the pursuit other than meritorious. Yet be this as it may, there are many accomplished gentlemen who have thought differently; and in this instance, at least, have called the hunt immoral. The immorality displayed in "Mademoiselle de Maupin" is the tormented grace of adolescence, the emotion which stirs the pulse of every youth however refined, and every maiden however pure. It represents the turbulence of health, the love of beauty, and the unaffected expression of a sentiment which while perfectly natural has the misfortune to shock those who lack the ability to inspire it in another. It is a tableau of the candors and generous dreams that reside in every one who prefers the Beautiful to its opposite. As such, perhaps, it is immoral, though one may wonder in what the criterion consists; and it may not be indecorous to note that they who declaim on the subject are sometimes at a loss for a standard, or an instance of morality in nature. Besides, Gautier did not write for accomplished gentlemen, nor yet for little girls in short frocks. He wrote for poets and for men. And where is the poet who would not envy d'Albert, and where is the man who would not have kissed the fair Madeleine? For my part, were the permission accorded me, I know of nothing that could give me greater pleasure. No, not even a conversation with Schopenhauer.

But to preach liberality to the illiberal is, as we all know, as profitable as asking alms of statues. Then, too, who shall question taste? The perfume which is distressing to one is alluring to another. The concert which delights the idler is painful to the amateur. The secret of never displeasing is the art of mediocrity. And Gautier alternately charms and rebuffs. His Muse has a thousand toilettes; she lives in a succession of masquerades. At times she moves in a minuet. Again she comes with the breath of brooks and sorceries of spring; now she is enveloped in the incense and hallelujahs of a cathedral, now in the fireworks and frenzy of a debauch; to-day a princess, yesterday a vagrant, to-morrow a wanton, last week a saint — but always the Muse.

If her attitude in "Mademoiselle de Maupin" may be considered venturesome, no such reproach has been laid at the door of "Avatar." There the heroine is endowed with a purity so tremulous in its clairvoyance that the Blessed Damozel herself might have envied it, and not she alone, but the

> . . . five handmaidens whose names
> Are five sweet symphonies:
> Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
> Margaret and Rosalys.

Prascovie Labinska is meet to be reckoned with such as they, and the portrait which Gautier drew of her could have been signed by no one else save perhaps Guido or Carlo Dolci. In this story he succeeded in what few have accomplished before, — he displayed the impalpable on paper, a dream in black and white. The reader assists at a metamorphosis more marvelous than any Paracelsus ever devised. A forenoon of Veronese fades as in a magic lantern; in its place comes a tableau after Goya, a nightmare of the Orient in modern guise, a picture of the human soul fluttering as might a bird over the horrors of an abyss. And then, at once, the dawn.

Gautier had a taste for the exotic, and he toyed with it as with a jewel. His knowledge was something wider than encyclopædic; he was familiar with the odds and ends of learning, the remnants and misfits of erudition ; he knew the reason of things, and confused many whose business in life was to seem wise without being so. In later years no one knew when he slept. His lamp was always burning. When he rested it was with a book. One day, so runs the legend,[1] he happened to be visiting at a country house. His fellow-guests were artists and savants. Near the house was a pond stocked with immemorial carp. Somebody suggested that one of these fish might be appetizing for breakfast. Accordingly a carp was caught and carried to the kitchen. Suddenly the head cook, his face whiter than his cap, and followed by trembling scullions, appeared among the assembled guests. In a voice broken by emotion he announced that the carp had no sooner been placed in the pot than the most heart-rending cries had come from it. The scullions bore witness to the truth of this statement, and declared that they would rather resign their aprons than be obliged to assist at the cooking of such an extraordinary fish.

"Extraordinary!" said Gautier, "not at all. All fish object to being boiled alive. The carp merely happened to have a stronger voice than the others."

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[1] *Théophile Gautier.* Emile Bergerat. Paris.

At this remark of the poet's, the savants were vastly amused. Nothing, they said, was better established than that fish were dumb. The cook evidently had been mystified or deceived by some illusion of the acoustics. Besides, they insisted, how can fish cry out,—they have no vocal organs?

"Forgive me," said Gautier, "they have." And thereupon he gave the assembly such a lesson in ichthyology that it seemed as though all the fish of the rivers and the oceans protested with him against the ignorance of man. He dissected and anatomized the finest fibres of their vocal organs. He made them vibrate, sing, cry, and murmur according to their joy or pain. He unveiled their mysterious lives, their loves, their wars, and touching at last on the abominable torture which is inflicted on them when they are cooked alive, he pictured it in such terms that Bergerat says even the scullions wept, and of the guests not one could be induced to touch fish for over a week.

The next day one of the erudites who had returned to Paris wrote to Gautier: "I have passed the night in verifying your assertions; every one of them is exact. It is you who are the savant and we who are poets."

It was this readiness that he brought to his work. Wit and wisdom ran off the end of his pen, and in the running assumed such perfect attitudes that Balzac, whose own phrases were laborious as childbirth, called him a magician, which he undoubtedly was. The quality of his style has been rarely questioned. Zola, it is true, has characterized it as tortured, and were it not malicious to wish that the style of that Jupiter Feuilletonant could be put on the same rack, the wish most assuredly would be expressed. But Zola to the contrary, Gautier so far from tormenting his style, did not even polish it. The secret of his grace and fluency lay, perhaps, in this. His mind was a kaleidoscope of fancies; he had but to shake it and an alluring combination was the result. Moreover, his memory was like a vise. It was never necessary for him to look up a reference; the dictionary was a relaxation to him; and when he wrote, — and he wrote everything, from an epigram to a ballet, enough, in fact, to fill a library, — the operation was absolutely painless. None of his manuscripts bear the slightest trace of revision, of erasure, or, for that matter, of punctuation. Bergerat says that after an interruption, such as a visit for instance, he would take up his work at the place he left off, often in the middle of a word, without so much as refreshing his memory by a reading of the sentence that preceded it. He wrote a sonnet as readily as an acceptance to a dinner, a story as easily as were he copying it. He wrote an acrostic sonnet, *bout-rimé* at that — one of the most difficult things in verse — as an improvisation. He went to Russia, and four years later, without a note-book to help him, wrote a description of what he had seen. The "Capitaine Fracasse," one of his chief works, a story of sixteenth century France, in which there is not an anachronism of language or of detail, was written at the end of a counter in a publisher's office, without even a lexicon at hand, amid the confusion of a large establishment, and as the manuscript fell from him it was carried to the printer. When the printer had enough for the day, Gautier took a stroll in the boulevard. Certainly he was a magician.

Beside the book of Russian travels, Gautier wrote another on Spain. It was alleged that he grazed the surface of things, and left the backgrounds unpenetrated. "Théo," said that delightful Mme. de Girardin one evening, "are there no Russians in Russia, no Spaniards in Spain?"

At this Gautier pretended to be very angry. "Fiddlesticks!" he exclaimed, or rather the Gallic equivalent. "Do you suppose I saw them? In St. Petersburg I was a Russian myself, in Madrid I was as thorough a Spaniard as the Cid or Don Ruy Gomez de Silva. I no sooner put my foot in a country than I become a native, I think, act, and see precisely like any other inhabitant. In Spain I would have had myself run through and through in defense of any one of a dozen different local opinions, no matter which, provided my sword had been tempered at Toledo, and the challenge was addressed to Don Theophilo. As to Russian customs, I adopted them at once. I adopted them as a matter of course; I forgot all others that differed. To me they seemed perfectly natural. Would you think of describing the form of a cravat in a land where every cravat is of the same form? No. Well, then, no more would I. Beside, man is everywhere the same. In every latitude he eats with his mouth and grasps with his fingers. No matter where you go you will find that the strong overcome the weak. From one pole to the other the art of love does not vary. To my thinking, descriptions of habits and customs are not worth the stroke of a pen; personally, I care as much for them as I do for the snows of yester-year. I have passed my life in a pursuit of the Beautiful, and I found it only in Nature and in Art. Everywhere and always man is ugly. He spoils creation. His sole value is in his intelligence. And as his intelligence is manifest only in his productions, I hold but to them; the secret of his destinies does not interest me in the least. The one thing that I care about in a foreign city is, therefore, the monuments, and I care for them simply because they convey the collective result of the genius of the population. If the population be brutal and the city a haunt of crime, what does it matter to me? All I ask is the permission to admire the edifices without being assassinated. As for humanity as it is improperly called, there is the 'Gazette des Tribunaux,' the 'Newgate Calendar;' all Balzac is in it, and over and above Balzac the universal history of that mischievous ape that I have met in all my travels, and who peoples the world. That is the way it is, and that is the way it always will be. It is only climates that differ, climates, thieves-slang, and the uniform of the police."

After this tirade it is probable that he shrugged his shoulders and repeated the favorite axiom of his declining years, "There is no use in anything; and, moreover, there is nothing; yet everything happens, but to me it is all the same." An axiom which, heard in conjunction with the foregoing tirade, might be mistaken for the purest Leopardi. But Gautier was anything but a miserabilist. Indifference makes one good-natured. In his youth he was too magnificent to be other than happy, and in his old age too sweet-tempered to believe in discontent.

Such change as there was in his disposition was that which is the outcome of Time. As a young man he promenaded the boulevards in wonderful trousers, transcendent waistcoats, neckclothed like Brummel, gazing about with conquering eyes. In the majestic indolence of later years he looked much as might an Asiatic potentate grown gray and grave. Victory had deserted his eyes, and in them had come a shadowy nostalgia, the regret of unsailed seas and unexperienced pleasures, and therewith a reverie so feline in its abstraction that one might have thought him constantly following the changes of some unending dream.

And that dream was, of course, the Beautiful. In the first intoxication of romanticism he caught the Muse by the hair, and threw her down like a young ruffian felling his mistress; he was vigorous in his beliefs, but as illusions left him, as illusions do, he intercepted some knowledge of the intangibility of the Ideal, and it was then that he shrugged his shoulders. Enthusiasm for a chimera is indeed difficult to prolong.

The story of the "Venus of Ille" is by an author of a different school. Prosper Mérimée was in a certain sense even more erudite than Gautier. He was a professional archæologist, an historian salaried by the state, a *fumiste* of literature, one of the mandarins of the Occident — that is to say, a member of the French

Academy, — a senator to boot, and at Saint Cloud and the Tuileries the modern representative of the jester of the past. Though he wore no bells, his business was none the less to amuse the court. He wrote witty little comedies, which were performed by titled amateurs, and to the empress he whispered anecdotes behind the fan.

His lines were cast in pleasant places. In after-life Gautier had to trudge through journalism, a martyr to the exigencies of the daily press, but Mérimée wore a braided coat, and drew an income from the coffers of the crown. He was rarely gifted, a man of sound learning, a philologist to the ends of his gloves, a student in the true acceptation of the word, and yet one who not from modesty but diplomacy preferred to be thought a dilettante. He did not wish to seem wiser than dukes and duchesses. Throughout his literary career he acted like that Englishman who refused to speak French correctly that he might not be taken for a professor of languages. He wrote a bundle of excellent verse, "La Guzla," which he published as translations from the Illyrian, and which were gravely commented upon by spectacled Germans. He produced a volume of plays, which he gave out as translations from an imaginary Spanish actress, Clara Gazul, whose manuscripts he pretended to have found when rummaging in the Escurial. The plays were strikingly original, nervous in movement, colorless in adjective, unburdened by an unnecessary word, and in peculiar contrast to the exuberance and fervor of the day. They too were gravely commented upon, and long articles were written about Clara Gazul and the art which that lady displayed.

Mérimée meanwhile laughed in his sleeve. Somebody, Taine perhaps, has said that his existence was dual. When the Mérimée whom the world knew showed himself in public, the real Mérimée stood at his side, and with an air of mockery resignedly watched him perform.

The Mérimée that the world knew was a pale impassible man, who never raised his voice, who said clever things, and told horrible stories with the impersonal unconcern of one describing the fair weather of an earlier June. It was said that he was an atheist, or, what is worse, a materialist, that he was without sentiment, without affection, without a heart. But after the posthumous publication of his "Lettres à une Inconnue," it was discovered that he had worn a mask, it was found that he had beliefs, nay, superstitions even, and that his heart could bleed as well as another. The pale impassible erudite disappeared, and in his place came an unknown Mérimée, a lover, tender, delicate, and always refined, who wrote to the Inconnue lines like these: —

"It is so long since I heard from you that I had begun to be anxious. Besides, I was tormented with a presentiment that I have not dared to relate. A few days ago I went with an architect to the Arenas of Nîmes, and there, ten paces from me, I noticed a charming bird. It was a trifle larger than a lark, its body was the color of flax, and its wings were striated black, white, and crimson. It was perched on a cornice, and gazed fixedly at me. I interrupted the architect to ask what kind of bird it was: although a great sportsman, he said that never before had he seen one like it. I went up to it, but it did not attempt to fly until I was near enough to touch it with my hand. Then, with its eyes still fixed on me, it fluttered a little distance away. Wherever I went, it followed me. The next day I returned to the Arenas, and found the bird still there. I had brought some bread with me, but it would not touch it. Thinking from the form of its beak that it might prefer insects, I threw it a grasshopper, but it paid no attention to it. The foremost ornithologist of the town told me that no such bird as I described had ever been seen in the neighborhood. Finally, at my last visit to the Arenas, the bird followed me so persistently that it even came after me into a dark passage which only a bat would have entered. I remembered then that the Duchess of Buckingham saw her husband in the form of a bird on the day that he was assassinated, and at once I feared that you had died, and had taken that way of seeing me. In spite of myself, the idea was torment, and I assure you I was delighted to see that your letter bore the date of the day on which I first saw my marvelous bird."

So much for the poet that the world did not know.

As a rule, when the real Mérimée showed himself it was in spheres unfrequented by fashion, over the gourd of a galley-slave for instance, in a nest of gitanas, or in some smuggler's haunt. Gautier, it may be remembered, discovered Andalusia, and every one since has wished to follow in his footsteps. The journey can be made in different ways. The pleasantest, perhaps, is by means of that enchanted rug, the imagination. A history aiding, one or two books of travel, and it is the easiest thing in the world to explore the entire land without so much as leaving one's arm-chair. The traveler closes his eyes, and presto! the Alhambra, the Lion Court, the Alcazar, Cordova, the ship of stone which is called Cadiz, surge in melting beauty before him. On the wings of his vagabond fancy he can float from Carthagena to Tyre; he can see the Phœnicians sailing in their purple galleys; he can hear the tramp of Roman soldiery; he can scan the face of Cæsar, vicious and blanched by incessant debauches; he can watch the inundation of the Vandals, the conquest of the Goths, the glitter of the Mussulman scimiter, and if his ear be properly attuned, he can catch the tinkle of the Moorish guitar. The ages will unveil their secrets, the cities their gore and their charm, and all this without being forced to ask a deaf man suffering from a cold at what time the train starts. This is, perhaps, the usual plan, though another and equally patriotic fashion is to go there ignorant of Spanish, ignorant of history, and after cursing the country long to be at home.

Prosper Mérimée chose none of these ways. The obscurest corner of history was his by right of conquest. He not only spoke Spanish, he spoke the *calo* of the gypsies and the jargon of the Catalans. When, therefore, the fancy took him to visit Andalusia, he went there in the directest manner. Few were the doors closed to him. He ate and drank with the best, with the Duke of Ossuna, whose ancestor Geryon tended the flocks of the Sun; with Mme. de Montijo, mother of the empress that was to be; and when his evening dress was put aside, and the Mérimée that the world knew was supposed to be asleep, he was supping in some *fonda* that reeked with garlic, chatting with muleteers and chulos, telling stories to the peasants of Ronda, lounging under the stars with smugglers and highwaymen, or watching some drama of jealousy, that jealousy that spends itself not in a scene, but in a murder. From these and similar excursions he brought back the portraits that fill his gallery. Carmen, for instance, Columba, and Cleménce. They are all living, not one of them has stepped into a book before, and yet with five or six strokes of the pen he makes the reader as familiar with them as were they stock characters of fiction. It was this method that he observed wheresoever he went, and as he was a great traveler the variety of his types is noticeable.

These portraits are hung in the plainest frames. After Gautier, the sobriety of his style is ascetic. To turn from "Avatar" to the "Venus of Ille" is like passing from high noon to twilight. The action in both is as sinewy as it is dramatic; so far as the mere management is concerned one is at a loss to decide which is the more nervous; but while through "Avatar" one can hear Gautier's voice, see his ample gestures, mark the forgetfulness of his volubilities, and feel as did one sit with him hand in hand that the tale is told with really personal sympathy, one looks in vain through the "Venus of Ille" for the faintest trace of emotion.

Mérimée has a story to tell, and he tells it as though he were giving evidence before a grand jury. He presents facts, not hearsay; each word of his testimony is relevant; he is not to be led into confusion or entangled in contradictions. He is logical, precise, plain-spoken, and undeclamatory. A perfect witness indeed. No one in all probability will ever be able to write as richly as Gautier, but in Mérimée's stories may be discerned the model of the modern novel — the art of displaying the documents in a given case uninterruptedly, one after the other like so many premises with a conclusion for climax. Gautier was the torch of an epoch, Mérimée the rapier.

EDGAR SALTUS.

NEW YORK, *May* 1, 1887.

AVATAR.

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BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

I.

No one could understand the malady which was slowly undermining Octave de Saville. He was not confined to his bed; his ordinary existence was unchanged; no complaint fell from his lips; and yet it was none the less evident that he was fading away. Questioned by the physicians whom the solicitations of his friends and relations forced him to consult, he could mention no definite suffering, nor could science discover an alarming symptom: the auscultation of the chest gave out a favorable sound, and the ear applied to the heart detected scarcely an irregular pulsation; he had neither cough nor fever, but life ebbed from him through one of those invisible rents of which, Terence says, man is full.

Sometimes a strange faintness made him white as marble, for a few moments he appeared lifeless, then the pendulum, no longer stopped by the mysterious finger which had held it, resumed its sway, and Octave awakened as from a dream.

He had been sent to a water-cure, but the thermal nymphs proved powerless to help him, and a journey to Naples produced no better result. The radiant sun, of which he had heard so much, was to him as black as Albert Dürer has engraved it; the bat with Melancholia written on its wing beat the dazzling sky with its dusky web, and flew between him and the light; on the quay of Mergellina, where the half-clad lazzaroni sun themselves till their skins take on the hue of bronze, he had felt chilled to the heart. So returning to his small apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, he had apparently resumed his former habits.

This apartment was for a bachelor most comfortably furnished. But as in time an interior becomes impressed with the look and even the very thought of its inhabitant, Octave's home had little by little grown dull and mournful; the damask curtains had faded and admitted but a gray light; the large bunches of flowers were withering on the dingy white of the carpet; the gilt frames of a few choice water-colors and sketches had slowly reddened under a relentless dust; a discouraged fire smoked and died out under its own ashes; the antique buhl clock, inlaid with brass and tortoise shell, withheld the noise of its tick-tack, and the voice of the dreary hours spoke low as one does in a sick-room; the doors closed silently, and the footfalls of rare visitors died away on the thick carpet; laughter ceased on penetrating these cold, sombre rooms, wherein modern luxury was omnipresent. Octave's servant, Jean, a duster under his arm, a tray in his hand, glided about like a shadow, for, unconsciously, affected by the surrounding gloom, he had ended by losing his natural loquacity. Trophies, such as boxing gloves, masks, and foils, hung on the walls, but it was easy to see that they had long been untouched; books were tossed carelessly about, as if Octave had tried to lull some fixed idea by mechanical reading. An unfinished letter, yellowed with age, seemed to have been waiting its conclusion for months, and spread itself out on the table in silent reproach. Though inhabited, the apartment appeared deserted. Life was absent, and on entering one encountered the chill which issues from a tomb. In this lugubrious dwelling, where no woman ever set her foot, Octave was more at his ease than elsewhere; the silence, the sadness, and the neglect suited him; the joyous tumult of life disgusted him, though he made frequent efforts to join in it; but as he returned from the masquerades, the balls, or the suppers to which his friends dragged him, gloomier than before, he struggled no longer against his mysterious pain, and let the days slip by with the indifference of a man who expects nothing from the morrow. As he had lost faith in the future he made no plans, and having tacitly sent in his resignation to life, he was awaiting its acceptance. Nevertheless, if you imagined him thin of face, with an earthy complexion, attenuated limbs, and a wasted appearance, you would be much mistaken ; a dark bruise under the eyelids, an orange shade around the orbits, a hollowing of the temples veined with blue, were alone observable. Yet his eyes were soulless, without trace of will, hope, or desire. This lifeless gaze in such a young face formed a strange contrast, and produced a more painful effect than the emaciated features and fevered expression of the ordinary invalid. Before his health was affected in this way Octave had been called a good-looking fellow, and he was so still ; thick, wavy black hair clustered in silky, lustrous masses at his temples ; his eyes were large, velvety, and deeply blue, fringed with curved lashes, and at times luminous with a liquid fire ; in repose, and when unanimated by passion, they had the serene look which the eyes of Orientals wear when, after smoking their nargileh, they take their *kief* at the café doors of Smyrna or Constantinople. His skin, always pale, had that southern tint of olive white which is most effective by gaslight; his hand was slender and delicate; his foot narrow and arched. He dressed well, without being in advance of the fashion or behind it, and knew perfectly how to set off his natural attractions to their best advantage. Though without the pretensions of an exquisite or a sportsman, had he been put up at the Jockey Club he would not have been blackballed.

How was it, then, that a man, young, handsome, rich, with every incentive to happiness, should be thus miserably consuming himself? The reader will imagine that Octave was blasé, that the novels of the day had filled his brain with morbid ideas, that he had no beliefs, that of his youth and fortune squandered in dissipation nothing remained to him but debts. All these suppositions would be erroneous. Octave had seen too little of dissipation to be tired of it: neither splenetic, romantic, atheistic, nor libertine, his life had been that of the average young man, a commingling of study and relaxation. In the morning, lectures at the Sorbonne claimed his attention, and in the evening, he might be seen stationed on the staircase of the Opéra watching the tide of beauty disperse. He was not known to take interest in either actress or duchess, and he spent his income without encroaching on the principal, — his lawyer respected him! In brief, he was of an equable temperament, incapable of jumping off a precipice, or setting a river on fire. The cause of his condition, which baffled the skill of the entire faculty, was so incredible in nineteenth century Paris that we must leave its narration to our hero.

As the ordinary scientists could make nothing of this strange illness (at the amphitheatres of anatomy a soul has yet to be dissected), an eccentric physician recently returned from India, and reputed to effect marvelous cures, was consulted as a last resource.

Octave, foreseeing a superior discernment capable of penetrating his secret, seemed to dread the doctor's visit, and it was only after repeated entreaties from his mother that he consented to receive M. Balthazar Cherbonneau. When the physician entered, Octave was stretched on a sofa; his head was propped up by a cushion, another supported his elbow, and a third covered his feet: wrapped in the soft and supple folds of a Turkish gown, he was reading, or rather holding, a book, for his eyes, though fixed on a page, saw nothing. His face was colorless, but, as has been hinted, showed no marked alteration. A superficial examination would not have disclosed dangerous symptoms in this young invalid, on whose table, instead of the pills, vials, potions, and other drugs usual in such cases, stood a box of cigars. Though slightly drawn, his clear-cut features had lost little of their natural charm, and but for his extreme debility and the irremediable despondency of his eye Octave would have appeared in a normal state of health.

In spite of his apathy Octave was struck by the physician's fantastic appearance. M. Balthazar Cherbonneau seemed as though he had escaped from one of Hoffmann's Tales, and was wandering about astounded at the reality of his own grotesqueness. His sunburnt face was overhung by an enormous skull, which loss of hair made appear even larger than it really was. The bald cranium, polished as ivory, had remained white, while the face, exposed to the rays of the sun, had taken on the color of old oak or a smoky portrait. Its cavities and projecting bones were thrown in such bold relief that their slight covering of wrinkled flesh resembled damp parchment stretched on a death's-head. The infrequent gray hairs which still lingered on the back of the head were gathered in three thin locks, — two drawn up over the ears, and the third, starting from the nape of the neck and ending abruptly at the beginning of the forehead, crowned this nut-cracker countenance, and evoked unconscious regrets for the ancient peruque or the modern wig. But the most extraordinary thing about him was his eyes. His face, wrinkled with age, calcinated by incandescent skies, worn with vigils, marked in lines more closely pressed than the pages of a book, with the wearisome fatigues of life and of study, was illuminated by two orbs of turquoise blue, inconceivably limpid, fresh, and youthful. Sunken in sombre sockets, whose concentric membranes and pink edges vaguely recalled the dilating and contracting pupils of an owl, they gleamed like two blue stars, and made one suspect that, aided by some witchery of the Brahmans, the physician had stolen the eyes of a child, and transplanted them to his own cadaverous visage. Octave's eyes were those of an octogenarian, but Cherbonneau's blazed with the fire of youth. He was dressed in the physician's ordinary garb, a suit of black with silk waistcoat of the same color, while his shirt-front was ornamented with a large diamond, the present of some rajah or nabob. But, as if suspended from a peg, his clothes hung on him in perpendicular folds, broken, when he was seated, into sharp angles by his limbs. India's devouring sun could hardly have been the only cause of the phenomenal emaciation which he exhibited. It may be that in view of some initiation he had undergone the prolonged fasts of the fakirs, and had been extended by the yogis between four glowing braziers on the skin of a gazelle. His attenuation, however, was not the outcome of debility. His fleshless knuckles moved noiselessly, as were they held together by strong ligaments stretched on the hands like the strings of a violin.

With a stiff movement of the elbows which resembled the folding of a yard-measure, the physician seated himself in the chair by the sofa to which Octave motioned him, betraying, as he did so, an inveterate habit of squatting on a mat. So placed, M. Cherbonneau's back was turned to the light which fell directly on the face of his patient, a situation most favorable to examination, and one usually chosen by observers more desirous of seeing than of being seen. Though the physician's face was hidden in shadow, and the top of his cranium, round and polished as a gigantic ostrich-egg, alone caught a ray of light, Octave discerned the scintillation of his singular blue pupils, which appeared endowed with the glimmer peculiar to phosphorescent bodies, and emitted a clear, sharp beam which penetrated the invalid's chest with the hot, pricking sensation which an emetic causes.

"Well, sir," said the physician after a moment's silence, during which he seemed to sum up the symptoms noted in his rapid inspection, "I see already that yours is not a case of every-day pathology. You have none of the well-known signs of catalogued maladies which the physician cures or aggravates ; and I shall not ask you for paper, or write from the codex a soothing prescription with a hieroglyphical signature for tail-piece, or trouble your servant to go to the corner drug-shop." Octave smiled faintly as if to thank M. Cherbonneau for sparing him useless and disagreeable remedies.

"But," resumed the physician, "do not rejoice too quickly ; because you have neither heart-disease, consumption, spinal complaint, softening of the brain, typhoid or nervous fever, it does not follow that you are in good health. Give me your hand."

Thinking M. Cherbonneau wished to count his pulse, and expecting to see him take out his watch for that purpose, Octave drew back the sleeve of his dressing-gown, and baring his wrist extended it mechanically. Into his yellow paw, of which the bony fingers resembled the claws of a crab, M. Cherbonneau took the young man's moist, veined hand, but instead of feeling with his thumb for that uneven pulsation which indicates that the machinery of man is out of order, he pressed and kneaded it as if to put himself in magnetic communication with his subject.

Though a skeptic in medicine, Octave could not restrain a sort of anxious emotion. The blood receded from his temples, and it seemed to him as if the physician's pressure was subtracting his very soul.

"My dear sir," M. Cherbonneau said, as he dropped Octave's hand, "your condition is far graver than you think; the old-fashioned treatments that are in vogue in Europe cannot aid you in the least. You have lost the will to live; insensibly, your soul is slipping from your body; yet there is no trace of hypochondria, lymphomania, nor yet of melancholy and suicidal preoccupation. No! There is nothing of that. Strange as it may appear, you might, did I not prevent you, succumb suddenly, without a single noticeable rupture internal or external. It is high time that I was summoned, for your spirit holds to your body merely by a thread; we will make a good strong knot of it, however." And therewith the doctor rubbed his hands blithesomely together, and smiled in a manner that sent the wrinkles eddying through the thousand lines of his weather-worn face.

"Monsieur Cherbonneau," Octave answered, "I do not know whether you will succeed, and as to that I care very little; but I must admit that you have gauged the cause of my mysterious affliction in the exactest and most penetrating manner. I feel as though I had become permeable, as though I were losing my ego as water runs through a sieve. I am melting away into the universal essence, and it is with difficulty that I distinguish my own identity from the surroundings into which it is being fused. Life, of which, as well as may be, I perform the daily pantomime to avoid grieving my relatives and friends, seems so far from me that there are moments when I feel as if I had already left this mortal sphere. Actuated by habitual motives whose mechanical impulse still lingers, I come and go, but without participating in my own actions. At the usual hours I seat myself at table, and appear to eat and drink; but the most highly seasoned dishes and the strongest wines have no flavor to me. The sunshine is pale as moonlight, and candle-flames are dark. I shiver in midsummer. Often an intense silence oppresses me, much as though my heart had ceased beating, and the wheelwork was clogged by some unknown cause. If the dead are sentient, my condition must resemble theirs."

"You have," replied the physician, "a chronic inability to live, an entirely moral disease, and one more frequent than is supposed. Thought is a force which can kill as surely as electricity or prussic acid, though the signs of its ravages cannot be grasped by the means of such analysis as is at the disposal of vulgar science. What sorrow has set its fangs in your heart? From what secretly ambitious height have you fallen crushed and broken? On what despair do you muse in your immobility? Is it the thirst for power which torments you? Have you voluntarily renounced an aim placed too high for human attainment? You are very young for that. May it be that a woman has betrayed you?"

"No, doctor," continued Octave; "I have not even enjoyed that happiness."

"And yet," continued M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, "in your dull eyes, in the listless attitude of your body, in the lifeless tones of your voice, I read, as plainly as if it were stamped in gold letters on a morocco binding, the title of one of Shakespeare's plays."

"And what is this play which I unconsciously translate?" asked Octave, whose curiosity was aroused in spite of himself.

"Love's Labor's Lost," continued the doctor, with a purity of accent which betrayed a long residence in the English colonies of India.

Octave did not answer; a slight blush reddened his cheeks, and to cover his embarrassment he toyed with the tassel of his girdle. The physician crossed one leg over the other, producing the effect of the crossbones carved on tombs, and clasped his foot in his hand in Oriental fashion. His blue eyes gazed into Octave's with a look at once soft and imperious.

"Come, come," said M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, "confide in me; souls are my specialty; you are my patient; and, like the Catholic priest to the penitent, I ask for a complete confession, and you can make it without kneeling."

"What good would it do? Supposing that you have divined correctly, the telling of my affliction would not relieve it. My sorrow is dumb. No earthly power, not even yours, can cure me."

"Perhaps," said the physician, settling himself more comfortably in his arm-chair, as if preparing to listen to a long confidence.

"I do not wish you," continued Octave, "to accuse me of a puerile obstinacy, nor to give you by my silence a pretext for washing your hands of my death; so, since you ask it, I will tell you my history: you have guessed the main point, I need not spare the details. Do not expect anything singular or romantic. It is a very simple adventure, very commonplace, very threadbare; but, as sings Henri Heine, whoso meets it finds it ever new, though the heart be broken every time. Really, I am ashamed to relate such an ordinary tale to a man who has lived in the most fabulous and chimerical countries."

"Do not fear," said the physician, smiling, "it is only the commonplace which can be extraordinary to me."

"Well, doctor, love is killing me."

II.

"Towards the end of the summer of 184– I found myself in Florence, at the best season for seeing that city. I had time, money, excellent letters of introduction, and I was a good-humored youth, only too ready to be amused. I installed myself on the Lung'-Arno, hired a trap, and drifted into that easy Florentine life which is so full of charm to the stranger. In the morning I visited some church, palace, or gallery, quite leisurely, without hurry, as I did not wish to give myself that indigestion of master-pieces which disgusts the too hasty tourist with art. One morning I examined the bronze doors of the Baptistery; another, the Perseus of Benvenuto under the Loggia dei Lanzi, the portrait of Fornarina, or Canova's Venus in the Pitti Palace, but never more than one object at a time. Then I breakfasted off a cup of iced coffee at the Café Doney, smoked a cigar or two, glanced at the papers, and, my bottonhole decorated, willingly or not, by one of the pretty flower-girls who in their huge straw hats stand before the café, I returned home for a siesta. At three o'clock the carriage came to take me to the Cascine. The Cascine is to Florence what the Bois de Boulogne is to Paris, with this difference, that every one is acquainted, and the square is an open-air drawing-room, where chairs are replaced by the half circle of carriages. The women, in full dress, recline on the cushions, and receive the visits of lovers, friends, exquisites, and attachés, who pose, hat in hand, at the carriage-steps. But you know all this as well as I. There plans for the evening are made, meetings are arranged, answers are given, invitations accepted; it is like a Pleasure Exchange open from three to five in the shade of beautiful trees, under the world's fairest sky. It is incumbent on every one of the least consequence to be seen there daily, and I was careful not to miss it. In the evening I made a visit or two, or if the prima donna was an attraction I went to the Pergola.

"In this way I spent one of the happiest months of my life; but my good fortune was not destined to last. One day a magnificent open carriage made its first appearance at the Cascine. It was one of Laurenzi's *chef-d'œuvres*, and a superb example of Viennese manufacture; glittering with varnish, and blazoned with an almost royal coat of arms, there was harnessed to it as handsome a pair of horses as ever paraded in Hyde Park, or drew up before Saint James' Palace during a drawing-room; added to this, it was driven à la Daumont in the correctest style by a youthful postilion in green livery and white knee-breeches. The brass on the harness, the boxes of the wheels, the door-handles, all shone like gold and sparkled in the sun; every eye followed this splendid equipage, which, after making a curve as regular as if traced by a compass, drew up near the other vehicles. The carriage, you may be sure, was not empty; but in the speed with which it passed nothing had been distinguished but the tip of a slipper extended on a cushion, a large fold of shawl, and the disk of a parasol fringed with white silk. The parasol was now closed, and a woman of incomparable beauty was revealed. Being on horseback, I was able to approach near enough to lose no detail of this poem in flesh. The fair stranger, with the assurance of a perfect blonde, wore a gown of that silvery Nile green which makes any woman whose skin is not irreproachable look as dark as that of a mole. A beautiful shawl of white crêpe de Chine, thick with embroidery of the same color, enveloped her like a Phidian statue in its clinging, rumpled drapery, while a bonnet of fine Florentine straw, covered with forget-me-nots and delicate aquatic plants of slender glaucous leaves, formed an aureole about her face. Her only ornament was a gold lizard studded with turquoises, which encircled the arm that held the parasol.

"Forgive me, doctor, this fashion-plate description. To a lover these trivialities are of enormous importance. Thick, rippling golden hair lay like undulations of light in luxuriant waves upon her brow, which itself was smooth and white as the new-fallen snow on the highest Alpine peak; long lashes, fine as the threads of gold radiating from the angel heads in the miniatures of the Middle Ages, veiled her eyes, whose pupils had the bluish-green light of a sun-pierced glacier. Her divinely modeled mouth glowed with the carmine of a sea-shell, and her cheeks resembled white roses flushed by the wooing of the nightingale or the kiss of the butterfly; no mortal brush could copy the suavity, the fairness, and the immaterial transparency of this complexion, of which the tints seemed hardly due to the blood which colors our coarser skins; the first blush of morn on the ridge of the Sierra Nevada, the rose-tipped petals of a camellia, Parian marble seen through a pink gauze veil, can alone give of it a vague idea. The creamy iridescence of the neck, visible between the shawl and the bonnet strings, gleamed with opalescent reflections. It was the Venetian coloring, and not the features, that arrested attention, though the latter were as clear cut and exquisite as the profile of an antique cameo. When I saw her, I forgot my past loves, as Romeo at sight of

Juliet forgot Rosalind. The pages of my heart became blank: every name, every memory, was obliterated. I wondered how the commonplace love affairs which few young men escape had ever had any attraction for me, and I reproached myself for them as if they had been culpable infidelities. A new life dated for me from this fatal encounter.

"Presently the carriage left the Cascine and took the road back to town. When the dazzling vision had vanished I brought my horse alongside that of an amiable young Russian, a great lover of watering places, a man who had frequented all the cosmopolitan drawing-rooms of Europe, and who was thoroughly conversant with the traveling contingent of high life; I turned the conversation on the fair stranger, and learned that she was known as the Countess Prascovie Labinska, a Lithuanian of illustrious birth and great fortune, whose husband had been fighting for two years in the Caucasian war.

"It is needless to tell you what diplomacy I used to be received by the countess, who, in view of her husband's absence, was necessarily circumspect in her receptions. At last, however, I was admitted; two dowager princesses and four aged baronesses answering for me on their ancient virtue.

"The Countess Labinska had taken, a mile or so from Florence, a magnificent villa, a former belonging of the Salviati family, and in a short space of time had filled the mediæval manor with every modern comfort without in the least disturbing its severe beauty and serious elegance. Heavy blazoned portières were in fit keeping with the vaulted arches from which they fell; the easy-chairs and other furniture of quaint and curious shapes harmonized with the sombre wainscoted walls and the frescoes dulled and faded to the hues of old tapestry; and through it all there was not a note that jarred. The present did not clash with the past. The countess was so naturally the châtelaine that the old palace seemed built as her appropriate setting.

"Fascinated as I had been by the countess' radiant beauty, at the end of several visits I was yet more charmed by her brilliant and subtle mind. When the conversation was of interest, her soul shone luminous in her eyes, the pallor of her cheek glowed with an inner flame as does a lamp of alabaster: the phosphorescent scintillations, the quivering of light of which Dante speaks in his description of the splendors of Paradise, were illustrated in her appearance, as who should say an angel thrown in bright relief against a sun. I stood bewildered, stupefied, and ecstatic. Lost in contemplation of her beauty, enchanted by the celestial tones of her voice, which made of every sentence ineffable music, I stammered, when obliged to speak, a few incoherent words, which must have given her a poor idea of my intelligence, and sometimes at certain phrases which denoted on my part either great embarrassment or incurable imbecility an imperceptible smile of friendly irony danced like a rose-colored ripple over her charming lips.

"Still I had not told my love, for in her presence I was without thought, strength, or courage; only my heart throbbed as would it break its bonds and fling itself at the knees of its sovereign. Twenty times I had determined to explain myself, but an insurmountable timidity restrained me; the least look of coldness or reserve from the countess threw me into a deathly trance comparable to that of the condemned who, bowed on the block, await the stroke of the axe that is to sever the head from the body. I was strangled by nervous contractions; I was bathed in an icy perspiration. I reddened, I grew pale, and without having dared to speak I came away, finding the door with difficulty, and staggering down the steps of the house like a drunkard. Once outside I came to my senses, and threw to the wind the most inflamed dithyrambs. I addressed to my absent idol a thousand declarations of an irresistible eloquence. In these mute apostrophes I equaled Love's greatest poets. The vertiginous perfume of the Orient, the poetry of Solomon's Song of Songs, hallucinated with hashish, the platonic subtleties and ethereal delicacy of Petrarch's sonnets, the nervous and delirious sensibility of Heine's 'Intermezzo,' could not compare with the exhaustless effusions of the soul in which my life wasted itself away. At the end of each monologue it seemed to me that the countess, vanquished, at last, must descend from the heavens to my heart, and frequently I clasped my arms to my bosom, thinking to enfold her in them.

"I was so completely possessed that I spent hours in murmuring like a litany of love the two words, — Prascovie Labinska; and in these syllables, dropped slowly like pearls, or repeated with the feverish volubility of a devotee exalted by prayer, I found an indefinable charm. Then again, I wrote the adored name on the finest parchment, illuminating it like a mediæval manuscript with flowered designs and traceries of azure and gold. In this work of pathetic minuteness and puerile perfection I passed the long hours which separated my visits to the countess. I could not read or otherwise occupy myself. Nothing but Prascovie interested me, and even my letters from France lay unopened. I made repeated efforts to overcome this condition; I tried to recall the axioms of seduction accepted by young men, the stratagems used by the Valmonts of the Café de Paris and the Don Juans of the Jockey Club; but to execute them my heart failed me, and I regretted that I had not, like Stendhal's Julien Sorel, a package of progressive epistles which I could copy and send to the countess. Unfortunately, I could only surrender myself, without the power to ask a return, without even a hope in the future; indeed, in my most audacious dreams I hardly dared touch with my lips the tips of Prascovie's rosy fingers. A fifteenth-century novice prostrate on the steps of an altar, a chevalier kneeling in his rigid armor, could not have had a more self-annihilating adoration for the Virgin."

M. Balthazar Cherbonneau had listened to Octave with profound attention; for to him the young man's story was not merely a tale of romance, and he murmured, during a pause in the narrative, as if to himself, "Yes, that is certainly a diagnostic of love, a curious malady which I have encountered but once, — at Chandernagore, — in a young Pariah in love with a Brahman; it killed her, poor girl, but she was a savage; you, M. Octave, you are a civilized being, and we will cure you." This parenthesis concluded, he motioned M. de Saville to continue; and, doubling back his leg to the thigh, like the articulated limb of a grasshopper, so as to support his chin on his knee, he settled himself in this position, impossible to any one else, but which to him appeared very restful.

"I do not want to bore you with the details of my secret martyrdom," resumed Octave; "I will hasten to a decisive scene. One day, unable to restrain my imperious desire to see the countess, I went to her before the hour at which she was accustomed to receive. The weather was heavy and overcast. Mme. Labinska was not in the salon. She was seated under a portico, which was supported by graceful columns, and opened on a terrace, from which one descended to the garden; she had had her piano, a wicker lounge, and a few chairs brought out, and jardinières filled with splendid flowers (nowhere are they so fresh and odorous as in Florence) stood between the columns, and impregnated with their perfume the infrequent breezes which came from the Apennines. In front, through the openings of the arcades, one could see the well-pruned yew and box trees, peopled with mythological statues in the labored style of Baccia Bandinelli or of Ammanato, and here and there a tall centenary cypress. In the dim distance rose the dome of Santa Maria del Fiore, and the square belfry of Palazza Vecchio jutted above the silhouette of the town.

"The countess was alone, and reclining

on her lounge; never had I thought her so beautiful; in indolent languor she lay like a water nymph, billowed in the foamy whiteness of an ample India-muslin gown that was bordered with a frothy trimming which resembled the silvery edge of a wave, and clasped at the throat by an exquisitely chased Khorassan brooch. In brief, her costume was as airy as the drapery which floats about the figure of Victory. Her arms, fairer than the alabaster in which Florentine sculptors copy antique statues, issued from wide sleeves open to the shoulder like pistils from a flower chalice; a broad black sash knotted at the waist with falling ends contrasted sharply with all this whiteness; but the melancholy effect which these shades ascribed to mourning might have given was enlivened by the point of a tiny Circassian slipper of blue morocco figured with yellow arabesques, which peeped from beneath her skirt.

"The countess' blonde hair, slightly raised as if by a passing zephyr, revealed her smooth forehead and transparent temples, and formed a nimbus, through which the light glittered in a shower of gold.

"On a chair near by, a large hat of rice straw, trimmed with long black ribbons, similar to those on her dress, fluttered in the breeze, and by it was a pair of unworn gloves of Swedish kid. On my arrival Prascovie closed the book she was reading, — the poems of Mickiewicz, — and gave me a kindly nod; she was alone, a circumstance as uncommon as it was favorable. I seated myself opposite her on the chair she designated, and for some minutes one of those silences fell upon us which are so painful if prolonged. None of the commonplaces of conversation came to my aid; my thoughts were confused, waves of flame rose from my heart to my eyes, and my passion cried, 'Do not lose this opportunity.'

"I do not know what I might have done if the countess, divining the cause of my emotion, had not partly risen, and extended her beautiful hand as though to close my mouth.

"'Not a word, Octave. You love me, I know, I feel, I believe it; nor does it anger me, for love is involuntary. Stricter women than I would be offended, but I pity you because I cannot return it, and it pains me to be the cause of your unhappiness. I regret that we should have met, and blame the whim which made me leave Venice for Florence. At first I hoped that my persistent coldness would weary and estrange you, but nothing rebuffs true love, of which I see all the signs in your eyes. Do not let my sympathy arouse in you either dreams or illusions; nor must you take it as an encouragement. An angel with diamond shield and flaming sword protects me more surely than religion, duty, or virtue against every seduction; and this angel is my love: I adore the Count Labinski. I have had the good fortune to make a love-match.'"

"A flood of tears burst from my eyes at this frank, loyal, yet modest avowal, and I felt the spring of life break within me.

"Prascovie rose in extreme agitation, and, with a motion of gracious feminine pity, pressed her delicate handkerchief to my eyes.

"'There, do not weep,' she said; 'I forbid it. Try to divert your thoughts; imagine that I have forever disappeared, that I am dead; forget me. Travel, work, do good; mingle actively in the tide of life; console yourself with art or love' . . . At this I interrupted her with a gesture.

"'Do you think,' she asked, 'you would suffer less in continuing to see me? If so, come. I will always receive you. God says we must pardon our enemies; why, then, should we ill-treat those who love us? Nevertheless, absence seems to me a more certain remedy. In two years we can shake hands without danger — for you,' she added, attempting a smile.

"The next day I left Florence; but neither study, travel, nor time has diminished my suffering. I am dying: do not prevent it, doctor!"

"Have you seen the countess since?" asked the physician, with an odd sparkle in his blue eyes.

"No," answered Octave, "but she is in Paris," and he extended a card on which was engraved :

The Countess Prascovie Labinska. And in a a corner, *Thursdays.*

III.

Among the infrequent passers who follow the Avenue Gabriel from the Turkish Embassy to the Elysée Bourbon, and prefer the silence, solitude, and fragrant calm of this avenue to the dusty whirl and noisy elegance of the Champs-Elysées, there are few who would not pause with mingled feelings of admiration and envy before a poetic and mysterious dwelling where for once felicity seemed to be lodged by wealth.

Who is there who has not halted at the railing of a park and gazed attentively through the green foliage at some white villa, and then passed on with heavy heart, as if the dream of his life lay hidden behind the walls? Then, again, other dwellings seen thus from the outside cause an indefinable melancholy. The gray gloom of desertion and despair has settled upon them and blighted the tops of the surrounding trees; the statues are moss-stained, the flowers droop, the water stagnates in the fountain; in spite of the rake, the paths are overrun with weeds, and if there are birds they are dumb.

The gardens on the Avenue Gabriel are separated from the sidewalk by a hedge, and extend in strips of varying size to the houses which face the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. The one alluded to ended at the street in an embankment supporting a wall of rocks chosen for the curious irregularity of their shape. The sides of this wall, being much higher than the centre, formed a rough, dark frame for the radiant landscape set between. The crevices of the rocks held soil enough to nourish the roots of rich plants and flowers, whose variegated verdure was thrown into relief against the sombre hue of the stone. No artist could have created a more effective foreground.

The walls that inclosed the sides of this miniature paradise disappeared under a curtain of climbing plants, of which the stalks, shoots, and tendrils formed a trellis of green. Thanks to this arrangement, the garden resembled an opening in a forest rather than a narrow grass-plot shut in the limits of civilization.

Just behind the rock-work stood several groups of slender trees, whose thick foliage contrasted picturesquely. Beyond them spread a plot of turf, without an uneven spear of grass. Finer, softer than the velvet of a queen's mantle, it was of that ideal green rarely obtained, except before the steps of a feudal English manor; a natural carpet on which the eye loves to rest, and the foot fears to crush; an emerald rug where, during the day, the pet gazelle frolics in the sun with the lace-frocked scion of an hundred earls, and where by moonlight a Titania of the West End glides hand in hand with an Oberon inscribed in the peerage. A path of sand, sifted through a sieve that no bit of shell or edge of flint should fret the aristocratic foot, circled like a yellow ribbon around this thick, smooth lawn, which, leveled by the roller, was moistened even in the dryest days of summer with the artificial rain of the sprinkler. At the end of the grass-plot blazed a bed of geraniums, a display of flowery fireworks, whose scarlet stars flamed against a dark mass of heath.

The charming façade of the house closed the perspective. Slim Ionic pillars, and a classical roof surmounted at each corner by graceful marble statues, gave it the appearance of a Greek temple transported by the fancy of a millionnaire, and subdued, by a suggestion of art and poetry, all that might otherwise have seemed ostentatious luxury; between the pillars awnings slashed with crimson were usually lowered, shading and defining the windows which opened, at full length, like glass doors, under the portico.

When the capricious sky of Paris deigned to stretch a bit of blue behind this dainty palace it looked so lovely in its thicket of verdure that it might easily have been taken for the abode of a fairy queen, or for one of Baron's pictures enlarged.

Extending into the garden from each side of the house were two conservatories, whose crystal panes, set in gilt, sparkled in the sun, and gave to a world of the rarest exotic plants the illusion of their native air.

A matutinal poet strolling in the Avenue Gabriel at dawn would have heard the nightingale trilling the last notes of his nocturne, and seen the blackbird in his yellow slippers quite at home in the garden walks. At night, in the silence of the sleeping city, when the roll of carriages returning from the Opéra has ceased, the same poet might have dimly distinguished a white-robed form clinging to the arm of a young and handsome man, and he would certainly have returned to his solitary attic sad and depressed.

The reader, doubtless, divines that here lived the Countess Prascovie Labinska and her husband. Count Olaf Labinski had returned from the Caucasian war after a glorious campaign, in which, if he had not fought face to face with the mystical and intangible Schamyl, at least he had attacked the most devout and fanatic Mourides of the illustrious Sheik. He avoided bullets, as only the brave can, by rushing to meet them, and the curved scimiters of the warlike barbarians had broken on his chest without so much as scratching him. Courage is a flawless cuirass. The Count Labinski possessed the mad valor of the Slav races, who love danger for its own sake, and to whom can be applied the refrain of an old Scandinavian song: "They kill, die, and laugh!"

The rapture with which husband and wife, to whom marriage was a passion sanctioned by God and man, were reunited could only be described by Thomas Moore in the style of the "Loves of the Angels"! To portray it, each drop of ink would have to be transformed to a drop of light, and each word evaporate on the paper with the flame and the perfume of a grain of incense. What picture is possible of souls melted in one like two dew-drops which, dissolving on a lily petal, meet, blend, absorb one another, and form but a single gem?

Happiness is so rare in this world that man has not thought to invent words to depict it, while on the other hand the vocabulary of suffering, moral and physical, fills innumerable columns in the dictionaries of all languages.

Lovers, even in childhood, the hearts of Olaf and Prascovie had never throbbed to other names. In fact, knowing almost from the cradle that they were destined for each other, the rest of the world was but landscape to them. One might have said that they were the twin halves of Plato's Androgyne, which, seeking each other since the primeval divorce, were at last united and joined together. In short, they formed that duality in unity which is known as perfect harmony; and, side by side, they marched, or rather sped, through life with an equal impulse, sustained and impelled, as Dante has it, "like two doves beckoned by the same desire."

That nothing might disturb this felicity, a colossal fortune enveloped it in an atmosphere of gold. When this radiant couple appeared, Misery, consoled, shed its rags, and dried its tears; for Olaf and Prascovie had the noble egotism of happiness, and could not endure affliction amid their own delight.

Since polytheism has disappeared, and with it the young gods, the smiling genii, the celestial youths whose forms were absolute in perfection, harmonious in rhythm, and perfect in idealism, and since ancient Greece no longer chants the hymn to beauty in Parian strophes, man has cruelly abused his permission to be ill-favored. Although fashioned in God's image, he is but a poor likeness of him.

The Count Labinski, however, had not profited by this license. His face was an elongated oval; his nose was clearly and boldly cut; his mouth firmly outlined and accentuated by a pointed blonde mustache; his chin, cleft by a dimple, was ever raised; while his black eyes, through a striking and pleasing singularity, caused him to look like one of the warrior angels, St. Michael or Raphael, who, mailed in gold, combated the devil. In fact, he would have been too handsome were it not for the virile light which shone from the dark iris of his eyes, and the shade of bronze that the sun of Asia had spread over his features.

The count was of middle height, slight, graceful, nervous, concealing, beneath an apparent delicacy, muscles of steel. When for some embassy ball he donned a magnate's costume, that was embossed with gold, glittered with diamonds, and embroidered with pearls, he passed through the throng like a shining apparition, exciting the jealousy of the men and the admiration of the women, to whom, be it said, Prascovie rendered him indifferent. We need not add that the count was as intelligent as he was handsome; the good fairies had visited his cradle, and the evil witch who spoils everything was in a good humor that day.

It is easy to understand that with such a rival Octave de Saville stood a poor chance, and also, that he was sensible in allowing himself to expire quietly on the cushions of his sofa, and that, too, despite the hope with which the fantastic physician, Balthazar Cherbonneau attempted to revivify his heart. The only way was to forget Prascovie, and that was impossible. To see her was evidently useless. Octave felt that the countess' resolution would never weaken in its gentle implacability and compassionate coldness. He was afraid that in the presence of his innocent and beloved assassin his wounds might reopen and bleed, and he did not wish to accuse her.

IV.

Two years had passed since the day when the Countess Labinska had prevented Octave from making the declaration of love to which she had no right to listen. Awakened from his dream, Octave had taken his departure a prey to the blackest despair, and had not since communicated with her. The one word he would have wished to write was forbidden. Surprised at his silence, the countess' thoughts had frequently and sorrowfully turned to her unfortunate admirer: had he forgotten her? The simplicity of her nature made her hope that he had, without being able to believe that he had really done so, for the light of inextinguishable passion which blazed in Octave's eyes was not of a character to be misinterpreted. Love and the gods are recognized at first sight. The limpid azure of her content was slightly clouded by this knowledge, and it inspired her with the tender melancholy of the angels who, in heaven, have yet a thought for earth. Her gentle spirit suffered that she should be the cause of pain; but what can the golden star shining on high do for the obscure shepherd holding up his mortal arms. In mythological times it is true Diana descended in silvery rays upon the sleeping Endymion, but then Diana was not married to a Polish count.

The Countess Labinska, upon her arrival in Paris, had sent Octave the commonplace invitation which Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau was twirling abstractedly between his fingers. Though she had wished him to come and see her, yet when he failed to do so she said to herself with a feeling of involuntary joy, "He loves me still!" She was a woman of angelic purity, and chaste as the uppermost snow of the Himalayas; but God himself in the depth of the infinite has to distract him from the monotony of eternity only the pleasure of hearing the beating heart of some poor, perishable creature on a puny globe that is itself lost in the immensities of space. Prascovie was not sterner than God, and Count Olaf could not have censured this delicate voluptuousness of the soul.

"Your story, to which I have listened attentively," said the physician to Octave, "proves to me that all hope on your part would be chimerical. The countess will never share your love."

"You see, Monsieur Cherbonneau, that I was right in not trying to retain my ebbing life."

"I said," the physician continued, "that ordinary remedies were useless. But, in lands which the stupidity of civilization regards as barbarous there are occult powers, of which contemporary science is absolutely ignorant. In those lands primitive man in his first contact with the vivifying forces of nature acquired a knowledge which is believed to have since been lost, a knowledge which the migrating tribes, the founders of races, were unable to preserve. This knowledge, handed down from initiate to initiate in the dumb recesses of temples, was subsequently confided to hieroglyphics paneled across the walls of the Elloran crypt in sacred idioms, unintelligible to the vulgar. But on the summit of Meru, — the cradle of the Ganges, at the foot of the marble stairs of the holy city of Benares, in depths of the ruined pagodas of Ceylon, aged Brahmans are to be seen deciphering forgotten manuscripts, yogis, who, unconscious of the birds that nest in their hair, pass their lives in repeating the ineffable syllable Om, and fakirs whose shoulders still bear the cicatrices of the Juggernaut's iron stamp. These are the ultimate depositaries of the lost arcana, and it is they who, when they so deign, are able with their esoteric lore to produce the most marvelous effects.

"The materialism of Europe has not the faintest conception of the spirituality which the Hindus have reached: the protracted fasts, the self absorption, the impossible attitudes maintained for years together, attenuate their bodies to such an extent that to see them crouched beneath a molten sun, between glowing braziers, their long nails buried in the palms of their hands, one might fancy they were Egyptian mummies withdrawn from their tombs, and bent double in apelike positions. Their mortal envelope is but a chrysalis, which the immortal butterfly, the soul, can abandon or resume at will. While their meagre form, inert and hideous, lies like a night moth surprised by the dawn, their untrammeled spirit rises on the wings of hallucination through incalculable distances to the spheres of the supernatural. They are visited by dreams and visions; from one ecstasy to another they follow the undulations that the ages make as they sink and subside in the oceans of eternity. To them the infinite delivers up its secrets; they assist at the creation of worlds, at the genesis and metamorphosis of gods; they recall the sciences that have been engulfed in plutonian and diluvian cataclysms, the unremembered relations of man and of nature. When in this condition they mumble words that no child of earth has lisped for æons; they intercept the primordial tongue, the Logos which made light spring from the archaic shadows. They are regarded as madmen; they are almost gods!"

This singular preamble aroused Octave's attention to the last degree. He was unable to understand what connection there could be between his love for the countess and the mummeries of the Hindus, and, in consequence, his eyes bristled with interrogation points. His state of mind was divined by the physician who, waving aside his questions with a gesture as who should say, Be patient, you will see in a moment that I am not digressing, continued as follows: —

"Outwearied of questioning, scalpel in hand, the dumb corpses in the amphitheatres, corpses that disclosed but death to me who sought life, I formed the project, — and one, be it said, as audacious as that of Prometheus who scaled the heavens to rob them of fire, — I formed the project of intercepting and surprising the soul, of analyzing and dissecting it, if I may so express myself. I passed over the effect; I looked for the cause; and therewith conceived an immense disdain for the self-evident nothingness of materialism.

"To work over a fortuitous combination of evanescent molecules seemed to me worthy only of a vulgar empiric. I attempted to undo with magnetism the bands that join mind and matter. In experiments that were certainly prodigious, but which failed to satisfy me, I surpassed Mesmer, Deslon, Maxwell, Puységur, and Deleuze: Catalepsy, somnambulism, clairvoyance, soul projection, in fact, all the effects which are incomprehensible to the masses, though simple enough to me, I produced at will. Nay, I did more; from the ecstasies of Cardan and St. Thomas of Aquinas I ascended to the self-abstraction of the Pythians; I penetrated the mysteries of the Greeks; the arcana of the Hebrews; I pierced the innermost wisdom of Trophonius and Æsculapius, and therewithal, I found in their now traditional miracles that by a gesture, a word, a glance, by mere volition or some other unknown agent, the soul would shrink or expand. One by one I repeated all the miracles of

Apollonius of Tyana. Yet still my ambition was unfulfilled; the soul escaped me; I could feel it, hear it, act upon it, but between it and myself there was a veil of flesh that I could not draw aside. Did I do so, the soul had vanished. I was like the bird-catcher who holds a bird beneath a net which he dare not raise lest his winged prey shall mount the sky and escape him.

"I went, therefore, to India. In that land of archaic wisdom I hoped to find the solution of the riddle. I learned Sanskrit and Prakrit, the idioms of the erudite, and the language of the people. I enabled myself to converse with Pundits and Brahmans. I crossed the tiger-haunted jungles. I skirted the sacred lakes possessed of crocodiles. I forced my way through impenetrable forests, scattering the bats and monkeys before my path, and at times, in a byway made by savage beasts, I halted abruptly face to face with an elephant. And all this to reach the hut of some far-famed yogi, one in communication with the Mahatmas; and near him I would sit for days sharing his gazelle skin, and noting the vague incantations that fell from his black, cracked lips. In this manner I caught the all-powerful words, the evoking formulas, the syllables of the creating Logos.

"In the interior recesses of pagodas that no eye save that of the initiate has seen, but which the garb of a Brahman permitted me to penetrate, I studied the symbolic sculptures. I read many of the cosmological mysteries, many of the legends of lost civilizations. I discovered the meaning of the emblems that the hybrid gods, profuse as Indian vegetation, clutch in their multiple hands. I meditated over Brahma's circle, Vishnu's lotus, the cobra de capello of the blue god Siro. Ganesa unrolling her pachyderm trunk, and winking her small eyes fringed with long lashes, seemed to smile at my efforts and encourage my researches. Each one of these monstrous figures appeared to whisper in their language of stone: 'We are but forms; it is the Spirit that stirs.'

"A priest of the Temple of Tirunamalay, to whom I disclosed my intentions, told me of a yogi who dwelt in one of the grottoes of the isle of Elephanta, and who had reached the highest degree of sanctity. I found him propped against the wall of the cavern. Robed in sackcloth, his knees drawn up to his chin, his fingers clasped around his legs, he crouched there motionless. His upturned pupils left visible only the whites of his eyes; his drawn lips exposed his teeth; his skin clung to his cheekbones; his hair, thrown back, hung in stiff locks like overhanging plants; his beard, divided in two floods, nearly touched the ground; and his nails curved inward like an eagle's claw.

"His skin, naturally brown, had been dried and darkened by the sun till it resembled basalt, and, thus seated, he looked, both in form and color, like a Canopic vase. At first I thought him dead. His arms, that were anchylosed in a cataleptic immobility, I shook in vain; in his ear I shouted the most powerful of the sacramental words which were to reveal me to him as initiate, but he heeded them not, nor did his eyelids quiver. In my despair of arousing him I was about to leave him, when suddenly I heard a singular rustle; swift as a lightning flash a bluish spark passed before my eyes, hovered for a second on the half-open lips of the penitent, and disappeared.

"Brahma-Logum (such was the name of this holy personage) seemed to awake from a lethargy; he opened his eyes, gazed at me in a natural manner, and answered my questions. 'Your wish is fulfilled,' he said; 'you have seen a soul. I have succeeded in freeing mine from my body whenever it so pleases me; it goes and returns like a luminous bee, perceptible only to the eyes of the adept. I have fasted, I have prayed, I have meditated so long, I have dominated the flesh so rigorously, that I have been able to loose the terrestrial bonds. Vishnu, the god of the tenfold incarnations, has revealed to me the mysterious syllable that guides the soul in its avatars. If, after making the consecrated gestures, I were to pronounce that word, your soul would fly away and animate whatever man or beast I might designate. I bequeath you this secret, which of the whole world I am now the sole possessor. I am glad you have come, for I long to disappear in the bosom of the Increate as does the drop of water that falls in the sea.' And therewith the penitent whispered in a voice as feeble as the last gasp of the moribund, but very distinctly, a few syllables which made a shudder, such as that which Job has mentioned, run down my back."

"Doctor," cried Octave, "what do you mean? I dare not fathom the awful profundities of your thought."

"I mean," M. Balthazar Cherbonneau tranquilly replied, "that I have not forgotten my friend Brahma-Logum's magic formula, and that the Countess Prascovie will be clever indeed if she recognizes the soul of Octave de Saville in the body of Olaf Labinski."

V.

Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's reputation as physician and wonder-worker had begun to be noised through Paris. His eccentricities, affected or natural, had made him the fashion.

But far from seeking to form what is called a practice, he rebuffed his patients by shutting the door in their faces, giving strange prescriptions, or ordering impossible regimens. The cases that he accepted were those that were hopeless ; a vulgar consumption, a humdrum enterite, or a commonplace typhoid he disdainfully dismissed to the care of his brother practitioners. But on supreme occasions the cures he effected were simply inconceivable. Standing at the bedside, he made magic gestures over a glass of water, and bodies already stiff and cold, prepared even for the coffin, after imbibing a few drops of the liquid recovered the flexibility of life, the colors of health, and sitting up again gazed about them with eyes that had become accustomed to the shadows of the tomb. In consequence, he was known as the resurrectionist, the physician of the dead. But it was not always that he consented to use his powers, and he often refused enormous sums from wealthy invalids. To decide him to undertake a struggle with destruction, he must needs be touched by the grief of some mother imploring the restoration of her only child ; by the despair of some lover whose beloved was at the door of death; or else it was necessary for him to consider the patient as one whose life was valuable to poetry, science, or the progress of humanity. In this way he saved a delicious baby that was being throttled by croup's iron fingers, a charming maiden in the last stages of consumption, a poet in delirium tremens, an inventor attacked by cerebral congestion, and whose discovery would otherwise have been buried with him.

Elsewhere he declined to intervene, alleging that nature should not be interfered with, that certain deaths were necessary, and that in preventing them there was a risk of disturbing something in the order that is universal. You can see, therefore, that M. Balthazar Cherbonneau was the most paradoxical of physicians, and that he had brought with him from India a complete outfit of vagaries. His fame as a magnetizer was, however, even greater than his fame as a physician. In the presence of a select company he had given a séance or two, of which the marvels that were related disturbed every preconceived idea of the possible and the impossible and surpassed the prodigies of Cagliostro.

Dr. Cherbonneau lived on the ground floor of an old mansion in the Rue du Regard. The apartment which he occupied was strung out in the manner peculiar to former times. The high windows opened on a garden that was planted with great black-trunked trees topped with vibrant green. Although it was summer, powerful furnaces puffed from their brazen-grated mouths blasts of hot air that maintained throughout the vast chambers a temperature that exceeded a hundred degrees Fahrenheit, for the physician, accustomed to the incendiary climate of India, shivered beneath our pale sun very much as did that traveler who, returning from the equatorial sources of the Blue Nile, shook with cold in Cairo ; as a consequence, Dr. Cherbonneau never left his house save in a closed carriage, and on such occasions he wrapped himself in a coat of Siberian fox, and rested his feet on a foot-warmer filled with boiling water.

His rooms were furnished with low couches covered with stuffs from Malabar, inworked with chimerical elephants and fabulous birds ; there were detachable stands, colored and gilded by the Ceylonese with naif barbarity ; there were Japanese vases filled with exotic flowers ; and on the floor from one end of the apartment to the other was spread one of those funereal carpets sprigged in black and white that the Thugs weave for punishment in prison, and of which the woof seems woven of the hemp from the ropes with which they strangle their victims. And therewith, in the corners, were a few Hindu idols of marble and bronze, the eyes long and almond-shaped, the nose hooped with rings, the lips thick and smiling, necklaced with pearls that descended to the waist, singular and mysterious in their attributes, the legs crossed on supporting pedestals. On the walls hung water-color miniatures by some Calcutta or Lucknow artist representing the Avatars which Vishnu has accomplished: his incarnation in a fish, in a tortoise, in a pig, in a lion with the head of man, in a Brahman dwarf, in Rama, in a hero combating the thousand-armed giant Cartasuciriargunen; in Krishna, the miraculous child in whom the dreamers see a Hindu Christ; in Buddha, adorer of the great god Mahadeva; and lastly, representing him asleep in the Milky Way on the five-headed serpent coiled in the form of a supporting dais, and there awaiting the hour when for final incarnation he shall assume the form of that winged white horse which in dropping its hoof upon the universe shall cause the world to cease to be.

In the last room, heated to an even greater degree than the others, M. Balthazar Cherbonneau was seated surrounded by Sanskrit volumes. In these volumes the letters had been made with a stylus on thin tablets of wood, which latter were pierced and strung together on a cord in a way which more closely resembled Venetian blinds than books, at least as European libraries understand them.

In the centre of the room an electric machine, its bottles filled with gold leaf and its glass plates revolved by cranks, raised its complicated and disquieting silhouette beside a mesmeric bucket spiked with numberless iron rods, and in which was plunged a metal lance. M. Cherbonneau was anything but a charlatan, and did not need a stage setting ; but, nevertheless, it was difficult to enter this weird retreat without experiencing a little of the impression which, in olden times, the alchemic laboratories must have caused.

Count Olaf Labinski had heard of the miracles realized by the physician, and his half-credulous curiosity had been aroused. The Slav races have a natural leaning towards the marvelous, which the most careful education does not always correct, and, besides, witnesses worthy of belief who had assisted at these séances told things of them which could not be credited until seen, no matter how much confidence one had in the narrator. The count went, therefore, to call on the thaumaturgist.

When he entered Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's apartment he felt as if surrounded by imperceptible flames ; the blood rushed to his head and seethed in the veins of his temples. He was suffocated by the excessive heat, and the lamps burning with aromatic oils, the huge Java flowers swaying their chalices like censers, intoxicated him with their vertiginous emanations and their asphyxiating perfumes. He staggered a few steps towards M. Cherbonneau, who was squatting on his divan in one of those strange fakir-like postures with which Prince Soltikoff has so picturesquely illustrated his book of Indian travels. One might have said, on seeing the angles formed by his joints beneath the folds of his garments, he was a human spider wrapped in his web, and crouching immovable before his prey. At sight of the count his turquoise pupils lighted up in their orbits, as yellow as the bistre of the liverwort, with a phosphorescent gleam, which as quickly died away, as if covered by a voluntary film.

Understanding Olaf's discomfort, the physician extended his hand towards him, and with two or three passes surrounded him with an atmosphere of spring, creating for him a cool paradise out of infernal heat.

"Do you feel better now?" he asked. "Your lungs, accustomed to the Baltic breezes, still icy from their contact with the perpetual snows of the pole, must pant like the bellows of a forge in this scorching air where, nevertheless, I shiver, I, baked, tempered, and, so to speak, calcinated in the furnaces of the sun."

Count Labinski made a sign to show that he no longer suffered from the high temperature of the apartment.

The physician continued in a good-humored tone, —

"Well, you have heard my tricks of legerdemain spoken of, and you want a sample of my skill. Oh, I am cleverer than Comus, Comte, or Bosco."

"My curiosity is not so frivolous," replied the count, "and I have too much respect for one of the princes of science."

"I am not an erudite in the acceptation given to the word; but, on the other hand, in studying certain subjects disdained by science I have mastered some unemployed occult forces, and I produce effects which appear miraculous, though they are perfectly natural. By watching for it, I have sometimes surprised the soul; it has made me confidences by which I have profited, and repeated words which I have retained. The spirit is everything; matter exists only in appearance. The universe is, perhaps, but a dream of God, or an irradiation of the Logos in space. I rumple at will the garment of the body; I stop or quicken life, I remove the senses, I do away with distance; I rout pain without chloroform, ether, or other anæsthetic drug. Armed with the force of my will, that electricity of the intellect, I vivify or I annihilate. Nothing is opaque to my eyes; my gaze pierces everything; I discern the radiations of thought; and I can make them pass through my invisible prism and reflect themselves on the white curtain of my brain as the solar spectrums are projected on a screen. But all that is trifling beside the prodigies accomplished by certain yogis of India who have arrived at the sublimest height of asceticism. We Europeans are too superficial, too inattentive; too matter of fact, too much in love with our clay-prison, to open windows on the eternal and the infinite. Nevertheless, as you shall judge, I have obtained a few rather strange results."

Whereupon Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau slid back on a rod the rings of a heavy portière which concealed a sort of alcove situate at the end of the room. By the light of an alcohol flame, which flickered on a bronze tripod, Count Olaf Labinski saw a spectacle, at which, notwithstanding his courage, he shuddered. On a black marble table was a young man, naked to the waist, and immobile as a corpse. Not a drop of blood flowed from his body, which bristled with arrows like that of St. Sebastian. He might have been taken for the colored print of a martyr in which the vermilion tinting of the wounds had been forgotten.

"This eccentric physician," Olaf said to himself, "is perhaps a worshiper of Siva, and has sacrificed a victim to his god."

"Oh, he does not suffer at all; prick him without fear; not a muscle of his face will move," said the physician, drawing the arrows from the body as one takes pins from a cushion.

A few rapid motions of the hands released the patient from the web of emanations which imprisoned him, and he awoke, with an ecstatic smile on his lips, as if from a happy dream. M. Cherbonneau dismissed him with a gesture, and he withdrew by a small door cut in the woodwork with which the alcove was lined.

"I could have cut off a leg or an arm without his perceiving it," said the physician, moving his wrinkles by way of a smile; "I did not do it because as yet I cannot create, and man, in that respect inferior to the lizard, has not a sap sufficiently powerful to remake the members cut from him. But if I do not create, I at least rejuvenate." He raised a veil which covered an aged woman who, lost in a magnetic slumber, was seated in an arm-chair near the marble table. Her features, which might once have been beautiful, were withered, and the ravages of time could be read in the emaciated outlines of her arms, shoulders, and bust. The physician fixed his blue eyes on her with obstinate intensity for several minutes. Gradually the tremulous lines strengthened, the contour of the bust recovered its virginal purity, smooth white flesh filled the hollows of the throat, the cheeks rounded into the peach-like bloom and freshness of youth, the eyes opened sparkling in liquid vivacity, and the mask of age, lifted as by magic, disclosed a lovely young woman.

"Do you think the Fountain of Youth has somewhere poured forth its miraculous waters?" asked the physician of the count, who stood stupefied by this transformation. "I, at least, believe so, for man invents nothing, and each one of his dreams is a divination or a memory. But let us leave this figure, remodeled for an instant by my will, and consult the young girl tranquilly sleeping in this corner. Question her; she knows more than sages and sibyls. You can send her to one of your seven castles in Bohemia, and ask her what your most secret casket incloses; she will tell you, for it needs but a second for her soul to make the journey, which is not so surprising, after all, since electricity travels seventy thousand leagues in that space of time, and electricity is to thought what the cab is to the train. Give her your hand to put yourself in communication with her; you will not have to formulate your question, she will read it in your mind."

The young girl replied to the mental interrogation of the count in a voice as lifeless as that of a spectre.

"In the cedar casket there is a bit of clay on which can be seen the impress of a small foot."

"Has she guessed correctly?" asked the physician negligently, as though quite sure of the infallibility of his somnambulist.

The count's cheeks grew crimson. In the earliest days of his love he had taken the imprint of one of Prascovie's footsteps from an alley in a park, and he kept it, like a relic, in a box of the most costly workmanship inlaid with silver and enamel, whose microscopic key he wore hung at his neck on a Venetian chain.

M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, who was a well-bred man, seeing the count's embarrassment, did not insist, but led him to a table, on which was set some water that was crystal in its clarity.

"You have, of course, heard of the magic mirror in which Mephistopheles showed Faust the image of Helen; now, without having a hoof in my silk stocking or plumes in my hat, I am none the less able to entertain you with this innocent phenomenon. Lean over this bowl and think intently of the person you wish to see; living or dead, far or near, she will come at your call from the end of the world or the depths of history."

The count bent over the bowl. Soon the water grew troubled and took on opalescent tints, as if a drop of essence had been poured into it, and a rainbow-hued ring encircled the edge of the dish framing the picture which already sketched itself beneath the creamy cloud.

The mist faded. Through the now transparent water a young woman was revealed. Her loose gown was of lace, her eyes sea green, her hair wavy and golden. Over the ivory keys of a piano her lovely hands strayed like white butterflies. The picture was so marvelous in its perfection that at sight of it artists might have died of despair. It was Prascovie Labinska, who, unconsciously, obeyed the passionate invocation of the count.

"And now let us pass to something more curious," said the physician, grasping the count's hand and placing it on one of the rods belonging to the mesmeric bucket. Olaf had no sooner touched the metal charged with an overpowering magnetism than he fell stunned to the floor.

Taking him in his arms, the physician lifted him up, laid him on the divan, rang, and said to the servant who appeared at the door, —

"Go find M. Octave de Saville."

VI.

In a little while the wheels of a carriage resounded in the silent courtyard of the hotel, and almost simultaneously Octave was announced. When M. Cherbonneau showed him the Count Olaf Labinski stretched on a sofa, apparently lifeless, he was stupefied. At first he thought murder had been committed, and was struck dumb with horror; but, on a closer examination, he noticed that the chest of the sleeper rose and fell with an almost imperceptible respiration.

"There," said the physician, "there is your disguise already prepared. It is a little more difficult to put on than a domino; but Romeo, in climbing to the balcony at Verona, did not worry at the danger he ran of breaking his neck. He knew that Juliet awaited him in the silence of the night. The Countess Prascovie Labinska is well worth the daughter of the Capulets."

Perplexed by the weirdness of the situation, Octave did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the count, whose head slightly thrown back on a cushion gave him the appearance of one of those effigies of knights which, with their stiff necks resting on a carved marble pillow, lie above their tombs in Gothic cloisters. In spite of himself, this chivalrous figure, of which he was to take possession, smote him with remorse.

The physician mistook Octave's perplexity for hesitation. A vaguely disdainful smile flitted across his lips, and he said, —

"If you are not decided I can awaken the count, who will depart as he came, astonished at my magnetic power. But, think it over; such a chance may never repeat itself. Still, however great my interest in your love may be, however much I desire to make an experiment which has never been attempted in Europe, I dare not hide from you that this exchange of souls is perilous. Question your heart. Will you risk your life in this supreme attempt? The Bible says Love is as strong as death."

"I am ready," Octave replied simply.

"Very good," cried the doctor, rubbing his shrunken, brown hands together with an extraordinary rapidity, as if he wished to strike fire in the manner of savages. "A passion which recoils at nothing pleases me. There are but two things in this world—passion and will. If you are not happy it will not be my fault. Ah, Brahma-Logum, from the depths of the sky of Indra, where the Apsaras surround you with their voluptuous choirs, you shall see if I have forgotten the irresistible formula which you gasped in my ear on abandoning your petrified carcass. Word and gestures, I have retained them all. To work! to work! We shall make in our caldron as strange a mess as the witches of Macbeth, without, however, the sorcery of the North. Take this arm-chair in front of me, and give yourself confidently into my power. Good! eye to eye, hand to hand. Already the charm works. The sense of time and space is lost, consciousness fades, the eyelids fall. The muscles, no longer commanded by the brain, relax; the mind is lulled, and all the delicate threads which hold the soul to the body are untied. Brahma in the golden egg, where he dreamed for ten thousand years, was not farther from external things. Now inundate him with electric currents. bathe him in psychic emanations."

While muttering these disjointed sentences, the physician did not for an instant discontinue his passes. Luminous rays flew from his distended hands and struck his patient on the brow and heart, while around him there gathered slowly a sort of visible atmosphere, phosphorescent like an aureole.

"That is perfect!" exclaimed M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, applauding himself for his success. "Now he is as I want him. But there," he cried, after a pause, as if he read through Octave's skull the last effort of his vanishing personality, "what is it that still resists? What is that mutinous idea which, driven from the circumvolutions of the brain, tries to escape my influence by crouching on the primal monad, in the sphericity of life? But I know how to reach and curb it."

To master this unconscious opposition the physician recharged the magnetic battery of his gaze, and caught the rebel thought between the base of the brain and the insertion of the spinal marrow, the most secret sanctuary, the most mysterious tabernacle of the soul. His triumph was complete.

He next prepared himself with a majestic solemnity for the surprising experiment he was to attempt. Robing himself in a linen gown like a Magi, he washed his hands in perfumed water. He took from different boxes powders, and smeared his brow and cheeks with hierarchic designs. He encircled his arm with the Brahman cord, and read two or three Slokas of the sacred poems, omitting none of the minute rites recommended by the Mahatmas of the isles of Elephanta.

These ceremonies terminated, he threw the doors of the furnaces wide open, and soon the room was filled with an incandescent atmosphere, which would have made tigers swoon in the jungle, cracked the cuirass of mud on the hides of buffaloes, and exploded aloes into bloom.

"The two sparks of divine fire which will now find themselves nude and divested for several seconds of their mortal envelope must not pale or waver in our icy air," said the physician, examining the thermometer, which marked 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Between the inert bodies Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, garmented in white, looked like a priest of one of those sanguinary religions which throw the corpses of men on the altars of their gods. Indeed, he recalled that pontiff of Vitziliputzili, of whom Heine speaks in a ballad, though his intentions were necessarily more pacific.

Presently he approached the motionless count and pronounced the ineffable syllable, which he hastened to repeat to Octave, who lay in a profound slumber. M. Balthazar Cherbonneau's face, which under ordinary circumstances was simply fantastic, now assumed a singular majesty. The extent of the power which he wielded ennobled his irregular features, and if any one had witnessed the sacerdotal gravity with which he accomplished these mysterious rites he would not have recognized in him the Hoffmannesque physician who suggested, while defying the pencil of the caricaturist.

Strange things then came to pass: Octave de Saville and Count Olaf Labinski appeared to be simultaneously agitated by a convulsion of agony; their faces, which were of a deathly pallor, twitched nervously, and a slight froth rose to their lips. Two small blue flames scintillated hesitantly over their heads.

The physician made an imperious gesture, which seemed to trace the way for them through the air, and the two phosphorescent sparks began to move. They crossed to their new abodes, leaving a trail of light behind them. Octave's soul entered the body of Count Labinski, and the count's soul entered that of Octave. The avatar was accomplished.

A flush of red at the cheek-bones showed that life had reëntered the human clay, which, an instant soulless, would, without the physician's power, have become the prey of the angel of death.

Cherbonneau's blue eyes gleamed with joy at his triumph, and he said to himself, as he strode up and down the room, "I should like to see the most noted physicians do as much, — they who are so proud of mending the human machine when it gets out of order: Hippocrates, Galen, Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Boerhaave, Tronchin, Hahnemann, Rasori, the most insignificant Indian fakir squatting on the steps of a pagoda knows a thousand times more than you! What matters the body when one can command the spirit?"

At the end of his sentence Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau cut several capers of exultation, and danced like the hills in the Sir-Hasirim of Solomon; but, catching his foot in the hem of his Brahman gown, he almost fell on his nose, a trifling accident, which recalled him to his senses and calmed his excitement.

"Now to awake my sleeping friends," said he, after he had removed the smears of the colored powder with which he had streaked his face, and tossed aside his Brahman costume. Placing himself before the body of Count Labinski, which contained Octave's soul, he made the passes necessary to awaken him from his somnambulistic state, shaking from his fingers at each gesture the electric fluid withdrawn.

After a few minutes Octave-Labinski (hereafter we will so call him for the clearness of the story) rose on his elbow, rubbed his hands across his eyes, and cast around him a look of astonishment, not yet lighted by the consciousness of self. When a finer perception of objects returned to him the first thing he noticed was his own form placed quite away from him on a sofa. He saw himself, not reflected by a mirror, but in reality. He gave a cry, — to his horror, this cry did not resound in his own tone of voice; the exchange of souls having occurred during the magnetic sleep, he had no recollection of it, and felt a strange sense of discomfort. His mind, served by new organs, was like a workman whose habitual tools had been taken away and replaced by others. Psyche, exiled, beat with restless wings the vault of this unfamiliar skull, and lost herself in the mazes of a brain in which still lingered traces of unfamiliar thoughts.

When the physician had sufficiently enjoyed Octave's surprise he said, "Well, how do you like your new habitation? Is your soul at home in the body of this handsome cavalier, hetman, hospodar, magnate, and husband of the most beautiful woman in the world? You no longer mean to let yourself die, as was your intention the first time I saw you in your gloomy apartment of the Rue Saint-Lazare now that the doors of the Labinski mansion are open to you, and you need not fear that Prascovie will close your mouth with her hand, as in the Villa Salviati, when you wish to speak of love. You see now that old Balthazar Cherbonneau, in spite of his hideous face,— which, by the way, he can change when he wants to, — has still rather good recipes in his box of tricks."

"Doctor," replied Octave-Labinski, "you have the power of a god, or at least of a demon."

"Oh, oh, do not fear; there is not the slightest deviltry in this! Your salvation is not in danger. I shall not make you sign a compact with a flourish. Nothing could be simpler than what has happened. The Logos which has created light can surely displace a soul. If men would but hearken to God across time and infinity they would see things even more surprising than that."

"With what gratitude, with what devotion, can I acknowledge this inestimable service?"

"You owe me nothing. You interest me; and to an old Lascar like myself, bronzed by every sun, hardened to every event, an emotion is a rare occurrence. You have revealed love to me, and you know we dreamers, who are more or less alchemists, magicians, and philosophers, all seek the absolute. But get up, move about, and see if your new skin is uncomfortable."

Octave-Labinski obeyed, and took a turn or two about the room. Already he was less awkward; though occupied by another soul, the body of the count retained the impulsion of its ordinary habits, and the new guest confided himself to these physical memories, for it was important for him to have the walk, the air, and the gestures of the former proprietor.

"Had I not myself but just operated the exchange of your souls," Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau said, laughing, "I should think that nothing unusual had happened during the evening, and I should take you for the true, legitimate, and authentic Lithuanian Count Olaf Labinski, whose real self still sleeps there in the chrysalis which you have disdainfully discarded. But it will soon be midnight; and if you do not want Prascovie to scold you, or accuse you of preferring lansquenet or baccarat to her, you had now better go. You must not begin your married life with a quarrel ; it would be a bad omen. In the mean time, I will busy myself in awakening your former envelope with all the care and respect it deserves."

Recognizing the importance of the physician's suggestion, Octave-Labinski hastened to leave. At the foot of the steps the count's magnificent bay horses snorted with impatience, and in champing their bits had flecked the pavement about them with froth. On Octave's appearance a superb green-garbed groom, of the lost race of heyduques, hurried to the carriage-step, which he lowered with a bang. Octave, who had first turned mechanically towards his modest brougham, installed himself in the splendid vehicle, and said to the chasseur, who flung the order to the coachman, "Home!" The door was hardly closed when the horses started, and the descendant of Almanzors and Azolans, aided by the large cords, swung himself up behind with a lightness one would not have expected of his immense size.

The distance between the Rue du Regard and the Faubourg Saint-Honoré is not long; it was covered in a few minutes ; and presently the huge portals of the mansion opened and gave way for the carriage, which swept about a large graveled courtyard, and stopped with remarkable precision under a pink-and-white striped awning.

The courtyard was vast. Octave-Labinski took in the details with that rapidity of vision which the mind acquires on certain important occasions. Surrounded with symmetrical buildings, and lighted by bronze lamp-posts of which the gas darted white tongues of flame into crystal lanterns resembling those that in olden times ornamented the Bucentaur, the Labinski mansion looked more like a palace than a mere house. Boxes of orange trees, worthy of the terrace at Versailles, stood at equal distances along the edge of the asphalt, which framed, like a border, the carpet of turf forming the centre.

The transformed lover, on setting his foot on the threshold, was obliged to pause an instant and press his hand to his heart to still its beating. He had, indeed, the body of Count Olaf Labinski, but he possessed only its physical attributes; all the ideas belonging to the brain had flown with the soul of its first proprietor, — this house, which was henceforth to be his, was strange to him; he was even ignorant of its interior arrangements. A staircase rose before him; he followed where it led, determined to attribute to abstraction any mistake he might make. The polished stone steps shone brilliantly, and threw into relief the opulent crimson of the broad strip of velvet carpet, which, held in place by rods of gilded brass, traced the way softly underfoot. Stands, filled with beautiful exotic plants, lined the stair. An immense windowed lantern, suspended by a heavy rope of knotted and tasseled purple silk, flashed golden shimmers over the stucco walls, smooth and white as marble, and threw a flood of light on a reproduction of one of Canova's most celebrated groups, Cupid embracing Psyche.

The landing of the first and only story was paved with mosaics of costly design, and on the walls, hung by silken cords, were four pictures, the work of Paris Bordone, Bonifazzio, Palma the elder, and Paul Veronese, whose architectural and pompous style harmonized with the magnificence of the staircase.

A high baize door, studded with gold nails, opened on the landing. Octave-Labinski pushed it, and found himself in a large antechamber, where drowsed several liveried footmen, who at his approach rose as if on springs, and ranged themselves along the walls with the impassibility of Oriental slaves. He passed on. A white-and-gold drawing-room succeeded the antechamber, but there was no one in it. Octave rang a bell. A maid appeared.

"Can madame receive me?"

"Her ladyship is undressing, but she will be visible presently."

VII.

LEFT alone with the body of Octave de Saville, which the soul of Count Olaf Labinski inhabited, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau set himself to work to bring it back to every-day life. After a few passes Olaf-de Saville (we must now unite these two names to designate a double personage) came out of the profound slumber, or rather catalepsy, which had chained him, like a spectre from Hades, stiff and motionless, to the sofa. He rose with an automatic movement, undirected as yet by the will, and staggered from dizziness. Objects swayed about him ; the incarnations of Vishnu on the walls danced a saraband. Dr. Cherbonneau, waving his arms like wings, and rolling his blue eyes in wrinkled, brown orbits which looked like the rims of spectacles, appeared to him as the Mahatma of Elephanta. The weird sights at which he had assisted before falling into the mesmeric trance reacted on his reason, and he grasped reality slowly. He resembled a sleeper suddenly awakened from a nightmare, who mistakes the clothes scattered over the furniture for vague, human shapes, and thinks the brass curtain knobs, shining with the reflection of the night-light, are the flaming eyes of cyclops.

Little by little this phantasmagoria evaporated, and things resumed their natural aspect; M. Balthazar Cherbonneau was no longer an Indian fakir, but a plain doctor of medicine, who smiled at his patient with commonplace good nature.

, "Are you satisfied, sir," he said, in a tone of obsequious humility, in which could be discerned a shade of irony; "are you satisfied with the experiments which I have had the honor to make before you? I dare to hope that you will not much regret your evening, and that you will leave here convinced that all that is told of magnetism is not, as official science affirms, mere fable and jugglery."

Olaf-de Saville nodded assent, and left the apartment accompanied by Dr. Cherbonneau, who made him a low bow at each door.

The brougham drove up, grazing the steps, and the soul of the Countess Labinska's husband, which inhabited Octave de Saville's body, entered it without noticing that neither the livery nor the carriage was his.

The coachman asked where his master wished to go.

"Home," answered Olaf-de Saville, confusedly, astonished at not hearing the voice of the chasseur who usually asked him this question with a most pronounced Hungarian accent. The brougham in which he found himself was upholstered with dark-blue damask; his own coupé was lined with buttercup colored satin, and the count, though surprised, accepted it all much as one does in a dream where ordinary objects present themselves under strange aspects without however ceasing to be recognizable. He felt smaller than usual, also, it seemed to him he had gone to the physician's in evening dress; yet, without remembrance of having changed his clothes, he saw that he wore a summer suit of thin material, which had never formed part of his wardrobe. His mind was confused, and his thoughts, so lucid in the morning, unraveled themselves laboriously. Attributing this singular state to the weird scenes of the evening, he thought no more of it; and leaning his head against the side of the carriage, he drifted into an undefined reverie, a vague dreaminess, which was neither waking nor sleeping.

The sudden halt of the horse, and the coachman's voice shouting "Gate!" recalled him to himself; he lowered the window, put out his head, and saw by the light of a lamp an unfamiliar street, and a house which was not his own.

"Where the devil have you brought me, fool?" he cried; "are we in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, — Hotel Labinski?"

"Excuse me, sir; I did not understand,"

muttered the coachman, turning his horse in the direction indicated.

During the transit the transformed count asked himself several questions which he was unable to answer. Why had his own carriage left without him, since he had ordered it to wait? Why did he find himself in some one else's. For the moment he fancied that the clearness of his perceptions must be obscured by fever, or perhaps that the thaumaturgistic doctor, to impress his credulity more keenly, had made him inhale in his sleep hashish or some other hallucinating drug, whose illusions would be dispelled by a night's rest.

The carriage reached the Labinski mansion. The Suisse, when summoned, refused to open the door, saying it was not a reception evening, and adding that his master had returned an hour ago, and her ladyship had retired.

"Fool, are you drunk or crazy?" cried Olaf-de Saville, pushing aside the giant who rose colossal from the threshold of the half-open door, like one of those bronze statues which, in Arab tales, defend from wandering knights the entrance to enchanted castles.

"Drunk or crazy yourself, my little gentleman," answered the man, who from his natural crimson turned purple with anger.

"Scoundrel!" roared Olaf-de Saville, "did I not respect myself" —

"Be quiet, or I will break you across my knee and throw the pieces on the sidewalk," replied the giant, opening a hand larger than the huge plaster hand in the glove shop of the Rue Richelieu; "you must not be ugly with me, my little man, because you have drunk too much champagne."

Olaf-de Saville, exasperated, shoved the Suisse so fiercely that he got by under the porch. Several footmen who were still up ran forward at the noise of the altercation.

"I discharge you, stupid animal, wretch, villain! You shall not even spend the night in the house. Go, or I will kill you as I would a mad dog. Do not force me to spill the base blood of a lackey."

And the count, dispossessed of his body, with blood-shot eyes, foaming lips, and clinched hands, rushed at the enormous Suisse, who grasped his aggressor's hands in one of his own, and held them almost crushed in the vise of his short, thick fingers, fleshy and knotted like those of a mediæval torturer.

"There now," said the giant, who, good-natured enough in the main, and fearing nothing more from his adversary, simply gave him a shake or two to keep him respectful. "There now, is there any sense in getting into such a state when one is dressed like a man of the world, and then come like a rowdy making a racket at night in respectable houses? One owes a certain consideration to wine, and that which has made you so drunk must be famous, that is why I do not knock you down, and I shall just put you gently out on the sidewalk, where the watchman will pick you up if you continue your uproar. A breath of prison air will sharpen your wits."

"Rascals," cried Olaf-de Saville to the assembled lackeys, "you allow this low varlet to insult your master, the noble Count Labinski!"

At this name the footmen with one accord gave a loud shout; a burst of laughter, Homeric and convulsive, lifted their galloon-covered chests.

"This little gentleman who thinks himself the Count Labinski! ha, ha, ha! the idea is good!"

An icy sweat broke out on Olaf-de Saville's temples. A sharp thought pierced his brain like a dagger, and he felt the marrow freeze in his bones. Was Smarra's knee on his chest, or was this real life? Had his reason foundered in the bottomless sea of magnetism, or was he the plaything of some diabolical machination? Not one of his servants, so trembling, so submissive, so prostrate before him, recognized their master. Had his body been changed as well as his clothing and carriage?

"That you may be very sure of not being the Count Labinski," said one of the most insolent of the group, "look, there he is, aroused by your clamor, descending the steps himself."

The Suisse's captive turned his eyes towards the end of the court, and saw, erect under the awning of the marquise, a slender, graceful young man, with oval face, black eyes, aquiline nose, and slight mustache, a young man who was none other than himself, or else his own ghost modeled by the devil with delusive cunning.

The Suisse dropped the hands which he held imprisoned. The lackeys ranged themselves respectfully against the wall, and with lowered eyes, hanging hands, in an absolute immobility, like pages at the approach of the Sultan, they rendered to this phantom the honors which the real count was denied.

Prascovie's husband, though brave as a Slav, a term which implies everything, felt an unspeakable terror at the approach of this Ménechme, who in mingling with real life and making his double unrecognizable was far more terrible than on the stage. An ancient family legend came to his mind and increased his dread. Each time a Labinski was to die, he was warned by the appearance of a phantom exactly similar to himself. Among northern nations to see one's double, even in a dream, is always regarded as a fatal omen, and the intrepid warrior of the Caucasus, at the aspect of this external vision of his own self, was seized with an insurmountable superstitious horror. He who would have plunged his arm in the mouth of a loaded cannon recoiled at sight of himself.

Octave-Labinski advanced toward his former body, in which the count's indignant soul was struggling and shivering, and said, in a tone of cold and haughty politeness, —

"Sir, do not compromise yourself with these servants. The Count Labinski, if you wish to speak to him, is visible from noon until two o'clock. The countess receives on Thursdays those who have had the honor to be presented to her."

Having uttered these sentences slowly, and emphasized each syllable, the pseudo-count quietly withdrew, and the doors closed behind him.

Olaf-de Saville was put in his carriage unconscious. When he came to his senses he was lying on a bed unlike his own in shape, in a room which he did not remember ever to have entered. At his side stood a strange servant, who raised his head and made him smell a bottle of salts. "Do you feel better, sir?" Jean asked the count, whom he took for his master.

"Yes," answered Olaf-de Saville; "it was nothing but a momentary faintness."

"Shall I leave you, sir, or had I better sit up?"

"No, leave me; but, before going, light the candelabra by the mirror."

"You are not afraid, sir, that the light will prevent your sleeping?"

"Not at all; besides, I am not yet sleepy."

"I shall not go to bed, sir," said Jean, inwardly alarmed at the count's pallor and drawn features, "and if you need anything I will come at the first sound of the bell."

When Jean, after lighting the candles, had gone, the count hurried to the mirror, and in the clear glass where the scintillations of the lights flickered he saw the face of a young man that was sad and gentle, he saw abundant black hair, eyes of a sombre azure, and pale cheeks covered with a dark, silky beard. In fact, a visage which was not his own, and which gazed at him from the depths of the mirror with an air of surprise. At first he tried to believe that some practical joker was framing his face in the brass and inlaid mother-of-pearl border of the Venetian mirror. He felt behind it; there was no one.

His hands, which he then examined, were longer, thinner, and more veined than his own. On the fourth finger projected a heavy gold ring with a seal, on which was engraved a coat-of-arms, — a shield divided, gules and silver, surmounted by a baron's crown. This ring had never belonged to the count, who wore one that bore an eagle displayed in sable, and for crest a pearled coronet. He searched his pockets and drew out a small card-case containing visiting cards with the name: "Octave de Saville."

The laughter of the lackeys at the Hotel Labinski, the apparition of his double, the unknown physiognomy substituted for his own reflection in the mirror, all this might possibly be the illusions of a disordered brain; but these different clothes, the ring which he took from his finger, were material, palpable proofs, evidence not to be denied. A complete metamorphosis had taken place in him without his knowledge. A magician, without doubt, a devil perhaps, had stolen from him his form, his nobility, his name, his whole personality, leaving him only his soul without means to manifest it. The fantastic stories of Pierre Schlemil and the Tale of Saint Sylvester's Night came to his mind. But La Motte-Fouqué and Hoffmann's characters had only lost the one his shadow, and the other his reflection, and if this strange loss of a projection which every one possesses inspired vexatious suspicions, at least no one denied that they were themselves.

The count's position was far worse. He could not claim his own title with the body in which he was now imprisoned. In the eyes of the world he would pass for an impudent impostor, or at least for a madman. In this deceitful envelope even his wife would disown him. How could he prove to her his identity? Yet surely there were a thousand familiar events, a thousand intimate details unknown to every one else, which, recalled to Prascovie, would make her recognize her husband's soul in this disguise; but of what use would her recognition be even if he obtained it, against the verdict of the world?

He was really and absolutely dispossessed of his self. And he had another anxiety. Was his transformation limited to the exterior change of figure and features, or did he really inhabit the body of another? In this case, what had been done with his own? Had a lime pit consumed it, or had it become the property of some bold marauder? The double seen at the Hotel Labinski could be a spectre, a vision perhaps, but it might also be a physical being, installed in the skin which that fakir-faced physician had stolen from him with infernal skill.

A frightful idea stung his heart like a viper's fang: "But this fictitious Count Labinski pressed into my shape by the devil's hands, this vampire who is now living in my house, whom my servants obey in spite of me, perhaps at this moment he is setting his cloven hoof on the threshold of that room where I have never entered less agitated than on the first night. And does Prascovie smile and, with a divine blush, lean her charming head on that shoulder marked by the devil's claw, taking for me that lying shell, that ghoul, that hideous son of night and hell? Shall I rush to the house, and setting it on fire, shout amid the flames to Prascovie: 'You are deceived; it is not your beloved Olaf whom you press to your heart! You are about to commit an abominable crime which my despairing soul will still remember when Time is weary of turning his hour-glass!' "

Waves of flame surged through the count's brain. He gave inarticulate cries of rage, gnawed his knuckles, and paced the room like a wild beast. Insanity was about to submerge the dim consciousness of self which remained to him. He ran to Octave's toilet table, filled a basin with water, and plunged his head into an icy bath.

His presence of mind returned. He told himself that the age of magic and sorcery was past; that death alone separated body and soul; that in the centre of Paris a Polish count accredited with several millions at

Rothschilds, related to the best families, the beloved husband of a fashionable woman, and decorated with the Order of Saint-André, could not be juggled with in this way. All this was undoubtedly but a joke, in very bad taste, indeed, but still a joke of M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, a joke which could be explained as naturally as the bugbears of Anne Radcliffe's novels. As he was worn out with fatigue he threw himself on Octave's bed, and fell into a deep sleep, so heavy that it resembled death, and which lasted until Jean, thinking his master awake, came in to lay the letters and newspapers on the table.

VIII.

The count opened his eyes and cast about him an investigating look. He saw a comfortable but simple bedroom. A carpet, spotted in imitation of a leopard skin, covered the floor, and tapestry curtains, which Jean had just drawn back, hung at the windows and hid the doors; on the walls was a green velvet paper simulating cloth. A clock cut from a block of black marble, with a metal dial, surmounted by the statuette of Diana in oxidized silver reduced by Barbedienne, and accompanied by two antique vases also in silver, decorated the mantel, which was of white marble veined with blue. The Venetian mirror in which the count had discovered the previous evening that he did not possess his usual face, and the portrait of an old lady painted by Flandrin, without doubt Octave's mother, were the only ornaments of this rather sad, sedate chamber.

A divan, an arm-chair near the fireplace, a study table covered with books and papers, furnished the room comfortably, but in no wise recalled the sumptuousness of the Hotel Labinski.

"Will you get up, sir?" said Jean in the careful voice which he had adopted during Octave's illness, as he handed the count the silk shirt, flannel trousers, and Algerian gandoura, which formed his master's morning costume. Though the count revolted at putting on a stranger's clothes, he was obliged to accept those Jean offered him or remain naked; so he put his feet down on the soft black bearskin rug at the side of the bed.

His toilet was soon finished, and Jean, without appearing to have the least doubt as to the identity of the false Octave de Saville whom he helped to dress, asked him, "At what hour will you breakfast, sir?"

"At the usual hour," replied the count, who had resolved to outwardly accept his incomprehensible transformation so as not to raise obstacles to the steps he intended to take to recover his personality.

Jean left the room, and Olaf-de Saville opened the two letters which had come with the newspapers, hoping to get from them some information. The first contained friendly reproaches, and complained that the old habits of comradeship were interrupted without motive; it was signed with a name unknown to him. The second was from Octave's lawyer, and urged him to come and draw a quarter's income long due him, or at least to designate an investment for this money which was lying unproductive.

"So it seems," the count said to himself, "that the Octave de Saville whose body I occupy much against my will really exists. He is not a fanciful being, a character of Achim Arnim or of Clément Brentano: he has an apartment, friends, a lawyer, an income greater than his wants, in fact everything which constitutes the legal status of a gentleman. Nevertheless, it seems to me I am the Count Olaf Labinski."

A glance in the mirror convinced him that this opinion would be shared by no one; the reflection was the same by the clear daylight as by the uncertain flicker of the candles.

In continuing the domiciliary visit he opened the drawers of the table: in one he found title deeds of property, two one-thousand franc notes, and fifty louis, which latter he appropriated without scruple for the needs of the campaign which he was about to begin; while in the other drawer he noticed a Russian leather portfolio closed by a patent lock.

Jean entered announcing M. Alfred Humbert, who rushed into the room with the familiarity of an old friend without waiting till the servant returned with his master's answer.

"Good morning, Octave," said the newcomer, a handsome young man with a frank, cordial manner; "what are you up to, what has become of you, are you dead or alive? No one sees you; I write, you do not answer. I should avoid you, but I have no false pride in matters of affection, and I come to see how you are. Good heavens! I cannot let a college friend die of melancholy in the depths of this apartment which is as lugubrious as one of Charles the Fifth's cells in the Yuste Monastery. You imagine you are ill, but you are bored, that is all. I shall force you to distract yourself, and I mean to play the despot and take you to a jolly breakfast in which Gustave Raimbaud buries his bachelor freedom."

Uttering this tirade in a half angry, half humorous tone, he took the count's hand in his and shook it vigorously.

"No," answered Prascovie's husband, entering into the spirit of his part, "I am even more indisposed to-day than usual; I am not in good condition; I should sadden and depress you."

"It is true you are pale and you look tired. I will wait for a more favorable occasion. I am off, for I am late for three dozen oysters and a bottle of Sauterne," said Alfred, going towards the door. "Raimbaud will be sorry not to see you."

This visit increased the count's depression. Jean took him for his master, Alfred for his friend. A last trial awaited him. The door opened, and a lady whose hair was streaked with gray, and who in the most striking manner resembled the portrait on the wall, entered the room, took a seat on the sofa, and said to the count, —

"How are you, my poor Octave? Jean has told me that you came in late yesterday in a state of alarming weakness; do take care of yourself, my dear son, for you know how much I love you notwithstanding the grief caused me by this inexplicable melancholy, the secret of which you have never been willing to confide."

"Fear nothing, mother, it is not serious," replied Olaf-de Saville; "I am much better to-day."

Reassured, Mme. de Saville rose and departed, not wishing to annoy her son, who, she knew, disliked to be long disturbed in his solitude.

"Now I am decidedly Octave de Saville," cried the count when the old lady had gone; "his mother recognizes me, and does not divine a stranger under her son's epidermis. Perhaps I am then forever immured in this envelope. What a curious prison for a soul is the body of another! It is hard though to renounce being the Count Olaf Labinski, to lose his coat-of-arms, his wife, his fortune, and to be reduced to a miserable commonplace existence. Oh! to get out of it I would tear this skin of Nessus which clings to me, and I would return it to its owner in a thousand shreds. Shall I go back to the hotel? No! — I should make a terrible scandal, and the Suisse would throw me out, for I have no strength in this invalid's dressing-gown. I must think, and look about me, for I must know something about the life of this Octave de Saville who is at present myself."

He tried to open the portfolio. Touched by chance the spring yielded, and the count drew from the leather pockets first a number of sheets of paper blackened with fine, close writing, and then a square of vellum. On this an unskilled but faithful hand had drawn, with love's memory and a resemblance not always attained by great artists, a crayon portrait which it was impossible not to recognize at the first glance. It was the Countess Prascovie Labinska!

At this discovery the count was stupefied. A feeling of furious jealousy succeeded his surprise; how did the countess's portrait come to be in the private portfolio of this strange young man? how did he get it? who had made it? who had given it to him? Had the religiously adored Prascovie descended from her sky of love to a vulgar intrigue? What infernal jest incarnated him, the husband, in the body of the lover of this woman, till then believed so pure? After being the husband, he was to be the lover! Sarcastic metamorphosis, a reversal of position sufficient to turn one's brain, he might trick himself, be at the same time Clitandre and Georges Dandin! All these ideas buzzed tumultuously in his mind; he felt he was losing his reason, and he made a supreme effort of will to regain a little composure. Without hearing Jean announce that breakfast was ready, he continued with nervous trepidation the examination of the mysterious portfolio.

The leaves composed a sort of psychological journal, abandoned and resumed at different intervals. Here are several fragments devoured by the count with anxious curiosity.

"She will never love me, never, never! I have read in her soft eyes the cruel sentence than which Dante could find nothing more severe to inscribe on the bronze gates of the *Cité Dolente:* 'Lose all hope.' What have I done to God to be damned alive? To-morrow, after to-morrow, always, it will be the same. The planets may intercross their orbits, the stars in conjunction may knot, but nothing in my destiny will change. With a word she has dispelled the dream; with a gesture broken the chimera's wings. The fabulous combinations of the impossible offer me no chance; the numbers thrown a million times in fortune's wheel will never come up, — there is no winning number for me!

"Fool that I am! I know that paradise is closed to me, and I sit stupidly on the threshold, with my back against the door which will not open, and I weep silently, without violence, without effort, as if my eyes were living springs. I have not the courage to rise and plunge into the immense desert or into the tumultuous Babel of men.

"When, sometimes, in the night I cannot sleep, I think of Prascovie; if I sleep I dream of her. Oh, how beautiful she was that day in the garden of the Villa Salviati, at Florence! That white dress with the black ribbons, it was charming and funereal! The white for her, the black for me! Now and then the ribbons stirred by the breeze formed a cross on the background of startling white, an invisible spirit was murmuring the death mass of my heart.

"Should some surprising catastrophe tiara my brow with the crown of an emperor or caliph, should the earth bleed for me her veins of gold, should the diamond mines of Golconda and of Visiapour allow me to dig in their sparkling galleries, should Byron's lyre resound under my fingers, should the most perfect works of antique and modern art lend me their charms, should I discover a new world, well, for all that I would not be further advanced!

"On what a thread hangs fate! If I had had the desire to go to Constantinople I should not have met her; I stay in Florence, I see her, and I die.

"I should have killed myself, but she breathes the air in which I live, and perhaps my covetous lip may seize — oh, ineffable joy! — a distant emanation of that perfumed breath. And, besides, my guilty soul would be assigned to an exile's planet, and I should lose the chance to make her love me in another life. To be separated there, she in paradise, I in hell: oh, maddening thought!

"Why must I love precisely the one woman who cannot love me! Others, called beautiful, who were free, smiled on me with their tenderest smiles, and seemed to invite an avowal which did not come. Oh, how happy is he! What sublimity of former life does God recompense in him by the magnificent gift of her love?"

It was unnecessary to read further. The suspicion which the count had conceived at sight of Prascovie's portrait had vanished at the first lines of this sad confession. He understood that the cherished image, recommenced a thousand times, had been drawn far from the model with the tender and indefatigable patience of an unhappy love, and that it was the madonna of a mystical shrine, before which kneeled a hopeless adoration.

"But perhaps this Octave has made a compact with the devil to divest me of my body, and then in my form to profit by Prascovie's unsuspecting love!"

Though it troubled him strangely, the improbability of such a supposition in these modern days made the count soon discard it.

Smiling to himself at his credulity, he ate the now cold breakfast which Jean had brought, then dressed, and ordered the carriage. When it was ready, he had himself driven to Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's, and crossed the rooms which he had entered the day before as the Count Olaf Labinski, and from which he had come out saluted by all the world with the name of Octave de Saville. The physician was seated, as usual, on the divan in the farthest room, holding his foot in his hand, and seemingly plunged in a profound meditation.

At the sound of the count's steps he raised his head.

"Ah! it is you, my dear Octave. I was about to go to you, but it is a good sign when the invalid comes to the physician."

"Always Octave! I think I shall go mad with rage," thought the count. Then crossing his arms, he stood in front of the physician, and fastening on him a terrible look, said, —

"You know perfectly, M. Balthazar Cherbonneau, that I am not Octave, but Count Olaf Labinski, and you know it, because last evening, on this very spot you stole my skin by means of your foreign witchcraft."

At these words the doctor gave a shout of laughter, fell back on his cushions, and held his sides to restrain the convulsions of his gayety.

"Moderate this excessive mirth of which you may repent, doctor. I speak seriously."

"So much the worse! that proves that the anæsthesia and the hypochondria for which I have been treating you are turning into insanity. I must change the regimen, that is all."

"I do not know what keeps me from strangling you with my hands, you doctor of the devil," cried the count, advancing towards Cherbonneau.

The physician smiled at the count's menace, and touched him with the end of a little steel rod. Olaf-de Saville received a frightful shock, and thought his arm was broken.

"Oh! we have means to compel invalids when they resist," said Cherbonneau, turning on him the look, cold as a douche, which conquers madmen and subdues the lion. "Go home, take a bath, and this excitement will pass away."

Confused by the electric shock, Olaf-de Saville left Dr. Cherbonneau's, more upset and uncertain than ever. He had himself driven to Passy to consult Dr. B.

To this celebrated physician he said, "I am the prey of a strange hallucination; when I look in the glass my face does not appear to me with its usual features; the objects which surround me are changed; I do not recognize either the walls or the furniture of my room; it seems to me that I am not myself but some one else."

"Under what aspect do you see yourself?" asked the physician; "the delusion may come from the eyes or from the brain."

"I see myself with black hair, dark blue eyes, and a pale face framed by a beard."

"A passport description could not be more exact: you have neither mental hallucination nor perverted sight. You are, in fact, just as you describe."

"Oh, no! I have really fair hair, black eyes, tanned skin, and a slight mustache *à la hongroise.*"

"Here," replied the physician, "begins an alteration of the mental faculties."

"Nevertheless, doctor, I am not in the least insane."

"Quite true. It is only sane people who come to me of themselves. A little fatigue, some excess in study or pleasure, has caused this trouble. You are mistaken; the vision is real, the idea chimerical: instead of being fair and seeing yourself dark, you are dark and think yourself fair."

"Still, I am sure of being Count Olaf Labinski, but since yesterday every one calls me Octave de Saville."

"That is precisely what I said," answered the doctor. "You are M. de Saville, and you imagine yourself to be Count Labinski, whom I remember to have seen, and who, as you say, is fair. That explains perfectly why you see yourself in the mirror with another face; this face which is yours does not correspond with your idea and surprises you. Remember this, that every one calls you M. de Saville, and consequently does not share your belief. Come and spend a fortnight here; the baths, the rest, the walks under the large trees, will dissipate this annoying impression."

The count bowed and promised to come again. He no longer knew what to think. He returned to the apartment in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and by chance saw on the table the invitation of the Countess Labinska, which Octave had shown to M. Cherbonneau.

"With this talisman," he cried to himself, "I can see her to-morrow."

IX.

When the real Count Labinski, chased from his terrestrial paradise by the false guardian angel who stood on the threshold, had been taken to his carriage by the servants, the transformed Octave went back to the little cream-and-gold salon to wait the countess' leisure.

Leaning against a white marble mantel of which the hearth was filled with flowers, he saw himself reflected in the depths of the glass placed on a gilt-legged console opposite. Though he was in the secret of his metamorphosis, or, to speak more exactly, of his transposition, he had some difficulty in persuading himself that this image, so different from his own, was the reflection of his present form, and he could not turn his eyes from the phantom stranger who yet had become himself. He gazed at himself and saw some one else. Involuntarily he looked to see if the Count Olaf were not leaning on the mantel beside him and thus throwing his reflection in the mirror. But he was quite alone. Dr. Cherbonneau had done the thing thoroughly.

After a few minutes, Octave-Labinski ceased to consider the marvelous avatar which had placed his soul in the body of Prascovie's husband; his thoughts took a turn more conformable to his situation. This incredible event, of which the wildest visionary would not in his delirium have dared to dream, had been brought about. He was to find himself in the presence of the beautiful and adored being, and she would not repulse him! The only combination which could unite his happiness with the immaculate virtue of the countess was achieved!

At the approach of this supreme moment his soul underwent the most dreadful agony and anxiety; the timidity of true love made it as weak as were it still in the despised body of Octave de Saville.

The entrance of the maid put an end to his combat with this tumult of thoughts. At sight of her he could not control a nervous start, and the blood surged to his heart when she said, —

"Her ladyship can receive you now, sir."

Octave-Labinski followed the woman, for he was unfamiliar with the different parts of the house and did not wish to betray his ignorance by taking uncertain steps. The maid showed him into a good-sized room; it was a dressing-room ornamented with all the most delicate refinements of luxury. A set of wardrobes in precious wood carved by Knecht and Lienhart, formed a sort of architectural wainscoting, a portico of capricious style, rare elegance, and finished execution. The doors were separated by columns around which heart-shaped leaves of convolvuli and bell-like flowers, cut with infinite skill, twined in ascending spirals. In these wardrobes were kept gowns of velvet and of silk, cashmeres, wraps, laces, cloaks of sable and blue fox, hats of a thousand shapes, and all the belongings of a pretty woman.

Opposite, the same idea was repeated with this difference, that the smooth panels were replaced by mirrors revolving on hinges like the leaves of a screen, so that it was possible to see the face, profile, or back, and to judge of the effect of a bodice or a head-dress. On the third side was a long toilet-table with an alabaster-onyx top, where the silver faucets spouted hot and cold water into huge Japanese bowls set in an open-work rim of the same metal; Bohemian glass bottles sparkling in the candlelight like diamonds and rubies, contained essences and perfumes.

The walls and ceiling were tufted with Nile green satin, like the inside of a jewel-case. A thick Smyrna rug, with softly blending colors, wadded the floor.

On a green velvet pedestal in the centre of the room was set a large chest of fantastic shape in Khorassan steel, chased, embossed, and engraved with arabesques amplificated enough to make the ornamentation of the Ambassadors' Hall in the Alhambra appear simplicity itself. Oriental art seemed to have done its best in this marvelous work, in which the fairy fingers of the Peris must surely have taken part. It was in this chest that the Countess Prascovie Labinska inclosed her ornaments, jewels fit for a queen, which she wore rarely, thinking, with reason, that they were not worth the place they covered. Her woman's instinct told her that she was too beautiful to need magnificence! In consequence, they only saw the light on solemn occasions when the hereditary pomp of the ancient Labinski family had to appear in all its splendor. Diamonds never lay more idle.

Near the window, whose ample curtains

hung in heavy folds, the Countess Prascovie Labinska, radiantly fair and beautiful, was seated at a lace-covered dressing-table, before a mirror held toward her by two angels carved by Mlle. de Fauveau with the fragile elegance which characterizes that lady's talent; two candelabra, each with six candles, flooded her with light. An ideally fine Algerian burnous, with blue and white stripes in alternation opaque and transparent, enveloped her like a fleecy cloud; the thin material had slipped from the satiny tissue of the shoulders, and revealed the lines of a throat beside which the snow-white neck of a swan would have appeared gray indeed. The opening of the folds was filled by the laces of a batiste gown, a nocturnal attire without a restraining belt. The countess' hair was undone, and fell behind her in a mass as opulent as the mantle of an empress. The flowing golden locks, from which Venus Aphrodite kneeling in her mother-of-pearl shell wrung the drops when she rose like a flower from the blue Ionian Sea, were not more blonde or luxurious! Blend Titian's amber and Paul Veronese's silver with the golden varnish of Rembrandt, make the sun shine through a topaz, and yet you will not obtain the marvelous tint of her wonderful hair, which seemed to give out light instead of receiving it, and which would have merited more than did

Berenice's to shine, a new constellation, among the ancient planets! Two women were dividing, smoothing, and rolling it in coils carefully arranged that the contact with the pillow should not rumple it.

During this delicate operation the countess balanced on the end of her foot a Turkish slipper of white velvet embroidered with gold, small enough to create jealousy in the hearts of the Sultan's khanouns and odalisques. Now and then, throwing back the silky folds of the burnous, she uncovered her white arm, and with a gently impatient motion pushed aside some stray lock of hair.

Reclining in this indolent posture she recalled the graceful figures in the Greek toilet scenes which decorate antique vases, and of which no artist has since been able to reproduce the pure and correct outlines or the youthful and slender beauty. She was a thousand times more seductive than in the garden of the Villa Salviati at Florence, and had Octave not been already wildly in love with her he would then have infallibly become so; but happily, nothing can be added to the infinite.

At sight of her Octave-Labinski acted as if he had seen the most terrible spectacle; his knees knocked together and almost gave way under him. His mouth grew parched. Distress seized him at the throat like the hand of a Thug, and flames danced before his eyes. Her loveliness magnetized him.

Reflecting, however, that this stupid and bewildered manner fit for a repulsed lover was perfectly ridiculous in a husband, no matter how much in love he might still be with his wife, he made a courageous effort, and stepped firmly enough toward the countess.

"Ah! it is you, Olaf! How late you are this evening!" said the countess without turning, for her head was held by the long braids which the maids were twisting. Freeing it from the folds of the burnous, she offered him one of her beautiful hands. Octave-Labinski grasped her soft, flower-like hand, carried it to his lips, and pressed it with a long, burning kiss, — his whole soul concentrating itself on the little spot.

It is impossible to know what sensitiveness of the epidermis, what instinct of divine modesty, what unconscious intuition of the heart warned the countess; but a crimson flush spread swiftly over her face. Her throat and her arms took on the hue of the snow on the mountain-tops at the sun's earliest kiss. She started, and, half angry, half ashamed, slowly withdrew her hand. Octave's lips had given her the impression of a hot iron. She quickly recovered herself, however, and smiled at her childishness.

"You do not answer me, dear Olaf. Do you know that it is over six hours since I saw you? You neglect me," she added, in a reproachful tone; "formerly you would not have deserted me so for a whole long evening. Did you even think of me?"

"All the time," replied Octave-Labinski.

"Oh, no, not all the time. I know when you think of me even at a distance. This evening, for instance, I was alone, seated at the piano, playing a piece of Weber's to soothe my dullness with music; in the sonorous pulsations of the notes your spirit hovered about me for several minutes; but at the last chord it flew away I know not whither, and did not return. Do not contradict me, I am sure of what I say."

Prascovie in fact was not mistaken. It was the moment when Count Olaf Labinski, at Dr. Cherbonneau's, had leaned over the magical glass of water evoking with all the force of a fixed idea an adored image. From that instant, submerged in the fathomless ocean of a magnetic slumber, the count had been without thought, feeling, or volition.

Having finished the countess' toilet, the maids withdrew. Octave-Labinski remained standing, gazing at Prascovie with a look of passion.

Constrained and oppressed by his expression, the countess wrapped herself in her burnous like Polymnia in her draperies. Only her head appeared above the blue-and-white folds, uneasy but charming.

No human penetration could divine the mysterious displacement of souls performed by Dr. Cherbonneau by means of the Sannyâsi Brahma-Logum formula; still Prascovie did not recognize in the eyes of Octave-Labinski her husband's usual expression, that look of love, chaste, calm, equal, eternal as the love of angels. This look was kindled by an earthly passion which troubled her and made her blush. She did not understand what it was, but she knew something had happened. A thousand wild suppositions crossed her mind. Was she no longer for Olaf anything but a common woman, desired for her beauty like a courtesan? Had the sublime accord of their souls been broken by some dissonance of which she was ignorant? Did Olaf love another, or had the corruptions of Paris sullied the purity of his heart? She asked herself these questions rapidly without being able to answer them in a satisfactory manner, and she told herself she was foolish, but still she felt afraid. A secret terror invaded her as though she were in the presence of some danger, unknown, but divined by that second sight of the mind which it is always wrong to disobey.

Nervous and agitated, she arose and went toward the door of the bedroom. The pseudo-count accompanied her as Othello leads away Desdemona at each exit in Shakespeare's play, with one arm around her waist; but when she was on the threshold she turned white and cold as a statue, stopped a second, gave a timorous glance at the young man, then entered, closed the door quickly, and shot the bolt.

"Octave's look!" she cried, and sank fainting on a sofa. As her senses came back she said to herself: "But how is it that this look which I have never forgotten shines to-night in Olaf's eyes? Why have I seen its gloomy and despairing flame sparkle in the pupils of my husband? Is Octave dead? Is it his soul which gleamed before me an instant to bid me farewell on leaving this world? Olaf! Olaf! If I was mistaken, if I foolishly yielded to empty fears, you will forgive me; but if I had welcomed you to-night I should have thought I was giving myself to another."

The countess assured herself that the door was well bolted, lighted a pendent lamp, and with a sensation of indefinable anguish like a timid child she hid herself in the bed. Towards morning she fell asleep; but strange and incoherent dreams tormented her restless slumber. Ardent eyes — Octave's eyes — stared at her from a mist, and darted at her forks of fire; while at the foot of her bed crouched a black and wrinkled figure, muttering syllables in an unknown tongue. Count Olaf also appeared in this absurd dream, but clothed in a form which was not his own.

We will not attempt to portray Octave's disappointment when he found himself facing a closed door and heard the bolt grating inside. His supreme hope had failed. He had had recourse to strange and terrible methods; he had surrendered himself to a magician, perhaps a demon, risking his life in this world, and his soul in the next, to conquer a woman who escaped him, though rendered defenseless by the sorcery of India. Repulsed as a lover, he was not more fortunate as a husband; Prascovie's invincible purity thwarted the most infernal plots. On the door-sill of the bedchamber she had seemed to him like one of Swedenborg's white angels anathematizing the Evil Spirit.

He could not stay all night in this ridiculous position, so he looked for the count's apartment. At the end of a suite of rooms he found one which contained an ebony columned bed with tapestry curtains, where amid the scrolls and flowers was embroidered a coat-of-arms. The panoplies of Oriental armor, knights' cuirasses and helmets, touched by the reflection of a lamp, threw vague glimmers into the shadow. Bohemian leather stamped with gold gleamed on the walls. Three or four huge carved arm-chairs and a heavy cabinet loaded with ornaments completed this mediæval furniture, which would not have been out of place in the great hall of a Gothic manor. On the count's part this was not a frivolous imitation of the fashion, but a hallowed memory. The room exactly reproduced the one he had inhabited at his mother's, and though often laughed at about it, — this fifth-act scenery, — he had always refused to change its style.

Octave-Labinski, exhausted with fatigue and emotion, flung himself on the bed and fell asleep, cursing Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau.

Fortunately, the morning brought with it serener thoughts; he promised himself to act hereafter in a more moderate fashion, to dull his glances, and to assume the manners of a husband. Aided by the count's valet, he dressed himself in a plain and simple costume, and went quietly down to the dining-room to breakfast with the countess.

X.

OCTAVE-LABINSKI walked in the footsteps of the valet, for in this house of which he was the apparent master he did not know where the dining-room was. It was a vast room on the ground floor, opening on the court, and in its noble and severe style recalled both an abbey and a manor. Dark oak wainscoting, arranged in symmetrical designs, reached to the ceiling, where plaster moulded in relief formed hexagonal panels painted blue and delicately arabesqued in gold. On the long panels of the wood-work Philippe Rousseau had painted the four seasons symbolically, not in mythological figures, but by trophies of still-life composed of the fruits appropriate to each season of the year. Game by Jadin corresponded to the fruits of Rousseau, and above each painting gleamed like the disk of a shield an immense plate by Bernard Palissy or Léonard de Limoges, of Japanese porcelain, Majolica or Arabian pottery, the glaze opalescent with all the colors of the prism. Stags' antlers and aurochs' horns alternated with the faience, and at each end of the room rose a large sideboard, as high as the altar-pieces in Spanish churches, of elaborate architecture and carved decoration, and rivaling the most beautiful works of Berruguete, Cornejo Duque, and Verbruggen. On their shelves glittered in confusion the antique silver of the Labinski family. Pitchers with fantastic handles, salt-cellars of ancient shape, large bowls, drinking-cups, centre pieces shaped by the quaint German fancy, all worthy of a place amid the treasures of the Dresden Green Vault. Opposite the antique plate shone the marvelous products of modern silverware. The masterpieces of Wagner, Duponchel, Rudolphi, and Froment-Meurice ; enameled tea-sets with figures by Feuchère and Vechte ; chased salvers, champagne coolers with vine-leaved handles, and bacchanals in bas-relief, chafing-dishes as graceful as the Pompeian tripods, not to mention the Bohemian crystal, the Venetian glass, and the services in old Saxe and old Sèvres.

Oak chairs covered with green morocco were ranged along the walls, and over a table of which the feet were carved like eagle's claws there fell a clear, equal light through the ground white glass set in the centre panel of the ceiling. A transparent wreath of vine-leaves framed this milky square with green foliage. On the table, set in Russian fashion, the fruit was already placed, surrounded by a garland of violets; and under silver covers that were polished like emirs' helmets, the viands awaited the knife and fork. A Moscow samovar hissed forth a jet of steam; and two footmen in knee-breeches and white cravats stood silent and immovable behind the two arm-chairs, facing each other like domestic statues.

Octave, in order not to be involuntarily preoccupied by the novelty of objects with which he ought to have been familiar, took in all these things at a glance.

A rustle on the marble slabs, a murmur of silk, made him turn his head. It was the Countess Prascovie Labinska who approached and seated herself, after making him an amicable little gesture. She wore a morning gown of pale green and white plaid silk trimmed with a pinked ruching of the same material. Her hair lay in thick waves on her temples, and was gathered at the nape of her neck in a golden coil resembling the scroll of an Ionian pillar, a style as simple as it was dignified, and which a Greek sculptor could not have wished to change. Her rose-tinted cheeks were delicately blanched by the evening's emotion and the agitated sleep of the night. An imperceptible aureole of shadow encircled her eyes, usually so clear and calm. She had a weary, languid air; but thus softened, her beauty was only the more penetrating; it acquired a human touch, the goddess became a woman, the angel, folding her wings, ceased to soar.

Octave, grown prudent, veiled the flame in his eyes with a look of indifference.

The countess, with a slight motion of the shoulders as if chilled by a remnant of fever, stretched out her small bronze-slippered foot to the silky wool of a rug that had been placed under the table to neutralize the cold contact of the mosaic of white and Veronese variegated marble which paved the dining-room. Fixing her blue eyes on her companion, whom she took for her husband, for with the daylight had vanished the presentiments, the fears, and the phantoms of the night, she spoke a sentence in Polish in a tender, melodious voice, rich with chaste caresses. In moments of affection and intimacy she often used the dear maternal language with the count, especially in the presence of French servants to whom this idiom was unfamiliar.

The Parisian Octave was well up in Latin, Italian, Spanish, and knew a few words of English; but, like all Gallo-Romans, he was entirely ignorant of the Slavic tongues. The bristling bastion of consonants which protects the rare vowels in Polish would have inhibited his access even had he wished to approach it. In Florence the countess had always spoken to him in French or Italian, and the idea of learning the language in which Mickiewicz has almost equaled Byron had not occurred to him. It is impossible to think of everything.

On hearing this phrase, there took place in the count's brain, inhabited by the mind of Octave, a very singular phenomenon. The sounds, so strange to the Parisian, following the folds of a Slav ear reached the usual place where Olaf's mind received and transferred them into thoughts, and evoked there a sort of physical remembrance. Octave had a confused idea of their meaning; words hidden in the cerebral circumvolutions, in the secret recesses of memory, arose buzzing, ready to reply; but these vague reminiscences, failing to communicate with the mind, soon dispersed, and all was again a blank. The poor lover's embarrassment was dreadful; in taking the form of Count Olaf Labinski, he had not dreamed of this complication, and he realized that in seizing his position he had exposed himself to severe disasters.

Astonished at Octave's silence, and fancying that through some momentary abstraction he had not heard her, Prascovie repeated her remark slowly and in a louder tone.

If he heard more plainly the sound of the words, the pseudo-count understood their signification none the better. He made desperate efforts to guess what it might be about, but for those who do not know them the dense languages of the North have no transparency, and if a Frenchman can surmise what an Italian says, he is deaf when listening to a Pole. In spite of himself, a violent blush covered his cheeks, he bit his lips, and to keep himself in countenance hacked furiously at the meat on his plate.

"One would certainly suppose, my sweet

prince," said the countess this time in French, "that you do not hear, or that you do not understand me."

"Really," faltered Octave-Labinski, hardly knowing what he said, "that terrible language is so difficult!"

"Difficult! Yes! perhaps it is for strangers; but for those who have stammered it at their mother's knee it springs from the lips like the breath of life, and with the unconsciousness of thought."

"Yes, doubtless; but there are times when it seems to me as if I no longer know it."

"What are you saying, Olaf? What! you have forgotten the language of your ancestors, the language of the Fatherland, the language which enables you to recognize your brothers among men, and," added she in a lower voice, "the language in which you first told me you loved me!"

"The habit of using another tongue" . . . ventured Octave-Labinski, at the end of his arguments.

"Olaf," answered the countess reproachfully, "I see that Paris has spoiled you; I was right in not wishing to come here. Who could have told me that when the noble Count Labinski returned to his domains he would no longer know how to reply to the felicitations of his vassals?"

Prascovie's charming countenance assumed a doleful expression; for the first time sadness cast its shadow on her angelically smooth brow. This strange forgetfulness wounded her inmost soul, and seemed almost treasonable.

The rest of the breakfast passed in silence. Prascovie frowned on the man whom she thought the count. Octave was in torment, for he dreaded other questions which he would be compelled to leave unanswered. At last the countess rose and returned to her rooms.

Left alone, Octave played with the handle of a knife which he was tempted to thrust in his heart, for his situation was unbearable. He had counted on a surprise, and now he found himself involved in the to him issueless labyrinths of an unknown existence. In assuming the body of Count Olaf Labinski he should also have taken from him his previous ideas, the languages he knew, his childhood's memories, the thousand intimate details which compose a man's self, the links binding his existence to the existences of others. But for that, all Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's knowledge would not have sufficed. What a fate! actually to be in this paradise whose threshold he had hardly dared glance at from afar, to live under the same roof with Prascovie, see her, speak to her, kiss her hand with the very lips of her husband, and yet be unable to deceive her divine modesty, and to betray himself every instant by some inexplicable stupidity! "It was written above that Prascovie would never love me! And yet I have made the greatest sacrifice to which mortal pride can descend; I have renounced my *self*, I have consented to profit under a strange form by caresses destined for another!"

At this point in his monologue a groom bowed before him and asked, with every sign of the deepest respect, what horse he would ride. Seeing that the count did not answer, the man, much frightened at his own boldness, risked murmuring, —

"Vultur or Rustem? they have not been out for a week."

"Rustem," replied Octave-Labinski, as he would have said Vultur had not the last name clung to his distraught mind.

He dressed for riding and started for the Bois de Boulogne, wishing to give his shaken nerves a bath of fresh air.

Rustem, a magnificent animal of the Nedji race, that carried on his breast, in an Oriental bag of gold-embroidered velvet, titles to a nobility extending back to the first years of the hegira, did not need to be roused. He seemed to understand his rider's thoughts, and as soon as he had left the pavements and struck the bridle-paths he started off, fleet as an arrow, before Octave had touched him with the spur. After two hours of hard riding the horseman and his beast returned to the hotel, the one quite calm, and the other fuming, with scarlet nostrils.

The pseudo-count joined the countess, whom he found in her drawing-room, dressed in a gown of white silk flounced to the waist, a knot of ribbon in her hair.

It was Thursday, the day on which she remained at home and received her visitors.

"Well," she said to him, with a gracious smile, for her beautiful lips could not pout for long, "have you regained your memory galloping in the alleys of the Bois?"

"No, my dear," replied Octave-Labinski, "but I have a confession to make."

"Do I not know in advance all your thoughts? Are we no longer transparent to each other?"

"Yesterday I went to see the physician who is so much talked about."

"Yes, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, who made a long stay in India, and has, they say, learned from the Brahmans a lot of secrets, each more marvelous than the other. You even wished to take me, but I am not curious; for I know you love me, and that knowledge is all I require."

"He made such singular experiments before me, he produced such miraculous effects, that my mind is still disturbed by them. This eccentric fellow, who has an irresistible power at his disposal, threw me into a magnetic sleep so profound that on awakening I no longer had the same faculties. I had lost the remembrance of many things. The past floated in a mist of obscurity; my love for you alone remained intact."

"You were wrong, Olaf, to put yourself under the influence of this physician. God, who has created the soul, has the right to touch it," said the countess in a grave tone; "but man in attempting to do so commits an impious action. I hope that you will not go back there, and I hope, too, that when I say something agreeable to you — in Polish — you will understand me as you once did."

During his ride Octave had conceived this excuse of magnetism to palliate the errors which he could not fail to make in his new life. But his troubles were not ended. A servant opening the door announced a visitor.

"M. Octave de Saville."

Though he might have expected this meeting one day or another, at these simple words the real Octave trembled as if the trumpet of the last judgment had suddenly sounded in his ear. He had need to call up all his courage, and to tell himself that he had the best of the situation, to prevent himself from reeling. Instinctively he clutched the back of a chair, and thus managed to stand apparently firm and tranquil.

Count Olaf, clothed in the form of Octave, advanced towards the countess with a deep bow.

"The Count Labinski . . . M. Octave de Saville," said the countess, presenting the gentlemen.

The two men bowed coldly, and over the marble mask of worldly politeness which sometimes covers such evil passions shot savage glances at each other.

"You have grown formal since Florence days, Monsieur Octave," said the countess in a familiar and friendly tone, "and I was afraid I should leave Paris without seeing you. You were more assiduous at the Villa Salviati, and you were numbered among the faithful."

"Madam," the pseudo-Octave answered constrainedly, "I have traveled, I have been ailing, ill even, and on receiving your gracious invitation I asked myself whether I should profit by it, for one must not be an egotist and abuse the indulgence that people are good enough to have for a bore."

"Bored perhaps, but never a bore," replied the countess. "You have always been melancholy; yet does not one of your poets say of melancholy,

'After idleness, 't is the best of ills'?"

"It is a report which happy people spread to dispense themselves from pitying those who suffer," said Olaf-de Saville.

As if to beg his pardon for the love with which she had involuntarily inspired him, the countess cast a look of ineffable sweetness on the count, shut up in Octave's body.

"You think me more frivolous than I am; all real pain has my pity, and if I cannot relieve, I can at least commiserate. I would like to have had you happy, dear Monsieur Octave; but why have you immured yourself in sadness, why have you refused the life which came to you with its joys, its seductions, and its duties? Why have you refused my proffered friendship?"

These simple and sincere phrases impressed the two listeners differently. Octave heard in them the confirmation of the judgment pronounced in the Salviati garden by this perfect mouth unsoiled by lies; and Olaf, a proof of his wife's unalterable virtue, which nothing but diabolical cunning could overcome. And a sudden madness seized him on seeing his spectre animated by another soul installed in his own house. He sprang at the throat of the false count.

"Thief, brigand, rogue, give me back my body!"

At this most extraordinary action the countess rushed to the bell and the footmen carried out the count.

"That poor Octave has gone crazy!" said Prascovie while Olaf, struggling vainly, was being taken away.

"Yes," answered the real Octave, "crazy with love! Countess, you are decidedly too beautiful!"

XI.

Two hours after this scene the false count received from the real one a letter bearing the seal of Octave de Saville, — the unhappy dispossessed Olaf had no other at his disposal. It produced an odd effect on the usurper of Count Labinski's body to open a missive sealed with his own crest, but everything had to be peculiar in this abnormal position.

The letter contained the following lines, traced by a stiff hand, in a writing which looked like counterfeit, for Olaf was not accustomed to holding a pen with Octave's fingers: —

"Read by another than yourself, this letter would appear to be dated from a lunatic asylum, but you will understand it. An inexplicable combination of circumstances never before produced, perhaps, since the earth has turned about the sun forces me to act as no man has ever done. I write to myself and put on the address a name which is my own, a name which with my person you have stolen from me. I am ignorant of the plot of which I am the victim and of the circle of infernal illusions into which I have put my foot. You, of course, know all about it.

"If you are not a coward, the mouth of my pistol or the point of my sword will demand of you this secret on a ground where every man, honorable or infamous, answers the questions put to him. To-morrow one of us must have ceased to see the light of day. The universe is now too narrow for us both. I will kill my body filled with your lying spirit, or you will kill yours, wherein my soul rages at being imprisoned.

"Do not try to prove me crazy. I shall have the strength to be reasonable, and everywhere I meet you I will insult you with the politeness of a gentleman and the coolness of a diplomat. The Count Olaf Labinski's mustache may displease M. Octave de Saville, and, every day, feet are trodden on at the exit of the Opéra. I trust that my words, though obscure, will have no ambiguity for you, and that my seconds will come to a perfect understanding with yours as to the hour, the place, and the conditions of the duel."

This letter threw Octave into a quandary. He could not refuse the count's challenge, and yet it went against him to fight with himself, for he had kept a sort of tenderness for his old envelope. The idea of being forced into this duel by some open insult made him decide to accept it, though if necessary he could have put his adversary into a lunatic's strait-jacket and thus stayed his arm; but his delicacy revolted at such a method. If carried along by an overpowering passion he had committed a reprehensible action and hidden the lover under the disguise of the husband to triumph over a virtue above all seduction, he was still a man not without honor and courage. Beside, he had not taken this extreme step until, after three years of struggle and suffering, the moment had arrived when his life, consumed by love, was escaping him. He did not know the count; he was not his friend, he owed him nothing, and he had profited by the hazardous means which Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau had offered to him.

Where find seconds? Of course among the count's friends; but Octave in the one day he had lived in the house had had no chance to meet them.

On the mantelpiece were two vases of china with gold dragons for handles. One held rings, pins, seals, and other trifling jewels, —

the other, visiting cards, on which, under the coronet of duke, marquis, or count, were inscribed by skilled engravers in Gothic, round, or English type a multitude of names, Polish, Russian, Hungarian, German, Italian, Spanish, and attesting the roving existence of the count, who had friends in every land.

Octave took two hap-hazard: Count Zamoieczki and the Marquis de Sepulveda. He ordered the carriage, and drove to their addresses. He found them both in. They did not appear surprised at the request of the man whom they thought Count Olaf Labinski. Totally devoid of the sensitiveness of middle-class seconds, they did not ask if the affair could be compromised, and like the perfect gentlemen they were maintained a silence full of good taste as to the motive of the quarrel.

On his side, the real count, or, if you like it better, the pseudo-Octave, was a prey to a similar embarrassment. He remembered Alfred Humbert and Gustave Raimbaud, whose breakfast he had refused to attend, and he requested them to help him in this encounter. The two young men showed considerable surprise at finding their friend involved in a duel, for he had hardly left his room in a year, and they knew his character was more pacific than quarrelsome. But when he had told them that it was a mortal combat, they made no further objections, and went to the Hotel Labinski.

The conditions were soon arranged. The adversaries having declared that sword or pistol suited them equally well, a gold coin thrown in the air decided the weapon. They were to meet in the Avenue des Poteaux of the Bois de Boulogne, near the rustic thatched summer-house, where the fine gravel offers a favorable arena for this sort of combat.

When all was settled it was nearly midnight, and Octave went to the door of Prascovie's apartment. As on the previous evening it was bolted, and the countess' mocking voice flung this sarcasm at him through the door, —

"Come back when you know Polish; I am too patriotic to receive a foreigner."

Notified by Octave, Dr. Cherbonneau came in the morning, carrying a case of surgical instruments and a roll of bandages. They entered a carriage together, MM. Zamoieczki and de Sepulveda following in their coupé.

"Well, my dear Octave," said the physician; "so the adventure is already turning into tragedy? I ought to have let the count sleep in your body on my divan for a week. I have prolonged magnetic slumbers beyond that limit. But even when one has learned wisdom from the Brahmans, the Pandit, and the Sanniasys of India, one always forgets something, and imperfections are found in the best combined plans. But how did Countess Prascovie welcome her Florence lover thus disguised?"

"I think," replied Octave, "that either she recognized me notwithstanding my metamorphosis, or else her guardian angel whispered in her ear to distrust me. I found her as chaste, as cold, as pure, as polar snow. Doubtless her exquisite nature divined a stranger under the beloved form of her husband. I told you truly that you could do nothing for me; indeed I am even more unhappy than when you paid me your first visit."

"Who can fix a boundary to the soul's power," said Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau thoughtfully, "especially when it is weakened by no earthly preoccupation, soiled by no human tie, and keeps itself in the glow and contemplation of love just as it left the Creator's hands? Yes, you are right; she recognized you, her heavenly modesty shrank at the look of desire, and instinctively veiled itself with its white wings. I pity you, my poor Octave! Your wound is indeed immedicable. Were we in the Middle Ages, I should say, Get thee to a monastery."

"I have often thought of it," replied Octave.

Presently they reached the meeting ground. The counterfeit Octave's brougham was already at the place designated.

At this early hour the Bois presented a really picturesque aspect, which later in the day fashion makes it lose. Summer was at that stage when the sun has not yet had time to darken the green of the foliage; fresh, translucent tints, washed by the night's dew, variegated the forest, and gave out an odor of tender vegetation. At this spot the trees are particularly fine; perhaps because they have encountered a more favorable soil, or because they are the only survivors of some old plantation. Their vigorous trunks, stained with moss or glossed with a silvery bark, clutch the earth with gnarled roots, and project oddly bent branches. They might have served as models for the studies of artists and decorators who go much further to seek less remarkable ones. A few birds, which later the day's noises silence, chirped gayly in the leafy retreat; a timid rabbit crossed the gravel of the alley in three bounds and ran to hide in the grass, frightened at the sound of the wheels.

These poems of nature surprised in undress occupied the two adversaries and their seconds very little, as you can imagine. The sight of Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau made a disagreeable impression on Count Olaf Labinski, but he recovered himself quickly.

The swords were measured, their places assigned to the combatants, who after taking off their coats fell into position.

"Ready!" the seconds cried.

In every duel, no matter what the fury of the adversaries may be, there is a moment of solemn immobility: each combatant silently studies his enemy and makes his plan, reflecting on the attack and preparing to parry and thrust. Then the swords seek, provoke, and feel each other, so to speak, without separating; that lasts several seconds, which seem minutes, hours, to the anxiety of the assistants.

The conditions of this duel, apparently commonplace to the spectators, were so abnormal for the combatants that they remained thus on guard longer than is customary. Each had in front of him his own body, and must drive the steel into flesh which had belonged to himself two days before.

The fight was complicated by a sort of unforeseen suicide, and, though both were brave, yet Octave and the count felt an instinctive horror at standing, sword in hand, face to face with their own phantoms, and ready to fall on themselves. The impatient seconds were about to cry again, "Gentlemen, are you ready!" when at last the blades crossed.

Several attacks were parried with agility on each side.

Thanks to his military education, the count was a skillful fencer; he had pinked the plastron of the most famous masters. But if he still had the method he no longer possessed the muscular arm which had routed the Mourides of Schamyl; it was Octave's weak wrist which wielded his sword.

Octave on the contrary felt, in the count's body, an unaccustomed strength, and though less expert, he always parried the steel which sought his breast.

It was in vain that Olaf strove to touch his adversary and risked thrusts which exposed himself. Octave, cooler and more steady, baffled every feint.

The count began to get excited, and his play grew nervous and uneven. Though he would then have to remain Octave de Saville, he wanted to kill this deceptive body which might even deceive Prascovie — a thought which lashed him into an inexpressible rage.

At the risk of being run through, he tried a straight thrust to reach, through his own body, the life and heart of his rival; but Octave's sword wound round his with such a quick, sharp, irresistible movement that the steel was wrenched from his hand, and springing in the air fell several steps away.

Olaf's life was at Octave's disposal; he had only to thrust and run him through.

The count's face quivered; not that he feared death, but he thought that he was about to leave his wife to this body-thief whom nothing hereafter could unmask.

Far from profiting by his advantage, Octave threw down his sword, and motioning to the seconds not to interfere walked towards the stupefied count, whom he took by the arm and dragged into the depth of the wood.

"What do you want with me?" said the count. "Why not kill me when you have the chance? Why not continue the duel after letting me recover my sword if it revolts you to strike an unarmed man? You know that the sun should not cast the shadows of both of us on the ground, and that the earth must receive one or the other."

"Listen to me patiently," replied Octave. "Your happiness is in my hands. I can keep forever this body in which I dwell to-day and which in legitimate propriety belongs to you. It suits me to acknowledge this now that there are no witnesses near us, and only the wild birds, who never repeat, can hear. Count Olaf Labinski, whom I represent as well as I can, is a better fencer than Octave de Saville, whose form you now have, and which I, much to my regret, would be obliged to suppress. This death, though not real, as my soul would survive, would desolate my mother."

Recognizing the truth of these remarks, the count maintained an acquiescent silence.

"If I should oppose it," continued Octave, "you would never succeed in reintegrating your identity; you see in what your two attempts ended. Other trials would stamp you as a monomaniac. No one would believe a word of your allegations, and, as you have already been able to convince yourself, when you pretended to be Count Olaf Labinski every one would laugh in your face. You would be shut up, and you would pass the rest of your life protesting under the shower-bath that you were actually the husband of the beautiful Countess Prascovie Labinska. Compassionate souls would say on hearing you: Poor Octave! And you would be disowned like Balzac's Chabert who wished to prove he was not dead."

This was all so mathematically true that the discouraged count let his head fall on his breast.

"As you are at present Octave de Saville you have doubtless searched his desk and rummaged among his papers, and you are not ignorant that for three years he has nourished for the Countess Prascovie Labinska a desperate, hopeless love, which he has tried in vain to tear from his heart, and which will only leave him with his life, unless it follows him to the tomb."

"Yes, I know it," said the count, biting his lip.

"Well, to reach her I have employed terrible means, on which a delirious passion alone would venture. Dr. Cherbonneau has attempted for me a task that would startle the thaumaturgists of the universe. After putting us both to sleep he changed the envelopes of our souls. But in vain! I will return you your body: Prascovie does not love me! Under the husband's form she recognized the lover's soul; her look was the same on the threshold of the conjugal apartment as in the garden of the Villa Salviati."

Octave's tone betrayed such true sorrow that the count had faith in his words.

"I am a lover," added Octave, smiling, "and not a thief, and as the only thing which I desired in this world cannot belong to me, I do not see why I should keep your titles, castles, lands, money, horses, and weapons. There, give me your arm; let us appear reconciled, thank our seconds, take with us Dr. Cherbonneau, and return to the magical laboratory from which we came forth transformed. The old Brahman will know how to undo his work."

"Gentlemen," said Octave, sustaining for a little longer the part of Count Olaf Labinski, "my adversary and I have exchanged confidential explications which render the continuation of the duel useless. There is nothing like crossing swords a bit to clear the minds of sensible people."

MM. Zamoieczki and de Sepulveda reëntered their carriage, and Alfred Humbert and Gustave Raimbaud regained theirs, while Count Olaf Labinski, Octave de Saville, and Dr. Cherbonneau drove at full speed towards the Rue du Regard.

XII.

During the transit from the Bois de Boulogne to the Rue du Regard, Octave de Saville said to Dr. Cherbonneau, —

"My dear doctor, I am about to test your science once more; you must restore our souls, each to its customary habitation. That should not be difficult for you. I hope that Count Labinski will not be angry at you for having made him change a palace for a hovel, and lodging his illustrious personality for some hours in my poor individuality. But then, you possess a power which fears nothing."

With an acquiescent gesture Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau replied: "The operation will be much simpler this time; the imperceptible filaments which hold the soul to the body have with you been recently broken, and have not had time to be renewed, and your minds will not form that obstacle which the instinctive resistance of the magnetized opposes to the magnetizer. The count will doubtless pardon an old erudite like myself for not having been able to resist the pleasure of putting in practice an experiment for which one finds but few subjects, and particularly as this attempt has only served to brilliantly confirm a virtue which carries delicacy to divination and triumphs where every other would have succumbed. If you wish, you can look on this momentary transformation as a strange dream, and perhaps, later, you will not be sorry to have experienced the odd sensation, which few men have known, of having inhabited two bodies. Metempsychosis is not a new doctrine; but before transmigrating into another existence the souls drink the cup of forgetfulness, and every one cannot, like Pythagoras, remember to have assisted at the Trojan war."

"The benefit of being reinstalled in my own individuality," the count answered politely, "equals the unpleasantness of having been expropriated from it; this is said without ill-feeling for M. Octave de Saville, whom I still am, and whom I am about to cease to be."

Octave smiled with the lips of Count Labinski at this sentence which could only reach him through another's envelope, and silence established itself between these three persons whose abnormal situation rendered all conversation difficult.

The unfortunate Octave thought of his vanished hope, and his reflections were not, it must be owned, precisely rose-color. Like all repulsed lovers, he still asked himself why he was not loved — as if love had a why! The only reason one can give it is the *because*, a reply logical in its obstinate laconism, and which women oppose to all embarrassing questions. Nevertheless, he recognized his defeat, and felt that the spring of life, which for an instant Dr. Cherbonneau had renovated for him, was newly broken, and rattled in his heart like that of a watch dropped on the ground. Octave would not have caused his mother the sorrow of his suicide; and he sought a spot wherein he might extinguish his unknown grief quietly under the scientific name of a plausible illness. Had he been an artist, poet, or musician, he would have crystallized his pain in masterpieces; and Prascovie, robed in white, crowned with stars, like Dante's Beatrice, would have hovered about his inspiration like an angel of light; but, as has been intimated at the beginning of this story, though well instructed and gifted, Octave was not one of those chosen spirits who imprint on this earth the trace of their passage. In his obscure sublimity he only knew how to love and die.

The carriage entered the court of the old hotel in the Rue du Regard, a court whose pavement was set in green grass through which the visitors' steps had worn a path, and which the high gray walls of the building inundated with shadow, like that which falls from a cloister's arcades; Silence and Immobility, like invisible statues, watched on the threshold protecting the meditations of the erudite.

When Octave and the count had alighted, the physician jumped from the carriage with a lighter step than one would have expected from his age, without even leaning on the arm which the footman offered to him with that politeness which servants of large establishments affect towards old or feeble persons.

As soon as the double doors had closed on them, Olaf and Octave felt themselves wrapped in the hot atmosphere which recalled to the physician that of India, and in which only he could breathe at his ease, but which almost suffocated those who had not, like him, been for thirty years torrified in tropical suns. The incarnations of Vishnu still leered in their frames, weirder by day than by lamplight; Shiva, the blue god, sneered on his pedestal; and Dourga, biting his callous lip with his wild boar's tusks, seemed to agitate his chaplet of skulls. The apartment retained its magical and mysterious appearance. Dr. Balthazar

Cherbonneau led his two subjects to the room where the first transformation had taken place. He turned the glass disk of the electric machine, shook the iron rods of the mesmeric battery, opened the hot-air registers to make the temperature rise rapidly, read two or three lines from parchments so ancient that they resembled old bark ready to crumble into dust, and, when several minutes had elapsed, said to Octave and the count, —

"Gentlemen, I am at your service; shall we begin?"

While the physician was making these preparations, disquieting reflections passed through the count's mind.

"When I am asleep, what is this old lugubrious-faced magician, who might be the devil himself, going to do with my soul? Will he restore it to my body, or will he carry it off to hell with him? Is not this exchange, which ought to give me back my happiness, a Machiavellian combination for some sorcery whose end escapes me? Still, my position could not be worse. Octave possesses my body, and, as he wisely remarked this morning, in reclaiming it with my present figure I should cause myself to be shut up as a lunatic. If he wished to put me definitely out of his way, he had only to drive in the point of his sword; I was disarmed, at his mercy; the justice of man could have said nothing against it; the form of the duel was perfectly regular, and it would have been done all in order. I must think of Prascovie and have no childish fears. Let me try the only way which is left me to regain her!"

And, like Octave, he grasped the rod which Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau presented to him.

Overpowered by the metal conductors, charged to the utmost with electric fluid, the two young men sank into an unconsciousness so profound that to any one unprepared for it it would have resembled death. The physician made the passes, performed the rites, pronounced the syllables as on the first occasion, and soon two luminous stars appeared above Octave and the count. The physician led to its original abode Count Olaf Labinski's soul, which followed the electrician's gesture with an eager flight.

During this time Octave's soul moved slowly from Olaf's body, and instead of rejoining its own, rose, rose as if glad to be free, and appeared indifferent to its prison. The physician was touched with pity for the fluttering, winged Psyche, and asked himself if it were a kindness to bring it back to this vale of misery. In this momentary hesitation the soul continued to ascend. Remembering his part, M. Cherbonneau repeated with the most imperious accent the irresistible monosyllable, and made a pass pregnant with volition, but the tiny quivering spark was already out of the circle of attraction, and swiftly traversing the upper pane of the window it disappeared.

The physician ceased making efforts which he knew to be useless, and awakened the count, who, seeing himself in a mirror with his usual features, gave a cry of joy, threw a glance at Octave's immobile body to make sure that he was thoroughly clear of that envelope, and with a nod of farewell to M. Balthazar Cherbonneau rushed away.

A few seconds later the muffled roll of a carriage under the arch was heard, and Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau was alone face to face with the corpse of Octave de Saville.

"By the trunk of Ganesa!" exclaimed the pupil of the Brahman of Elephanta when the count had gone, "this is a provoking affair. I opened the cage-door, the bird flew away, and now it is already beyond the sphere of this world, so far indeed that the Sannyâsi Brahma-Logum himself could not overtake it, and here am I with a corpse on my hands. It is true, I can dissolve it in a corrosive bath of such strength that not an appreciable atom will remain, or I can make of it in a few hours a beautiful mummy, like those inclosed in cases covered with variegated hieroglyphs; but inquiries will be started, my dwelling searched, my chests opened, myself subjected to all sorts of tiresome questions" . . . Here a bright idea crossed the physician's mind; he seized a pen and wrote rapidly a few lines on a sheet of paper, which he put in the drawer of his table.

The paper contained these words:

"Having neither relatives nor connections, I bequeath all my belongings to M. Octave de Saville, for whom I have a particular affection, on condition that he pays a legacy of one hundred thousand francs to the Brahmanic hospital of Ceylon for old, worn-out, and sick animals; that he gives twelve hundred francs yearly for life to my Indian and to my English servant; and that he sends the manuscript of the laws of Manu to the Mazarin library."

This testament made to a dead man by a living one is not the strangest thing in this story, improbable yet true; but the singularity of it will be at once explained.

The physician felt Octave de Saville's body, from which the warmth of life had not yet departed, looked in the glass, with a singularly disdainful air, at his own wrinkled face, tanned and rough like a zebra's skin, and making over his head the motion with which one throws off an old coat when the tailor brings a new one, he muttered the formula of the Sannyâsi Brahma-Logum.

Immediately, Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau's body fell to the floor as if struck by a thunderbolt, and that of Octave de Saville rose up in full strength and activity.

Octave-Cherbonneau stood for some minutes before the thin, bony, and livid carcass, which, no longer upheld by the powerful spirit that had before animated it, at once took on a look of complete senility, and rapidly assumed a cadaverous appearance.

"Farewell, poor human remnant, miserable out-at-elbow garment, frayed at every seam, which for seventy years I have dragged about the five parts of the globe! You did me good service, and I do not leave you without regret. One gets accustomed to living so long together! but with this young envelope, which my science will soon make robust, I can study, work, and read still a few words more in the great book before Death, saying 'It is enough!' closes it at the most interesting paragraph!"

After this funeral oration, addressed to himself, Octave-Cherbonneau went forth with a tranquil step to take possession of his new existence.

Count Olaf Labinski had returned to his house and had immediately sent to ask if the countess could receive him.

He found her in the conservatory seated on a bank of moss amid a virgin forest of exotic and tropical plants. The half raised panes of glass admitted the warm, bright air. She was reading Novalis, one of the most subtile, rarefied, and immaterial authors which German spiritualism has produced. The countess did not like books which paint existence in strong, real colors; and, from having lived in a world of elegance, love, and poetry, life appeared to her a trifle coarse.

She threw down her book and slowly lifted her eyes to the count. She feared to encounter again in her husband's dark pupils that ardent, stormy look, full of mysterious thoughts, which had troubled her so much, and which had seemed to her — foolish apprehension — the look of another!

In Olaf's eyes shone a serene joy, and a pure, chaste love burned in them with a steady fire; the stranger soul, which had so mysteriously changed the expression of his features, was gone forever. Prascovie at once recognized her adored Olaf, and a quick blush of pleasure colored her transparent cheeks. Though she was ignorant of the transformations performed by Dr. Cherbonneau, her delicate sensitiveness had unconsciously been aware of all these changes.

"What are you reading, dear Prascovie?" said Olaf, lifting from the moss the book bound in blue morocco. "Ah! the history of Henri d'Ofterdingen, — it is the same volume that I went full galop to get you at Mohilev, one day when you had expressed a wish for it at dinner. At midnight it was on the table beside your lamp; but poor Ralph was broken-winded ever after!"

"And I told you that I would never again mention the least desire before you. You have the character of that Spanish noble who prayed his mistress not to gaze at the stars, since he could not give them to her."

"If you looked at one," replied the count, "I should try to climb to heaven and ask it of God."

While listening to her husband the countess smoothed a refractory mesh of her hair which scintillated like a flame in a ray of gold. The motion had disarranged her sleeve, and uncovered her beautiful arm encircled at the wrist by the turquoise-studded lizard which she wore on the day of her apparition in the Cascine so fatal to Octave.

"What a fright that poor little lizard once gave you!" said the count. "It was when you had, on my insistent prayer, descended to the garden for the first time, and I killed it with the stroke of a switch. I had it dipped in gold and decorated with a few stones; but even as a trinket it still appeared disagreeable to you, and it was some time before you could bring yourself to wear it."

"Oh, I am quite accustomed to it now, and it is my favorite ornament, for it recalls a very dear remembrance."

"Yes," replied the count, "on that day we agreed that on the morrow I should make your aunt an official request for your hand."

The countess recognized the look and tone of the real Olaf, and reassured also by these intimate details, she rose smiling, took his arm, and made several turns about the conservatory with him, plucking with free hand as she went some flowers whose petals she pulled off with her fresh lips, looking as she did so like that Venus of Schiavoni's who is feasting on roses.

"As you have such a good memory to-day," she said, flinging from her the flower she had been mutilating with her pearly teeth, "you ought to have recovered the use of your mother-tongue . . . which yesterday you no longer knew."

"If souls retain a human language in paradise," answered the count in Polish, "it is the one my soul will speak in heaven to tell you that I love you."

Prascovie, still moving, let her head fall gently on Olaf's shoulder.

"Dear heart," she murmured, "now you are as I love you to be. Yesterday you frightened me, and I fled as from a stranger."

The next day Octave de Saville, animated by the spirit of the old physician, received a black-edged letter which begged him to assist at the funeral service and burial of M. Balthazar Cherbonneau.

Clothed in his new aspect, the physician followed his former body to the cemetery, saw himself buried, listened with a well-assumed air of regret to the address pronounced over his grave, in which the irreparable loss to science was deplored, and then returned to the Rue Saint Lazare and awaited the opening of the will he had made in his own favor.

That day could be read among the items of the evening papers :

" Dr. Balthazar Cherbonneau, known by his long sojourn in India, his philological knowledge, and his marvelous cures, was yesterday found dead in his laboratory. A most thorough examination of the body has banished all idea of a crime. M. Cherbonneau probably succumbed to excessive mental fatigue, or perished in some audacious experiment. It is said that a will in the testator's own handwriting leaves to the Mazarin library some extremely valuable manuscripts, and names as heir a young man belonging to a distinguished family, M. O. de S."

THE VENUS OF ILLE.

THE VENUS OF ILLE.

Γλεὼς ἤν δὲγὼ, ἔστω ὁ ἀνδρίας
καὶ ἤπιος, οὕτως ἀνδρεῖος ὤν.
Λουκιανου Φιλοψευδης.

BY PROSPER MÉRIMÉE.

I WAS descending the last slope of the Canigou, and though the sun was already set I could distinguish on the plain the houses of the small town of Ille, towards which I directed my steps.

"Of course," I said to the Catalan who since the day before served as my guide, "you know where M. de Peyrehorade lives?"

"Just don't I," cried he; "I know his house like my own, and if it were not so dark I would show it to you. It is the finest in Ille. He is rich, M. de Peyrehorade is, and he marries his son to one richer even than he."

"Does the marriage come off soon?" I asked him.

"Soon? It may be that the violins are already ordered for the wedding. To-night perhaps, to-morrow or the next day, how do I know? It will take place at Puygarrig, for it is Mademoiselle de Puygarrig that the son is to marry. It will be a sight, I can tell you."

I was recommended to M. de Peyrehorade by my friend M. de P. He was, I had been told, an antiquarian of much learning and a man of charming affability. He would take delight in showing me the ruins for ten leagues around. Therefore I counted on him to visit the outskirts of Ille, which I knew to be rich in memorials of the Middle Ages. This marriage, of which I now heard for the first time, upset all my plans.

"I shall be a troublesome guest, I told myself. But I am expected; my arrival has been announced by M. de P.: I must present myself."

When we reached the plain the guide said, "Wager a cigar, sir, that I can guess what you are going to do at M. de Peyrehorade's."

Offering him one, I answered, "It is not very hard to guess. At this hour, when one has made six leagues in the Canigou, supper is the great thing after all."

"Yes, but to-morrow? Here I wager that you have come to Ille to see the idol. I guessed that when I saw you draw the portraits of the saints at Serrabona."

"The idol! what idol?" This word had aroused my curiosity.

"What! were you not told at Perpignan how M. de Peyrehorade had found an idol in the earth?"

"You mean to say an earthen statue?"

"Not at all. A statue in copper, and there is enough of it to make a lot of big pennies. She weighs as much as a church-bell. It was deep in the ground at the foot of an olive-tree that we got her."

"You were present at the discovery?"

"Yes, sir. Two weeks ago M. de Peyrehorade told Jean Coll and me to uproot an old olive-tree which was frozen last year when the weather as you know was very severe. So in working, Jean Coll, who went at it with all his might, gave a blow with his pickaxe, and I heard *bimm* — as if he had struck a bell, and I said, What is that? We dug on and on, and there was a black hand, which looked like the hand of a corpse, sticking out of the earth. I was scared to death. I ran to M. de Peyrehorade and I said to him, — 'There are dead people, master, under the olive-tree! The priest must be called.'

"'What dead people,' said he to me. He came, and he had no sooner seen the hand, than he cried out 'An antique! an antique!' You would have thought he had found a treasure. And there he was with the pickaxe in his own hands, struggling and doing almost as much work as we two."

"And at last what did you find?"

"A huge black woman more than half naked, with due respect to you, sir. She was all in copper, and M. de Peyrehorade told us it was an idol of pagan times — the time of Charlemagne."

"I see what it is, — some virgin or other in bronze from a destroyed convent."

"A virgin! Had it been one I should have recognized it. It is an idol, I tell you; you can see it in her look. She fixes you with her great white eyes — one might say she stares at you. One lowers one's eyes, yes indeed one does, on looking at her."

"White eyes? Doubtless they are set in the bronze. Perhaps it is some Roman statue."

"Roman! That 's it. M. de Peyrehorade says it is Roman. Oh! I see you are an erudite like himself."

"Is she complete, well preserved?"

"Yes, sir, she lacks nothing. It is a handsomer statue and better finished than the bust of Louis Philippe in colored plaster which is in the town-hall. But with all that the face of the idol does not please me. She has a wicked expression, — and, what is more, she is wicked."

"Wicked! what has she done to you?"

"Nothing to me exactly; but wait a minute. We had gotten down on all fours to stand her upright, and M. de Peyrehorade was also pulling on the rope, though he has not much more strength than a chicken. With much trouble we got her up straight. I reached for a broken tile to support her, when if she does n't tumble over backwards all in a heap. I said, 'take care,' but not quick enough, for Jean did not have time to draw away his leg" —

"And it was hurt?"

"Broken as clean as a vine-prop. When I saw that I was furious, I wanted to take my pickaxe and smash the statue to pieces, but M. de Peyrehorade stopped me. He gave Jean Coll some money, but all the same, he is in bed still, though it is two weeks since it happened, and the physician says that he will never walk as well with that leg as with the other. It is a pity, for he was our best runner, and, after M. de Peyrehorade's son, the cleverest racquet player. M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade was sorry I can tell you, for Coll always played on his side. It was beautiful to see how they returned each other the balls. They never touched the ground."

Chatting in this way we entered Ille, and I soon found myself in the presence of M. de Peyrehorade. He was a little old man, still hale and active, with powdered hair, a red nose, and a jovial, bantering manner. Before opening M. de P.'s letter he had seated me at a well-spread table, and had presented me to his wife and son as a celebrated archæologist who was to draw Roussillon from the neglect in which the indifference of erudites had left it.

While eating heartily, for nothing makes one hungrier than the keen air of the mountains, I scrutinized my hosts. I have said a word about M. de Peyrehorade, I must add that he was activity personified. He talked, got up, ran to his library, brought me books, showed me engravings, and filled my glass, all at the same time. He was never two minutes in repose. His wife was a trifle stout, as are most Catalans when they are over forty years of age. She appeared to me a thorough provincial, solely occupied with her housekeeping. Though the supper was sufficient for at least six persons, she hurried to the kitchen and had pigeons killed and a number broiled, and she opened I do not know how many jars of preserves. In no time the table was laden with dishes and bottles, and if I had but tasted of everything offered me I should certainly have died of indigestion. Nevertheless, at each dish I refused they made fresh excuses. They feared I found myself very badly off at Ille. In the provinces there were so few resources, and of course Parisians were fastidious !

In the midst of his parent's comings and goings M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade was as immovable as rent-day. He was a tall young man of twenty-six, with a regular and handsome countenance, but lacking in expression. His height and his athletic figure well justified the reputation of an indefatigable racquet player given him in the neighborhood.

On that evening he was dressed in an elegant manner; that is to say, he was an exact copy of a fashion plate in the last number of the *Journal des Modes*. But he seemed to me ill at ease in his clothes; he was as stiff as a post in his velvet collar, and could only turn all of a piece. In striking contrast to his costume were his large sunburnt hands and blunt nails. They were a laborer's hands issuing from the sleeves of an exquisite. Moreover, though he examined me in my quality of Parisian most curiously from head to foot, he only spoke to me once during the whole evening, and that was to ask me where I had bought my watch-chain.

As the supper was drawing to an end M. de Peyrehorade said to me: "Ah! my dear guest, you belong to me now you are here. I shall not let go of you until you have seen everything of interest in our mountains. You must learn to know our Roussillon, and to do it justice. You do not suspect all that we have to show you, Phœnician, Celtic, Roman, Arabian, and Byzantine monuments; you shall see them all from the cedar to the hyssop. I shall drag you everywhere, and will not spare you a single stone."

A fit of coughing obliged him to pause. I took advantage of it to tell him that I should be sorry to disturb him on an occasion of so much interest to his family. If he would but give me his excellent advice about the excursions to be made, I could, without his taking the trouble to accompany me.

"Ah! you mean the marriage of that boy there," he exclaimed, interrupting me; "stuff and nonsense, it will be over the day after to-morrow. You will go to the wedding with us, which is to be informal, as the bride is in mourning for an aunt whose heiress she is. Therefore, there will be no festivities, no ball. It is a pity, though; you might have seen our Catalans dance. They are pretty, and might have given you the desire to imitate Alphonse. One marriage they say leads to another. Once the young people married I shall be free, and we will bestir ourselves. I beg your pardon for boring you with a provincial wedding. For a Parisian tired of entertainments — and a wedding without a ball at that! Still you will see a bride — a bride — well, you shall tell me what you think of her. But you are a thinker and no longer notice women. I have better than that to show you. You shall see something; in fact, I have a fine surprise in store for you to-morrow."

"Good heavens!" said I; "it is difficult to have a treasure in the house without the public being aware of it. I think I know the surprise in reserve for me. But if it is your statue which is in question, the description my guide gave me of it has only served to excite my curiosity and prepared me to admire."

"Ah! So he spoke to you about the idol, as he calls my beautiful Venus Tur; but I will tell you nothing. To-morrow you shall see her by daylight, and tell me if I am right in thinking the statue a masterpiece. You could not have arrived more opportunely. There are inscriptions on it which I, poor ignoramus that I am, explain after my own fashion; but you, a Parisian erudite, will probably laugh at my interpretation; for I have actually written a paper about it, — I, an old provincial antiquary, have launched myself in literature. I wish to make the press groan. If you would kindly read and correct it I might have some hope. For example, I am very anxious to know how you translate this inscription from the base of the statue: CAVE. But I do not wish to ask you yet! Wait until to-morrow. Not a word more about the Venus to-day!"

"You are right, Peyrehorade," said his wife; "drop your idol. Can you not see that you prevent our guest from eating? You may be sure that he has seen in Paris much finer statues than yours. In the Tuilleries there are dozens, and they also are in bronze."

"There you have the saintly ignorance of the provinces!" interrupted M. de Peyrehorade. "The idea of comparing an admirable antique to the insipid figures of Coustou!

'How irreverently my housekeeper
Speaks of the gods!'

Do you know that my wife wanted me to melt my statue into a bell for our church. She would have been the godmother. Just think of it, to melt a masterpiece by Myron, sir!"

"Masterpiece! Masterpiece! A charming masterpiece she is! to break a man's leg."

"Madam, do you see that?" said M. de Peyrehorade in a resolute tone, extending toward her his right leg in its changeable silk stocking; "if my Venus had broken that leg there for me I should not regret it."

"Good gracious! Peyrehorade, how can you say such a thing! Fortunately, the man is better. And yet I cannot bring myself to look at a statue which has caused so great a disaster. Poor Jean Coll!"

"Wounded by Venus, sir," said M. de Peyrehorade, with a loud laugh; "wounded by Venus, and the churl complains!

'Veneris nec præmia nôris.'

Who has not been wounded by Venus?"

M. Alphonse, who understood French better than Latin, winked one eye with an air of intelligence, and looked at me as if to ask, "And you, Parisian, do you understand?"

The supper came to an end. I had ceased eating an hour before. I was weary, and I could not manage to hide the frequent yawns which escaped me. Madame de Peyrehorade was the first to notice them, and remarked that it was time to go to bed. Then followed fresh apologies for the poor accommodations I would have. I would not be as well off as in Paris. It was so uncomfortable in the provinces! Indulgence was needed for the Roussillonnais. Notwithstanding my protests that after a tramp in the mountains a bundle of straw would seem to me a delicious couch, they continued begging me to pardon poor country people if they did not treat me as well as they could have wished.

Accompanied by M. de Peyrehorade I ascended at last to the room arranged for me. The staircase, the upper half of which was in wood, ended in the centre of a hall, out of which opened several rooms.

"To the right," said my host, "is the apartment which I propose to give the future Madame Alphonse. Your room is at the opposite end of the corridor. You understand," he added in a manner which he meant to be sly, — "you understand that newly married people must be alone. You are at one end of the house, they at the other."

We entered a well-furnished room where the first object on which my gaze rested was a bed seven feet long, six wide, and so high that one needed a chair to climb up into it.

Having shown me where the bell was, and assured himself that the sugar-bowl was full and the cologne bottles duly placed on the toilet-stand, my host asked me a number of times if anything was lacking, wished me good night, and left me alone.

The windows were closed. Before undressing I opened one to breathe the fresh night air so delightful after a long supper. Facing me was the Canigou. Always magnificent, it appeared to me on that particular evening, lighted as it was by a resplendent moon, as the most beautiful mountain in the world. I remained a few minutes contemplating its marvelous silhouette, and was about to close the window when, lowering my eyes, I perceived a dozen yards from the house the statue on its pedestal. It was placed at the corner of a hedge that separated a small garden from a vast, perfectly level quadrangle, which I learned later was the racquet court of the town. This ground was the property of M. de Peyrehorade, and had been given by him to the parish at the solicitation of his son.

Owing to the distance it was difficult for me to distinguish the attitude of the statue; I could only judge of its height, which seemed to be about six feet. At that moment two scamps of the town, whistling the pretty Roussillon tune, *Montagnes régalades*, were crossing the racquet court quite near the hedge. They paused to look at the statue, and one of them even apostrophized it aloud. He spoke Catalonian, but I had been long enough in Roussillon to understand pretty well what he said.

"'There you are, you wench!" (The Catalonian word was much more forcible.) "There you are!" he said. "It was you then who broke Jean Coll's leg! If you belonged to me I'd break your neck."

"Bah! what with?" said the other youth. "It is of the copper of pagan times, and harder than I don't know what."

"If I had my chisel" (it seems he was a locksmith's apprentice), "I would soon force out its big white eyes, as I would pop an almond from its shell. There are more than a hundred pennies' worth of silver in them."

They went on a few steps.

"I must wish the idol good-night," said the taller of the apprentices, stopping suddenly.

He stooped and probably picked up a stone. I saw him unbend his arm and throw something. A blow resounded on the bronze, and immediately the apprentice raised his hand to his head with a cry of pain.

"She threw it back at me!" he exclaimed. And my two rascals ran off as fast as they could. It was evident that the stone had rebounded from the metal and had punished the wag for the outrage he had done the goddess. Laughing heartily, I shut the window.

Another Vandal punished by Venus! May all the desecrators of our old monuments thus get their due!

With this charitable wish I fell asleep.

When I awoke it was broad day. On one side of my bed stood M. de Peyrehorade in a dressing-gown; a servant sent by his wife was on the other side with a cup of chocolate in his hand.

"Come, come, you Parisian, get up! This is quite the laziness of the capital!" said my host, while I dressed in haste. "It is eight o'clock, and you are still in bed! I have been up since six. This is the third time I have been to your door. I approached on tiptoe:

no one, not a sign of life. It is bad for you to sleep too much at your age. And my Venus, which you have not yet seen! Come, hurry up and take this cup of Barcelona chocolate. It is real contraband chocolate, such as cannot be found in Paris. Prepare yourself, for when you are once before my Venus no one will be able to tear you away from her."

I was ready in five minutes, that is to say, I was half shaved, half dressed, and burnt by the boiling chocolate I had swallowed. I descended to the garden and saw an admirable statue before me. It was truly a Venus, and of marvelous beauty. The upper part of the body was nude, as great divinities were usually represented by the ancients. The right hand was raised as high as the breast, the palm turned inwards, the thumb and two first fingers extended, and the others slightly bent. The other hand, drawn close to the hip, held the drapery which covered the lower half of the body. The attitude of this statue reminded one of that of the *mourre* player which is called, I hardly know why, by the name of Germanicus. Perhaps it had been intended to represent the goddess as playing at *mourre*. However that may be, it is impossible to find anything more perfect than the form of this Venus, anything softer and more voluptuous than her outlines, or more graceful and dignified than her drapery. I had expected a work of the decadence; I saw a masterpiece of statuary's best days.

What struck me most was the exquisite reality of the figure; one might have thought it moulded from life, that is, if Nature ever produced such perfect models.

The hair, drawn back from the brow, seemed once to have been gilded. The head was small, like nearly all those of Greek statues, and bent slightly forward. As to the face, I shall never succeed in describing its strange character; it was of a type belonging to no other Greek statue which I can remember. It had not the calm, severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who systematically gave a majestic immobility to all the features. On the contrary, I noticed here, with surprise, a marked intention on the artist's part to reproduce malice verging on viciousness. All the features were slightly contracted. The eyes were rather oblique, the mouth raised at the corners, the nostrils a trifle dilated. Disdain, irony, and cruelty were to be read in the nevertheless beautiful face.

Truly, the more one gazed at the statue the more one experienced a feeling of pain that such wonderful beauty could be allied to such an absence of all sensibility.

"If the model ever existed," I said to M. de

Peyrehorade, "and I doubt if heaven ever produced such a woman, how I pity her lovers! She must have taken pleasure in making them die of despair. There is something ferocious in her expression, and yet I have never seen anything more beautiful."

"'*C'est Venus tout entière à sa proie attachée!*'" cried M. de Peyrehorade, delighted with my enthusiasm.

But the expression of demoniac irony was perhaps increased by the contrast of the bright silver eyes with the dusky green hue which time had given to the statue. The shining eyes produced a sort of illusion which simulated reality and life. I remembered what my guide had said, that those who looked at her were forced to lower their eyes. It was almost true, and I could not prevent a movement of anger at myself when I felt ill at ease before this bronze figure.

"Now that you have seen everything in detail, my dear colleague in antiquities, let us, if you please, open a scientific conference. What do you say to this inscription which you have not yet noticed?" He pointed to the base of the statue, and I read these words:

CAVE AMANTEM.

"*Quid dicis doctissime?*" he asked, rubbing his hands. "Let us see if we agree as to the meaning of *cave amantem!*"

"But," I replied, "it has two meanings. You can translate it: 'Guard against him who loves thee,' that is, 'distrust lovers.' But in this sense I do not know if *cave amantem* would be good Latin. After seeing the diabolical expression of the lady I should sooner believe that the artist meant to warn the spectator against this terrible beauty. I should then translate it: 'Take care of thyself if *she* loves thee.'"

"Humph!" said M. de Peyrehorade; "yes, it is an admissible meaning: but, if you do not mind, I prefer the first translation, which I would, however, develop. You know Venus's lover?"

"There are several."

"Yes; but the first is Vulcan. Why should it not mean: 'Notwithstanding all thy beauty, thine air of disdain, thou wilt have a blacksmith, a wretched cripple for a lover'? A profound lesson, sir, for coquettes!"

The explication seemed so far-fetched that I could not help smiling.

To avoid formally contradicting my antiquarian friend, I observed, "Latin is a terrible language in its conciseness," and I drew back several steps to better contemplate the statue.

"Wait a moment, colleague!" said M. de Peyrehorade, catching hold of my arm; "you have not seen all. There is another inscription. Climb up on the pedestal and look at the right arm." So saying, he helped me up, and without much ceremony I clung to the neck of the Venus with whom I was becoming more familiar. For a second I even looked her straight in the eyes, and on close inspection she appeared more wicked, and, if possible, more beautiful than before. Then I noticed that on the arm were engraved, as it seemed to me, characters in ancient script. With the aid of my spectacles I spelt out what follows, and M. de Peyrehorade, approving with voice and gesture, repeated each word as I uttered it. Thus I read:

VENERI TVRBVL . . .
EVTVCHES MYRO.
IMPERIO FECIT.

After the word 'Tvrbvl' in the first line it looked to me as if there were several letters effaced; but 'Tvrbvl' was perfectly legible.

"Which means to say?" my host asked radiantly, with a mischievous smile, for he thought the 'Tvrbvl' would puzzle me.

"There is one word which I do not yet understand," I answered; "all the rest is simple. Eutyches Myron has made this offering to Venus by her command."

"Quite right. But 'Tvrbvl,' what do you make of it? What does it mean?"

"'Tvrbvl' perplexes me very much. I am

trying to think of one of Venus's familiar characteristics which may enlighten me. But what do you say to 'Tvrbvlenta'? The Venus who troubles, agitates. You see I am still preoccupied by her wicked expression. 'Tvrbvlenta' is not too bad a quality for Venus," I added modestly, for I was not too well satisfied with my explanation.

"A turbulent Venus! A noisy Venus! Ah! then you think my Venus is a public-house Venus? Nothing of the kind, sir; she is a Venus of good society. I will explain 'Tvrbvl' to you — that is, if you promise me not to divulge my discovery before my article appears in print. Because, you see, I pride myself on such a find, and, after all, you Parisian erudites are rich enough to leave a few ears for us poor devils of provincials to glean!"

From the top of the pedestal, where I was still perched, I promised him solemnly that I would never be so base as to filch from him his discovery.

"'Tvrbvl,' — sir," said he, coming nearer and lowering his voice for fear some one besides myself might hear him, "read 'Tvrbvlneræ.'"

"I understand no better."

"Listen to me attentively. Three miles from here at the foot of the mountain is a village called Boulternère. The name is a corruption of the Latin word 'Tvrbvlnera.'

Nothing is more common than these transpositions. Boulternère was a Roman town. I always suspected it, but I could get no proof till now, and here it is. This Venus was the local goddess of the city of Boulternère; and the word Boulternère, which I have shown is of ancient origin, proves something very curious, namely, that Boulternère was a Phœnician town before it was Roman!"

He paused a moment to take breath and enjoy my surprise. I succeeded in overcoming a strong inclination to laugh.

"'Tvrbvlnera' is, in fact, pure Phœnician," he continued. "'Tvr,' pronounce 'tour'—'Tour' and 'Sour' are the same word, are they not? 'Sour' is the Phœnician name of Tyr; I do not need to recall the meaning to you. 'Bvl' is Baal; Bâl, Bel, Bul are slight differences of pronunciation. As to 'Nera,' that troubles me a little. I am tempted to believe, for want of a Phœnician word, that it comes from the Greek *νηρός*, moist, marshy. In that case, it is a mongrel word. To justify *νηρός* I will show you at Boulternère how the mountain streams form stagnant pools. Then, again, the ending 'Nera' may have been added much later in honor of Nera Pivesuvia, wife of Tetricus, who may have benefited the city of Turbul. But on account of the marshes, I prefer the etymology of *νηρός*."

He took a pinch of snuff in a complacent way, and continued:

"But let us leave the Phœnicians and return to the inscription. I translate it then: To Venus of Boulternère Myron dedicates by her order this statue, his work."

I took good care not to criticise his etymology, but I wished in my turn to give a proof of penetration, so I said,—

"Stop a moment, M. de Peyrehorade. Myron has dedicated something, but I by no means see that it is this statue."

"What!" he cried, "was not Myron a famous Greek sculptor? The talent was perpetuated in his family, and it must have been one of his descendants who executed this statue. Nothing can be more certain."

"But," I replied, "on this arm I see a small hole. I think it served to fasten something, a bracelet for example, which this Myron, being an unhappy lover, gave to Venus as an expiatory offering. Venus was irritated against him; he appeased her by consecrating to her a gold bracelet. Notice that *fecit* is often used for *consecravit*. The terms are synonymous. I could show you more than one example if I had at hand Gruter or Orellius. It is natural that a lover should see Venus in a dream and imagine that she commands him to give a gold bracelet to her statue. Myron consecrated the bracelet to her. Then the barbarians or some other sacrilegious thieves" —

"Ah! it is easy to see you have written romances!" cried my host, helping me down from the pedestal. "No, sir; it is a work of Myron's school. You have only to look at the workmanship to be convinced of that."

Having made it a rule never to contradict self-opinionated antiquarians, I bowed with an air of conviction, saying, —

"It is an admirable piece of work."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed M. de Peyrehorade, "another act of vandalism! Some one must have thrown a stone at my statue!"

He had just perceived a white mark a little above the bosom of the Venus. I noticed a similar mark on the fingers of the right hand. I supposed it had been touched by the stone as it passed, or that a bit of the stone had been broken off as it struck the statue, and had rebounded on the hand. I told my host of the insult I had witnessed, and the prompt punishment which had followed it.

He laughed heartily, and, comparing the apprentice to Diomede, wished he might, like the Greek hero, see all his comrades turned into white birds.

The breakfast bell interrupted this classical conversation, and, as on the preceding evening, I was obliged to eat enough for four. Then came M. de Peyrehorade's farmers, and, while he was giving them an audience, his son led me to inspect an open carriage, which he had bought at Toulouse for his betrothed, and which it is needless to say I duly admired. After that I went into the stable with him, where he kept me a half hour, boasting about his horses, giving me their genealogy, and telling me of the prizes they had won at the county races. At last he began to talk to me about his betrothed in connection with a gray mare which he intended for her.

"We will see her to-day," he said. "I do not know if you will find her pretty. In Paris people are hard to please. But every one here and in Perpignan thinks her lovely. The best of it is that she is very rich. Her aunt from Prades left her a fortune. Oh! I shall be very happy."

I was profoundly shocked to see a young man appear more affected by the dower than by the beauty of his bride.

"You are a judge of jewels," continued M. Alphonse; "what do you think of this? Here is the ring I shall give her to-morrow."

He drew from his little finger a heavy ring, enriched with diamonds, and fashioned into two clasped hands, an allusion which seemed to me infinitely poetic. The workmanship was antique, but I fancied it had been retouched to insert the diamonds. Inside the ring these words in Gothic characters could be discerned: *Sempr' ab ti*, which means, thine forever.

"It is a pretty ring," I said, "but the diamonds which have been added have made it lose a little of its style."

"Oh! it is much handsomer now," he answered, smiling. "There are twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds in it. My mother gave it to me. It is a very old family ring, — it dates from the days of chivalry. It was my grandmother's, who had it from her grandmother. Heaven knows when it was made."

"The custom in Paris," I said, "is to give a perfectly plain ring, usually composed of two different metals, such as gold and platina. The other ring which you have on would be very suitable. This one with its diamonds and its clasped hands is so thick that it would be impossible to wear a glove over it."

"Madame Alphonse must arrange that as she pleases. I think she will be very glad to have it all the same. Twelve hundred francs on the finger is pleasant. That other little ring," he added, looking in a contented way at the plain ring he wore, "that one a woman in Paris gave me on Shrove Tuesday. How I did enjoy myself when I was in Paris two years ago! That is the place to have a good time!" and he sighed regretfully.

We were to dine that day at Puygarrig, with the relations of the bride; so we got in the carriage, and drove to the château, which was four or five miles from Ille. I was presented and received as the friend of the family. I will not speak of the dinner, or the conversation which followed. I took but little part in it. M. Alphonse was seated beside his betrothed, and whispered a word or two in her ear now and then. As for her, she hardly raised her eyes; and every time her lover spoke to her she blushed modestly, but answered without embarrassment.

Mademoiselle de Puygarrig was eighteen years of age. Her slender, graceful figure formed a striking contrast to the stalwart frame of her future husband. She was not only beautiful, she was alluring. I admired the perfect naturalness of all her replies. Her kind look, which yet was not free from a touch of malice, reminded me, in spite of myself, of my host's Venus. While making this inward comparison, I asked myself if the incontestably superior beauty of the statue did not in great measure come from its tigress-like expression; for strength, even in evil passions, always arouses in us astonishment, and a sort of involuntary admiration.

"What a pity," I thought, on leaving Puygarrig, "that such an attractive girl should be rich, and that her dowry makes her sought by a man quite unworthy of her."

While returning to Ille, I spoke to Mme. de Peyrehorade, to whom I thought it only proper to address myself now and then, though I did not very well know what to say to her: "You must be strong-minded people in Roussillon," I said. "How is it, madam, that you have a wedding on a Friday? We would be more superstitious in Paris; no one would dare be married on that day."

"Do not speak of it," she replied; "if it had depended on me, certainly another day would have been chosen. But Peyrehorade wished it, and I had to give in. All the same, it troubles me very much. Supposing an accident should happen? There must be some reason in it, or else why is every one afraid of Friday?"

"Friday!" cried her husband, "is Venus' day! Just the day for a wedding! You see, my dear colleague, I think only of my Venus. I chose Friday on her account. To-morrow, if you like, before the wedding, we will make a little sacrifice to her — a sacrifice of two doves — and if I only knew where to get some incense" —

"For shame, Peyrehorade!" interrupted his wife, scandalized to the last degree. "Incense to an idol! It would be an abomination!

What would they say of us in the neighborhood?"

"At least," answered M. de Peyrehorade, "you will allow me to place a wreath of roses and lilies on her head: *Manibus date lilia plenis.* You see, sir, freedom is an empty word. We have not liberty of worship!"

The next day's arrangements were ordered in the following manner: Every one was to be dressed and ready at ten o'clock punctually. After the chocolate had been served we were to be driven to Puygarrig. The civil marriage was to take place in the town-hall of the village, and the religious ceremony in the chapel of the château. Afterwards there would be a breakfast. After the breakfast people would pass the time as they liked until seven o'clock. At that hour every one would return to M. de Peyrehorade's at Ille, where the two families were to assemble and have supper. It was natural that being unable to dance they should wish to eat as much as possible.

By eight o'clock I was seated in front of the Venus, pencil in hand, recommencing the head of the statue for the twentieth time without being able to catch the expression. M. de Peyrehorade came and went about me, giving me advice, repeating his Phœnician etymology, and laying Bengal roses on the pedestal of the statue while he addressed vows to it in a tragicomic tone for the young couple who were to live under his roof. Towards nine o'clock he went in to put on his best, and at the same moment M. Alphonse appeared looking very stiff in a new coat, white gloves, chased sleeve-buttons, and varnished shoes. A rose decorated his buttonhole.

"Will you make my wife's portrait?" he asked, leaning over my drawing. "She also is pretty."

On the racquet-court of which I have spoken there now began a game which immediately attracted M. Alphonse's attention. And I, tired, and despairing of ever being able to copy the diabolical face, soon left my drawing to look at the players. There were among them some Spanish muleteers who had arrived the night before. They were from Aragon and Navarre, and were nearly all marvelously skillful at the game. Therefore the Illois, though encouraged by the presence and advice of M. Alphonse, were promptly beaten by the foreign champions. The native spectators were disheartened. M. Alphonse looked at his watch. It was only half-past nine. His mother's hair he knew was not dressed. He hesitated no longer, but taking off his coat asked for a jacket, and defied the Spaniards. I looked on smiling and a little surprised.

"The honor of the country must be sustained," he said.

Then I thought him really handsome. He seemed full of life, and his costume, which but now occupied him so entirely, no longer concerned him. A few minutes before he would have dreaded to turn his head for fear of disarranging his cravat. Now he did not give a thought to his curled hair or his fine shirt-front. And his betrothed? If it had been necessary I think he would have postponed the wedding. I saw him hurriedly put on a pair of sandals, roll up his sleeves, and, with an assured air, take his stand at the head of the vanquished party like Cæsar rallying his soldiers at Dyrrachium. I leaped the hedge and placed myself comfortably in the shade of a tree so as to command a good view of both sides.

Contrary to general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball. It came skimming along the ground, it is true, and was thrown with astonishing force by an Aragonese who appeared to be the leader of the Spaniards.

He was a man of about forty, nervous and agile, and at least six feet tall. His olive skin was almost as dark as the bronze of the Venus.

M. Alphonse threw his racquet angrily on the ground.

"It is this cursed ring," he cried, "which squeezes my finger, and makes me miss a sure ball."

He drew off his diamond ring with some difficulty ; I approached to take it, but he forestalled me by running to the Venus and shoving it on her fourth finger. He then resumed his post at the head of the Illois.

He was pale, but calm and resolute. From that moment he did not miss a single ball, and the Spaniards were completely beaten. The enthusiasm of the spectators was a fine sight : some threw their caps in the air and shouted for joy, while others wrung M. Alphonse's hands, calling him the honor of the country. If he had repulsed an invasion I doubt if he would have received warmer or sincerer congratulations. The vexation of the vanquished added to the splendor of the victory.

"We will play other games, my good fellow," he said to the Aragonese in a tone of superiority, "but I will give you points."

I should have wished M. Alphonse to be more modest, and I was almost pained by his rival's humiliation.

The Spanish giant felt the insult deeply. I saw him pale beneath his tan. He looked sullenly at his racquet and clinched his teeth, then, in a smothered voice he muttered :

"*Me lo pagarás.*"

M. de Peyrehorade's voice interrupted his son's triumph. Astonished at not finding him presiding over the preparation of the new carriage, my host was even more surprised on seeing him racquet in hand and bathed in perspiration. M. Alphonse hurried to the house, washed his hands and face, put on again his new coat and patent-leather shoes, and in five minutes we were galloping on the road to Puygarrig. All the racquet players of the town and a crowd of spectators followed us with shouts of joy. The strong horses which drew us could hardly keep ahead of the intrepid Catalans.

We were at Puygarrig, and the procession was about to set out for the town-hall, when M. Alphonse, striking his forehead, whispered to me:

"What a mess! I have forgotten the ring! It is on the finger of the Venus; may the devil carry her off! Do not tell my mother at any rate. Perhaps she will not notice it."

"You can send some one for it," I replied.

"My servant remained at Ille. I do not trust these here. Twelve hundred francs' worth of diamonds might well tempt almost any one. Moreover, what would they think of my forgetfulness. They would laugh at me. They would call me the husband of the statue. If it only is not stolen! Fortunately, the rascals are afraid of the idol. They do not dare approach it by an arm's length. After all, it does not matter; I have another ring."

The two ceremonies, civil and religious, were accomplished with suitable pomp, and Mademoiselle de Puygarrig received the ring of a Parisian milliner without suspecting that her betrothed was making her the sacrifice of a love-token. Then we seated ourselves at table, where we ate, drank, and even sang, all at great length. I suffered for the bride at the coarse merriment which exploded around her; still, she faced it better than I would have expected, and her embarrassment was neither awkward nor affected.

Perhaps courage comes with difficult situations.

The breakfast ended when heaven pleased. It was four o'clock. The men went to walk in the park, which was magnificent, or watched the peasants, in their holiday attire, dance on the lawn of the château. In this way we passed several hours. Meanwhile, the women were eagerly attentive to the bride, who showed them her presents. Then she changed her dress, and I noticed that she had covered her beautiful hair with a be-feathered bonnet; for women are in no greater hurry than to assume, as soon as possible, the attire which custom forbids their wearing while they are still young girls.

It was nearly eight o'clock when preparations were made to start for Ille. But first a pathetic scene took place. Mlle. de Puygarrig's aunt, a very old and pious woman, who stood to her in a mother's place, was not to go with us. Before the departure she gave her niece a touching sermon on her wifely duties, from which sermon resulted a flood of tears and endless embraces.

M. de Peyrehorade compared this separation to the Rape of the Sabines.

At last, however, we got off, and, on the way, every one exerted himself to amuse the bride and make her laugh ; but all in vain.

At Ille supper awaited us, and what a supper! If the coarse jokes of the morning had shocked me, I was now much more so by the equivocations and pleasantries of which the bride and groom were the principal objects. The bridegroom, who had disappeared for a moment before seating himself at the table, was pale, cold, and grave.

He drank incessantly some old Collioure wine almost as strong as brandy. I sat next to him, and thought myself obliged to warn him. "Be careful! they say that wine" — I hardly know what stupid nonsense I said to be in harmony with the other guests.

He touched my knee, and whispered :

"When we have left the table . . . let me have two words with you."

His solemn tone surprised me. I looked more closely at him, and noticed a strange alteration in his features.

"Do you feel ill?" I asked.

"No."

And he began to drink again.

Meanwhile, amidst much shouting and clapping of hands, a child of twelve, who had slipped under the table, held up to the company a pretty pink and white ribbon which he had untied from the bride's ankle. It was called her garter, and at once cut into pieces and distributed among the young men, who, following an old custom still preserved in some patriarchal families, ornamented their buttonholes with it. This was the time for the bride to flush up to the whites of her eyes. But her confusion was at its height when M. de Peyrehorade, having called for silence, sang several verses in Catalan, which he said were impromptu. Here is the meaning, if I understood it correctly:

"What is this, my friends? has the wine I have drunk made me see double? There are two Venuses here" . . .

The bridegroom turned his head suddenly with a frightened look, which made every one laugh.

"Yes," continued M. de Peyrehorade, "there are two Venuses under my roof. The one, I found in the ground like a truffle; the other, descended from heaven, has just divided among us her belt."

He meant her garter.

"My son, choose between the Roman Venus and the Catalan the one you prefer. The rascal takes the Catalan, and his choice is the best. The Roman is black, the Catalan is white. The Roman is cold, the Catalan enflames all who approach her."

This equivocal allusion excited such a shout, such noisy applause, and sonorous laughter, that I thought the ceiling would fall on our heads. Around the table there were but three serious faces, those of the newly married couple and mine. I had a terrible headache; and besides, I do not know why, a wedding always saddens me. This one, moreover, even disgusted me a little.

The final verses having been sung, and very lively they were, I must say, every one adjourned to the drawing-room to enjoy the withdrawal of the bride, who, as it was nearly midnight, was soon to be conducted to her room.

M. Alphonse drew me into the embrasure of a window, and, turning away his eyes, said, —

"You will laugh at me — But I don't know what is the matter with me . . . I am bewitched!"

My first thought was that he fancied himself threatened with one of those misfortunes of which Montaigne and Madame de Sévigné speak:

"All the world of love is full of tragic histories," etc.

"I thought only clever people were subject to this sort of accident," I said to myself.

To him I said: "You drank too much Collioure wine, my dear Monsieur Alphonse; I warned you against it."

"Yes, perhaps. But something much more terrible than that has happened."

His voice was broken. I thought him completely inebriated.

"You know about my ring?" he continued, after a pause.

"Well, has it been stolen?"

"No."

"Then you have it?"

"No — I — I cannot get it off the finger of that infernal Venus."

"You did not pull hard enough."

"Yes, indeed I did — But the Venus — she has bent her finger."

He stared at me wildly, and leaned against the window-sash to prevent himself from falling.

"What nonsense!" I said. "You pushed the ring on too far. You can get it off to-morrow with pincers. But be careful not to damage the statue."

"No, I tell you. The Venus' finger is crooked, bent under; she clinches her hand, do you hear me? . . . She is my wife apparently, since I have given her my ring. . . . She will not return it."

I shivered, and, for a moment, I was all goose-flesh. Then a great sigh from him brought me a whiff of wine, and all my emotion disappeared.

The wretch, I thought, is dead drunk.

"You are an antiquarian, sir," added the bridegroom in a mournful tone; "you understand those statues; there is, perhaps, some hidden spring, some deviltry which I do not know about. Will you go and see?"

"Certainly," I replied. "Come with me."

"No, I would prefer to have you go alone."

I left the drawing-room.

The weather had changed during supper, and a heavy rain had begun to fall. I was about to ask for an umbrella, when a sudden thought stopped me. I should be a great fool, I reflected, to go and verify what had been told me by a drunken man! Besides, he may have wished to play some silly trick on me to give cause for laughter to the honest country people; and the least that can happen to me from it is to be drenched to the bone and catch a bad cold.

From the door I cast a glance at the statue running with water, and I went up to my room without returning to the drawing-room. I went to bed; but sleep was long in coming. All the scenes of the day passed through my mind. I thought of the young girl, so pure and lovely, abandoned to a drunken brute. What an odious thing a marriage of convenience is! A mayor dons a tri-colored scarf, a priest a stole, and then the most virtuous girl in the world is delivered over to the Minotaur! What can two people who do not love each other find to say at a moment, which two lovers would buy at the price of their lives? Can a woman ever love a man whom she has once seen coarse? First impressions are never effaced, and I am sure M. Alphonse will deserve to be hated.

During my monologue, which I abridge very much, I had heard a great deal of coming and going in the house. Doors opened and shut, and carriages drove away. Then I seemed to hear on the stairs the light steps of a number of women going towards the end of the hall opposite my room. It was probably the bride's train of attendants leading her to bed. After that they went down stairs again. Madame de Peyrehorade's door closed. How troubled and ill at ease that poor girl must be, I thought. I tossed about in my bed with bad temper. A bachelor plays a stupid part in a house where a marriage is accomplished.

Silence had reigned for some time when it was disturbed by a heavy tread mounting the stairs. The wooden steps creaked loudly.

"What a clown!" I cried to myself. "I wager that he will fall on the stairs." All was quiet again. I took up a book to change the current of my thoughts. It was the county statistics, supplemented with an address by M. de Peyrehorade on the Druidical remains of the district of Prades. I grew drowsy at the third page. I slept badly, and awoke repeatedly. It might have been five o'clock in the morning, and I had been awake more than twenty minutes, when the cock crew. Day was about to dawn. Then I heard distinctly the same heavy footsteps, the same creaking of the stairs which I had heard before I fell asleep. I thought it strange. Yawning, I tried to guess why M. Alphonse got up so early. I could imagine no likely reason. I was about to close my eyes again, when my attention was freshly excited by a singular trampling of feet, which was soon intermingled with the ringing of bells and the sound of doors opened noisily; then I distinguished confused cries.

"My drunkard has set something on fire," I thought, jumping out of bed. I dressed quickly and went into the hall. From the opposite end came cries and lamentations, and a heart-rending voice dominated all the others: "My son! my son!" It was evident that an accident had happened to M. Alphonse. I ran to the bridal apartment: it was full of people. The first sight which struck my gaze was the young man partly dressed and stretched across the bed, the wood-work of which was broken. He was livid and motionless. His mother sobbed and wept beside him. M. de Peyrehorade moved about frantically; he rubbed his son's temples with cologne water, or held salts to his nose. Alas! his son had long been dead. On a sofa at the other side of the room lay the bride, a prey to dreadful convulsions. She was making inarticulate cries, and two robust maid-servants had all the trouble in the world to hold her down. "Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "what has happened?"

I approached the bed and raised the body of the unfortunate young man: it was already stiff and cold. His clinched teeth and black face expressed the most fearful anguish. It was evident enough that his death had been violent and his agony terrible.

Nevertheless, no sign of blood was on his clothes. I opened his shirt, and on his chest I found a livid mark which extended around the ribs to the back. One would have said he had been squeezed in an iron ring. My foot touched something hard on the carpet; I stooped and saw it was the diamond ring. I dragged M. de Peyrehorade and his wife into their room, and had the bride carried there.

"You still have a daughter," I said to them. "You owe her your care." Then I left them alone.

To me it did not seem to admit of a doubt that M. Alphonse had been the victim of a murder whose authors had discovered a way to introduce themselves into the bride's room during the night. The bruises on the chest and their circular direction, however, perplexed me, for they could not have been made either by a club or an iron bar. Suddenly I remembered having heard that at Valencia *bravi* used long leather bags filled with sand to stun people whom they had been paid to kill. Immediately I thought of the Aragonese muleteer and his threat. Yet I hardly dared suppose he would have taken such a terrible revenge for a trifling jest.

I went through the house seeking everywhere for traces of house-breaking, but could find none. I descended to the garden to see if the assassins could have made their entrance from there; but there were no conclusive signs of it. In any case, the evening's rain had so softened the ground that it could not have retained any very clear impress. Nevertheless, I noticed some deeply marked footprints; they ran in two contrary directions, but on the same path. They started from the corner of the hedge next the racquet-court and ended at the door of the house. They might have been made by M. Alphonse when he went to get his ring from the finger of the statue. Then again, the hedge at this spot was narrower than elsewhere, and it must have been here that the murderers got over it. Passing and repassing before the statue, I stopped a moment to consider it. This time, I must confess, I could not contemplate its expression of vicious irony without fear; and, my mind being filled with the horrible scene I had just witnessed, I seemed to see in it a demoniacal goddess applauding the sorrow fallen on the house.

I returned to my room and stayed there till noon. Then I left it to ask news of my hosts. They were a little calmer. Mlle. de Puygarrig, or I should say the widow of M. Alphonse, had regained consciousness. She had even spoken to the *procureur du roi* from Perpignan, then in circuit at Ille, and this magistrate had received her deposition. He asked for mine. I told him what I knew, and did not hide from him my suspicions about the Aragonese muleteer. He ordered him to be arrested on the spot.

"Have you learned anything from Mme.

Alphonse?" I asked the *procureur du roi* when my deposition was written and signed.

"That unfortunate young woman has gone crazy," he said, smiling sadly. "Crazy, quite crazy. This is what she says:

"She had been in bed for several minutes with the curtains drawn, when the door of her room opened and some one entered. Mme. Alphonse was on the inside of the bed with her face turned to the wall. Assured that it was her husband she did not move. Presently the bed creaked as if laden with a tremendous weight. She was terribly frightened, but dared not turn her head. Five minutes, or ten minutes perhaps — she has no idea of the time — passed in this way. Then she made an involuntary movement, or else it was the other person who made one, and she felt the contact of something as cold as ice, that is her expression. She buried herself against the wall trembling in all her limbs.

"Shortly afterwards, the door opened a second time, and some one came in who said, 'Good evening, my little wife.' Then the curtains were drawn back. She heard a stifled cry. The person who was in the bed beside her sat up apparently with extended arms. Then she turned her head and saw her husband, kneeling by the bed with his head on a level with the pillow, held close in the arms of a sort of greenish-colored giant. She says, and she repeated it to me twenty times, poor woman! — she says that she recognized — do you guess who? — the bronze Venus, M. de Peyrehorade's statue. Since it has been here every one dreams about it. But to continue the poor lunatic's story. At this sight she lost consciousness, and probably she had already lost her mind. She cannot tell how long she remained in this condition. Returned to her senses she saw the phantom, or the statue as she insists on calling it, lying immovable, the legs and lower part of the body on the bed, the bust and arms extended forward, and between the arms her husband, quite motionless. A cock crew. Then the statue left the bed, let fall the body, and went out. Mme. Alphonse rushed to the bell, and you know the rest."

The Spaniard was brought in; he was calm, and defended himself with much coolness and presence of mind. He did not deny the remark which I had overheard, but he explained it, pretending that he did not mean anything except that the next day, when rested, he would beat his victor at a game of racquets. I remember that he added:

"An Aragonese when insulted does not wait till the next day to revenge himself. If I had believed that M. Alphonse wished to insult me I would have ripped him up with my knife on the spot."

His shoes were compared with the footprints in the garden; the shoes were much the larger.

Finally, the innkeeper with whom the man lodged asserted that he had spent the entire night rubbing and dosing one of his mules which was sick. And, moreover, the Aragonese was a man of good reputation, well known in the neighborhood, where he came every year on business.

So he was released with many apologies.

I have forgotten to mention the statement of a servant who was the last person to see M. Alphonse alive. It was just as he was about to join his wife, and calling to this man he asked him in an anxious way if he knew where I was. The servant answered that he had not seen me. M. Alphonse sighed, and stood a minute without speaking, then he said: "Well! the devil must have carried him off also!"

I asked the man if M. Alphonse had on his diamond ring. The servant hesitated; at last he said he thought not; but for that matter he had not noticed.

"If the ring had been on M. Alphonse's finger," he added, recovering himself, "I should probably have noticed it, for I thought he had given it to Mme. Alphonse."

When questioning the man I felt a little of the superstitious terror which Mme. Alphonse's statement had spread through the house. The *procureur du roi* smiled at me, and I was careful not to insist further.

A few hours after the funeral of M. Alphonse I prepared to leave Ille. M. de Peyrehorade's carriage was to take me to Perpignan. Notwithstanding his feeble condition, the poor old man wished to accompany me as far as the garden gate. We crossed the garden in silence, he creeping along supported by my arm. As we were about to part I threw a last glance at the Venus. I foresaw that my host, though he did not share the fear and hatred which it inspired in his family, would wish to rid himself of an object which must ceaselessly recall to him a dreadful misfortune. My intention was to induce him to place it in a museum. As I hesitated to open the subject, M. de Peyrehorade turned his head mechanically in the direction he saw I was looking so fixedly. He perceived the statue, and immediately melted into tears. I embraced him, and got into the carriage without daring to say a word.

Since my departure I have not learned that any new light has been thrown on this mysterious catastrophe.

M. de Peyrehorade died several months after his son. In his will he left me his manuscripts, which I may publish some day. I did not find among them the article relative to the inscriptions on the Venus.

P. S. — My friend M. de P. has just written to me from Perpignan that the statue no longer exists. After her husband's death Madame de Peyrehorade's first care was to have it cast into a bell, and in this new shape it does duty in the church at Ille. "But," adds M. de P., "it seems as if bad luck pursues those who own the bronze. Since the bell rings at Ille the vines have twice been frozen."

23

[redacted]

The IMPERIAL ORGY

EDGAR SALTUS

Hamilton Co
Scarsdale, New York

Hamilton Cottier
Scarsdale, New York

THE IMPERIAL ORGY

BY EDGAR SALTUS

HISTORIA AMORIS

IMPERIAL PURPLE

THE POMPS OF SATAN

MARY MAGDALEN

THE LORDS OF THE GHOSTLAND

THE PALISER CASE

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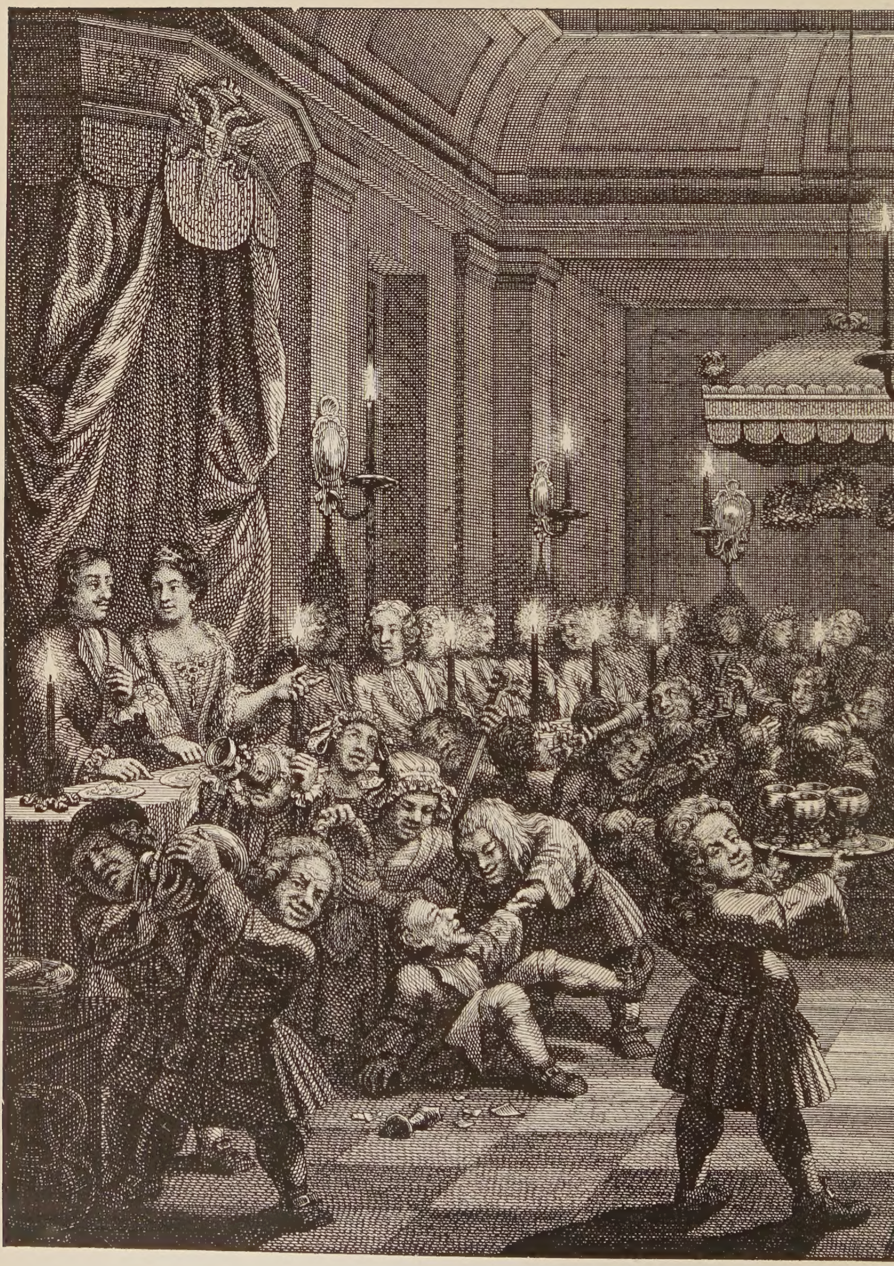
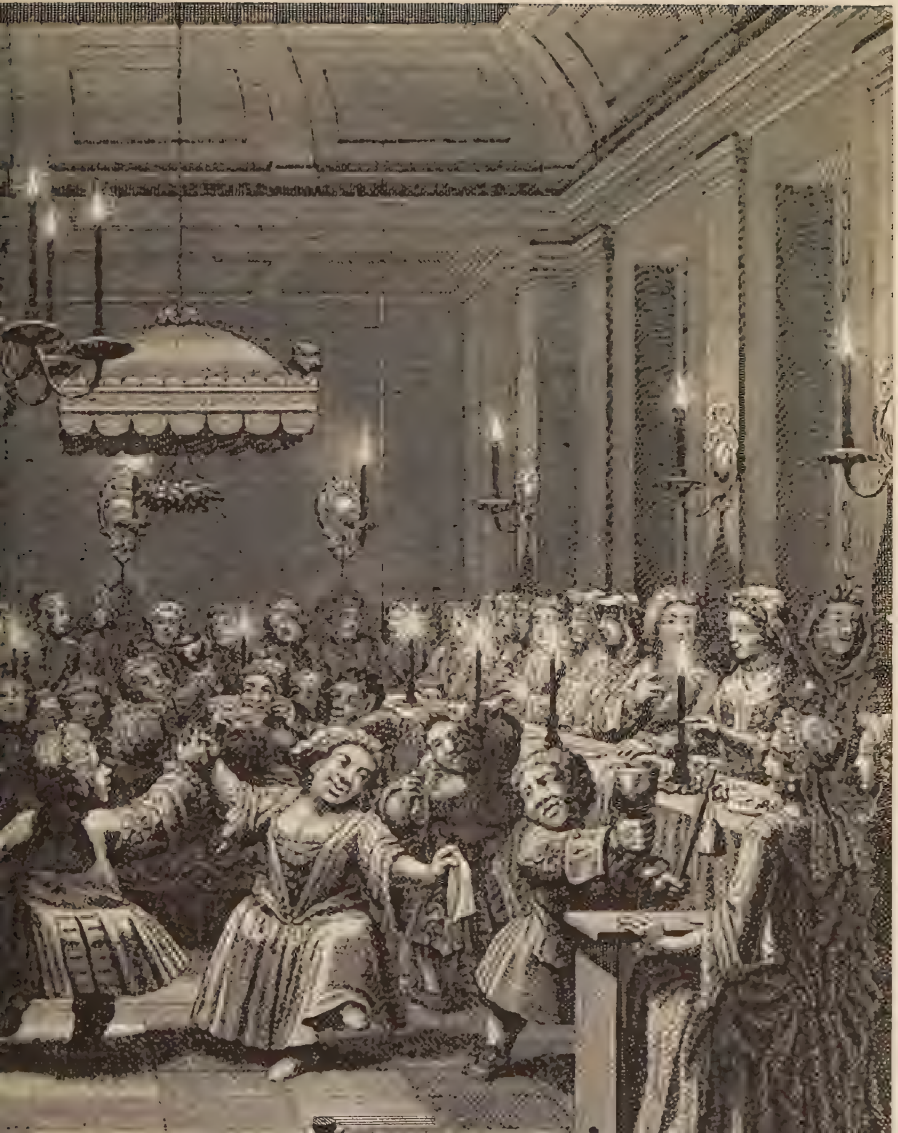


'PETER AT THE MARRIAG



F HIS FAVORITE DWARF

The Imperial Orgy

An Account of the Tsars from the First to the Last ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

EDGAR SALTUS

New York ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧
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To

O. S. C.

WITHDRAWN

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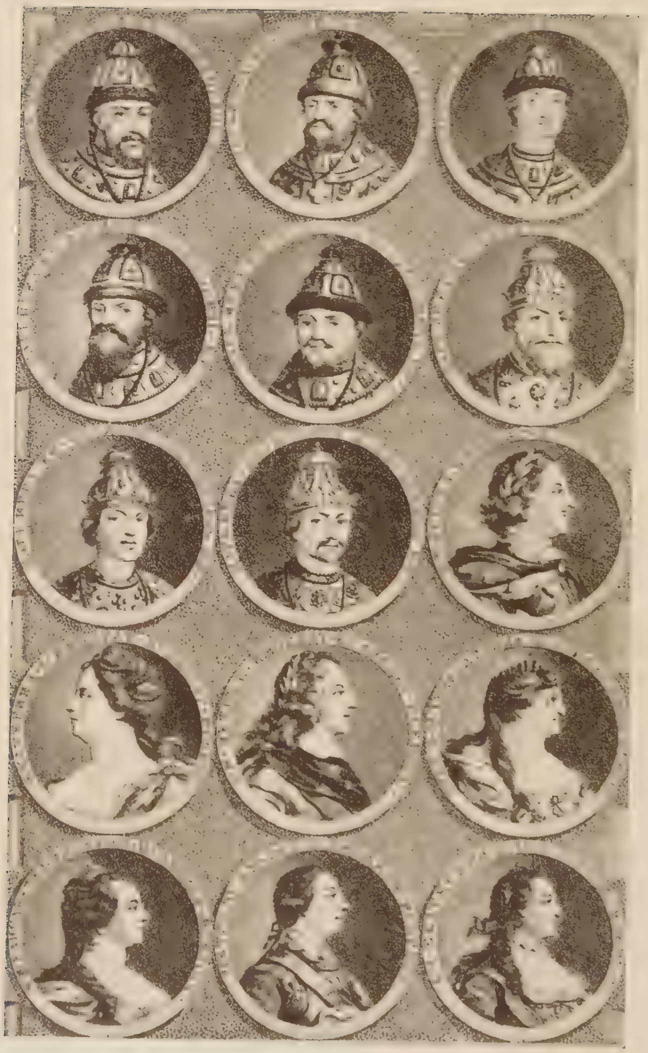
THE IMPERIAL ORGY



TSARS AND TSARITSAS

FROM IVAN TO CATHERINE II

THE IMPERIAL ORGY

I

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

TIMUR and Attila dwarf Ivan but not very much. In the fury with which Attila pounced on civilisation there is the impersonality of a cyclone. Timur was a homicidal maniac with unlimited power and a limitless area in which to be homicidal. Where he passed he left pyramids of human heads and towers made of prisoners mixed with mortar. Where Attila passed he left nothing.

Ivan turned cities into shambles and provinces into cemeteries. A cholera, corpses mounted about him. But death was the least of his gifts. He discovered Siberia. That was for later comers. For his immediate subjects he discovered something acuter. To them he was not cholera, he was providence.

From some he had the epidermis removed, after which they were flayed. Others he carved, a leg or an arm at a time, which he fed to hounds but seeing to it that the amputated were sustained with drink, that their vital organs were protected, seeing to it that they were tended, nursed, upheld, enabled as long as possible to look on at the feast of which their limbs were the courses. Others, tied in sacks, were trampled by maddened horses. But some danced to his piping. Put in cages they were burned alive.

The red quadrilles were invented not by him but by the dancing masters whom history called conquerors and who developed into kings. These beings were divine. They had the right to slay and crucify and they did crucify and slay those that wished to be free and those also that had disrespectful thoughts. To wish to be free was sacrilege. To be disrespectful was contrary to every law. In either case the penalty was death preceded by torture and what could be more reasonable? All men are mortal. To them all a divine providence dispensed the greatest possible variety of ills. Kings who were themselves divine imitated it all they could. It was in this manner that Ivan became a providence to his people.

Born in the early part of the sixteenth century and crowned when a lad, for nearly fifty years his sceptre was an axe. He killed, as hæmatomaniacs do kill, for the joy of it. Before killing he tortured. That also was a joy. It was not only a joy, it was his right. He possessed, in fee-simple, a sovereign monoply of evil.

To-day it seems incredible. There is something that exceeds it. To his quivering people he was a god, a god to be feared as divinity should be, but also to be adored. In life a mythological monster and in death a satyr, he was beloved. That is the incredible. It is also irrefutable. Karamsin, the historian of the early tsars, states it with pride. His statement annalists of the day confirm. When Ivan died, the nation in its entirety, not excepting the children of his victims, put on sackcloth and ashes. The horrors of his reign had fascinated Muscovy to the point of insanity.

In the history of Western Europe there is no parallel for his atrocities, nor is there any for the servility with which they were endured. In considering that abjection one cannot but conjecture that his subjects were insane. Perhaps they were. The acceptance of atrociousness is as insane as its perpetration. None the less and assuming the insanity of all concerned, Ivan had a purpose. That purpose he achieved. He put a seal on Russia, the seal imperial which was blood-red.

Russia then was Cimmerian. Ages earlier, to poets who had not been there, it was a land where gnomes fought for gold with griffons in the dark. The poetry tempted adventure. Triremes entered the Euxine, beyond whose hither coast the gold was rumoured to be. It must have gone, the goblins with it. Instead were whelps of demons that clothed themselves in human skins and who, through gaps of time, vanished utterly. It was forgotten that they had been. They were but brooding. In septentrional fens they lurked, separating and segregating into clans affiliated and yet distinct.

Ultimately, from the White Sea to the Black, a horde descended. They called themselves Slav, a word that means glory. The territory that they occupied was outside of Europe, outside of the world. Unknown, it had no name. It was not until the ninth century that it got one. The Slavs, meanwhile, might have been content to continue to be, had not the scenario of events prevented. Unknown, they were unmolested, consequently they fought among themselves, fought in fights internecine and therefore the fiercer, from which the victors emerged masters and the vanquished slaves. Masters are not necessarily amiable. These also fought and for the very human reason that each wanted to lead.

Equality does not tolerate grades. Precedence being impossible, from the roof of the world they haled a Norse pirate and gave him the *pas*.

The pirate was Rurik. He was chief of a crew of rowers, that is to say, of russi. Russia came then into being and with her a throne that was to become the tallest bit of furniture on earth, a throne so tall that when the last incumbent was tossed from it into Siberia, the trajectory was wider and higher than any that history has beheld. Vespasian, when his hour had come, gestured finely:—"This is death and an emperor should meet it standing." At death's approach, it is said that the last of the Russian emperors fainted.

Rurik was not emperor. He was the turnkey of the enigmatic door that opened on a history that was to be an uninterrupted crime and which, already a sea of blood, mirrored then a record of murders, sacks and massacres; a chronicle of nightmares tangled, obscure but always atrocious, and yet merely preludes, the overture to an empire's gestation or, more exactly, the preliminaries to the construction of the cage in which, bent double, the empire was to live.

From the sea of blood, pictures mount; gleams radiated from Byzantium, ascending cupolas, glittering domes, the torches of civilisation, art and beauty—submerged suddenly by an avalanche of Asiatics shoved over the Urals by the Khan of khans; the conquest of Russia by the Mongols; the lording of her by a despot whom it took years to reach.

More dimly are glimpses of peasants, heavy-witted as cattle, feeding like cattle on straw. Behind them rise the outlines of cities: of Novgorod that styled herself My Lord Novgorod, and of Moscow that from Mongol made Russia Muscovite and where the Rurikovitch lifted themselves into tsars. Additionally, there is a Rembrandt touch that was due to the khans. Sprung from hell they had sunk back there. For souvenir they left night.

Russia then was pitch-black, and not black merely but dumb, a desert of ignorance, a land apart, the pasturage of cattle that a hyena ruled. The cattle had one privilege, one only, but in itself very great, the right to obey. Serfdom, an invention of the operatic Boris Godounov, came later. Designed, very liberally, to prevent economic and military deficits, it turned cattle into fixtures, bound the peasant to the soil.

In the days and particularly the nights of Ivan, cattle were free, at least to die. Apart from that added privilege, they were useful to the upper classes, one of which Ivan composed uniquely. The remaining population was made up of prelates, nobles, vassals, whose lives and possessions were Ivan's absolutely, all in all, in the same manner that Russia was. The realm, his personal property, was a private estate. It lacked a fence. About it he ran a ring of forts. The estate became a park. In that park the modern history of Russia begins. In it germinated the seed of progress, the onward policy and the martyrology of uninterrupted crime.

The potential germ Ivan cultivated. Peter forced it into a fruit rotten before it was ripe. In a marvel of canning, Catherine brandied it. The rottenness remained. But the policy, which persisted, transformed a private park into an empire wider than the moon. It extended Russia from polar auroras to tropic blooms. It led the Bear through the Chinashop to the fangs of Japan. The rottenness, obvious there, threw her into convulsions and the delirium that ensued. Then again night closed on her.

Prior to Ivan there had been night only. It was he who pronounced the Fiat lux. Day dawned, a day blood-red which Torquemada looking on, or rather up, from his scarlet seat at Satan's left, must have envied, and which Domitian, from his sombrer couch at Pluto's right, may have regretted. Ivan, more sinister than either, more fiendish than both, was unexceeded in horror even by the khans.

During their dominion, Russia, shamming death, lay prostrate. Ivan raised her, not very much but still a little and left her on her knees. For centuries that was her attitude. That she might maintain it the more devoutly there were tall gibbets and hot vats. These things insure fealty. To heighten it, to make it instinctive, Ivan instilled awe.

In the Golden Horde, when the Khan of khans had dined, a herald announced that minor khans could eat. It was very gracious. The graciousness proceeded from a theory, which Genghiz Khan made a fact, that there is one sun —one—above, and one emperor—one—on earth. The rest of the world was offal. With minor variations, the Assyrian satraps, the pharaohs, the Cæsars, preluded Genghiz in that aria. It caught Ivan's ear, suited his voice. Absolutism with theocracy for leading motif and Tatar tom-toms for accompaniment was the way he rendered it. The aria had echoes and, the tomtoms aiding, so loud were they that yesterday, or the day before, you could have heard them. Through the centuries they reverberated from the first tsar to the last.

Ivan who had taken everything else, took the tomtoms and with them the tomtom players, the trained musicians of the Golden Horde who, in Slavonic, became opritchniki which, being translated, means assassins. At a gesture from Ivan, they cut your head off. Convenient for him, they were quite as convenient for his successors. In descending the centuries their name changed, but not their functions. Yesterday or the day before, they were known as the red guards. Instituted by the first tsar, they eliminated the last. They were certainly very serviceable.

The Descartian *Cogito ergo sum* had not then been formulated. Before it could be, Ivan reversed it. Cogitate and you no longer were. The aria with its tomtom accompaniments regulated not only actions but thoughts. To cogitate was not permitted. Even if it had been, no one dreamed of such a thing. Apart from that, restrictions were few. Obedience only was exacted and everything else forbidden. These measures, eminently considerate, were equally benevolent. Personal notions were sacrilegious and sacrilege, as everybody knows, is punishable not in this world merely, but in the next. Tortured here while you lived, hereafter you were tortured forever.

A very beautiful idea, it had perhaps its defects. It put a premium on imbecility. On the other hand, it created awe. Imbecility is sufficiently common. Awe is more rare. Without it absolutism could not have endured. Yet such are the abysses of human stupidity that wretches whom Ivan was torturing shrieked in their agony, "God save the tsar!"

At tsaral command, millions have vacated the planet. Why? They did not know. They omitted even to ask. Batushka—the Little Father—had so ordered. That sufficed. These people were not very intelligent. Perhaps Ivan was not either.

Karamsin says that he was intelligent. He says also that he was best read man in the realm. That may be true and mean nothing. Barring the Bible and a few histories quite as reliable, there was nothing to read. Ivan read the Bible. The hyena was devout. Religion led him from massacres to mass and back again.

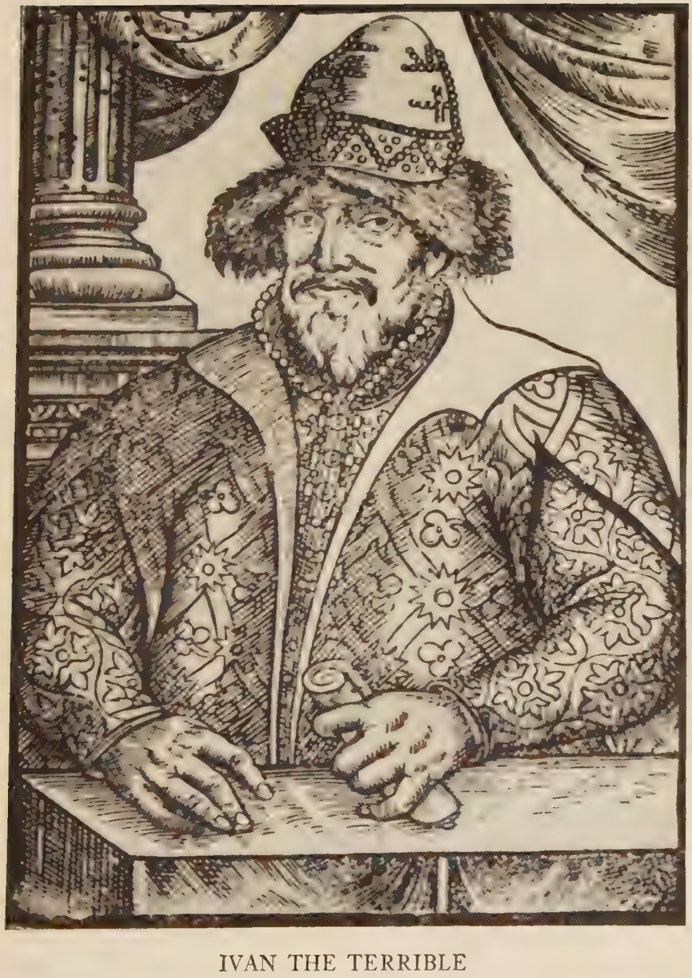
Bluebeard and Caracalla combined, he had seven wives of whom he only killed three. He tickled a child. The child laughed. He ran a knife down its throat. A boiar, not seeing him approach, omitted to grovel. To improve his sight his legs were broken. Another noble— But these are minor matters. Generally, the lackeys of history ignore them. Perhaps they were due to nervousness. Ivan was born in a storm which, it may be, predisposes to neurosis. But also he was born with a sceptre in his mouth. He was fourteen before he knew how to use it. At that age, a boiar displeased him. He had him thrown to the wolves, eaten alive. He was training then for the throne of Moscow.

In recent years, Moscow was a manufacturing town. Its specialty was silk. In Ivan's day its specialty was death. In the nineteenth century, there were high hats, yellow gloves, women's laughter, the tinkle of the balalaika and gypsies singing in the streets. In the sixteenth century, Moscow was dumb. Belfries tolled, the tocsin sounded. Apart from that there was silence.

From afar it enchanted. It seemed a city of sylphs in a land of chimeras. Nearer, it frightened. From afar it projected the glitter of glass, the sheen of enamel, the glow of mother-of-pearl, a crystallisation of spangles, ochre, azure, pink. Fairylike from afar, within was a conjury of constructions without a name and without example. The architecture was not Tatar, it was not Lower Empire, it was not Gothic. The renaissance had not come there. Greece was absent. Neither oriental or classic, it was tsaral. Around it circled rampants, white and pale rose. Without was Moscow, Russia's Mekka. Within was the Kreml, Moscow's heart.

Ivan was the ideal tyrant. The Kreml was a tyrant's ideal, a city of assassins that looked on a city of victims. Fortress, abattoir, seraglio, acropolis and necropolis in one, for a heart it was infernal.

Ivan was born there, lived there, died there, haunts it still. It was not his work, it was his portrait. With curious foresight it was built by Ivan's grandfather in Ivan's image. The architects were Italian. There were Italian architects everywhere. Nowhere, in no place, at any time, has Italian art created anything in any way similar. Like Ivan it was and remained unique. A charnel house may be grandiose, it cannot be sublime. The Kreml never allured. It did better. It alarmed. At the time, Moscow was the frontier of Europe, a barrier against the East. The Kreml menaced both. In its



IVAN THE TERRIBLE

turrets spectres watched, watch still perhaps. Like Ivan, it was inhuman.

Without the Kreml, at a turning to the left, is the Red Square. In the square is the Church of Vassili Blagennoi. The name of the architect is forgotten, but not his fate. To prevent him from elsewhere erecting a duplicate, Ivan tore his eyes out.

To-day it suggests a corner of some universe other than ours. But the immediate impression is one of emancipation. You feel that the architect was freed from the pale camisoles of what is correct. Critics have called him mad. Perhaps he was. It is only the mad who are delivered from the commonplace.

Here the deliverance is expressed in a solidified mirage that resembles a dragon and a peacock topped by flowers on fire, by painted icicles, by strawberries gigantic and glowing, by roses and rainbows that bewilder, delight, dismay. The effect, vividly abnormal, is that of an hallucination. It is a House of God perhaps, but of God as men may have known Him in Atlantis, when faith was nearer to nature than the divine. Primarily an evocation, it remains a marvel. Ivan's treatment of the architect has therefore an excuse, or at least Gautier found one for him:—"In matters of art, ferocity is preferable to indifference."

Behind the ferocity is a story that may be untrue but which Karamsin recites. During the siege of Kasan, Tatar sorcerers stood on the walls and with lifted robes vomited spells and insults at Ivan who, Cross in hand, outfaced them. In commemoration of the strategy, and of the victory that ensued, the Church of Vassili the Beatified was erected.

Ivan took Kasan from the Tatars as Ferdinand took Granada from the Moors. That recovery enthralled Castille. The recovery of Kasan enraptured Muscovy. It threw back the Golden Horde. It started the débâcle of the khans. After Kasan, Astrakhan and, with the latter, the Caspian.

These feats are notable. So, too, at the time, was Ivan. He was devout. He was brave. He was handsome. Terrible he was also, but only on the field. Presently his character changed, his appearance altered. Where the Christian had been came the saurian. From handsome he grew hideous. A hyena replaced the hero.

Perhaps a man's courage is in proportion to his humanity. Probably if the latter diminishes so does the former. It may be that psychological variations alter the lines of the face. As a lad, Nero was charming. The epileptically obscene changed him into a cringing beast. That and other influences affected Ivan. Bestial and remorseless at home, to foreign insults he bowed. He did worse, if worse can be.

There was Kasan. He offered to return it. There was Livonia. He gave it back. Livonia was the gate to Europe. Muscovy had fought for it with the Poles, with the Swedes, with the Livonians themselves. Muscovy had won it. Ivan owned it. It was his, with an insult for crown.

He had asked the Polish king for his sister in marriage. The answer he received was a white mare tricked out like a woman. The envoi was the king's expression of his supreme contempt. Ivan swallowed it. Subsequently, with a relatively innumerable army, with a relatively inexhaustible treasure, he surrendered Livonia, not at the point of the sword, but with a scratch of the pen. The bloodiest of sovereigns, who killed an elephant because it did not kneel at his bidding, had grown afraid of a man.

The result is curious. Ivan had seven wives whom he successively ignored, repudiated or killed. By the seventh he had a son, Dmitri, who lives in drama to-day. By the third he had a son, Fedor, who has survived in an opera. By the first there had been born to him the tsarevitch, a lad that he was training in crime and debauchery to reign when he had gone.

After the surrender of Livonia, the tsarevitch asked leave to go and fight the Poles. The request was innocently made; that is, if anything could be innocent in a hyena's whelp. But Ivan, construing the request as a criticism, raised a cudgel and struck him dead. Then, crocodilianly, the hyena wept.

Ivan exceeded Torquemada. He exceeded Tartuffe. Without any intention to abdicate, he announced that he would. It may be doubted that the martyrs loved their Roman butchers or that the Cæsars were affectioned by the saints. But Muscovy, to whom servility was a religion and, psychologically, a very interesting religion, beat her battered head against the throne. With tears and lifted hands she prayed that he would deign to continue to rule. To him, to rule was to kill and justified by the national genuflections, murder became not merely a joy but a duty, one that he so punctiliously fulfilled that, when he died, the desolation experienced was curious and even biblical.

Historically the desolation was profund, yet, unless any present conjecture is hopeless, it must have been less pronounced than the desolation which Ivan himself effected. In spite of his ultimate attitude to Poland, previously he had been terrific.

Poland at the time, predominant in the north, had for emblem the sun. Other tsars attended to that. They put it out. Ivan attended to Novgorod who had been stretching a hand to its rays. The attention involved, first the destruction of the surrounding country. For years it was bare. Famine stalked there and on the heels of famine, plague. Already Ivan had attended to the inhabitants.

Every day for a month, thousands were dispatched. Some were ordered to scaffolds, to cauldrons, to the river, where they were thrown wholesale. Some were hacked to pieces. Others were first hacked and then boiled. In the river, children were tied to their mothers. Guards, armed with pikes rowed among them, shoved them down. The guards and executioners wearied; Ivan never.

Occasionally he prayed. This was his prayer: "Remember, Lord, the souls of Thy servants, inhabitants of this town, whose names Thou knowest."

Incidentally he kept tally. One of the lists gives three thousand four hundred and seventy "whose names Thou knowest." On other lists, names that he had learned are itemised "with his wife," "with his wife and children," "with his sons and daughters."

The prayers at an end, the lists completed and filed, Ivan returned to Moscow where, in the Red Square, at the east wall of the Kreml, other traitors "whose names Thou knowest" waited.

Here were more cauldrons, more gibbets; saws that cut you in two; pincers that pulled your tongue out; machines that slipped you, like an eel, from your skin. Then as, leisurely, the first tortures began, Ivan, foaming like a horse, called at the tortured:—

"I am your god!"

Very consoling and equally true. To a people dumb and driven, he was a god, jealous perhaps, perhaps also severe, but so wholly divine that after the Novgorod ceremonies, ambassadors who passed that way found the Volga dammed by the corpses that the god had left.

For these envoys other things were in store, the surprise of discovering a new realm, a land that stretched between Europe and Asia, a monarchy whose sovereign was more formidable than the khans. It amazed them, as the unimagined always does amaze. But a detail surprised. In the faraway burgs and keeps from which they had come, they were clearly entitled to whatever was not taken away from them. In Russia, matters were ordered differently. There the ruler, after taking everything else, put the iron hand of absolutism on whatever his subjects possessed. Privileges and property, all were his, in fee-simple. Their right to breathe was subject to the caprice of a despot who had taken septentrional sables and bicephalous eagles for device and who called himself tsar.

The sables were indigenous, the eagles Byzantine, but the title tsar, a word that means power, originated in Assyria where it became the terminology of kings, notably of Nabonassar, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar. Muscovy, finding the title in the Slavonian translation of the Bible, gave it to the khans. It was from them that Ivan took it. Antecedent rulers had been grand princes, grand-dukes. In assuming the higher title, Ivan glorified the realm.

In the Kreml, where he held court, it would have been interesting to have seen him. On a throne of gold, that was set with two thousand diamonds—a present from a brother reptile, the Shah—a diadem on his hideous head, in one bloody hand he held the orb, symbol of sovereignty; in the other, the sceptre, symbol of power.

Horsey, an English tourist, who visited him and who was perhaps imaginative, says that the sceptre, three feet long, was a whale's tooth crusted with jewels, and that the robe he wore was so laden with other jewels that he could not move.

In that regalia, Ivan, hyena though he were, must have resembled Arpocrates, god of silence. About him, in kaftans of white satin, boiars stood, armed with silver hatchets. They did not speak. No one spoke. There was not a sound, not a whisper, not a movement. One would have thought the court bewitched. In the witchery of it, in that silence, on that throne, Ivan presented the spectacle—by no means commonplace—of absolute might. Presently he gestured, the court awoke and ambassadors and tourists approached the monster, who already divine, had taken on other aspects of divinity.

After the manner of Tlaloc, the lizard-faced god of the Aztecs, he made the rain and the fine weather. Those about him had nothing whatever, and very naturally since he had all. Consequently, on state occasions, he rained sunshine on them. Guards, nobles, the rest of the court, were given silks, satin, velvet, gems. The function at an end, the lizard-hyena saw to it that garments and jewels were returned.

That custom, which he originated, was afterward abrogated, but the theory of it, the theory that from the tsar everything emanated, that he alone was, that no one else is anybody, persisted and so sovereignly that patriotism became treason.

Treason at this time was not in the code, it was in the index. Patriotism was fealty and fealty religion. To the Russian, in his Greek Church, the tsar, the nation and the Almighty were entities barely differentiable. That idea, lunatic certainly, but an article of faith, endured and in enduring inspired, as it was intended to inspire, such awe that, until within relatively recent years, Russians got from their conveyances and threw themselves in the mud, in the snow, before a tsar as he passed.

Through a beautiful subversion of this idea, prelates in announcing Ivan's death, proclaimed that he had become an angel. At the death-notice Muscovy really grieved. That in itself partakes of the marvellous. What perhaps is more marvellous still is that with the grief astonishment mingled. An angel! It was unaccountable and not at all because of his fiendishness but because of local servility. An angel! Could he not have done better? Without effort it had been assumed that when he deigned to die he would be translated to the zenith ineffable.

Balzac said that it is not possible to conceive of an ugly angel. Perhaps he forgot Ivan who, just prior to his assumption, contrived to sully even the Kreml. Between those lines there is drama. Karamsin supplied the details. From them Alexis Tolstoi wrote a play:—*The Death of Ivan the Terrible.*

The mise en scène is a horrible room in the palace of horrors. In that vomitory of crime, Ivan, stretched on a bed of zibelines, was momentarily alone. Boris Godounov, a wolfman, had just left him.

Without, guarded by keepers, were men in peaked bonnets and the long, starred robes of Babylon.

It was adjacently that Ivan lay, but not quite alone. Death that tore tiaras from popes and sceptres from kings, reducing them all to the great proletariat of eternity, was there also. The men in starred robes had foretold it. Unknown to them, unknown, too, to Ivan, the wolfman had invited it.

A little before, from the red stairway of the red palace, Ivan had seen a comet. Was it a presage of his passing, he wondered? That he might know, he had summoned magicians, assembled astrologers, promising that if they lied he would kill them.

At the moment, to minister to Ivan, timidly, atiptoe, the wife of his son Fedor entered and fled aghast at his instant and monstrous lubricity.

Ivan laughed. Death? He had shamed it from him. Laughing still, he clapped. A page appeared. Ivan ordered. The soothsayers and their guards filed in.

Ivan, indicating the wizards, told the guards to take them out, take them away and burn them alive. They had lied. They had said he was to die that day. Make a bonfire of them!

Ivan turned, turned again. "Wait! The day is not done. Hold them until night. Then, the stake!

"Here!" he called at approaching pages. "Lead me to my treasure-hall."

That hall was floored with agate, roofed with gold. In it, jewels were heaped. There were bags of emeralds, bags of rubies, bags of pearls. There were crowns there, the crown of Muscovy, the crown of Kasan, the crown of Kiptchak, the crown of Siberia, the crown of Astrakhan, crowns on crowns, diamonds on gold, dust on blood. There were great silver bins piled one on top of the other, each replete with coin, with the sack of cities, with the spoil of provinces, with the riches of realms, with spectres, with tears.

With widening eyes, the miser-satyr stared. The hall had faded, the crowns had vanished, the glare had gone. There was nothing, blood only and mists of murdered men.

He wavered, staggered, fell. From out the mist death had leaped.

Ivan the Angel was winging his way on high.

A table remained. It was set. On it were chalices of power, flagons of grandeur, cups of mud and blood. The wine was there, the feast prepared. The imperial orgy had begun.

II

DMITRI THE SORCERER

GREECE had many shrines. There was one to every divinity. There was one to the unknown god. In Rome there were altars to every sin, except the sins unknown. Unknown sins were unimaginable. Two, that have become known since then, are indescribable. To-day, in words masked to the teeth, one is called cloacism; the other, masochism. Invented by the Tatars for the relaxation of batrachians and ghouls, afterward they were forgotten until, in Flanders and Champagne, they were revived by the Huns.

Ivan adopted them, took to them naturally, took to religion also. Ferocious felons are often devout. In the cathedrals of contemporaneous Spain, highwaymen sharpen their daggers while saying their prayers. From saurian abysses Ivan passed to the cloister. There he prostrated himself, protested his abasement, after which he returned to it.

During one of his religious crises, a son, Fedor, was conceived. He had another son, the lad whom he killed, and still another, Dmitri who was also killed, killed twice, killed three times, killed oftener perhaps, but who, in each instance, came to life again.

Russian history is packed with drama. In point of time, in point, too, of surprise, the Dmitri drama leads. Schiller attempted it, Goethe considered it, Soumarokov wrote it. It will be told in a moment. The story of Fedor comes first. Brief and unusual, it is like the tale of the Persian king who, invisible to his subjects, occupied himself with beautiful things.

Before Ivan became an angel, he instituted a pentarchy, a council of five—five boiars—nominally a ministry of affairs domestic and foreign, but whose actual ministry was limited to variations on the Byzantine formula:—"May I speak and live?" Among the five was Boris Godounov, whose sister Fedor had married. Ivan gone, the pentarchy led Fedor to the feast, seated him there, set the chalices before him.

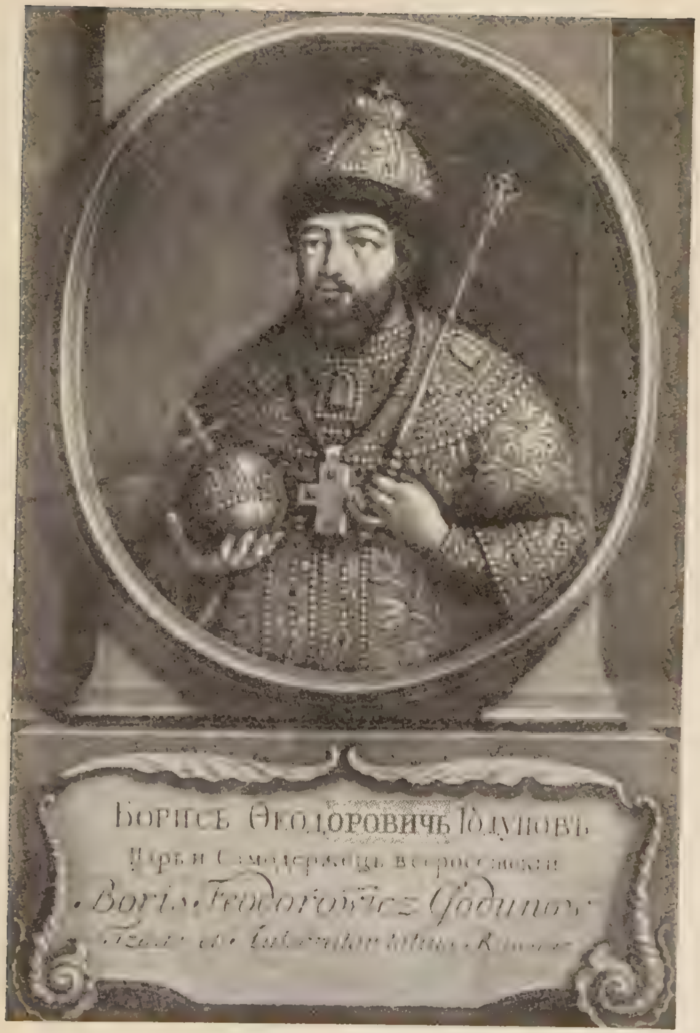
A dilettante in delicate emotions, the food was too rich, the wine too strong. Beyond were Persian tapestries. Abandoning the orgy to Boris, he retired behind them and thereafter occupied himself in going to mass and avoiding his wife.

The charm of missals—missals that pictured the twelve perils of hell—the ecstasy apprehensible in devotion, the harmony of grave hymns, the glow of ikons, these things appealed to him in ways which blood and mud never could. With fine levity, history has called him chaste. At least he was neither sensual nor drunken, abstentions very remarkable in those days and particularly in a son of Ivan. Fedor resembled his father as a fawn resembles a boa-constrictor. The table with its high festoons failed to detain him. But, an artist, he embellished Moscow. He gave it an avenue on which, in lieu of the pine isbas of Ivan's day, there were palaces, uncomfortable, unsanitary, but of stone, and more churches—already there were five hundred—and among them one in particular, a little gem, that held just seven souls.

On the palace walls he hung paintings that displayed the leading chapters of Russian history, the main events of the Bible. In the middle rotunda, from which a red stairway led, he put mosaics of saints and seraphs and, behind a screen of jewels, the Madonna. Above, in the centre of the arched roof, he added a sculptured lion holding in its teeth a twisted serpent from which the tsaral eagles swung. Beneath was the throne which he supplemented with the four monsters of the Apocalypse. These were of gold, the throne was gold, the walls were gold and about them he put gold and silver vases, some in the form of licornes and stags, others in the form of swans and peacocks and all so massive that, Karamsin says, it took a dozen men to move one of them.

These decorations effected, Fedor became a Persian king. It fatigued him to rule. From despotism he shrank. No tsar has been more the artist and less the autocrat than he. But no tsar has been artist at all—except in the divine business of ordering people off the earth. In that, each of the litter was hors concours. Fedor, with no criminal tendencies, with no orgiac tastes, effaced himself, abandoning Muscovy to a wolf.

Beauvois de Chauvincourt wrote learnedly on lycanthropy, concerning which it used to be heretical to disbelieve. Boris Godounov presented a prefectly defined case. A magnificent brute, Tatar on the distaff side, he looked the wolf, lived the wolf and made others die of that wolfishness. In the orgy that Ivan initiated, raveningly he had assisted. Very close to Ivan and always edging closer, finally he closed in on him. Ivan's abrupt ascension was caused by a poisoned brew which the wolf cooked and served him. The brew brought him close to the


Борисъ Ѳеодоровичъ Годуновъ
Царь и Самодержецъ всероссійскій
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BORIS GODUNOV

throne, to which he got closer, still closer, until he hugged it.

To-day, in operatic circles, his basso howl resounds. Moussorgski did reasonably well by him, though less happily perhaps than Glinka did with Mikhail Romanov, the insignificant insect around whom he composed *A Life for the Tsar*. One may regret that instead of that insect he did not take Fedor. The regret is idle. It was Fedor's destiny to live less in scores than in sanctity, a sancity, parenthetically, which Dmitri, his thoroughly demoniac brother, exceeded.

Dmitri, then a boy of seven, was a little savage, a trifle malformed. One of his arms was longer than the other. With his mother, he lived obscurely and afar at Ouglitch where he tortured kittens and puppies and made models in snow of the chief boiars whose heads he chopped off. The story of these traits, very promising, thoroughly Ivanesque, was probably invented. But Fedor was childless; also he was frail. The little savage was next in line. Boris licked his chops at both. One at a time.

Presently the little savage was murdered, or so it was reported. In those days murder was common and not at all criminal. But a tsarevitch was holy. His assassination was sacrilege. Immediately the obituary was corrected.

Dmitri had not been murdered. He had killed himself, accidentally, while at play, during which, knife in hand, he had a fit of epilepsy and the knife had cut his throat. The story may not be true, but at any rate he was dead, though how he died witnesses differed. That was very injudicious of them. The official version must prevail. Dmitri's mother was sent to a convent, other witnesses to their graves. Ouglitch was razed, the inhabitants exterminated. During the massacre, a bell tolled. What business had it to do that? Karamsin says that Boris exiled it, shipped it to Siberia. Excellent measure.

Dmitri then was thoroughly dead. Years later to make him deader, if that were possible, he was beatified and made a saint. In the Greek Church, to which orthodox Russia adhered, canonisation was less arduous than at Rome. The proponent's tomb was opened. If the body had not decomposed that miracle attested his sanctity. But a bone is part of the body; at a pinch, so, too, is a lock of hair. Given but these and the miracle subsisted. They sufficed for the young savage. Moreover, when his tomb was opened, a perfume, rarely delicious, issued from it. That in itself was enough, yet there was more. His remains, a bone and a hank of hair worked the usual wonders, effected the usual cures. In the same measure that Dmitri's death was beyond doubt, so also was his sanctity.

All this was years later. Fedor meanwhile had joined his angelic father. Boris remained. His sister blessed him; the boiars knelt to him. A wolf was tsar.

In his lair was a daughter, Xenia. Her eyebrows met, a mark of beauty then greatly admired and which when lacking was produced with a crayon. Baer, a Lutheran clergyman who was in Moscow at the time and who left a little bloody history of it, said that she seemed moulded in cream and spoke more elegantly than a book.

The rumour of these charms allured the Prince of Denmark to Moscow, where, although he was a foreigner, consequently a heretic and hated as such, Boris so feasted him that he died. It was said that he had been poisoned. Probably that was untrue, but thereafter other princes fought shy of this beauty for whom fate had in store a rôle which, on another stage, Louise de la Vallière immortalised.

Incidentally there were tortures, decapitations, butcheries, wars and sacks. Boris Godounov was becoming very terrible. There was a famine more terrible still, during which human flesh hung in the markets and a mother was seen eating her child.

With these harmonies for overture, the curtains parted on one of the great dramas of Russian history. At the court of Sigismond, king of Poland, abruptly, like a knight in a ballad, the dead Dmitri appeared. Sardou never did better.

Whether it were the real Dmitri, whether it were an impostor, or, as was afterward said, a sorcerer that then occupied the stage, no one now can say and, it may be that, save the chief actors, no one then could. The tale that was told was that relatives at Ouglitch, fearful of Boris and his wolfishness, had substituted a dead boy for the tsarevitch who was then hidden in a monastery which, years later, he abandoned and afterward joined the Cossacks.

The Cossacks, literally the Fighters, were hordes on horseback that had republics that were armies, but no chiefs, except in war, when they elected a despot and called him hetman. Among the cavalry republics was that of the Cossacks of the Don. Dmitri joined them and declared his rank, exhibiting, to prove it, various tokens; in particular, a cross of diamonds.

Diamonds then were not the articles of commerce that they have since become. Inhibited to the vulgar, they were reserved to the elect. Generally, there were laws on the subject: what is more potent, there were terrors. To anyone not born to the purple, the possession of a diamond was malefic. The evil repute of that hill of light, the Koh-i-nor, has no other origin. A belief in this malignancy, common among the simple to-day, was potent then. Moreover the pretender, young, virile, ugly—ugly with that ugliness that attracts—had an air sovereign and compelling. He looked the king. In addition to the cross, his appearance may have been confirmatory. In any event it served as passport to the court of Sigismond, who, perhaps, had issued the passport himself. That is possible. It may be that the claimant was really prince, but with the bend sinister, a natural son of this king who, for reasons of his own, wanted him on the throne of Russia.

Russians and Poles were like first cousins that loathe each other. Mutually antipathetic, they came of the same stock. But while the Poles, in their relative freedom, had developed the Slavic grace and gallantry, the Russians, under the Tatars, had degenerated into ignorant and superstitious brutes. Bathory, the antecedent king of Poland, had proposed to reunite the two nations. The proposition, advanced to Fedor, was rejected by Boris, fearful for his own regency and the domination which the superior civilisation might exert.

Sigismond, in seconding Dmitri, may have had the same idea. But that is conjectural, as is almost everything else concerning Dmitri, except that he was a demon and, what is far rarer, a man. He may have been Sigismond's son. He may have been Ivan's. He may have been neither. Concerning his origin there are texts by the ton, opinions all you like, but a certainty never, unless a mother's recognition may be so regarded. The mother of Dmitri Redux did recognise him as her son, or pretended to, and must have pretended, if pretend she did, because she was terrorised into it. Between those horns of the duenna, the reader may choose. The rest is fairy-tale, very bloody, equally dramatic, with a coup de théâtre for finale.

At Sigismond's court, Dmitri Redivivus encountered Iouri Mniszech, lord palatin of Sendomir, a great noble as greatly in debt, who also had a daughter, Maryna, another beauty, prima donna in the lyric drama that ensued. At first sight the two young people fell in love. Life became fair as a dream. The impoverished father sanctioned the engagement, the subtle king offered an army. Both had the throne in view:

Sigismond perhaps for himself, Mniszech certainly for his daughter. But while it does not appear that the king made any conditions, the father demanded sacks of the Kreml gold. To get the girl, Dmitri had to get the gold and to get the gold he had first to get the throne. It was the old Hesperidian story, told backward, told in Slav.

The encounterable difficulties were formidable. Boris had an army to maintain him. But here, as in every fairy-tale, the unbelievable enters. Muscovy, enthralled by the story of the resurrection of her lawful lord and weary of a werewolf's teeth, rose to Dmitri. The troops refused to fight against Ivan's son and heir. Very sensibly, too. At Dmitri's heels were long vistas of Poles and Cossacks; the former brilliant, glittering, yet frightful with the wings of great vultures which they wore on their helmets; the latter soberly and sombrely fierce.

Among the Muscovite troops, Boris, by way of counter-irritant, circulated a quadrille of monks who were, or who claimed to be, superiors of the monastery where the pretender had been. Violently they denounced him as an impious impostor, a youth of base origin whom again and again they had punished and for what? For sorcery!

The accusation, which afterward was shudderingly recalled, Dmitri traversed. He trapped the monks, put them to the question. On the peaks of torture three of them died. The fourth recanted. Dragged before Dmitri he collapsed, but he gasped:—"Behold the tsar!" In an effort to get him to his feet, those that stood about kicked him. He was dead.

The testimony lacked conclusiveness. To confirm it, something else was required. Dmitri's mother was in a convent. He invited her to join him. They met in a tent, very sumptuous, it is said, that had been erected for the purpose at the outskirts of Moscow. Within the tent, concealed from all, for a few moments they remained. Then, issuing from it, they embraced; the tsaritsa publicly acknowledging Dmitri as her son. Afterward, she was said to have said that, while in the tent, Dmitri threatened to kill her if she refused. That may or may not be true. But, at the time, who could doubt that he were tsar?

No one perhaps, not even Boris, particularly not Boris. The loupgarou may not have known the truth about Dmitri, but he knew it then about himself. In Beauvois de Chauvincourt's learned and very reasonable work on lycanthropy, it is stated that when a werewolf is cornered and cannot escape, he kills himself. Boris Godounov drank poison and just in time. Through the holy gate of holy Moscow, Dmitri was riding. He rode a white charger whose legs and tail had been dyed scarlet, a picturesque conceit intended to suggest that the horse had waded through blood.

At the entrance, dignitaries in gala dress tendered him a gold plate on which were bread and salt, the symbols of submission. Dmitri flung himself from that horse—the detail is typical—and strode—another typical detail—into the palace where, perhaps after an old manner of paying old debts, he made the fascinating Xenia his. The coronation followed and for a while this lad, he was only twenty-one, lived in state with a tsarevna for mistress.

In fairyland, kings and queens never appear without their crown and to Dmitri, the Kreml, vomitory of crime though it were, must have been fairyland then. Whether prince or impostor, his life had been rude. Hunger had been his bedfellow, peril his drink and suddenly, through one of the prodigious shuffles of fate, he was tossed from nowhere into everything.

Above him swung a gold bicephalous bird. Beneath the eagle was a panoply of canary brocade festooned with pearls that silver griffons upheld. Beneath the panoply, on a throne of gold, in a golden robe, he sat. About him were prelates in purple; princes in ermine. On his head was the crown; in his hand the sceptre. But at his feet, in the attitude of a slave, a man, old, fat, dressed and bejewelled as now only maharajahs are, held, with venomous and greedy fingers, the imperial sword.

That man, that slave, whom Dmitri had first disgraced and then raised to the position of valet, was Vassili Chouiski. Watch him! He is the villain in this drama of which all that has gone before is prelude.

Years earlier, in the remote obscurity in which the savage young tsarevitch lived, Vassili's had been the arm chosen by Boris to eliminate him. A Rurikovitch and as such with claims of his own to the throne, he had done the work, not for Boris, but for himself, a design which Boris thwarted. Since then he had bided and brooded and plotted and for what? At the very moment when he might have called Muscovy his, the dead young savage had revived, not merely to thwart him again but to disgrace him. Publicly, in the Red Square, Dmitri had had him knouted, as a preliminary to chopping his head off. Then, just when the axe was raised, Dmitri had laughed and pardoned, yet only to send him to Siberia and, as the cart was starting, had laughed anew, pardoned once more and made him his valet. Such vengeance might have envenomed a saint. Vassili was not a saint. A wretched, greedy old man, he bided and plotted.

With the careless temerity of youth, Dmitri abetted him. At the very beginning, in flinging himself from the crimson-legged charger and in striding into the palace, he affronted Moscow. A prince of Muscovy never strode. When he deigned to walk, though it were from one room to another, boiars supported him. When he rode, they lifted him up, held him in the saddle, lifted him down, treating him always like an idol. Dmitri was grand-duke and tsar, but primarily a man. He derided old customs and with them the abysmal Muscovite ignorance, which, like all else that was orthodox, Russia revered.

Former grand-dukes amused themselves with bear fights which they enjoyed from a balcony. A fight was arranged for Dmitri. He abandoned the balcony and killed the bear. It was a tsar's privilege to kill his subjects. But a bear, no. Moscow drew the line at that.

A yet graver affront was Dmitri's entourage. All Poles, they were all pagans, as all foreigners were. Other nations professed other creeds. That was their damnation. Russia alone was holy. Throughout the universe her lord was the one Christian king, and all other kings his slaves. But was Dmitri a Christian? Was he even Muscovite? He allowed the Polish hussars to enter the Church of the Mother of God with clanking swords and to squat there, leaning against the sacred ikons, to which he never bowed. His priests, it was said, were papists. But when it was said also that he was to marry a heretic, it was suspected that he could not be a Russian at all, rather, as Vassili Chouiski insinuated, a hireling employed by Sigismond to deliver Muscovy to the Polish king.

As novelists express it, the ground was prepared.

Into the gloom of the Kreml, Xenia meanwhile was fading. From a delight, she had become an ennui; from a vision, a shadow. Deeper into the gloom she passed. A convent opened and swallowed her. Dimitri nodded good-riddance. He, too, was preparing. Maryna was en route.

Already the treasure-chests had been opened. The sacks of gold were paid. Then, at last, came the bride. But to Moscow, how indecently!

In a chariot drawn by eight horses that were tricked out and painted to resemble tigers, she appeared, dressed after the manner of Marie de Medici, with a ruff two feet in diameter, a ballooning skirt, a waist that would fit in a garter, her hair done high and, like her waist, exposed.

In Muscovy, the hair of a Christian woman was concealed by a headgear. Always her gown was girdled above the breast. Never had Moscow seen such an exhibition. The old orthodox city was not placated by the presence of the girl's father, nor by the presence of a chaperon, mistress of the robes. For behind the heretics, trooped a retinue, three thousand strong, and what Christian woman ever took an army with her when she went to a husband's arms?

Of all of which Dmitri heard nothing and cared less. Later he did hear. At the moment he was supervising the welcome. The pomp of that is said to have been prodigious. No doubt it was. In the great hall of the palace, a hall heaped to the rafters with bizarre vases and fabulous beasts, there were concerts, masquerades and a state dinner more lavish than anything that anywhere had been known.

Among the courses which, after the oriental fashion, succeeded each other interminably, there were swan's knees, lamb's lungs, roast cygnets, storks cooked in ginger, deer's brains, lemon soup, sweetmeats of honey and attar of rose. Additionally were the wines of Hungary, of Alicante and the Canaries, together with the strong waters of Holland and of France. But these, all of them, after another oriental custom, were served last.

Dmitri had a table to himself, a plate to himself and also a fork, then a great novelty. The table was on a dais. Below and beyond the guests feasted, forkless, from trenchers. Maryna was not present. It was not etiquette that she should be. Nor did she appear until just prior to the ceremony, when old men supported her, as though she were an infant in arms, from the cathedral's entrance to the altar. Dmitri was similarly supported. Etiquette so required. To the assembled Poles it was ridiculous. They laughed indecently.

Afterward, in the Kreml, there was a ball, during which Dmitri, in Polish costume, danced with his bride and, for good measure, with her father. Beyond, in the Red Square, Poles, very drunk, drew their swords, pinked the Muscovites. The good measure was full. Concerts, balls, masquerades, in particular the bride's exhibition of her hair and waist, these things, every one, were pagan abominations. The good measure, full already, overflowed.

To Dmitri and Maryna it was all very rapturous. Life at its apogee had begun. The rapture lasted one week. At the stroke of twelve on the seventh night, men-at-arms, enrolled by Chouiski, were clamouring and beating at the bridal door.

A naked man is never brave, but he may be adroit. Dmitri disappeared through a window. Maryna shrieked, as perhaps only a frightened girl can shriek. Nearby, in an adjoining apartment, were her women. They hurried to her. One of them, the chaperon, was vast and formidable. Under the immense farthingale which she wore, Maryna hid. Just in time. The men had broken in. The other women, who were not at all formidable and who, being Polish, were pretty, were carried away, treated as playthings. Maryna escaped, in a shift, it is said, to her father. The house in which he lodged was besieged. The houses where other Poles lodged were besieged also. They gave as good as was sent. But a lot of them, taken in taverns and the open, were killed outright. To employ an archaic phrase, the streets were dyed—like wool—with blood.

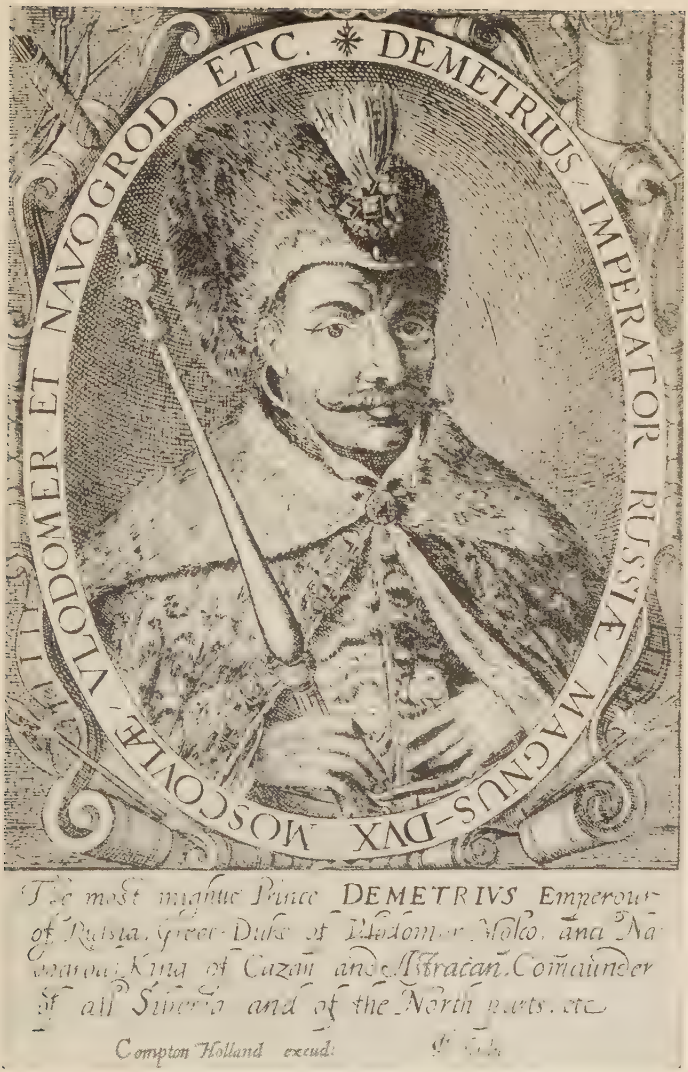
Dmitri, in vanishing through a window, disappeared. For a time, that is. Presently he was found. When found, he had broken his legs. He could not move. In that condition he was shot, stabbed, hacked even in the face, which was disgustingly disfigured. Incidentally he was insulted.

"Dog of a bastard, tell us who you are?"

Dmitri made no reply. He was dead. A wandering Jew had his gabardine torn off. It was put about the naked body, which, carried to the Red Square, was dumped on a table. On that table for three days it remained. On the third night, a thin blue flame hovered above it. The phenomenon, caused probably by the corpse's putrefaction, created a terror all the more profound because superstitious. Who knew what it might portend?

In an effort to ward any evil, the corpse was carried to a cemetery. A grave was dug. The body was lowered into it. Immediately other phenomena occurred. Over the grave, eagles were seen that flew away when approached and then returned. Eagles! At least they were not two-headed. The comfort was meagre. At night, the flame was still visible. What is worse, sounds were heard, oddly discordant, that came, or seemed to come, from below.

The terror augmented. The grave was


DEMETRIUS IMPERATOR RUSSIÆ MAGNUS-DVX MOSCOVIÆ VLODOMER ET NAVOGROD. ETC.
The most mightie Prince DEMETRIVS Emperour
of Russia, Great Duke of Vlodomer, Mosco, and Na
ugarod, King of Cazan and Astracan. Cõmaunder
of all Siveria and of the North parts. etc
Compton Holland excud:

DMITRI

opened. It was empty! That body had moved. It had moved of itself! It was at the other end of the cemetery!

There could be no doubt about it then. The monkish accusation was recalled. Dmitri was a sorcerer who knew the infernal art of post-mortem resuscitation. With a vampire one could not be too careful. As supreme precaution, the body was burned and the ashes, rammed in a cannon, were fired from it. Then only did terror pass. Dmitri, his ghost or its counterfeit, had been definitely laid.

Maryna, meanwhile, minus her crown, and her father, minus his sacks, were extracted from the besiegers and invited to leave. The invitation was not cordial, but the forms were there. Polish reprisals, always possible, were, if possible, to be avoided. Hence the civility which emanated from Chouiski who, in the riot, had become tsar.

Maryna, calling herself tsaritsa still and insisting on being treated as such, set forth with the surviving Poles for Sendomir. She never reached it. The great playwright that destiny is, had for her an epilogue in reserve. One may wonder whether, in insisting on her prerogatives, she knew it. Logically, the drama ended dramatically, as drama should end, on the bloody night of the interrupted honeymoon. Did she know that it was to be resumed. One wonders.

Leo X., a very lettered pope, said and sensibly enough, "Since God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it." Chouiski could also enjoy himself. An ignorant and very vile old man, he was not lettered. But he was capable at least of a butcher's pleasures and, other things being equal, he might have supped on them. The great playwright had planned differently. Before Maryna had gone more than half the way to Sendomir, a coup de théâtre occurred. That devil of a Dmitri was alive again!

The news of it, filtering through the Kreml, struck Chouiski dumb. Reaching the travellers en route for Poland, it stupefied them as well it might. They looked at the widowed bride who perhaps was widowed no longer. Perhaps! It was all highly phantasmagoric. But in looking they saw that their stupefaction was not shared by her. She appeared to know all about it. It may be that she did.

Afterward it was reported that on the bloody night, Turkish horses disappeared from the tsaral stables. It was also reported that in the early morning, a boatman on the Oka ferried three men, one of whom, indicating another, said that he was tsar; a statement which he repeated later that day to an innkeeper on the road to Tuchino. In each instance he had added:—"He will return with an army and reward you."

That may or may not have been true. But whether true or false, it was also reported that letters stamped with Dmitri's seal were in circulation. At any rate, a cavalry republic, the Cossacks of the Don, were rising and rallying in his name.

"In his name, yes, but in whose else? Who is this impostor?" Chouiski, with recovered speech, demanded. It was at this juncture, in an effort to show that whoever the reincarnation might be, it was not that of the original tsarevitch, it was then that the wretched old man evolved a lovely expedient. He ordered the young savage's tomb opened and commanded his canonisation. The priests may have wept at the altars, they obeyed.

Dmitri then was at Tuchino. Whether this Dmitri were the prince twice dead, or another being, the reader may take a moment to decide. It had taken Maryna no longer. She hurried to him, threw herself into his virile arms, one of which was longer than the other. It is nowhere related that that malformation had been remarked in Moscow, but it was the peculiarity of the murdered young tsarevitch.

In Tuchino, a bandit's lair, splendour was absent. For balls there were riots; for concerts, brawls. Cossacks drink nobly. The capacity of Poles is proverbial. What is termed the flower of the nobility joined Dmitri in this lair which, camp, lupanar and fortress combined, contained a hundred thousand men, every one of them eager to reseat a tsar, eagerer still to loot the tsaral treasure. Then, presently, off they started.

Chouiski had thought of enjoying himself. Instead he quaked. Sigismond, an army at his heels, was marching on him. Chouiski quaked at that, but far less than he quaked at the demon Dmitri who was marching also. Let the sorcerer again get him and this time farewell to his head.

Against a sorcerer, sorcery is indicated. At Chouiski's orders, magicians worked their spells. Infants unborn were torn from their mothers. From gutted horses hearts were removed. With both a horrible hash was made and strewn, full-handed, as grain is strewn, before the walls. The necromancy succeeded. Abruptly, though through what normal connivance has never clearly appeared, once more Dmitri was assas-

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sinated, yet, as was customary with him, briefly only. In the interval, Maryna, carried off by a Tatar, vanished on horseback from history.

The sorcerer reappeared. More exactly, there was another incarnation. Probably the new Dmitri was not Dmitri at all. None the less the avatars continued. The surprising creature never again entered the Kreml, but his ghost was not definitely laid until Chouiski died. That seemed to placate him.

Then leisurely the preludes to another and a greater drama began. Transiently the stage was occupied by Mikhail Romanov, an insignificant insect who, every morning, beat his empty head fifteen hundred times on the stones before the altar. That insect was grandfather of a gorilla.

III

PETER THE GREAT

THE night in which Hercules was conceived lasted forty-eight hours. So at least it has been said. Assuming that the story be true, the night in which Peter was conceived must have lasted twenty-four.

Who the male collaborator may have been is unimportant. But the problem perplexed him. In a scene, tolerably dramatic, which Dolgoroukov recites, he shouted it.

"Whose son am I?" Glaring, he pointed. "Yours, Tihon Streshnief? Speak or I will have you strangled."

Streshnief fell on his knees. "Batushka! Mercy! How can I tell? I was not the only one!"

In the chronicles of nations figures arise. Time passes and they pass with it. They are forgotten like spilt wine. Occasionally come figures that persist. Usually they are brutes. It is the Cæsars that are remembered, not the saints. Cyrillus, a bishop, contrived to be useful and to be beautiful. To be both is to be sublime. Sublimity is a dangerous occupation. It may lead to oblivion and also to Golgotha. Cyrillus gave Russia nothing less than a language. His reward is the dustbin. With the alphabet that he created the name of Petrus Maximus is written. It is written on a page of granite. The granite is red. Voltaire thumbed it and said: "Half hero." Voltaire paused and added: "Half tiger."

A tiger is a beautiful animal. There was nothing beautiful about Peter, nor is there about a gorilla. Peter was a gorilla with brains.

Like the great apes in a Borneo jungle, he sprang and killed. He had the same indisputable instinct for destruction, the same elasticity, the same quick subtlety of sense. In Moor's portrait of him, the expression, vaguely ruminant, is that of a beast that has fed. Back of it is another, an impression of will, inflexible as an axe and of which you feel the chill and the edge. The man is there, framed in wood, like a bird of prey nailed on a panel.

Probably the reincarnation of a Tatar khan, necessarily he was a nihilist. "Take earth and heaven, take all laws human and divine and spit on them and that," said a lucid exponent, "is nihilism." Nihilism and bolshevism differ, but only in spelling. Peter was the original bolshevist.

His earliest bath was blood. At the death of his mother's husband, surviving enthusiasts formed opposing factions. Cheerfully, the guardians of the peace participated in their massacre of each other. The spouting blood drenched Peter; drenched Sophia, his sister; drenched Ivan, his brother, with whom he had ascended a two-seated throne. Back of the throne was a chair. Before it hung a curtain, behind which was the girl. A moment only. Sophia was a phantom. So also was Ivan. Peter alone was real. Watch him!

At his feet Russia sprawled, inert, chaotic; a land still mediæval, but without chivalry, romance, poetry, troubadours and cours d'amour. It was a land across which beings moved, ignorant as carps. Of the mediæval spirit they possessed only the sure cognition of hell. Otherwise, its night enveloped them. They loved it. Except drink, it was the only thing they did love. A protection, it made them obscure See what he does to them and to it.

As yet he was a cub. Wait until he grows. Wait until he becomes, what he did become, seven feet tall—seven feet which to those beings must have seemed seven hundred. When the gorilla was grown, history beheld what the tired old gossip had never beheld before and never has witnessed since, the spectacle of a nation, backward, obstinate, rigid, unwilling to develop, tossed from Asia into Europe, knouted into evolution, terrorised into modernity.

Terror was Peter's nurse. His toys were weapons. His palace, haunted by nightmare, was hung with horror. Before him the history of his house uncoiled in shudders. He gasped, but only for air. When he stretched his legs, dwarfs in double rows surrounded him with screens of violet and concealing silk. Even a cub would balk at that. When he could, he got to the sea. Through an atavism proceeding perhaps from the pirates from whom he presumptively descended, he had dreamed of it. His predecessors had dreamed also, but they had fought. There was the Baltic. It belonged to the Norse. There was the Euxine. It belonged to the Turks. The dream of one or both was human to the sons of rowers.

In the Kreml, Sophia dreamed not of the sea but of the sceptre. She wanted it one and indivisible in her hand. She wanted to be autocrat. She became a prisoner. Those who had wanted for her what she wanted were put in cages and burned alive. Shortly and silently

Ivan disappeared. Peter was sole monarch, lord absolute of everybody, proprietor of Russia, despot of her denizens and destiny, alone on the two-seated throne.

From it he stared at the sea which no other tsar had seen. He determined to cross it, which no other Russian had done. Gautier declared it indecent for a young man to enter the drawing-room of life without a book of verse for boutonnière. Peter felt it unfitting to enter the drawing-room of the world without a victory in his buttonhole. At the time he lacked even a yawl. From abroad he beckoned craftsmen, made a fleet, sailed the Don, attacked Azov, took it.

Then, to see the sights, there started forth a savage, young, tall, dark, grimacing, neurotic, always in a hurry; a lout whom a napkin embarrassed; an oaf whom corsets surprised; a monarch who was a rustic; a potentate who was a clown; a tsar crassly ignorant and aware of it; a man vital, violent, elemental, bestial, drunk every night of his life.

On the part of a Russian subject, travelling was treason. A junketing prince was sacrilegious. Peter who was to kill men with his bare hands, who, while he drank and looked on, was to order heads off for his amusement, left clandestinely, incognito, disguised.

Simianly inquisitive, seeing a thousand things that amazed him, seeing civilisation which amazed him most, learning in Saardam how to handle a ship, in London how to handle a scalpel, in Vienna how to use a fork, assimilating every idea and forgetting none, he learned how to recruit an army, build a navy, create a nation and supply it, off hand, by force of edicts, with a veneer of civilisation that could crack and did and with a report that startled the world.

The bolshevist was an ape, but ape-artificer. In occult circles it is said that Victoria R. I. was formerly Alfred the Great. If that be true, Peter, prior to becoming a Tatar khan, may have been Nero, though in that case he had degenerated in the progression.

At Kœnigsburg he asked to see somebody—anybody—broken on the wheel, a variety of torture which he thought might do for Moscow. The authorities regretted that they had no available criminal.

"Here," said Peter, "take one of my suite."

Voltaire had it from Frederick, who had it from a former envoy, that, one night in Moscow, Peter amused himself by decapitating twenty men, drinking flagons of brandy between each stroke, after which he invited the Prussian representative to try his hand at it. Nero would not have done that; he lacked the energy, lacked the brandy. For the greater glory of Jupiter, he lacked, too, the Prussian.

Subsequently, Peter acquired an interest, unplatonic and brief, in Mary Hamilton, a young woman of Scotch descent, related more or less vaguely to the dukes of that name. Shortly he threw her over. Afterward, as the result of another interest, she had a child and killed it, a very customary proceeding, but to which, in this instance, Peter objected on the ground, perhaps valid, that the child might have become a man whom he could decapitate.

The theatre was prepared. That theatre, the scaffold, was a stage, carpeted with red, hung with black, about which an avid crowd collected.

Mary Hamilton, in white, dressed like a bride, but, in honour of the groom, with black ribbons, was brought there. She was fainting. Peter carried her up the steps, forced her to kneel, looked on at the operation, picked up the bloody head that had rolled on the crimson carpet, gave a lecture on anatomy and the spinal column, eyed the pallid lips which so often had kissed his own, dropped the head, descended the steps, strolled away.

A pleasant person. In the alcove he was equally attractive. There Villebois etched him. "Il était un vray monstre de luxure. Il s'abandonnait à des accès de fureur érotique dans lesquels l'âge et le sexe même luy importait médiocrement."

That was Peter, afterward the Great. At the time he was merely horrible. In the course of the foreign junket, tiresome news reached him from home. Sophia, weary of her prison, but wearier of her demon brother, was urging Moscow to rebel. The budding mutiny was hushed. You might have thought the matter at an end. It had not begun. On Sophia, on Moscow, the gorilla pounced. Corridors of ardent chambers, perfectly equipped with every form of fiendishness, functioned night and day. After preliminary and very agonising delays, those who entered there were burned alive. For others, death was quicker. Ordinary persons were decapitated in coils, at the rate of fifty at a time. Their bodies, carted in thousands beyond the walls, were left to rot. From the balconies of Sophia's prison two hundred hung, as grapes hang, in bunches.

For the greater glory of God, Torquemada resurrected Moloch and set Castille on fire. For the greater awe of Peter, Moscow was turned into a gehenna. There were groves of gibbets, blood in lakes, hills of dead, tortures vaster than Carthage knew, than Castille beheld. Peter's deputies sank outwearied. Peter was tireless. Axe in hand, he stalked knee-deep in the human abattoir. That axe, dented each night, each morning was resharpened.

Years later, his son confessed a mortal sin. He had hoped his father would die. Commiserately the priest raised a hand. "We all wish it."

Yet no sooner had he gone, than he became Peter the Great, a nation's idol. In Greece, Heraklitos died of laughing, literally of laughing, at the folly of his contemporaries. Heraklitos was then an old man. In Russia, he might have died younger but he would have laughed more.

Peter was a butcher. Also he was tsar. The terms are synonymous. In addition, he was dentist. If you so wished he pulled your teeth. He was quite capable of pulling them any way. He pulled a woman's who did not want him to and who died of it. He attended her funeral. Bon prince, he was practical. He gave Moscow her first hospitals, her first pharmacies and kept them busy. In his leisures, which occasionally were spacious, he presided at the Bezpietchalnyi sobor—the council that knows no sadness—an assembly of phallicists whose ceremonies exceeded anything that even the lost books of Elephantis may have told.

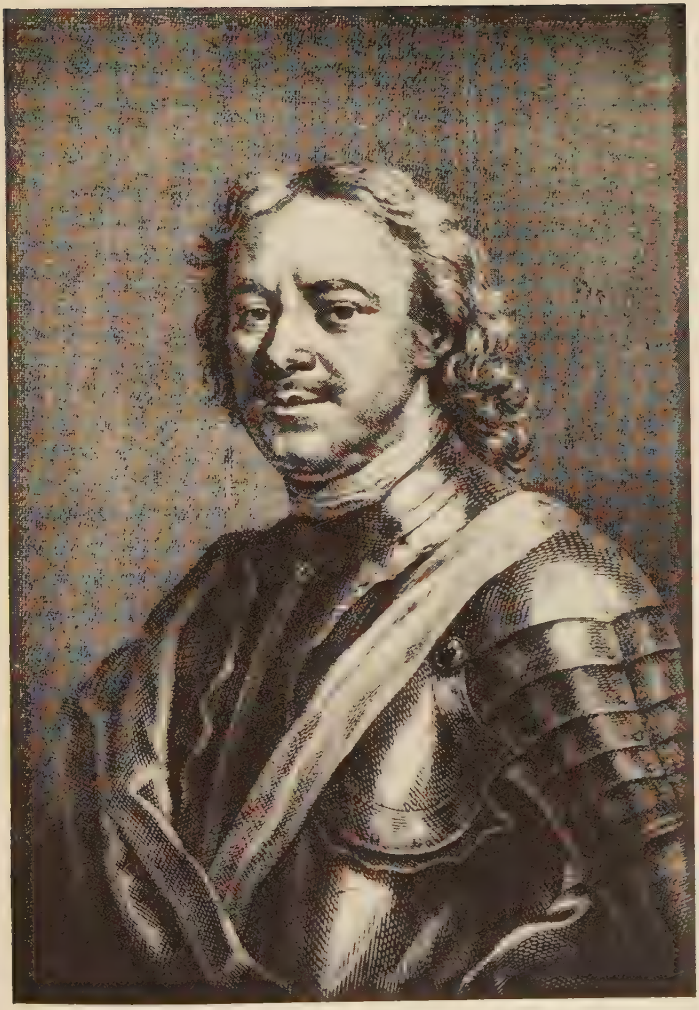
From the council that knew no sadness, Peter passed to the council that knew nothing else. Over that also he presided, as over all matters he presided as well. He was the state. He was the living law. Death was his servant. He ordered. Death obeyed.

In the hideous night when Domitian ruled old Rome, informers were at work. Any denunciation, false or true, meant death. On the burg of Peter that night descended. As in Rome, informers were rewarded. For anything, for nothing, the heedless were denounced. On a cellar wall a woman saw, or said she saw, letters traced by an unknown hand in an unknown tongue. The knout! A student in his cups babbled fretfully. The rack! Before the tsar as he passed a drunken peasant lurched. The axe! The arrest of one usually involved the arrest of a dozen. The original culprit, put to the question, shrieked whatever names he could think of. When he could think of no more he was masked, led through the streets, made to point out this one, that one, any one. At sight of him, a cry went up:—"The mask! The mask!" Instantly the streets were empty. In Rome an accused accused his accuser. The latter went mad. That breath of madness blew through the burg that Peter built. "Near the tsar, near death," a Russian proverb runs, and the reign, which was a reign of terror, taught many things, but chiefly how to die—with your nostrils torn out, your eyes extracted, your ears severed, your body beaten into a bag of pulp, or, in the ardent chambers, cremated while yet you lived. God save the tsar!

Resembling no one, intellectually blind and yet intelligent; archroyal and very low, this brute whom fate made despot, destiny made seer. In the nation a force dumb, obscure, but latent, was to elevate it from an insignificant satrapy into an empire wider than the moon at its full. That force recognised itself first in Peter. In the chaos about him, he foresaw the imperialism to be.

The future imperialism is not obvious in the butcher. But it appears in the ogre who dragged from Europe long tatters of her civilisation and forced them down Russia's throat. The ogre will enter in a moment. A soldier comes first.

In Sweden, at that time, stood Charles XII.,



PETER THE GREAT

a man of bronze, a monarch whose kingdom was not of this world, whose palace was the battlefield and who dressed in war's rich livery of blood. He had overturned the throne of Poland. He proposed to demolish Peter's, dictate terms in the Kreml and, from there, take on the sanguinary and gorgeous East.

He started for Moscow, moving viâ the Ukraine and Byron's Mazeppa—Hugo's Mazeppa also, Pushkin's as well. It is from a paragraph in Voltaire's *Histoire de Russie* that Byron and Hugo evolved their hero who was a hero, to credulous women, and also to a man who was not credulous at all.

Peter believed in Mazeppa. He trusted him, counted on his Cossacks and believed, trusted and counted in vain. When Charles appeared, Mazeppa joined him, a treachery that history damned and poetry absolved. Together they marched on Peter, beating him on the way so thoroughly that Peter laughed. It was a lesson. He enjoyed it. "The devils will teach me to beat them," he shouted and laughed again. The laugh rang true.

Presently Charles was at Pultowa, the siege of which a grave historian has stated—and stated too in that language which only grave historians employ—"he hotly pressed." The description is pleasant. The cold was such that crows fell dead. Charles wounded there and delirious from the wound, called to Turks who never heard, to Poles who never came.

Peter did both and so effectively that Charles, delirious still, was carted away, carted afar, carted into obscurity where he died as he had lived, as Roland lived and died, clasping his sole mistress, his sword.

Peter, who had learned his lesson and who had routed what he had not destroyed, sent for the officers taken prisoner.

"Where is your viking?" he asked them. "Where is my brother Charles?

"Keep your swords," he added, "and let me see if you can keep your heads."

That night he got drunk with them, but, more potent than brandy, was the fact that triumphantly he had entered the drama of the world.

Pultowa has its date. That date marks an era. Muscovy, hitherto held down by Swedes, by Poles, by Tatars and Turks, was ready for them all. Heretofore her history had been one long humiliation. At Pultowa she came of age. To celebrate it, Petersburg leaped into being.

A moment before Peter had asked:—"Where are my legions?"

Moscow answered. Moscow pointed to a

long, double hedge of skulls gibbeted there to remind Russia of the disadvantages of conspiring against him. In Moscow he had massacred an army.

The troops since recruited were untrained, unfit. They were sheep. He turned away. In turning he scattered invitations afar. Tacticians, drill-sergeants, professors of the art of war, the surgeons of her clinic, became his guests. Presently, turning back to the sheep, he operated a transfusion. He put blood in them, mettle, his own instinct for destruction. Pultowa was the result and with it a tripled realm, balconies that overlooked the seas, a proscenium box on Europe, the dominion of the north.

Waliszewski, who has written very passionately about him, says that he had an idea a day. For a genius that is meagre; for a monarch it is magnificent; for a Muscovite a miracle. Perhaps Waliszewski exaggerated. Besides, opinions vary as to what constitutes an idea. But the gorilla had brains. With them he substituted himself for time. The labour of centuries he effected in years. He tossed the state up, as skyscrapers are tossed, one storey quick on the other. From the jimcrack Russia has suffered ever since. Yet his business was not with the future. It was with the past which was then the present, which stuck its tongue at him and which he pulled as he pulled teeth.

It was singular and easy. The creature was a crowned anarchist. More technically, he was an autocrat, which means the same thing. An anarchist wants to do as he likes. An autocrat can—or could. Peter could. He had merely to will and his will was law. He willed that what he thought, all must think: that what he did, all must do. He willed that Russia should dance to his piping, dress to his taste, play the clown, abolish her customs, assassinate her ideals, abjure her gods. He so willed because such was his pleasure. When that pleasure was not gratified instantly, were there misunderstanding, weakness, fatigue, the axe!

The Russian year began September 1st. It began then because on that day, 5508 B.C., God created the world. Nothing could be more authentic. To celebrate the event, everybody fuddled and fought. But nobody smoked. Tobacco was heathen. Nobody danced. In the ascetic orthodoxy of the Russian Church, gaiety was sinful, instrumental music forbidden, learning was damned and ignorance blessed.

Men still wore the long, flowing robes of the East. What women wore is immaterial. When serfs, they were soulless. They did not exist.

Women of the upper class did not appear. Shut away in oriental seclusion, they were invisible. But all men were longly robed and all were bearded. They had to be. In the sacred iconography, Father and Son were bearded and robed. Man, made after the image of God, must be like unto Him. Any dissimilarity was sacrilege.

That sacrilege Peter commanded. In a ukase written with the knout, beards and robes were ordered off, the women were ordered out. Models of what all were to wear and which those who did not wear got the knout until they did, hung in the Red Square. Prior to the knout, robes were torn off at the waist; beards were torn out by the roots. Incidentally men were ordered to smoke. They were ordered to revise their calendar. The year no longer began in the autumn, as it had begun, or in the spring, as it should begin, but after the absurd Roman fashion which Europe had adopted.

With edicts and the lash, the year was revised. Men were shaved, redressed, a pipe was stuck in their mouth, and the beauties of their household were ordered into society in a land in which there was none, had been none rather, for Peter created ballrooms with a ukase. The boiars were pronunciamentoed into entertaining. They were told what to do, what not to do, the days and the hours for it.

No gambling, but dancing was rigorously required. As nobody knew how to dance, Peter personally gave lessons, instructing the sullen beauties that, for the go of it, they must kiss their partners. To encourage them, he ladled brandy in wooden spoons, not forgetting to help himself, becoming in the process as drunk as the ladies, if possible drunker, teaching them not merely the pas de quoi, but the elegancies of deportment and the pomps of etiquette.

Rudiments followed. The bear, taught to dance, was taught to read. He was given an alphabet, partly Greek, partly Bulgarian, which Cyrillus had supplied, which Peter refashioned and which seven-tenths of Russia have not yet acquired. Subsequent autocrats objected to its dissemination. A little learning is a dangerous thing and a lot of it may be revolutionary. Catherine the Greater said that if the inmates of her little household—Russia was her little household—knew how to read, they would write her off. Sensible woman. But she had seen the French Revolution, which to Peter was unimagined. It becomes therefore rather instructive to watch him reaching down into mediæval dungeons, pulling the prisoners into a modern reformatory, bundling them out of their ideals into his, kicking over the past with one seven-leagued boot, projecting them into the future with the other, tossing them into the mould from which contemporaneous Russia with her colossal corruption and volcanic anarchy proceeded.

For university, Russia had the scaffold; for curriculum, the knout. These things instruct. They teach the æsthetics of servility, hypocrisy, smothered hatred and bursting bombs. But not morals. Peter, devoid of any as an orang-outang, saw no reason for them. He may have been right. Mathematics know nothing of morals. Political economy is not interested in them. Art ignores them. They are not a principle of civilisation. It was not for lack of them that Rome fell. What sapped her was malaria. Morals are a luxury and Peter in his catarrhine ignorance was unaware that the luxuries of life are its necessities. He wanted the superficial and the veneered. The tears he sowed to get them, tsardom reaped.

To Waliszewski, he was the noblest Roman of them all. He may readily have been that and remain the perfectly ignoble brute that he was to his pigmies, for whom, very thanklessly, he strung balconies from which they could look at Europe and Europe could look at them.

To enhance the view, abruptly, on the Neva—a Tatar word that means mud—there was built, at the cost of two hundred thousand lives, the lives of serfs converted into masons and harried there to death, the town of Petersburg, vast and boreal, where art congealed into tasteless edifices, dreary palaces, empty streets; a city with a heart of stone, a plaster body and extremities of rotten wood.

In Petersburg, Peter made himself emperor, made himself pontifex maximus. Asiatic absolutism, crowned long since, then was mitred. The patriarch had died. Assembled prelates asked him to appoint a successor. "I have," he told them. "I have appointed myself." Lord temporal, lord spiritual, the Antichrist was pope. Besides, why not? The Russias, all of them, everything and everybody in them, were as thoroughly his as the coat on his back. "I will give Russia to whom I see fit," the grandfather of the terrible Ivan unselfishly said. Peter would not merely have said it, he would have done it. He lacked the time. A laundress, handed by a pastrycook, stepped into his shoes.

Louis Napoleon married the granddaughter of a publican. Petrus Maximus married the daughter of a serf. After the manner of an emperor who is above the law, he married her without becoming divorced from a princess, Eudoxia Lapoukhin, already his wife. In the story of the princess there is drama. In the story of the empress there is myth.

The property of a trooper, she passed sidewise and upward to Peter who, for her immediate favours, gave her a ducat. A ducat to the trull to whom he afterward gave a crown! At the time, she had no name. Peter, in addition to the ducat, gave her one. He called her Katinka, also Katierinouchka, a tender diminutive which history severely revised. Historically, she became Catherine I.

In her spiral ascent she reached Menchikov, an ex-pastrycook whom Peter had picked up in the street. Peter made him his mignon, then his minister. When Peter was afar, Menchikov ruled for him. When he was farther, Menchikov ruled alone. It was he who gratified Peter with the lady of the ducat and the crown.

The Margravine of Baireuth, who saw her, said she was short, huddled, tanned, completely lacking in looks, dignity, grace; dressed in a gown covered with dirt and embroidery, and so tricked out with medals, necklaces, gewgaws, that she jingled like a mule.

She had her charms though, a trooper's thirst, the ability to carry her liquor like a boiar and a skill, which no trainer has acquired, the art of taming a gorilla. In her hands a madman was putty. Peter in a rage was a fiend in a fury. Katinka cajoled, commanded and calmed the brute. She lulled him to sleep. When he awoke the access had passed. So are beasts and despots won.

But not detained. Peter had a nostalgia for mud, a homesickness which Katinka shared. Any woman, provided she were ugly and a slattern, could win him and Katinka, empress and entremetteuse, saw to it that he was supplied, not neglecting to provide for her own amusements, gaieties at which Peter did not even shrug his shoulders, except once.

The man, a good-looking young fellow, brother of one of Peter's light o' loves, was chamberlain in Katinka's suite. The position involved duties, among others that of listening to her. In listening, he replied. The conversation was overheard and Peter informed. Ordinarily, the information would not have interested him, but the anonymous letter which conveyed it, stated that the two were conspiring against his life.

The gorilla sprang at the chamberlain who, at sight of him, fainted. When he recovered, Peter had also. Considerately, sympathetically, with a show of deep affection, Peter assured him that he was sorry, very sorry, but he would have to have him killed.

The theatre was prepared. The avid crowd assembled. Peter took Katinka to see the show. They went there in a sleigh. The day was polar but clear. Katinka remarked about it. That was all. But on her console that night, she found her lover's head.

What turpitudinous, or merely horrible reprisals he meditated for her, one may surmise and never know. Death, whom he had so continuously beckoned for others, took him by the ear. Et ainsi finit l'histoire de Barbe-Bleue.

That was when Katinka was empress. Anteriorly she had children, two in particular, Ann and Elisabeth, one of whom reigned over happy and holy Russia. But Eudoxia the Forsaken, also had a child, Alexis the tsarevitch.

Peter hated them both. They represented the past. By way of contrast, Katinka was the New Woman whom Peter, without going far but low, had found and finding made empress. The paradox of the performance was its inducement. In its vulgarity was its charm. Peter had another in reserve that was to eclipse it, but only in horror.

To approach the latter adequately requires a nearer understanding of Katinka's primitive soul. The slatterns with whom Peter amused himself meant nothing to her. But Eudoxia was very offensive. Eudoxia was noble, she was tsaritsa, she was a saint, or, if not a saint, in the convent where Peter had put her, she resembled one. The insolence of it! A bucket of mud! The bucket was raised, the mud was thrown. Katinka fastened a lover and a conspiracy on her.

The conspiracy was a plot to seize the throne, put the tsarevitch there and abolish the reforms. It was highly imaginative. None the less Eudoxia admitted it, admitted the lover, admitted everything. Beforehand she was knouted. Under the knout even a saint may admit no matter what. Glebov, the lover, an officer and a gentleman, denied everything. The rack could extract nothing from him. On the other hand, a dozen convent nuns said whatever the lash told them to say. The evidence was complete.

Eudoxia was sent to another convent and Glebov to the theatre. At the four corners of the stage were amputated heads. About it were fifty corpses. There Glebov was impaled. On that day the cold was extreme. In order that he might endure the torture as long as possible, he was bundled in furs. During it, Peter gloatingly approached. Glebov spat in his face.

Previously a drama occurred that has never been properly told and now never can be. The proper telling would require the collaboration of Æschylus and Michelet. Here, in cobweb, is the outline.

From the circles of terror that Peter radiated, Alexis shrank. Otherwise, brains and energy deducted, he was Peter's son. His tastes were low. He liked drink and common women. Apart from that, he was inoffensive and, after the manner of the inoffensive, he was ineffective.

Peter always effective and equally offensive, eyed him. What would become of the throne and Russia when both were his? To sit on a throne cannot be difficult. To remain there presupposes strength. Alexis had none. To supply it, Peter bullied him as he bullied everybody, frightened him as he frightened all. He dragged the boy from palace to shambles, from a honeymoon to war. In the same manner that he had put mettle into sheep, he tried to put force into dough. Failing, he exhorted. Failing in that, he threatened. Again he failed. The boy had gone.

The year before he had married a German

girl. The marriage was a precedent. Every Russian sovereign, except the third Alexander, who married a Dane, followed that lamentable example. The girl whom Alexis married was Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel. Her sister, wife of the Austrian emperor, was the mother of a girl, afterward Maria Theresa. Charlotte became the mother of a son, afterward Peter II. It is said that just before the latter's birth, Alexis kicked her. It may be true. Peter's court was a morgue. The amenities were not observed there. But the classics were taught. One learned how to suffer and how, too, to disappear. Charlotte died and was buried. Or so at least it was announced.

Charlotte lacked beauty. Instead she had the sentimental form of German sentiment which was later known as schwärmerei. An officer tapped at her heart. The green savannahs of the south, the bayous of Louisiana, called and beckoned. They got away, went there, loved there, lived there, left there to go their separate paths, one of which led Charlotte to Paris, where she lived on an allowance served to her by her niece, Maria Theresa.

After Charlotte's death, the Variétés produced a play of which she was the heroine. It was called *Madame Péterhof*. The play annoyed Catherine the Greater. Severely she remarked:—"Everybody knows that the princess died here of consumption."

A French wit took it up. "Everybody knows that your husband died of apoplexy."

Before Charlotte's fantasia began, Alexis had left her. He fled from the morgue in disguise. Years earlier, Peter had also fled in disguise. He fled to escape his ignorance. Alexis fled to escape that ignorance which still persisting made Peter blind to the fact that, potent though he were, for the power he misused he would render account, not to a recording angel perhaps, but to himself. In Avitchi, the plane that the very vile enter when they have passed from here, the penalty of the damned consists in beholding what they have done. Here they may have lacked a conscience, they acquire one there; acquire, it may be, two of them. If there is a word of truth in what occultism tells of that plane, Peter must have acquired three consciences, six, a dozen. He needed them all.

At the time he had none whatever. Katinka had none either, but she had just had a child. Maternity prompting, she prompted Peter. Alexis was invited to become a monk. Alexis agreed. He had to agree. He had no choice. But then the cowl is not nailed to the head.

Peter gone, he could discard it, ascend the throne and abolish the reforms. The reforms meant little to Katinka, but the throne meant all. It was in these circumstances that she fastened on Eudoxia a conspiracy which involved Alexis. Peter would have killed him. Before he could, Alexis had gone.

At once the magic circles of terror expanded. Peter was seeking him, willing him back.

Furtively the boy crouched and scurried. With him, crouching and scurrying also, was another boy whom he called his page. The description shows imagination. The boy was a girl and a serf whom he had garnered, as Peter gathered Katinka, on the backstairs of life. Her name was Euphrosine. She was a Finn and looked it. She had the expression, slightly bestial, that Finns display. Alexis loved her. The little animal enraptured this lad in whose life raptures had been scant. Together they got down to Vienna where they hid and dreamed. But that is an exaggeration. Alexis dreamed dreams which Euphrosine dreamed for him—Peter dead, the abolition of the reforms, Alexis tsar, Euphrosine empress!

As for that final touch, why not? What had Katinka been? Longly the boy discussed the dreams which, ambrosia to her, were nectar to him, but on her account only. Left to himself, his dream would have been a country boiar's existence, quiet, sensual, drunken.

But the flaming circles were contracting and they fled again, this time to Naples where Peter's huntsmen, who for a year and a day had been stalking, quarried them. The shudder that shook Alexis then was Æschylean. Yet how needlessly! There was a letter, very reassuring, from Peter. Alexis had only to return; everything would be forgiven, his father's tenderness restored.

Peter added:—"If you refuse, I, as your father, will curse you and, as your sovereign, condemn."

On reaching Vienna, Alexis had gone to the emperor. Charles VI. was his brother-in-law. The tenuous bond appealed. Charles promised to look after him and, when Alexis fled to Naples, he told the viceroy there to have an eye on him also. But Peter, who knew what he wanted and knew, too, how to get it, was massing troops. The viceroy did not want war, nor did Charles. When Alexis in his terror invoked the one, then the other, they threw him to the dogs. Alexis might still have escaped. But Euphrosine who expected to be another Katinka and to replace her, persuaded him to bargain that Peter should consent to their marriage.

Tenderly Peter yielded. Only, in view of tsaral customs and Alexis' rank, the marriage must be solemnised in Moscow.

Off then they went under guard of that tender father's huntsmen, a guard that, for Alexis at least, was never relaxed until that tender father's will was done.

In Moscow, in the great hall where the terrible Ivan throned, the terrific Peter questioned. Alexis, shaken and swooning, had nothing to say except that he was a devoted son. It was a lie, one which, no doubt, the Lords of Karma remitted.

Then came the turn of Euphrosine, a chance for the antique virtues, the display of Cornelian traits. Not a bit of it. The little trull, whose ambitions had been privately disabused, unwound the thread of her lover's dreams—tsardom and the reforms abolished!

Face to face with Alexis, eye to eye as it is expressed in the Muscovite code, she was sentencing him to death. He knew it, yet more profoundly afflicted by the treachery of the creature whom he still adored than by any torture that his father could inflict, he collapsed.

Peter was most gracious to the skirted Judas.

He gave her a dowry and married her to an officer with whom, it is said, she lived very happily.

In the eyes of gods that see and foresee, Alexis fared better. He was murdered.

On that day the stage was bare. The usual properties, the red carpet, the black draperies, the knout, the rack, the knife, the block, the axe, these things were absent. The theatre was closed. The blood of kings is sacred. A tsarevitch could not be butchered to make a Russian holiday.

In a cellar beneath a cellar, a pillared vault lit by torches that were sometimes human, Alexis was beaten into insensibility, drenched with salted water, revived, beaten again, longly torn, considerably burned, killed thoroughly.

Peter, twitching neurotically, biting and moistening his lips, heard his son's shrieks, watched him die. Whether he delivered the usual post-mortem lecture, history does not say. What she does say is that on the morrow, which was the anniversary of Pultowa, he laughed, danced and made merry.

Nero killed his mother. Her crime was in giving him birth. But, monster though he were, the monstrosity of his own crime haunted him. Ivan who, in monstrosity, was his equal, killed his son and wept. Alessandro Borgia, their peer, assembled the consistory, beat his breast, vomited his incests, purged, or tried to purge, his hideous soul. Peter, more monstrous than those three monsters, killed his son and made merry. But that is not his epitaph.

In his contempt of every decency, in the edicts with which he changed the status of things, in his obliteration of national customs, he assassinated the ideal. That is his epitaph.

In constructing, he undermined. In correcting, he corrupted. Russia's rottenness proceeded from his knout; her anarchy, from his autocracy.

Peter garroted the past; already Ivan had strangled the future—dual felonies that put Russia in a sociological fourth dimension, a plane abnormal, apart, where lurked and brooded the forces elemental that were to scatter the eagles, destroy the state, startle the world.

Peter and Ivan were the obstetricians of anarchy's posthumous accouchement, though probably long before, on spheres beyond our ken, it was pre-ordered that they should be. After the manner of geological transformations that seem cataclysmic but which are beneficent, probably they were the gestators of a Russia yet to be.

IV

IMPERIAL SABLES

PETER knouted his wife, killed his son, beheaded his mistress. He was a great man. After the funeral, opéra bouffe. On the throne sat a laundress, put there by a pastrycook.

At no time, anywhere, except in Haiti, has there been anything as impudent. From a Haitian revolution a slave emerged emperor. The slave was Soulouque. He could not read, he could not write. But he could make his mark and he did and a very dirty one. The laundress was quite as scholarly. Balzac planned a play about her and gave it up. It was too much for him. Previously, Grétry presented her in an opera. The colouring of the score was as suited to her as a piano is to a kitchen. Perhaps only Offenbach, who turned melody into a strumpet, could have succeeded with her. In that case and by comparison, the *Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein* would be opera seria.

Peter's reign was a perpetual martyrology. The reign of his widow was an uninterrupted debauch. The one modern parallel is Rabelais' vastes lippées. Miraculously the empire persisted, its might increased. In conditions practically identical the same phenomenon occurred in Rome. But the circumstances of the Latin miracle are clearer than the Slav. Russia lacked what Rome possessed, a Suetonius to describe, a Tacitus to judge. To fill the picture there is little else than the dispatches of foreign legates. In one of these dispatches the government is called a chaos and the court a bordel.

Death in taking Peter by the ear, took him so abruptly that he had no time to appoint a successor. Legally, if the term had any meaning and it had none, the indicated heir was his grandchild, the son of the murdered Alexis, or, in default of the latter, an illegitimate daughter, or else a more legitimate niece. The complications that these people subsequently effected would be farcical were it not for the tragedies that ensued. But after the good old Roman fashion, in prevention of any complications and while Peter was still rattling at death, Katinka subventioned the pretorians. With the guards behind her, the rest was easy and Menchikov, who had superintended the subventioning, attended to that.

Menchikov entered history from the gutter, Katinka from a wash-tub. The daughter of Livonian serfs, she was fat, coarse and a laundress. During the siege of a tottering town, where she practised her genteel vocation, she got from under the crashing walls and crawled in among Peter's troopers. One of them took her, beat her, turned her over to a sergeant, who passed her up to a lieutenant, from whom she passed to a captain. From him, on the escalator of fate, she reached Menchikov, who gave her to Peter, who gave her a ducat and added a crown.

Inconvenient preludes deducted, there, retold, would be the tale of the darky beggar-maid and the African king Cophetua, were it not that the negress did not live to reign and the laundress did.

Katinka, Peter called her, for he had to call her something and she had no name of her own. In spite of which and with no other imaginable attraction than the manner in which she washed soiled linen, this wench who had sprung from the mud and who fell back there, became Catherine I., Autocrat of All the Russias. There is no parallel for that, even in mythology.

In an old print, Peter is shown, looking up from a table covered with dishes and bottles, while Menchikov leads the lady in. The picture is suggestive and probably exact. But Menchikov after leading her in did not back himself out. For a year and a day she remained the property of both.

There is no immaculate history. If there were it would relate to a better world. The maculacy of these people exceeds the powers of decent prose. None the less it has been a subject of wonder that an emperor could have gone the extravagant length of marrying a laundress. Perhaps the extravagance was the incentive. In Peter's mind, and he had one, the marriage may have served to convey the expression of his supreme contempt for everybody and everything. It is difficult to imagine how he could have made it more emphatic. But apart from that snap of the finger, there was another reason, one already indicated and perhaps more profound. The demon that he was she could transform into a child. On his horrible soul she poured balm.

Behind the balm was a gold mine. In the perpetual funeral that Peter conducted, she interceded. At her prayers, penalties were remitted. Those prayers she sold. For the intercession she was paid. Boiars sentenced for a yes or a no to the scaffold, sent her bags of coin. Their pardon followed. The bags were many and in time very useful. It was with them that she subventioned the pretorians who, Peter gone, secured for her the throne.

In these enterprises she was prompted and aided by Menchikov who, like her, could neither read nor write. He was otherwise educated. In the hard school of a harsh court, and previously in the training camp that the gutter is, he had learned how to want and, what is superior, how to get what he wanted. Originally apprentice in a sweetshop, Peter picked him up in the street, debauched him and, afterward, made him prince of the empire, a Slav grandee with titles by the yard, lord of domains of which the enumeration would fill a page.

The meal was insufficient. His appetite grew as he ate. A rapacious brute with a strapping figure and a bold and fumbling eye, he wanted the throne and got it; nearly, that is, for Peter gone he was practically tsar and, when Katinka had followed her gorilla, he was regent. Nor was that enough and reasonably perhaps since regency is not heritable or even permanent. Katinka's successor was Peter's grandson, then a boy, and that boy he determined should marry his daughter. Meanwhile he filled his pockets, already replete, stuffing them with gigantic confiscations, becoming in the process despotic as Peter, greedy as Ivan, with—what unfortunately both of them missed—destitution for climax and Siberia for finale. But no, that was not the end. After being prince, generalissimo, regent, the scoundrel became sublime. Despoiled, degraded and in chains, he grew fat!

Prior to that astounding coup de maître, and immediately after he had placed his chattel on the throne, it was his custom to go to her, before she was up, and ceremoniously salute her.

"Ouray, Katinka! What shall we drink?"

The question decided, he fuddled with her and whomever she had at her side. Generally, the third party was some one whom he had never seen, or she either, until the day before. The high and puissant lady held reviews that she might make her choice. Always exclusive, usually she was drunk. Her reign, in consequence, while not brilliant historically, socially was delightful. It established a precedent which her immediate successors scrupulously observed.

Among these was her daughter, Elisabeth. Waliszewski said that, in following her mother's example, she used her own bed as spring-board to the throne. Apparently that is true. A regiment of her lovers put her there. But that was after she had already refused it and for a reason delicate, perhaps, but commendable. At the time, a poet compared her to a goddess on a cloud. The comparison will be presently examined. The only comparison that could fit her mother would be one that likened her to a scullion on a dais. The woman was nothing else and to her credit did not pretend to be. With no fear of another severed head confronting her, gluttonously she reassembled and wallowed in the mud from which she had sprung.

At fifty, her health ruined by the cups of dirt and vodka of which avidly she drank the deeper as her strength decreased, it became obvious that she would soon rejoin her gorilla and it was in these circumstances that the succession was offered to Elisabeth who, for a reason that will be recited, refused.

There remained her sister, who had married a Holsteiner that nobody wanted and whom everyone got, later on that is, in the shape of his whelp, an ignoble poodle, husband of Catherine the Greater. But meanwhile and additionally there was the son of the murdered Alexis, an agreeable lad with an agreeable minority ahead of him. Katinka appointed him tsar, with Menchikov for regent.

The lad's style and title was Peter II. Apart from the title, his style was good. He said, or was said to have said, that Vespasian would be his model, that no one should leave his presence depressed.

Wide-eyed, Petersburg commented and marvelled. Centuries earlier, the astonishment of Rome had been as vast. Behind Vespasian stretched a line of imperators that dispensed death as readily as Ivan and Peter. But they dispensed it with an urbanity which Muscovy never knew. Greece humanised the Cæsars, Tartary brutalised the tsars. The Cæsars invited men to die. The invitation was civil. It put the recipient at his ease. It left him free to choose whatever death displeased him least. Occasionally, to fatten fish, a slave was tossed in a pond. To flatter the plebs, occasionally a senator was thrown in the arena. Now and then a seer might be punished as Epictetus was, by having a leg broken. But to a Roman citizen, torture was never applied. Rome assimilated many an orientalism but not that, and it was in that that the tsars exceeded the Cæsars.

Petersburg marvelled consequently at the young emperor's benignity which, however, did not extend to Menchikov.

Menchikov was his master, his task-master, his ruler, his regent, his autocrat, precisely as he was despot of all the Russias. The tyranny of it irked the young tsar, already embarrassed by

Menchikov's daughter, a young woman with the cold eyes of a ghoul. At the time, Menchikov was decorating the streets with columns topped with spikes. On the spikes were heads. From the columns rotting corpses hung.

Peter II. ordered them removed. With that gesture he asserted himself. With the columns, Menchikov fell. Convicted of counterfeiting and embezzlement, petty felonies on a grand scale that he must have committed for practise merely, from the apex of power, from the summit of wealth, without one thing to his name, except the clothes on his back and the chains on his feet, he went to the great white house of the dead that Siberia was and where, superior to destiny, his girth increased. That was superb. He was otherwise magnificent. Already he had founded a line, unique in history, a race of male Pompadours.

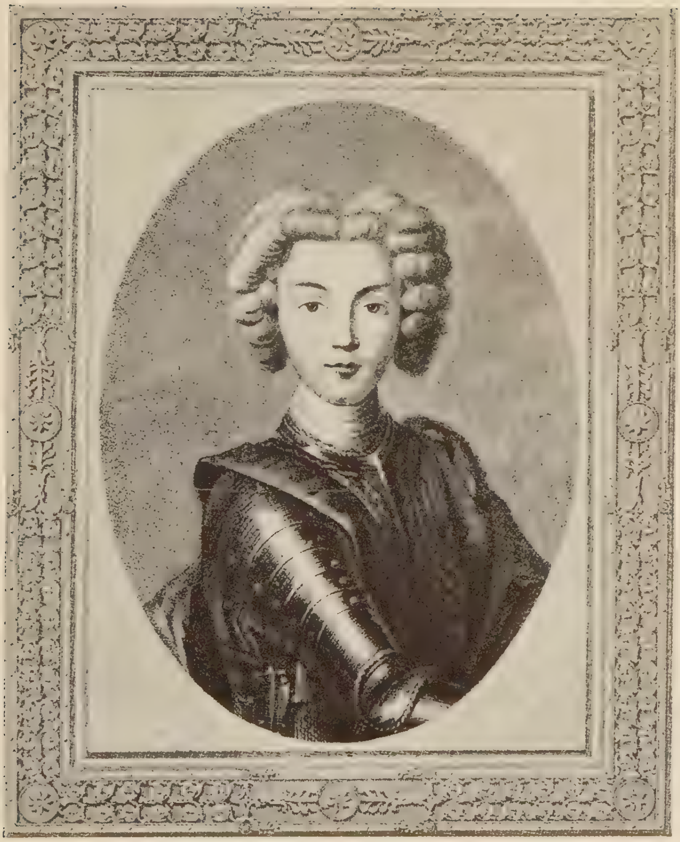
Petersburg, savage but timorous, relished the tyrant's vast dégringolage and savoured the young emperor's promise.

The first to remind him of it was his aunt, Elisabeth. Waliszewski says that she marred the lad's ingenuousness. Another Cherubino one might think. But the melodious problem, *Che cosa e amor?* he had already investigated. More Valois than Romanov, he was a Muscovite

Henri III. He had all the feminisms of that king who contrived to be queen. From his aunt he learned nothing, except that love is a pathological condition, from which a tsarevna's convalescence may be immediate. Elisabeth, too distrait to prolong the lesson, abandoned the lad, who became engaged to a Dolgorouki girl, with whose brother, Alexis, he had entered the hermaphroditisms of Valois nights.

The Dolgoroukis were highly noble, so noble that when, long later, Alexander II. married one of the house, it was said, and very correctly, that the princess was marrying beneath her. The second Alexander was not a Romanov. The tribe was then extinct. The last of the litter was Elisabeth's daughter. But the Dolgoroukis of this epoch were perhaps less fastidious than they afterward became.

At the ceremonies of the betrothal, and very gorgeous they are said to have been, a ghost materialised. The ghost was Eudoxia Lapoukhin, Peter's first wife, whom he had knouted and whose lover he impaled. From a convent where ceaselessly she prayed, she came in the antiquated, barbaric and radiant robes of a Muscovy tsaritsa. Psychic from long vigils and very pale, this phantom of the past who, during the reign of a trull, had been too lofty to descend,



PETER II

vacated the cloister, reappeared on earth, blessed her grandson and silently, sadly, royally, her glowing robes about her, drew back from before a drama which, it may be, her psychic eyes foresaw.

The fiancée's immediate family consisted of her father, her uncle, and her brother Alexis, with whom she lived in a great palace and in equal pomp. The girl had red hair, red lips, a cameo profile, passionate and proud, but not too proud. Those lips had met other lips and so lingeringly that the result became apparent.

The inconvenience of the situation was complicated by the boy tsar. At the time he was living in the Dolgorouki residence. There he developed typhoid. It was thought that he would die and, what is worse, too soon.

An effort was made to hasten the marriage. The boy was delirious. An attempt was made to have him sign a ukase appointing the girl his heir. The boy was unconscious. An expedient which then suggested itself was to put the girl in his bed and announce that he had honoured her with his permission to be there, after having, in his quality of pontifex maximus, performed the marriage himself. There was still another way, perhaps superior: since the lad could not sign the ukase, why not sign it for him?

In the vast palace, in the dead of night, feverishly these people turned from one plan to another, uncertain how to act, certain only that if they did not act and act immediately, the throne was gone. In the jeopardy of that, the ukase was signed and not a moment too soon. A minute later the boy emperor was dead. It was the girl's brother who signed the ukase. Dropping the pen, he drew his sword and rushed out with the cry, "Live the empress!"

The cry found no echo. The forgery was never employed, though, through what connivance is uncertain, it was discovered. The dead boy's betrothed went to Siberia. En route, a demand was made for the engagement-ring. Haughtily she extended her hand:—"Cut it off and the finger with it."

Her brother went to the scaffold. There, while his arms and legs were being broken, he is represented as reciting a prayer, scanning each word from beginning to end. The story is not improbable. The same thing occurred in London, at Smithfield, which Mary Tudor turned into a Plaza Mayor and where she exceeded the Inquisition.

Meanwhile, the nightmare throne was vacant. Official caretakers dusted it and wondered about the next occupant. In wondering, they thought of Peter's nieces, the daughters of his brother Ivan.

Ivan had no daughters. Always less than half a man and never more than half a sovereign, when Peter shoved him aside, he wandered, a lost soul, into the country where he lived dismally, in shabby state and where his wife had two children, both girls, neither of whom was his, yet who, none the less, were born in wedlock, a formality which Peter, in regard to his own daughters, had imperially omitted. The more legitimate nieces remained. One had married the duke of Courland; the other a Mecklenburg prince. This other will appear in a moment. The Courlander comes first.

Pink, fat, large and greasy, she was familiarly known as Big Nan, except to Carlyle who, with easy humour, called her a Westphalia ham. Her husband died the day after the wedding, not of delight, but of the nuptial feast, during which he gorged and gulped gargantually. For after-course there were pastries, from which nude pigmies sprang and danced, an entertainment that may have excited his further and fatal efforts.

Big Nan survived and became empress, a rôle which the world has generously forgotten. But also she became a figure in a romance which the stage recalls.

Nan's minor part occurred at Mittau, the capital of Courland where, as duchess, she held court. It is said that she never bathed. In her day, Russian women of position washed in decoctions of roots mixed with brandy which afterward they drank. It is said of this lady that she preferred melted butter. It is also said that she had a negligent cook hanged where she could watch his last wriggles. At table, her women were beaten before her. Their screams gave her an appetite.

At Mittau, she had other distractions. She liked gossip and tales of brigands. These at an end, she turned to her chamberlain, whose wife discreetly retired.

The chamberlain, Bühren, who afterward variously mutilated, exiled and killed over a hundred thousand people, was a German. Previously there had been another German and it was intermediately that a romance occurred on which Scribe built a play in which Rachel appeared, not as Big Nan, but as Adrienne de Lecouvreur, actress and chère amie of Maurice de Saxe.

Men do not dream any more as that man lived. The son of Augustus of Poland and of Aurore of Kœnigsmarck, he became marshal of France, fought on every battlefield and posthumously in that of letters. George Sand was his descendant. He had fought at Pultowa. He had fought before, he fought again, in a series of conflicts which amours and revels distended. When he was dead, men sharpened their swords on his tomb. When he lived, women contended for him. Among these were the Duchesse de Bouillon and Adrienne de Lecouvreur. In a duel that they fought for him, the duchess poisoned the actress.

Mozart had not then appeared. Molière had and with him Don Juan. The latter pre-existed the playwright. Protean, indefinite, eternal, the oldest and the youngest man on earth, Maurice de Saxe was one of his many avatars, perhaps also an avatar of the Cid. Reprobate and paladin, the story of his conquests, carried from one metropolis of pleasure to another, reached Petersburg and passed thence to Mittau, where, a troop of henchmen at his heels, but always gallant, he came to claim the duchy.

The sinews of the enterprise had been furnished by Adrienne. It used to be said that a gentleman may receive gifts only from his mistress and his king. Adrienne, all in all for her lover, sold her jewels, melted her plate. It was on the proceeds that the beau sabreur appeared at Mittau.

Immediately Big Nan was his. In addition, he could have had the duchy. In addition to the duchy he could have had an empire. Nan wanted him to marry her. The duchy was in his hand, the duchess in his arms, the empire in her pocket. But not every one can sup on Westphalia ham. A slice or two sufficed. Maurice took to reading *Don Quixote,* a pastime in which he was surprised by one of Nan's ladies.

At the time, the palace was dark. It was darker when the surprise ended. Maurice undertook to carry the lady to her own apartment. On the way, a watchman saw them, saw rather what he imagined was a two-headed ghost, shrieked with fright and dropped his lantern. Maurice kicked at the lantern, tried to extinguish it, slipped in the effort and fell with the lady on the watchman who shrieked the louder. A door opened. It was Nan's. She threw a glance out, followed it and raised the lantern. A page of history turned. It was in turning it that Nan consoled herself with Bühren.

Bühren was the son of an ostler, a circumstance which elucidates a contemporary remark that he talked to horses like a man and to men like a horse. Otherwise he was of the Pompadour lineage which, founded by Menchikov, was to continue on to Potemkin. Casanova, who met him, as he met everybody, says that he was finelooking. So is a vulture. Nan made him duke, changed his name from Bühren to Biron and, with enviable imagination, evolved a genealogy that interrelated him with one of the first families of France. When the head of that family heard of it he laughed and asked:—"What better name could the canaille have chosen?" But all that was insufficient for this German who could not speak Russian and still less French.

Nan, at the time, was empress. Ignorant, indolent and cruel, she resembled the serpent painted by Raphael that had a woman's head. Bühren had the head of a bird of prey. Otherwise they were admirably mated. Both possessed that dangerous characteristic which stupidity is. Nan, in creating him duke of Courland, made him premier of Russia. But the Menchikov lesson taught him nothing except the impermanence of delegated power. By way of insurance against the hazards of the morrow, he conceived the easy expedient of marrying his daughter to the Holstein whelp whom Catherine the Greater afterward married and murdered. But in his wheels there were spokes, put there by Ostermann and Munnich, generals who had come down from Peter, and who had plans of their own concerning him and that daughter of his, pleasant plans with Siberia among them. Bühren, meanwhile, a Pompadour tsar, was peopling that land, sending citizens there in droves or, more expeditiously, to the scaffold. The orgy appealed to him vastly.

The court then was charming. Under Peter it had been a morgue. Under Katinka, an assignation house. Nan, with Bühren and his discreet wife for managers, elevated it to the dignity of a tap-room. "Here!" a chamberlain called at an officer who neglected to get drunk. "Don't you know that your conduct is insolent? You are her majesty's guest."

In Peter's day the court was bare. In Katinka's it was filthy. Under the Bühren management it became an oriental cabaret, glittering and tawdry.

On a throne in a great gaudy room, lolled Frau Bühren, duchess of Courland. Humpbacked and hideous, she was royal. The robe she wore a couturier valued at a hundred thousand roubles. Her jewels were worth two million. In lolling, she smiled and very fondly at her children who, in their romps, threw ink about. Let the darlings play! With whips they lashed the boiars. Who ever saw such dears?

Adjacently were jesters, dwarfs, crippled princes that played the clown, swarms of attendants in all the costumes of all the Russias and a greater swarm of Germans. The court was German. The government was German. The orgy was Teuton. Only the boiars converted into clowns and cripples were Slav. But clowns can think, cripples can hate. At the moment, with heads that shook, uncertain how long they would own them, they knelt. Along the walls, in gilded cages, were nightingales, larks, canaries, thousands of them. From the doorway, two generals peered and muttered.

In another room lay Big Nan. The tales of brigands that she used to like, pleasured her no longer. Bühren had made her live them. Beside her, the vulture perched. Nearby were three other Germans, the prince and princess of Brunswick and their child, a boy.

The princess, daughter of the duchess of Mecklenburg, was Nan's niece. The boy was next in line. In the drama of Russian history, his history is unique. It must wait on the romance of his father and mother, an admirably assorted couple who never spoke. A grave historian remarked of Louis XV., qu'il fit à sa femme sept enfants sans lui dire un mot. The Brunswick pair, equally reserved, were less prolific. The boy sufficed.

The girlhood of the princess had been variegated by a duo with a man named Lynar. Why he consented to sing with her seems mysterious. An equivocal young person with classic inclinations, she was plain, vain and stupid. Presently, as a result of the duo's lilt, she was married to an imbecile. Subsequently this boy was born. Big Nan being childless, the happy family was invited to the annex of Berlin that Petersburg had become and where the mystery of Lynar's civility was dissolved. About the otherwise avoidable mädchen he had foreseen the sables. What Bühren was to the aunt, he might become to the niece and, as it happened, he did.

A few years later, the greater Catherine etched him:—"A fine looking fellow, with the dress and the airs of a fop, I hear he sleeps in a complexion mask and boasts of eighteen children." Catherine added details, graphic certainly, but not in conformity with present taste. That is hardly to her discredit. Formerly, prelates employed in the pulpit expressions which to-day a coster would avoid.

In the interim, affairs of state occurred. Big Nan, overcome by drink, took to her bed. The extreme unction was suggested. "Don't frighten me," she irritably retorted. But death was eyeing her. It may be she did not know it. Bühren did. So also did the Brunswickers whose complete nullity appealed to him. Since their boy was to be tsar, he saw no reason why the curtains of Nan's alcove should not be modelled for him into a robe of sables. He prepared a ukase to that effect.

"Do you want to be regent?" Nan asked. Those were her last words. She signed the ukase. That was her final gesture.

The gesture was a signal. The clowns and cripples who could think and hate prepared to act. But already two generals, long since prepared, were acting.

It had been Bühren's ambition to be regent. He gratified it for twenty-two days and expiated it for twenty-two years. On the twenty-second night of his regency, his daughter, a lass quite as lovely as her discreet mamma, woke to sudden cries. In an adjoining room, her father, half naked, was struggling with grenadiers whom the two generals, Ostermann and Munnich, commanded. Bühren, knocked on the head, was carried senseless to the street, where his wife and daughter, both in chemise, were carried with him.

The next day, charged with having attempted the life of the late empress by taking her to drive in the rain, he and his started for a prison which Munnich had personally designed and which later, the designer occupied with him.

It was Elisabeth who put him there and Ostermann also. Meanwhile the little palace revolution had succeeded. Nominally, the Brunswick woman ruled.

Ann of Mecklenburg and of Brunswick was as vacuous as Big Nan, in addition to being more indolent. With weak gestures she trailed the sables that Nan had bedrabbled. Perhaps less Mecklenburg than Mytilene, her tastes, such as they were, were exotic. Apart from Lynar, she had companions of a category that Brantôme ignored and Kraft-Ebbing described. Through her brief paragraph in history, she moved languidly to Lesbian airs.

To Petersburg that mattered little. The woman's regency was objectionable but not at all on that account. The reigns that preceded hers had inured to anything, no matter what. It was the deepening German atmosphere that annoyed. The woman was half German and her child, Ivan VI., Mecklenburg on her side and Brunswick on his father's, was German to the core. There was some one else who was not German, some one who was Russian through and through. But also there was the scaffold.

Subterraneanly a conspiracy was formed that, silent at first, confined to a few, presently showed its teeth. One night, to the clatter of arms, the Brunswick woman awoke. Elisabeth stood before her.

V

THE NORTHERN MESSALINA

QUINTILLIAN said that history and poetry are sisters. He was dreaming. Yet that dream of his Elisabeth exemplified. To-day her face, her figure, her reign are vague. In the great penumbra she has greatly faded. Vers libre remain. They tell of a woman who beat the fat Frederick to his knees, nearly crushed the egg from which Bismarck hatched a Kaiser, and whose many loves were briefer and more burning than the wick of her alabaster lamp. They tell of a war-woman who was a lady of pleasure.

The housemaids of history have tidied her alcove, burnished her morals and locked the door. Excellent method. Elisabeth, who had a grain of humour, would have enjoyed it. It is quite in accordance with her own ideas which she entirely neglected to observe. If she had a broom, she did not use it and she left her door wide open. To look in on her is not good manners. Real history never had any.

Nor had she. Ignorant, irascible, cruel and, in her later years, always drunk, autocratically she did as she liked. A great privilege, it was part of the orgy, the best part. Without it the feast would have had no savour, the wine no taste. It enabled her and the rest of the lot to do things for which there are no words in any dictionary and no penalty in any code.

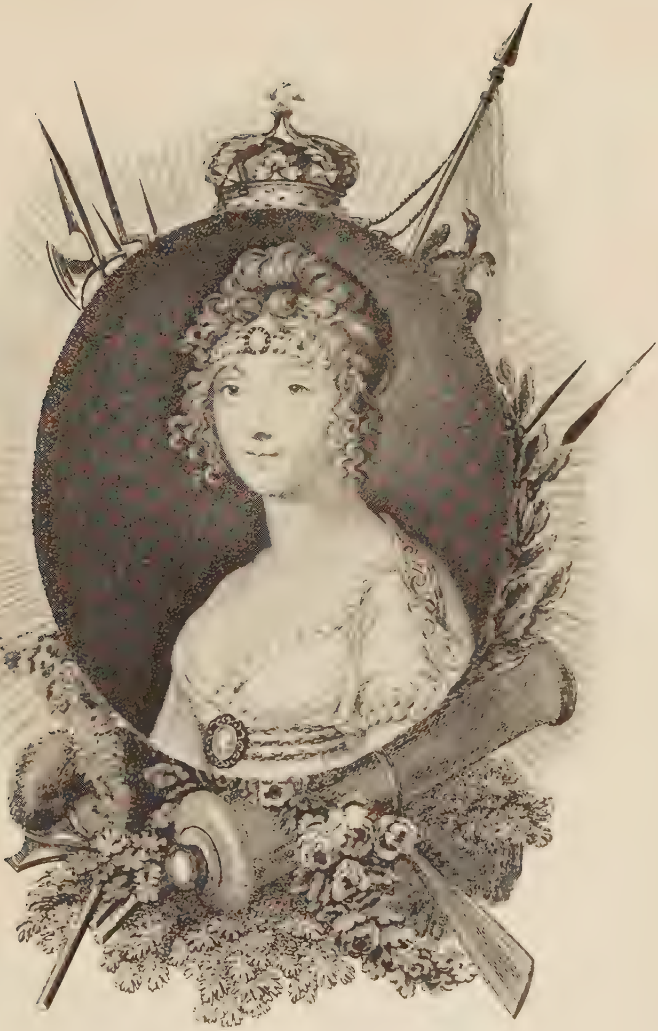
Lomonosov, a poet of her day, compared her to a goddess on a cloud. Well, yes, perhaps. But she was a trifle heavy for it. The earth appealed to her more than the sky, more even than the throne which was offered to her and which, for a delicate reason, she refused. Engaged at the time in a fervent amour, she feared the ceremonial would interrupt it. A young woman so retiring was bound to win hearts and she did by the regimentful. Besides, her mind was as changeable as her affections. In addition she was Peter's daughter. Over and above all she was Russian.

One night, a corps of grenadiers, laughing mightily at the adventure, carried her, laughing also, to the palace, where she pulled the regent out of bed, sent her and hers to the devil and, in the same lively manner, ran up the steps of her father's throne.

The fashion in which her reign began must have interested Sardou. During the Brunswick management, during that also of Big Nan, many people, but two in particular, had been thoughtless enough to annoy her. The two she ordered broken on the wheel. The stage with its red carpet and black draperies was prepared. Avidly the crowd assembled. Munnich, in full uniform, a scarlet cloak about him, a smile for every one, a nod to those he knew, gallantly ascended the steps, threw off his cloak, partially undressed and, still with that smile, listened while he was told that torture had been commuted to decapitation. Then, just as the axe was raised, more theatricals. Instead of decapitation, exile.

To the crowd's immense disgust, Ostermann was treated similarly. Both went to Siberia. Hundreds followed them. The hundreds became thousands. The thousands multiplied. Before Elisabeth died she recalled them all, all that still lived that is, except two. These were women. How and why they went will be told in a minute.

Elisabeth was very beautiful. She knew it and it delighted her. She loved life, loved pleasure, loved her beauty best. Time had the impertinence to touch her. Her beauty departed. At that, this sovereign whom admiration had lifted, like a divinity, to the skies, could



THE EMPRESS ELISABETH

not, as a mortal might, fall from them. A goddess still, she disappeared.

When a girl and a beauty, there was question of her becoming queen of France. The idea, originally Peter's, Versailles considered and, other things being equal, a Russian instead of a Pole might have been the thrice-blessed wife of Louis XV. But Elisabeth had not been born in the pomps of matrimony. It was afterward that Peter married her mother. In the eyes of legitimate France, Elisabeth was illegitimate. That was sufficient. There was more. Elisabeth, who even as a lass loved life, dressed like a man and hunted hyenas and lovers.

Her first affair, a Slav eclogue, was with a shepherd whom she pursued and overtook. Very presuming of him, none the less. To teach him the respect due to a tsarevna, his tongue was cut out. Along the tundras of the Siberian coast, thereafter he meditated on that lesson.

The shepherd was succeeded by a tenor, the tenor by a regiment. Highly temperamental, Elisabeth changed her chosen only less frequently than her costumes, of which, in the course of her volatilely voluptuous reign, she accumulated nineteen thousand, together with a few less than five thousand pair of shoes. Incidentally there was a child. About Elisabeth romance clung. About the child there is tragedy. That also will be told in a moment.

In the long illness that Russian history is, the romance of the woman and of her reign relaxes. Set between the hysteria that had gone and the relapses to come, the pages of the imperial annals turn to airs that are almost blythe, to a gaiety sickly but convalescent. From windows that gave to the south and west, the patient beheld defeats and massacres. The defeats were those of Frederick the Pseudo-Great; the massacres, those of Prussians. Medicaments like these invigourate. Accompanying them were gusts of culture, a trifle uncertain, the hesitant preludes of freer life. Heads were still shaky. They were no longer cut off for a yes or a no.

These restoratives were apprehensible from the upper storeys only. Beneath them, the soul of the nation, narcotised at birth, slept restlessly. Sleep was Russia's normal condition. No European nation slept longer. Peter shook her, kicked her to her feet, put her at work. Russia laboured at his bidding, toiled beneath his lash, writhed on his rack and, he gone, fell asleep again. Conscious she was but conscious of nightmare. She knew that she agonised but how or why she could no more tell than a child with the croup. The subsequent shrieks of the Terror, the amputations of the austere guillotine, the festivals and convulsions of France, passed her unheeded. Somnambulistic, automaton, hypnotised by absolutism's basilisk stare, night held her and continued to hold her until the Crimean war.

The shock of that ignoble scramble stirred her. From her cot that was at once a cage and a coffin, she showed a few poisoned fangs, but only to have them drawn. They have grown afresh since then. Since then, from being affrighted, she frightened the world. But meanwhile her brain was still heavy, her pulse was slow. She suffered without knowing why. Time, the great pathologist, was occupied elsewhere. Even otherwise, it is not until a nation can diagnose her own maladies that the indicated remedies are applied.

They were not applied then. On the upper storeys of the hospital, a pale daylight fell. Elsewhere, darkness persisted. In the isbas, where even vermin starved, serfs cried for bread and died. In the schools, problems on the nature of angels' thoughts were anxiously discussed. In the streets, sudden cutthroats did for you and vanished. Yet one of them, Vanka Kaïn, the tsar of cutthroats, managed to be quite as surprising and infinitely more poetic than the anointed bandits with whom these pages deal. That is the grave inconvenience of history. In writing it, the historian may not sing the kings of the highroad. He must harp of the great carnivora. The bestiarium will reopen immediately.

For the people, in those days, existence was tragic. For the boiars it was gay. Shackled by Peter, they were halt. Under Elisabeth they could move. Provided they did not affront the imperial stare, they could live. In this epoch they began to. About them, from the toil of serfs, wealth had been accumulating. Splendidly they squandered it. In France, red-heeled seigneurs were similarly engaged. There, presently, the poor, bled to death to defray the follies of the rich, sent in their bill. History calls that bill the Terror. In Russia, the addition took longer. But when finally it was presented, the terror that resulted reduced that of France to the proportions of a farandole. It assembled all the terrors of tsardom and turned them upside down.

Muscovite follies began in the reign of this good Queen Bess. To encourage them, a great novelty had been introduced. The novelty was champagne. Other novelties followed: pineapples, Irish hunters, French literature, Italian music and the parage of princely display. When a gentleman drove, two heiduques and ten lackeys accompanied him. If he took snuff, he had three hundred and sixty-five jewelled snuff-boxes to choose from. His coats were gorgeous and, in the court of Elisabeth, his existence was Paphian.

For the court, Elisabeth built the Winter Palace, the largest in Europe, precisely as Buckingham is the ugliest and Versailles the least comfortable.

Versailles had other attributes. In that El Dorado of gallantry, vice was ennobled. Created a marquis, it acquired a dignity ceremonial and amusingly pompous. Gallantry, which is the parody of love, became its style and title. Legitimate and royalist as the king, there was no hypocrisy about it. It was cynical but not perverse. The perverse was there also, but hidden, veiled by gold brocade, buried under fleurs-de-lys.

The Winter Palace parodied Versailles as gallantry parodies love. Lampsacene hymns, Lesbian songs, the rites of the gods of the cities that mirrored their lunar towers in the Bitter Sea, these, the ritual of halls that a league of candles lit, made up in fervour what they lacked in grace. The fault was Peter's who, without considering the preliminary and very imperative educational steps, had ukased a social world into being.

The fault was not regarded as such. It was a sesame to the cave of forbidden fruit and resulted in a sans-gêne that no modern court has known, even behind the arras. As a consequence, the advent, elevation and passing of Elisabeth's grenadiers—lads of the moment they were called—young men lifted from the barracks to the couch of imperial amours, constituted a parade that was viewed with understanding, not with censure, except once. Two women presumed to sit in judgment. That was a serious matter. The beauty of one of the women exceeded Elisabeth's. That was more serious still. What followed is horrible.

The women were taken to the theatre. On the stage, one of them, the Countess Bestoujev, gave the executioner a handful of diamonds. The lash fell lightly on her back. The knife barely scratched her tongue. The other, the beauty, Countess Lapoukhin, screamed and fought with the man, bit his hand, resisted him as best she might. He tore her clothes off and, before applying the lash, cut her tongue out. Then, jeering at her nakedness, he offered the bloody morsel for a rouble. He turned to beat the beauty. She had fainted. The lash revived her. Presently for her and the other woman, the journey to Siberia began. Of all whom Elisabeth sent there, these two only she neglected to recall.

In the private life of the nobles there were incidents equally abominable. A woman of rank, angered by a serf, got her fingers in his mouth and tore it back to the ears. In the bedroom of another woman, a serf lived in a cage. The serf was a barber and the woman did not wish it known that, when loosened, he dyed her hair. Another woman, personally and unaided, killed a hundred of her human chattels. Another woman—but here the pen balks. Gautier said that the inexpressible does not exist. Gautier did not live in eighteenth-century Russia.

In sending the Brunswickers to the devil, Elisabeth directed them to the north, from which, years later, they reached Denmark, minus the boy tsar. Ivan VI. was taken from them, brought back, put in one prison, then in another, though where and in what prison he never knew. No one was allowed to tell him. It was forbidden to speak to him. To look at him was forbidden. The Iron Mask of Russia, for twenty years he reigned in an oubliette. For crown, he had cobwebs; for subjects, spiders; for kingdom, a cell.

That grandeur was excessive. It menaced

Elisabeth's. To annoy her, Frederick threatened to put him on the throne. "I'll chop his head off first," Elisabeth retorted. More finely, she nearly chopped Prussia's. In the interim she forgot Ivan. What she forgot, Catherine II. recalled. The Star of the North could not endure the rivalry even of a phantom. An attempt was made to rescue him. The keepers had their orders. The shadow tsar was killed.

That was Catherine's doing. Elisabeth objected to rivals also but not to shadows, only to women. With these she was merciless. Otherwise she enjoyed herself hugely. She hunted all day and danced all night. At some of the dances she appeared as a man. On such occasions it was etiquette for all court young women to appear as men and for all young men to appear as women. Elisabeth liked that. She liked young men in women's clothes. Moreover, that they might be properly sent out, she acted as dresser, selecting in the process those that pleased her most. In regard to her own masquerade she had a reason quite as interesting. Her leg was well turned, she knew she looked well as a man, knew, too, that women generally look the reverse. To be merely empress was insufficient. After the manner of a châtelaine in the days and in the lands of chivalry, she wanted to be Queen of Beauty and of Love.

In these diversions, age had the insolence to approach her. Illness dared to touch her. On her beauty they laid a smearing hand. That was crime, a crime long since codified—*crimen læsæ majestatis divinæ.*

The woman loved life, loved love, but she loved her beauty best. To it, to her gowns, her coiffure, her mirror, she gave contented hours. She never wore the same frock twice. No one was permitted to copy her coiffure until she had adopted another arrangement. One night she put a rose in her hair. The Countess Lapoukhin did the same. She got her face slapped for it, with the knout and Siberia to follow. As Elisabeth dealt it to that woman, the high fates dealt it to her. The knout was her mirror, her prison a darkened room. There, the goddess passed from sight, the sovereign disappeared. Like the countess, she was in the house of the dead.

There were hours when she meditated escape. The lustres were lighted and in a fresh Parisianism, her hair redressed, her face rerouged, her neck circled with emeralds as big and as naked as eggs, the illusion of lost beauty returned. But who was that rancid horror that stood and stared? From the mirror she turned, the illusion had gone and, weeping, she drank.

Her sins were scarlet. They might have been remitted if she had lived long enough. With longer life she would have washed them in the paler crimson of Frederick's blood. Her troops entered Berlin. East Prussia was theirs. Pomerania was theirs. Elisabeth directed them. More exactly, a thousand miles from the front, she shook her pen at her generals. "If any man wavers," that pen told Saltykov, "send him to me in chains."

They might have sent her the incompetent parvenu whom the lackeys of history call the Great, and who, serving as model for Wilhelm II., fled in fright from the battlefield as that fellow fled; bombarded cathedrals as he did under pretext that they served as conning towers; regarded treaties as the same scraps of paper; ordered the same frightfulness and pretended he had not; pretended also, precisely as that scrofulous dwarf pretended, that he did not want war and warred only because Europe was jealous. England, credulous as her lackeys, believed him. Just prior to Rossbach, he told d'Argens that, if he lost it, he would practise medicine. D'Argens nodded:—"Toujours assassin."

Elisabeth lacked the time to snuff him out but, for the remainder of the century, she snuffed

Prussia. That was the war-woman. The lady of pleasure had other ideals. There was her namesake, the first good Queen Bess. She wanted to resemble her. She, too, wanted to parade as a Virgin Queen. The task was difficult, but that made it all the more commendable. Consequently, when she took it into her head to marry, the ceremony was performed sub rosa. The rose was not very tenebrous. The court, Petersburg, everybody, even the dvorniks, looked through it at the ceremony, which she had so often omitted that it was thought highly original of her to observe it at all.

The happy man was Russian. It is said that she induced herself to accept him out of patriotism, in order that she and the throne might not become the prey of some foreign prince. Everything is possible and it may be true. But the compatriot whom she selected for her country's sake, she had already selected for her own. He was the tenor who preceded the regiment and, though a tenor, not in the least ferocious, on the contrary, an amiable, heavy-witted peasant in Sunday clothes.

His name was Rázoumovski. His father kept a pothouse where his mother was waitress. Good, plain, natural people, their son was the proper mate for a servant-girl's daughter.

Known after the ceremony as the nocturnal emperor, his mother came to call. Suitably, or at all events ornamentally attired beforehand, she saw herself in a mirror, mistook what she saw for her daughter-in-law and fell on her knees.

The picture is Arcadian. To embellish it Razoumovski's behaviour was Boetian. He had none of Menchikov's pretensions, no Bühren ambitions, no Lynar airs. Years later, when Elisabeth was dead, he said that he had never been other than the most humble of her majesty's subjects. It was quite true. No jealousy of any kind. No interference of any sort. No views. The art of loving people as though you hated them was too complicated for this peasant who presented, in its perfection, a picture, life-size, of the mari sage, or rather would have, were it not that, like Amanda, he had one defect. He drank. But then the regiment that single file marched through the boudoir of his lady, any husband, however discreet, might wish to forget.

Drink aiding, he so thoroughly succeeded that, though made count, prince, field-marshal, his native simplicity remained unimpaired. Always and everywhere, in public, in private, in life and in death, he was the most humble of her majesty's subjects, except once, when, excited by liquor, he hit Saltykov over the head. What made the incident particularly awkward was Saltykov's inability to hit back. A nocturnal emperor was sacred. But that incident, the marriage itself, Razoumovski included, would not merit a footnote, were it not for a drama that ensued.

Paris, years later, became interested in a visitor of whom nothing was known and everything could be imagined. Young, fair, rich and mysterious, about her was the atmosphere of the faraway, a flavour that was heightened by her eyes which, like Ann Boleyn's, were of different colours. One was dark amber, the other deep blue. Her name, equally strange and oddly undulant, was Aly Emettée de Vlodomir, Princess Tarakanov.

What and where was Vlodomir? Who and what were the Tarakanovs? There was then no Almanach de Gotha to reply. But in the young woman's household there were those who did as well. Vlodomir and Tarakanov were domains of which their lady was lord. She may have been, but servants sometimes embroider.

Yet she had that air, remote, gracious, triste, which, in fairyland, poets and royals display. Estates, domains, patents of nobility, robes et manteaux, these things may be had. But that air, never! It is nowhere on sale. This girl exhaled it and, with it, the gift of the strange gods which innate charm is.

Whether she were or were not what she afterward claimed to be, is one of the minor enigmæ of history. But her belief in a secret that enveloped her, became the tragedy of her tragic life. On the sheer red peaks of torture, peaks that are the summits of human agony, she clung to it, refusing to retract, asking only that there be said over her a prayer for the dead.

In Paris, years ago, Flavinski, a Russian artist, exhibited a painting of which the horror and the execution detained. It showed this girl standing on a cot in a vault into which water poured through a grating. Her back against the wall, her head bent by the low roof, her hands clasped in terror, it was obvious that in a moment the water would reach and claim her.

The vault was a subterranean cell of a Petersburg prison which the Neva, rising, had flooded. Before Petersburg became Petrograd the cell was shown. Given the money and the guide and one can be shown anything. What the picture represented never occurred. The Princess Tarakanov was not drowned, she was murdered.

The story of the girl is brief, simple, bizarre and horrible. Her first memories were of a Russian convent from which, while still a child, she was taken endlessly to Baghdad, thence on to Isfahan, where she grew up in the palace of a prince who treated her with a respect invariable and profound. Later she went with him to London. There he left her, supplying her beforehand with money and an entourage and revealing to her a secret, of which long since whispers had reached her, and concerning which documentary evidence would in time, he said, be produced.

It was in these circumstances that, vacating London, she went to Paris, afterward to Vienna, then to Venice, where the polite world was intrigued by this exotic princess who looked like a houri and who lived like a vestal.

In that she reversed the order of things. To look like a vestal is always permissible, but to live like one was not fashionable then. At the time, the fervours of Cyprus were forgotten. The altars to Eros and Aphrodite were dust. From the crystal parapets where they leaned and laughed, the immortals had gone. But not very high, nor yet very far. Over the eighteenth-century metropoles of pleasure, they leaned and laughed as before. Their shrines had crumbled, their temples had fallen, but their worship endured. They were the immortals. Modernity could not touch them, time could not reach them, only their names had changed. Instead of Eros was Temptation; in place of Aphrodite, Delight. In the current literature were their rituals; in paintings and statues, their images; in opera, their hymns. The contagion of their rites fevered and depraved.

In the amorality of the neo-pagan atmosphere, the princess really loved. She loved in an epoch when no one loved at all. It was very eccentric of her. To be eccentric is always hazardous. The danger was there. She mistook it for bliss. In that disguise it caught and killed her.

A prince asked her hand. The prince was Radziwill, a Polish refugee, who travelled about with the twelve apostles, life-size, in massive gold, which, in accordance with his needs, he melted.

In considering the proposal, which she presently rejected, she told him the secret. It was so inspiring that with it he planned to have the Sultan put them both on the throne of the Jagellons. Whether he were suited for it is unimportant. But she looked the queen which she might have been, though not perhaps in Poland. Apparently, too, the time had come. From Isfahan the other prince, the Persian, sent her the promised papers.

Among them was Elisabeth's will. Elisabeth then was dead. Catherine II. had succeeded her. According to the documents, the accession was illegal. In the will, Elisabeth appointed her daughter to succeed her and that daughter, issue of her marriage with Razoumovski, was Aly Emettée de Vlodomir.

At the time, she was in the ideal city of the material world. Venice should have detained this girl who embodied its charm. But the dream that always had been with her and which, it may be, had given her the look, enigmatically triste, which they alone display whom destiny has marked for some fate, supreme or tragic, that dream, or that destiny, held her and led her and hid her away.

Then, too, a rumour of the will, the report that she was granddaughter of Peter the Great, the evocation of power absolute, these things and her presence, sovereign, gracious, sad, stirred Venice. Along the liquid streets ran the ripple of the cry, *"Viva l'imperatrice!"*

That also may have been coercive. Presently, in addition, there was love.

Radziwill, meanwhile, more enthusiastic, more enamoured and more absurd than ever, melted his last apostle. Clearly the Sultan, Perfume of Paradise, Shadow of God on Earth, could refuse nothing to a descendant of the Porte's arch-foe. The plan was magnificent, it was also insane. The princess, disassociating herself from him and from it, went to Ragusa, where she sent the admiral of a Russian squadron, then at Leghorn, a copy of her mother's will.

The admiral, Alexis Orlov, had been Catherine's lover. He referred the matter to her. In reply he was commanded to seize the claimant at any cost, even though he had to bombard the coast to get her.

That order, if executed, meant war. It is perhaps obvious that Catherine, in giving it, knew the facts and preferred war to their recognition.

Historians generally have ignored that point. Generally they have ignored the princess. Otherwise they have derided her. To some, her Persian was a fabulous being. To others, her purity was as mythical. Challemel-Lacour described her as an adventuress. She may have been. But some time later, de Verac, the French minister at Petersburg, received a bill which he was asked to collect. The bill was from a Paris merchant who claimed that the Princess Tarakanov owed him fifty thousand francs. De Verac had never heard of the lady. At headquarters he asked about her. He was requested not to ask again, but he was told that the bill would be paid, which it was, although bills incurred by the Russian squadron in French waters were protested and payment refused. Privately, his enquiries continued. From the secret service he learned that the princess was Elisabeth II.

In those days communication was very leisurely. When Orlov received Catherine's commands, the course he adopted was characteristically that of the average Russian of whom it is characteristic not to have any character at all. He prostrated himself before the girl whom he called his empress and to whom he swore the fealty of a knight. The sad girl listened, listened longer, listened as she had listened to no man before. Orlov was a giant and an athlete. Because of a fight in which he had sunk the Turkish fleet, he was called a hero. He looked it. He was superiorly handsome. Though a ruffian, he, too, could charm. That charm encircled her. Italy and youth and love! Love in the land where, said Owen Meredith, "love most lovely seems!"

In the girl's entourage there were those who doubted, who warned, who perhaps foresaw. But the girl who had never yet loved, then loved wholly. The man, his splendid vigour, his knightly allegiance, enthralled. Then too there was the dream into which he entered with her. He told her, what was true, that he and his brothers had put Catherine on the throne. He added, what was false, that he and his brothers would take it from her. Then, if his lady but deigned, she and he could share it.

In the passionate wooing the impassioned girl was won. She became his wife and, amid the boom of guns and acclaiming cries, went with him to the flagship, where instantly he disappeared. About her were marines. She was a prisoner. A prisoner she remained until she reached Petersburg where Catherine had her put to the question, tortured to death.

The throne then was secure. From it Catherine had torn an emperor whom she murdered. From it she had held another emperor whom she killed. There were no more claimants. The last of the Romanovs was dead, and at her latest lover the empress leered.

VII

VENUS VICTRIX

FROM the cupboard of yawns that history is, Catherine the Greater emerges in spangles. Her life was an opera composed by Chance. Musicians do not know him; mythographers do not mention him, mathematicians deny that he is. Yet, drawn in a chariot of jewels by horses of flame, those whom he favours are raised to the sky. Chance carried her portrait from a tinpot principality to the great Peter's grandson and herself to the throne.

That grandson, a poodle-faced boy, pockmarked, witless, neurotically unable to be still, and whose tongue, when not wagging with inanities, hung like a hound's from his mouth, was the son of the Duchess of Holstein-Gottorp, Elisabeth's sister. Appointed tsarevitch, he was given for bride the Princess Sophia Augusta of Anhalt-Zerbst, whom the Church christened Catherine; and Voltaire, Semiramis.

The name rolls; it is empty as sound. Semiramis never existed. But the name subsists. It means the One who Loves. As such it fitted this girl who was to become the grande amoureuse and whose dramatic entrance into history was effected with a swoon. At sight of the whelp she fainted.

A virgin and—in appearance—very ethereal, she had two ambitions. She wanted the mantle of glory. She wanted the perfume of Eros. She wanted to be Venus Victrix.

At the time, a Psyche on a fan, slight and very fair, her mouth was red as sealing-wax, her hair an auburn turban. Her eyes, sometimes heliotrope, were sometimes green, sometimes grey. In later years, dignity replaced the deliciousness that had been. In lieu of Psyche, there was Juno. With age came the sibyl, a sybil obese, dropsical, sinister. But when she left Stettin, where she had played with ragamuffins in the sullen streets, and journeyed to Russia and the throne, it was endearing to see the blushes, the ingenuousness, the modesty that she displayed. She looked precisely what she was, fresh from school, pretty enough to eat—while preparing to devour an empire.

In her memoirs she says that already she had determined to have it and have it alone. By way of preparation for the meal, she sharpened her teeth on Machiavelli, taught herself Russian and meditated the mosaics of the Greek faith. In marrying the whelp that faith would have to be hers. But she had no inconvenient scruples. She would have become Mormon if necessary and though it was not, she did. That, though, was later. Meanwhile, from the swoon into which the prospective delights of marriage with the poodle-faced boy had thrown her, she got herself together, got the whelp and, when the throne was his, put him from it as a child is put to sleep. For soothing syrup he had poison; for lullaby, contempt; for cradle, a grave.

The whelp—historically Peter III.—was a German. He was born a German, died a German. Frederick, at the time, was on his knees. This imbecile first raised him up, then knelt before him. From that day, Prussia began an ascent that culminated at the Marne. The original Romanov was a Prussian. Peter III. was a Hun.

Among other children of Catherine was Paul, who succeeded her. In her memoirs she says that Peter the Little was not Paul's father. Historians who know more about it than she did, insist that he was. In listening to them, one might mistake the lady for an austere matron. The error would have annoyed her. She had no false pride. On the other hand, she did have a few lovers. Among them was Saltykov, who may have been Paul's father. But, as Voltaire said, and said too very reasonably:—"These are family matters."

All that was later. At the start, Catherine, who had determined to be first, began by being last. Before commanding, she obeyed; before usurping, she effaced herself. To Elisabeth, she was adorably subservient; to Peter, unutterably considerate; to the court—amazed at such guilelessness—she was delightfully ingénue. To no one, however obscure, was she negligent. She importuned no one, however great. She gave everything and asked nothing. The rose was her model. She charmed and was silent. Yet, without seeming to listen, she heard everything. Apparently ethereal, she was preparing to gobble a throne.

Hunger appeased, Cinderbritch vanished. The swooning virgin had gone. To the court's astonishment, an ingénue became a general; a girl, a despot. Peter the Great made Russia recognise Europe. Catherine the Greater made Russia recognised by the world. That is history. When enemies were arming, concerning their number she never enquired. What she asked was:—"Where are they?" That is Roman. When she learned that Diderot was poor, she bought his library, made him its custodian and paid him a salary for fifteen years in advance. That is delightful. When her purse was empty she evoked the ghost of gold that paper money is and saddled her country with debt. Had she wished she could have manufactured money out of leather, out of blades of grass and given it any value she liked. She could do anything and did almost everything. She cowered but once. That was at the sight of the French revolution. Immediately she straightened. Her little household, as she called Russia, was not France. Moreover, she commanded an army that fought without pay, without rest, often without food and always without complaint. Against that army no revolution could prevail. No, nor Asia either. Had she lived, she would have owned it.

Beside her, Peter, her lord, looked exactly what he was and nothing worse can be said of him—an imbecile who drilled tin soldiers, dressed wax dolls, trained terriers in his bedroom, occupied his absence of mind with grotesque puerilities, worshipped Frederick, made peace with Prussia, prussianised the army, got drunk with his lackeys and foisted on the court a band of Holsteiners as ignoble—if that be possible—as himself. Catherine, meanwhile, belle comme le jour, to employ her own description of herself, was dreaming of grandeur absolute. By way of practise, she managed the idiot's duchy. Later, when the dream came true, she found it quite as easy to manage his empire. She was a born administrator and yet a woman. But what a woman! Cæsar and Faustine combined.

Faustine had many lovers. Catherine had more. But before she was empress only a few, just enough to hand her up on the throne from which they pulled her husband off. In tsaral annals, the modus of the elimination, then unique, was to become common. Peter III. was murdered. He was given arsenic in vodka. The poison being ineffective, Alexis Orlov knocked him down, held him down and strangled him with a napkin. Orlov's punishment, highly dramatic, and equally delayed, will be told later on. For the murder itself, Catherine has been rebuked. Perhaps it had its excuse. Prior to Elisabeth's death, Peter the Small had made it clear to Semiramis that once tsar he would divorce and replace her, as Peter the Great's wife had been replaced, by a scullion. Catherine had therefore the choice between immolating and being immolated. It was at dinner that she decided.

Tacitus tells of a supper, given by Nero to Britannicus, who died of it. "After a moment of silence," the historian noted, "gaiety returned." *Post breve silentium, repetitia convivii lætitia.* The dinner resembled that supper.

The dinner was held in a high hall, hung with Asiatic splendour, flooded with European light. The foreign ministers were there, the great nobles, the ladies of honour, a swarm of princes and peris perfumed with lies, starred with diamonds, radiant as rainbows.

Peter, rising, proposed the health of the imperial family. Catherine remained seated. Why not? The imperial family consisted of herself; of Paul, who was a child; of Peter, who was her husband.

"Doura!" Peter the Small bawled at her. "Fool!"

Everybody heard, except Catherine. With a smile she turned to one of her gentlemen. With a fresher smile she turned to another. A moment merely. But in that moment a grave had been dug. Then she looked at Peter. So must Nero have looked at Britannicus.

Peter counted for little. What he did count for was German. Petersburg had an indigestion of Teuton customs, Teuton manners, Teuton touts. Catherine was not Teuton. She had begun by being German but the taint had been drained. She had become wholly Russian prior to becoming entirely French. The versatility of her universality enthralled prelates and pretorians, the boiars and the army. When the time came, she but lifted her finger. They rose to her.

The dinner was in celebration of peace with Prussia whom Elisabeth, had she lived, would have knifed. A few days later, Peter celebrated the peace again, but on this occasion at Oranienbaum, a plaisance where Catherine omitted to accompany him.

Incidentally the Orlovs were at work, five of them, five brothers, five men with one head, each of whom commanded a regiment, in one of which Potemkin was lieutenant. Gregori Orlov, the eldest of the brothers, but though the eldest still very young, had so charmed Catherine that familiarly she was called Madame Gregori. He was one of the men to whom she had turned and smiled on the night of the dinner. The other man was Alexis Orlov, who had charmed her also.

Early one morning, shortly after, Alexis Orlov brought her, dressed as a general, to the barracks. There, a priest, raising a cross, recited an oath. The soldiers repeated it. A cry went up, "Live the empress!" In that cry Petersburg joined.

To the blare of brass, the regiments started, Catherine on horseback leading. Peter got wind of it. He fled to a fortress. The wind had preceded him.

From a rampart a sentry called:—"Who goes there?"

"The emperor."

"There is no emperor. Move on!"

Peter turned and, whimpering like a beaten cur, offered to share the sceptre. Catherine declined. He begged for mercy. Officially, his death was ascribed to apoplexy. Crétinism were more exact.

Peter had many defects. The gravest was an inability to appreciate a Tiberius in skirts. That fault official Russia did not share. It rose to her and it knelt. Then, presently, about the throne, the perfume of Eros mounted.

In the ballroom of her heart, the Orlovs were not her first partners, nor were they the last. Their predecessors were not numerous, but their successors were without number. Moralists have blamed her for that and no doubt very justly. None the less, her cotillon favours represented something else than the caprices of an empress autocratically privileged to do as she liked. Catherine elevated her men Pompadours to the dignity of a state institution. They had appointments, prerogatives, and a position that was exceeded only by her own and which frequently was on an equality with it. Several offended her greatly, successively she wearied of each, yet to all she was decent, none incurred her dislike. One, whom she surprised with her nearest friend, she dismissed, but not to Siberia. Another she relinquished to a rival, without chopping his head off first. Christine of Sweden had a faithless du Barry killed in her presence. Queen Elisabeth was as bloody. Lovers of whom Catherine wearied or who wearied of her, preserved her friendship, enjoyed her protection. When their intimacy with her ended, their service to the state began. Or, if they lacked the ability, they lived semi-royally on her royal largesse.

The first to gather her handkerchief was Saltykov, a young assembly of brilliant vices whose assiduities, favoured for reasons dynastic, were interrupted. He was given an honorific exile and sent as minister to Sweden. Catherine, who was not then Semiramis, but grand-duchess merely, shed no tears. The lustre of his brilliance had been already dimmed. Into her ken another partner had swum. The new planet was Poniatowski, a tourist from Poland who returned there as king.

The kingship had been predicted. When but a child an astrologer drew his horoscope. In it was a throne. What throne? Nobody knew, but he was trained for it as a colt is trained for a race. In the training he acquired the attitude and strut of a king on the stage. That was mere façade. Back of it was the ingenuousness of a young lady, and fronting it was a smile in which there was Château Yquem. Such a smile is heady. It captivated Catherine. But though he had a languorous eye on her, he had another and a very timorous one on Siberia. In Russia, one never knew! Besides, he barely escaped it.

Late one night he reached the grand-ducal residence where Catherine awaited him. While effecting a surreptitious entrance, he was surprised by the guard and taken to Peter. At the moment, the future monarch was guzzling with his lady, a very elegant young person, squint-eyed, stupid, malodorous, who, Masson says, spat when she talked.

Peter grinned. "Come to assassinate me?"

Poniatowski, his façade crumbling, stammered a protest.

Peter giggled. "He, he! You're after the grand-duchess. Well, run along. I, too, have a girl."

Subsequently, Catherine gave him a crown. That bit of jewellry was his walking-stick. She made him king to be rid of him. Poland, the mad nation, a nation chivalrous, heroic, insane, removed it. Poland that had withstood the Tatars and was to withstand everything, could not stand a young lady, though recently she listened to a pianist. From the Slav Valhalla, with what fierce surprise, the Jagellons, her warrior kings, must have looked down at that!

Catherine's handkerchief passed from Poniatowski to the Orlovs, from them to Potemkin, from him to Zubov. Saltykov and Poniatowski were her maîtres de danse. In the great cotillon that followed, the Orlovs mark the beginning, Potemkin the height, Zubov the end. Intermediately were other partners, though how many, history, her hostess, fatigued by the task of enumerating them, neglected to count. But in the long bacchanal, Gregori Orlov detained her most.

Vigorous, violent, fearless, a giant in stature, Gregori Orlov was the handsomest man of his day. After the manner of giants he was dull. But he looked every inch the sultan that he became. He not only looked the sultan, he filled the rôle. To him, Semiramis was but another odalisque in the seraglio which he maintained. Catherine tolerated his impertinences, ignored his infidelities, forgave whatever he did. Catherine loved him. More exactly, like every grande amoureuse, and of them all she was the greatest, when she said je t'aime she meant je m'aime and failed to see the difference. Nor did Orlov see it. He thought of marrying her. It seemed the simplest thing in the world. She had given him honours, titles, palaces, serfs by the thousand, domains by the league. She shared the treasury with him. But the throne, no. There pride interfered, the consciousness that however she might condescend, the sceptre must remain indivisibly hers. Then also, while Orlov had practically put the sceptre in her hand, while, too, he was a sort of Greek god, yet the coup d'état had been to him merely an adventure, and his divinity was of the early and very primitive type. The god was null. Presently the nullity was revealed. To have an empress at his feet was insufficient. He ran off with a chit of a girl, who died, and the pulp behind his forehead deglutinised. He went mad, covering his face with offal which, like Ezechiel, he ate.

At the time, the madness was said to have been caused not at all by grief, but by an herb with which Potemkin poisoned him.

Potemkin too was mad, not from an herb, but with genius. One of the many who handed Catherine up on the throne, he began, on the morning of the coup d'état, by offering her a silver feather for her uniform and might have ended by putting the Byzantine crown on her head. On the morning of the revolution, he was an ensign. Orlov gone, he was vice-emperor. Between those sentences there are years. There is also an ascent from nowhere to everything. Catherine made him prince, premier, plutocrat, generalissimo. With the Crimea and the Black Sea, royally he repaid her.

Women admire the brave but they prefer the audacious. Saltykov was a ladies' man. Poniatowski was a lady. Orlov was a devil, Potemkin was a demon. The cotillon which Catherine danced with these and with other men and in which she displayed a temperamental intemperance more extravagant than any that the modern world has beheld, represents the spaciousness of her heart, which many entered and none could fill. Saltykov surprised her. Poniatowski charmed her. Orlov carried her off her feet. Potemkin held her in the air. Her interest in

Saltykov and in Poniatowski was that of the amateur in experimental physiology. But it was Orlov who taught her to love and Potemkin who taught her to reign. If neither became her master, it was because no man could be that.

Potemkin was also a giant, a giant with one eye. In a tavern brawl he had lost the other. Alexis Orlov knocked it out. Gregori Orlov was gigantic and violent. Alexis Orlov was gigantic and brutal. Potemkin was gigantic and terrible. A dark cyclops with the air of a jackal and the negligences of a pasha, he was the only one of Catherine's partners whom she had not selected for his looks, but also he was the only one who spared her the advances which she was always obliged to make, the only one who dared. That won her to this man, who loved her with the tenderness of an amant and the poetry of a troubadour. She was his mistress and his glory. When satiety came, ambition linked them still.

Incidentally, she was pushing the frontiers back, extending her little household, at the north, to the aurora; at the east to the dawn; at the south, nearly to the gates of Stamboul.

In the extension, Potemkin greatly aided. To her ménage he added the Crimea and then took her to see it.

It would have been interesting to have accompanied her in the Arabian Night entertainment that he devised and through which in a sleigh—Cleopatra's barge on runners and for which, and for her suite that followed, there were five hundred horses at each relay—she passed down from polar ice to a tropical sun, from Petersburg to the Euxine, from surprise to enchantment, from the emptied thrones of Tatar khans to the abandoned divans of Ottoman viceroys, from fallen palaces of kings of the Bosphorus to the crumbled temples of Hercules and Diana, from memories of Mithridates to the myths of Greece, from illusion to illusion, through scenery painted on canvas, through panoramas that vanished as she passed, through trained ballets of acclaiming crowds, through cascading fireworks, through uninterrupted fêtes, down into glowing gardens where Wallachian hospodars, Circassian princes, dispossessed Georgian lords genuflected to the Star of the North, who, at the end of the route, saw a triumphal arch on which blazed an inscription—"The Way to Stamboul."

At one halt, Catherine was greeted by the Austrian emperor, disguised as a gentleman; at another by Poniatowski, disguised as a king.

Ségur—French minister to the court of Semiramis—who went with her, said that the meeting between the ex-amants was formal. What did he expect? But presently the two retired into privacy where they probably talked of old times as old people do. On emerging, Poniatowski had mislaid his hat. Catherine found and restored it.

"Ah!" said Poniatowski with his Château Yquem smile. "You gave me once a far finer one."

Ségur said that Catherine's conversation was very banal. Poniatowski may have copied it.

Near Moscow, on the return flight, an opera was given in the private theatre of a resident count. The composer, the librettist, the singers, the musicians, the corps de ballet, everybody connected with the representation—except the count's guests—were his serfs. Earlier that day the tenor, who took the part of a king, had been flogged. At a supper which followed, Ségur noted that the goblets, enough for a hundred, were incrusted with jewels.

Potemkin surpassed the count. In magnificence, he exceeded Catherine. His entertainments bewilder the pen. The paragraphs that tell of them dazzle. The Crimean junket, the unequalled journey through the antique Taurida, was but one of the many flowers that he put at his sovereign's feet. At a ball which he gave for her, lackeys handed about goblets filled with diamonds to the brim.

Hero and lover, doubly triumphant, he too thought of marrying his queen. It seemed to him, as it had seemed to Orlov, the simplest thing in the world. Catherine regarded the matter as before. He threatened to become a monk. For a cyclops and a jackal, the threat was ridiculous. Catherine laughed. The charm was broken. Friendship remained. Potemkin, fantastic in all things, demonstrated his in a manner that was perhaps original. He made lists of eligible young men and, with the lists, submitted their portraits. It was for Catherine to choose. For a while, she did. But Zubov, who succeeded them all, she selected unassisted.

Saltykov entered her life when she was young, Zubov when she was old. Young she was delicious. Age moldered her. Seen across a room she was still imperial. Close to, was a toothless woman with furtive eyes, a quavering voice and passions still unappeased. Yet, far or near, her power was predominant. The splendour of her court, the pomp of her princes, the extent of her dominions, created an admiration that was stupefying. Her prestige surpassed the forgotten glories of Louis XIV. But in the same manner that her fame transcended his, her bacchanals exceeded Faustine's. There are planes beneath which there is perhaps nothing deeper. Tiberius devised vices for which names had to be coined. The Winter Palace became a Tiberian villa. Zubov, young enough to be her grandson, had companions in arms, and in his and in their company, while her troops beat the Turks, fought the Swedes, devastated Poland, the sinister and prodigious woman achieved the ultimate descent.

Zubov's portrait was not submitted by Potemkin, it was self-presented. He put himself where Catherine could see him. Any officer who had, or who thought he had, a well-turned leg did the same. The state apartments were lined with fetching young men. They formed a hedge along which the sovereign passed, looked, smiled, passed on. Zubov followed the smile. It led him far and high. Another subaltern was a fille entretenue. With none of Orlov's dash, without a spark of Potemkin's ability, he obtained from her more power than either, more wealth than both. In the last years of her reign, Zubov was automatically and autocratically tsar.

His portrait, which Potemkin neglected, Masson displayed. It shows a youth in a dressing-gown and not a very decent one, waited on by his valets, the lords and princes of the realm. His back is turned. But in a mirror before him, his face appears, cold, vain, empty. In his hand is a book; on his shoulder a monkey. Meanwhile his valets stand and wait, wait and stand until he deigns to turn, deigns to look. At that condescension, instantly they prostrated themselves before the Pompadour who had been emptying the treasury, filling the prisons and whom no one, unpermitted, dared to address. There were those who were there on matters of state. Day in, day out, month after month they came before the permission was accorded. Then negligently, in that negligée, the tsar dismissed them.

Slight of body and slimmer of soul, he may have possessed, Masson, for finishing touch, concludes, occult qualities which only Catherine could appreciate. No doubt. Besides, to the old woman that she was, he was spring, fair skies, youth's return and she a girl again, loved as Poniatowski had loved her, for her charm alone. There is sorcery in that and in the first enthrallment of it she regarded him as a genius. Afterward she saw him more after the manner of a sultana on whose neck is a eunuch's heel.

Potemkin, at the time, was at Jassy. He

started for Petersburg. On a highway he died. It was reported that Zubov had had him poisoned. Perhaps he had. But an annalist says that during a fever that overtook him en route, he ate a whole ham, a smoked goose, three chickens, drank liquor by the quart, drenching himself alternately with ice-water and cologne. Gigantic and fantastic in life, fantastically and gigantically he died. At the news of it, the sultana leered at the eunuch.

Zubov is the smear on the chronicles of a woman sovereignly enabled to do as she liked and who was very polite about it. One after another she killed the last three Romanovs and ran Poland through the heart. To-day, these things are forgotten. The blood has dried, only dust remains and the fading memory of an empress whose life was a decameron to be read with pursed lips. But in her were Alexandrine ambitions. The route which Potemkin blazed the way, she would have followed to St. Sophia and beyond it to Delhi and the peacock throne. She had the will, the ability, the power. What she lacked was time. Apoplexy battened on her as she had on Warsaw. It is said that she gave up the ghost with a shriek. Was it Poland that she saw?

— Indulgent and cruel, prodigal and mean, a woman in whom every contradiction was resumed, Catherine was an empress who made enormous an empire already vast; a tsaritsa who enumerated her victories and could not count her amours; a conqueror who had Adonis for secretary of the treasury and Apollo for minister of war; a cynic who slaughtered Poland and called herself a pupil of Voltaire; a sovereign before whom the entire pageant of passion and glory unrolled; a tyrant and a lesbian who passed through history dripping with blood and exhaling the perfume of Eros.

Succinctly, a great temperament; concisely, a great man; summarily, the least detestable despot of the lot, and yet, primarily, a German girl who had come to Russia without a penny and without a friend.

Shortly after she reached Petersburg her father died. He died on his barren farm, which was called a principality.

"It is ridiculous of you to cry," Elisabeth told her. "You ought to know better. Your father was nobody."

Elisabeth was too civil to add "and a pauper." Besides, as she perhaps divined, the girl was superiorly endowed. Catherine had assets. The assets were appetites. She gorged them. During a reign that lasted from the middle of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth, an empty-handed nobody gave her lovers the equivalent of half a billion and ruled fifty different races with a despotism that was identical for each.

Previously Psyche, she was Venus Victrix then. At her feet lay all the Russias. To her the whole of Europe bowed. At her left was a son whom she hated; at her right a lover whom she paid. Seated between them on the tallest of earthly thrones, covered and crowned with diamonds and with gold, she knew, as no other woman has known, how love and glory taste. The bitterness of them filled her toothless mouth.

VII

PAUL

CATHERINE, who entered history with a swoon, departed with a shriek. At the shriek, Night unfurled her great black fan. Another reign of terror had begun.

The shriek proclaimed Paul emperor. The proclamation was involuntary. Catherine did not want Paul to rule. She had arranged otherwise. He ruled, none the less, and in such a manner that at his own exit he also shrieked. With that shriek for motif, Bovery composed an opera, and Petersburg a Te Deum.

Paul's coronation robe should have been a straitjacket. Ivan was mad. Peter was mad. Their madness appals, but it fascinates. In horror raised to the ultimate degree there is grandeur. Paul's insanity took the form of microphilia. Domitian was a microphile. He specialised in flies. Heliogabalus was a microphile. He collected cobwebs. Microphilia is the insanity of the petty.

The maladies and particularly the deaths of those emperors should have instructed Paul. Besides, since their day, times had changed. They had changed, too, since the days of Ivan and of Peter. Catherine's reign had been a liberal education. She scandalised Europe, murdered her husband, killed Peter's nephew, crucified Elisabeth's daughter, slaughtered Prague, assassinated Warsaw, destroyed Poland and hated her son. She was a well-bred woman. But men no longer had their heads chopped off for a yes or a no. Women's tongues might wag, they were not torn out for that reason. Catherine was indulgent. Paul was modest.

"I will thank you to understand," he told an envoy who had spoken of some boiar as an important person, "that there is but one important person in Russia. That is the person whom I happen to address and his importance lasts only while I am addressing him."

The microphile was a megalomaniac. That was not his mother's fault. Catherine dwarfed and hated him, as she hated and dwarfed her husband. The hatred that she had for her son is the sole evidence that he was legitimate. Psychologically, the evidence had its weight.

Paul examined it and turned to Poniatowski. "Are you my father?"

The problem was delicate, the solution obscure. Poniatowski, who was then old, fat, rheumatic and a king no longer, shook his head and sat down.

With imperial brevity, Paul again addressed him. "Stand!"

He turned anew to the evidence. It seemed conclusive. He gave orders accordingly. The orders, spectacular in their theatrical effect, will be recited in a moment.

When Catherine shrieked, Paul was married, middle-aged, the father of three sons, two of whom successively succeeded him. The shriek reached him at Gatchina, a country fortress near Petersburg, where he lived with a Würtemburg woman, who was his wife; with an embittered young Russian, who was the dearer one yet, and with a regiment which he dressed and drilled, Prussian fashion, whip in hand. The fashion was otherwise observed. The uniform was Prussian, but one that Prussia had long since abandoned. Paul loved it. He loved the past. Except such torture as he could inflict, it was the only thing that he did love.

The atmosphere of Gatchina was grand-ducal, pestilential and penitentiary. Travellers avoided it. Above, in a turret, was a telescope. There Paul sat. Any one whom he could spy afar making a détour to keep out of his way, he sent cavalry to overtake and imprison. "Let me be hated," said Caligula. "But let me be feared."

Paul was Caligula in miniature. Like him, he was hideous but, excessive in every form of hideousnesss, he was more hideous. He had the face of a cat, a dead cat, a dead Kalmuck skunk, and with that death's-head on a short pudgy body, he strutted. After Catherine's exit, he strutted crowned. In his palaces, he was the monarch that the old pictures show. On parade, he was the drill-sergeant, but everywhere the bully. In behalf of some one, Alexander, his son, at the time but a boy, fell at his feet, begged him to be merciful. Paul kicked him in the face.

"Sacha, was it you who killed him?" that boy's mother afterward asked.

At Gatchina, he spied a giant on horseback racing toward the fortress. The giant was Nikolai Zubov, brother of the Pompadour en titre. The shock of the sight of him gave Paul the colic. He thought he had come to arrest him. Zubov had been hastening to announce that Catherine was in extremis. The colic passed, but another fear gripped him. To allay it, off he rode.

At the Winter Palace, Catherine was unconscious. Up the great stairway, through a double hedge of Circassians, and on through high halls filled with courtiers and lackeys, Paul passed to her apartments. Before he reached them, the death-rattle had begun.

In one room was an escritoire and near it an open fire. Paul opened the desk. Among the papers was an order for his arrest. He gave it to the flames. Another paper was a will in which his mother appointed his son, Alexander, her successor. That also he destroyed.

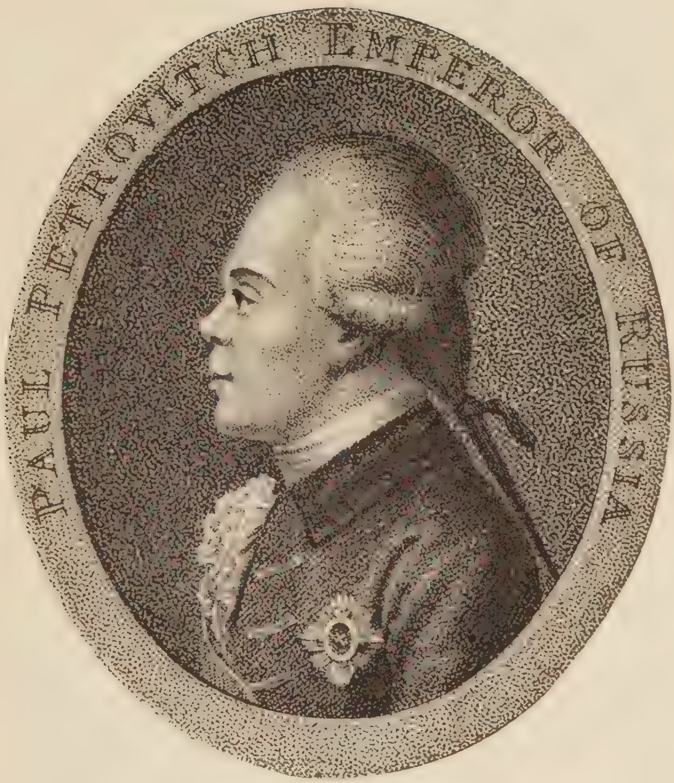
He turned. Before him was the Pompadour. Behind Zubov was a throng of nobles. Paul lifted his dead-cat face. With a pudgy hand he gestured.

"I am your emperor!"

Instantly Zubov, to whom all Russia cringed, was cringing. Instantly the nobles were on their knees.

It was then that Night unfurled her great black fan. A reign of terror had begun.

The old courtesan that history is, had her attenuations for Paul, as she had her myopia for Ivan, her cecity for Peter. An age-long supper on abominations made her indulgent. Youth is always intolerant. Tacitus branded, Juvenal flayed. History then was a débutante. To-day she candies her tales, throws orange blossoms on the tomb of Lucrezia Borgia and immortelles


PAUL PETROVITCH EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

PAUL I

on Paul's. Beneath the weeds, Paul has the faded air of a noble character thwarted and misunderstood. But pulled down a chimney by his bandy legs and run through for his crimes? Nowhere in Russian history is that recorded. History is the one book that has no end.

Sixty years later, a boy, afterward Alexander III., told a comrade that he had discovered a state secret—the Emperor Paul was assassinated!

Among the attenuations put on Paul's tomb was his grand-ducal existence. Catherine made it a long humiliation. A man who is a man rises from an insult refreshed. It is perhaps a tonic. In a microphile it secretes venom, of which the chemical precipitate is spite. When Catherine's crown passed to Paul he spat on it and ordered another.

Masson, an idler in Petersburg, says that in the processions of peoples, the ark of the covenant was not surrounded by greater pomp than was that new crown during its journey from the jeweller's to the palace. At the palace, the jeweller-Pygmalion was compelled to kneel in worship to it.

It was in that crown that the misunderstood lunatic strutted. Always a comic figure—at a safe distance—his mother made him ridiculous.

While lovers of hers, who were younger than his sons, governed Russia and waded in gold, he was put on an allowance, put in a corner, treated as nobody. Night after night, he and his sons with him, had seen her dismiss the court and march off with some Pompadour who always ignored them. For less than that, Catherine had put her husband in the grave. Paul could have put her in the street. It was not natural affection or filial respect that restrained him. He loathed her as completely as she abominated him. But Catherine, with all her faults, with all her sins, and all her crimes, was brave. Paul, a born bully and, for that reason, a born coward, was afraid of her. With her husband, with Ivan VI. and Elisabeth's daughter for examples, he had cause. He was not a match for her.

He was not a match for anyone. Since Pultowa, everywhere the Russian arms were victorious. During Paul's reign, generally they were defeated.

Immortelles, however plentiful, cannot alter that. None the less the circumstances of his pre-monarchal career may have prepared him to be what he became, a tyrant, conceited, fantastic, implacable, mad as a hatter, his pockets stuffed with ukases about nothing at all. To say as much, or rather as little, was impossible. In holy

Russia, a tsar was sacrosanct, an abyss of knowledge, a star of truth. It was quite in that light that Paul regarded himself. All lunatics are imaginative. With power added, sometimes they are spectacular. It is then that they become interesting.

Catherine's body was embalmed and put on a great bed in the throne-room. The embalming, very artistically effected, made her black and orange. People who had beheld her in her splendour, marvelled then at her hideousness. They did not realise that for the first time they saw her as she really was.

Beside her, on that bed, Paul put another corpse. The watchman whom he selected to stand guard at night was Alexis Orlov. Catherine's bedfellow was her husband's skeleton. It was Alexis Orlov who had killed him. In the vast room, which candles feebly lit, Orlov's vigil must have been Dantesque. But the ghosts of that couple, surprised enough to find themselves again together, what spectral secrets they must have muttered, not only to each other, but at him!

The scene, thoroughly Æschylean, was succeeded by another that did not surpass it, perhaps nothing could, but which Hugo should have painted. During the funeral that followed, Orlov was compelled to walk, carrying the crown he had wrenched from Peter the Little, and to walk directly behind the coffin into which he had strangled him. Such stagecraft deserves applause.

From the funeral, Paul turned to affairs of state. Catherine's reign had been a golden age. The massacres committed by her indemnified those who had missed the butcheries of anterior tsars. But the beautiful custom of throwing yourself from your conveyance and grovelling in the snow, in the mud, to the sovereign that passed, Semiramis abolished. With a ukase, Paul revived it.

Presently, a woman drove by. She had not heard of the ukase. She had never seen Paul. She lived in the country. There, her husband was dying. She was hurrying for a physician. She did not notice a madman on horseback. She was thinking of her husband, of the physician who might save him. On she drove.

Paul, twisting in the saddle, motioned. "Arrest her!"

Explanations, excuses, prayers, tears, these things availed her nothing. Afar her husband waited, wondered, hoped, despaired, agonised and died. In the stone sack where she was thrown, mercifully a fever came in which she joined him.

Paul dealt with the army as he dealt with that woman. For the slightest inadvertence, arrest. Generals came to the daily drill with travelling bags. They never knew at what moment or for what reason Paul would order them seized and carted away. On one occasion a line wavered. "Halt!" Paul ordered. "March!" he continued and added:—"To Siberia!"

Discipline first, accoutrements next. Since Peter's day, the uniform of the Russian soldier had been warm without being heavy, easy without being loose. Paul trussed the troops in a uniform so tight that if a soldier fell he could barely rise unassisted. On one occasion a horse stumbled. Paul had the animal starved to death. On another occasion a horse threw an officer. "Get up, you scoundrel!" Paul shouted. The officer's leg was broken. Paul spat on him.

Discipline at any cost. The cost was perhaps excessive. In trussing the troops and exiling the generals, there was an invitation to defeat. The thrashings that ensued made Paul morose. But mobile as madmen are, his humour veered and he shook a fist at Europe.

"I will fight any sovereign in single combat. I will fight all of them."

Incidentally, he had become grand-master of the Knights of Malta. The office was useful. When visiting his harem where, with the punctuality of kings, he went every afternoon at four precisely, the office enabled him to wear the Holy Order of St. John of Jerusalem. It was otherwise serviceable. It prompted. With it, he planned to be pope, successor of Pius VI. and the twelve apostles. A decent, unassuming tsar.

A busy one also. The form of a hat, the size of a neckcloth, the colour of a feather, the cut of a coat, one's boots, one's gaiters, a coachman's livery, a horse's harness, became affairs of state, the subjects of ukase. The only printing-press that he permitted to function was one that published his edicts. For a disregard of anyone of them, Siberia!

The droves he sent there, for no reason whatever, except the pleasure of it, perplexed the foreign legates. One of them wrote that, barring the prisons, which were full, Petersburg was becoming a desert, everybody was being exiled. Some were sent to the mines for calling a yacht a schooner. The yacht was a schooner, but it was Paul's and, by imperial ukase, a frigate. Others went for saying that they had the liberty to do this or that. The use of the word liberty was forbidden. It was forbidden to speak of any revolution, even and including that of the earth.

That is an exaggeration. Nothing was forbidden. Tsaral Russia had no synonym for the Hun Verboten. The imperial formula was either Prikazeno—It is ordered, or Ne prikazeno—It is not ordered. Simple formulæ and yet so magical that it was inconceivable that they should not be observed and logically inconceivable. At any infraction, the knout. But an infraction was not a prerequisite. Anything sufficed. Paul thought he would take a walk and said so to a general who remarked that it might rain. What an unpleasant person! The knout!

The knout for him, for everybody, for anything, for nothing at all. After the knout, Siberia, the pilgrimage undertaken in chains. The chains irked. So much the better! The chains made sores. Better yet! For any dog of a Samaritan that attempted to comfort the sufferer, to anoint his sores, to bandage his wounds, the knout!

The writhings under that knout were joys to Paul. "Flog," he ordered. "Flog without mercy." Then gloatingly he would ask:—"Did they howl? Tell me about it." The details supplied, he patted his stomach. "Now send them where they won't find their bones."

A Frenchman was asked what he did during the Terror. "I lived," he replied. During the Pauline terror, Petersburg shammed death as Muscovy had under the khans. When it passed, delight was as insane as Paul. In the frozen streets, beneath the frigid sky, people kissed and romped and danced and sang. An officer ran his horse up on the sidewalk. "Now," he exclaimed, "we can do what we like!" In the first year of the nineteenth century, that was a Russian officer's idea of liberty.

Kant, in defining liberty, said that it consists in obeying those laws only to which we have given our assent. In any autocracy, particularly in the United States, where one has all the forms of liberty and none of the substance, assent is implied. Under the tsars and under the Cæsars, even the forms were lacking. "Your god and master orders it," Domitian, in addressing the servile senate, negligently remarked. Paul's attitude was identical. To heighten it was his dead-cat face. Mediævally, death was a grinning skull topping a nightmare frame of bones, to which philosophy added a scythe and poetry wings. From its eyries it swooped, spectral and sinister. Deduct the rictus and replace the scythe with a knout and that is the manner in which Paul appeared. High and low quaked if he but looked. The sullen streets were empty.

Those who had to be in them, made themselves small, fled at a footstep, dematerialised into shadows. Whatever they did, however they hid, terror stalked them. It stalked all the Russians of all the Russias. It spread as disease spreads, from cities to hamlets, from the provinces to the steppes, from the septentrion to the sea. Ashen-faced, along the roads it ran, calling, "I am Fear!"

Throughout Russia, life, then, was a panic and panic is contagious. Breathe it and even autocrats are infected. It infected Nero. To escape it, he killed himself. It infected Paul. The terror he exuded returning back to its spring, terrorised him. To escape it, he who made others hide, hid from them.

Nero also hid, but he could not hide from himself. Paul fancied that where that monster failed, he could succeed. By day, he did. He got behind ukases, screened himself with them. But at night, the furies were waiting. The creature needed a disguise and he invented one. He discovered, or said he had, how to look seventeen years younger.

One disguise is always inadequate. Another occurred to him, a domino of granite. He put it on, as soon, that is, as it could be made for him. In the tailoring, an army of masons was employed. The result, the Michel Palace, was a threat in stone, a dungeon surrounded by moats, a fortress so vast that it discouraged adventure and so sombre that even the furies might lose their way. Once a day only and then at high noon, the drawbridges were lowered. To the yodel of horns and the crack of postilions' whips, the mail was brought. That service completed, the drawbridges were raised, the mask was resumed, a threat in stone confronted you.

The threat was effective. Terror could not scale it. Paul was safe. Yet was he? From without, certainly. But from within? There was his wife. There were his sons. Who knew what they might be plotting? Well, he too could plot. At the slightest sign, the axe! The axe for all of them. Meanwhile, a hint.

The hint resumed itself in a *History of Peter the Great,* which he placed on a table in a room occupied by his son Alexander. Paul left the book open at a page which told of the death of a tsarevitch, executed for treason, killed at his father's command.

In spite of the hint, in spite of the threat, in spite of the disguise, in spite of moats, guards, sentinels, in spite of all, the furies found him. Paul's nights were terrible. Clearly something else was needed; the iron hand, perhaps. At once, every avenue that led to the palace was barricaded. Martial law was proclaimed. Petersburg became a city abandoned by God, a polar hell, peopled with phantoms but peopled, too, by terror.

Terror, intangible, fluidic, hung in shadows, crept in darkness, lived in silence, sprang from nowhere, vaulted the barriers, leaped at Paul, tore his mask off. Paul, sidling and crouching, screamed. The scream brought Pahlen.

Pahlen, military governor of Petersburg, had a fabulous nose, a cheerful air, nerves of bronze. At the moment he needed them.

"There are conspirators here," the crouching thug spat at him.

How does he know? Pahlen must have wondered.

How he did know is explicable only by the unfathomable acumen which madmen sometimes possess. Yet, there was no secret about it. Everybody, even to the man in the Nevski, knew that a drama was being staged, though not the lines. Those terror wrote and badly as terror always does write. Alexander had adapted them. Pahlen was stage-manager. In the cast were Plato Zubov, ex-Pompadour; Bennigsen, former page of Elisabeth, and a dozen officers, with a regiment for scene-shifters.

With sudden suspicion, Paul pointed. "And you are one of them."

Pahlen saluted. "For your better protection, sir." He fumbled and produced a paper. "Here is the list."

Without looking at the names, Paul straightened. "The axe!"

Pahlen bowed. "They would have had it already, sir, but two of them are your sons."

"Arrest them."

Pahlen wheeled. It was time to act. Beforehand there was supper.

It would have been interesting to have been there. In addition to Paul and his wife, there were a dozen people at table, none of whom was permitted to speak. Elsewhere, in other palaces, there was that rarity, laughter. With it was champagne, lifted glasses, toasts to the actors in the drama staged for that night.

In the supper-room at the Michel Palace there was silence. Presently Paul related a dream he had had and in which he thought he was suffocating. He looked at his wife. Was she on that list? No matter, the scaffold was neighbourly. Comforted by the reflection, he began throwing creams and pastries on the floor. The pages could eat them.

Lampridius, or, more exactly, the brute who abridged him, gave the story of an emperor's death. The lines ring with yells. There is the sudden pretorian rush, the clatter through the Roman palace, the gleam of quick knives.

After supper, Paul went to his apartment, which was on the floor below. Composed of a vestibule, an antechamber, a library and a bedroom, the one entrance was through the vestibule. The bedroom, which was beyond the library, had an exit but that, as additional precaution, had been barricaded. Nearby was a fireplace and before it a screen. At the right was a bed. Above the bed was a picture of a knight of St. John. Opposite was a bust, badly executed, of Frederick II. The room was large, high-ceiled, panelled in white. On the walls were landscapes by Vernet and Van der Meer. In the library there was nothing literary. In the antechamber, two servants, both armed.

On leaving the supper-table, Paul went to bed, to sleep, to dream, to wake, to shriek, to die.

"My God!" said Zubov, "how that man does shriek."

Zubov and the others, all of them, except

Paul's sons, Alexander and Constantine, who were under arrest, had, through interior connivance, crossed the moat, entered the palace, seized and disarmed the guards; after which, rushing up a stairway, they broke into the antechamber and cut down the servants.

Most of them were drunk. The noise they made wakened Paul. When they reached the bedroom they could not find him. They thought he had escaped. But in the rush the screen was overturned. Back of it, up the chimney, Paul's bare feet protruded. They pulled him down. One of them struck him with a gold snuff-box. He shrieked. They ran him through, cutting off three of his fingers while they were at it, he shrieking all the time. In a moment he fell. Another of them, taking him by the head, dashed it against the fireplace, dashed it again and again and then once more.

Afar, a Te Deum mounted. Night refurled her great black fan.

VIII

THE LAST DESPOT

IN Greece, death was a girl. The child of Night, the sister of Sleep, less funereal than narcotic, she beckoned and consoled. In epicurean Rome, death was a marionette that invited you to wreathe yourself with roses before they could fade. In the Muslim east, death was Azrael, who was an angel. In Vedic India it was Yama, who was a god. In Iran it was Mairya, who was a fiend.

That last, and long since forgotten conception, the tsars revived and adopted for others. Elsewhere death had been gracious. In Russia it was horrible.

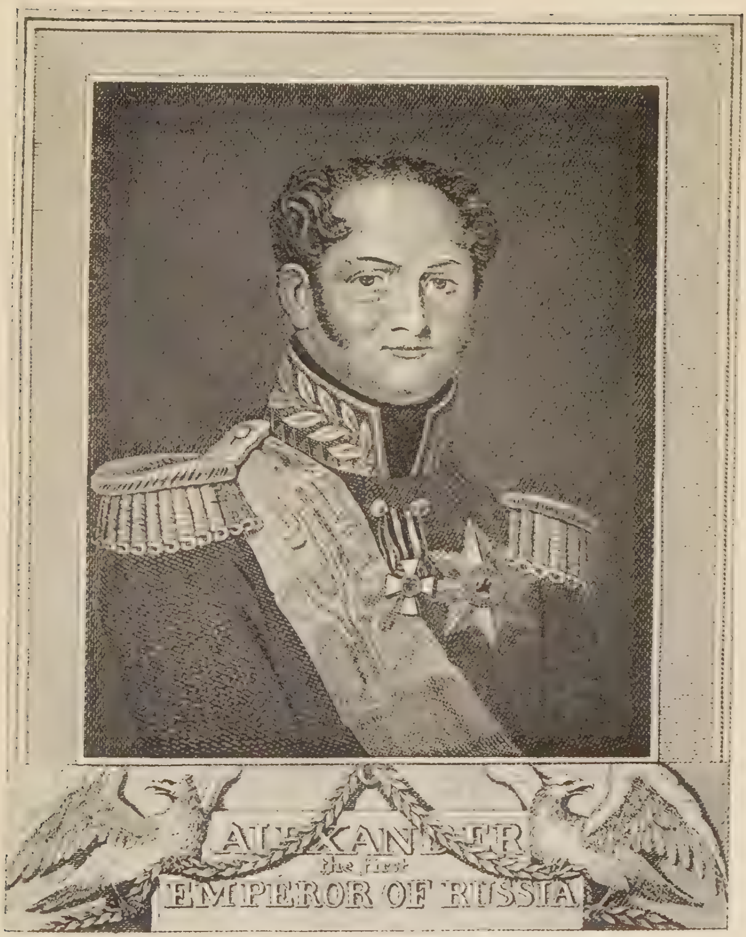
Alexander altered that. Already Elisabeth had abolished the axe. It was not clemency that actuated her. It was the selfish commonsense which political economy is. Hands without heads cannot work, but heads with hands can and did. They worked for Elisabeth. Instead of a swift decapitation on the scaffold, prisoners were given the slow guillotine of the mines.

The axe which Elisabeth buried there, Nicholas replaced with the gallows. But under Alexander torture ceased.

One may applaud him and very greatly for that, particularly as there is nothing else to his credit. Nothing whatever, except that he was less Asiatic than Paul and more European than Nicholas. Suavity was his note. It is the note of every hypocrite.

Nominally under arrest while Paul was being killed, he pretended to be asleep when the news of it, which he was awaiting, was brought to him. Afterward he pretended that he had nothing to do with it. The pretence served as hothouse for the usual immortelles. Among other garlands is one to the effect that Paul was not his father. However false or true that may be, he did not resemble him. Paul had the sour look of a skunk with a stomach-ache. Alexander looked like a cherub in an overcoat. His brothers, Constantine and Nicholas, did not resemble Paul either, physically, that is, though otherwise they were quite as Tatar, which is not remarkable if their reported geńeology be correct. Alexander's father is said to have been an Alsatian grenadier. Their father was a Prussian.

Catherine, who generally knew what she was


ALEXANDER
the First
EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

ALEXANDER I

about, brought Alexander up to succeed her. Constantine, she brought up to occupy Constantinople. Nicholas, the youngest of the breed, she left to his own devices and very unoriginal they were. At the time of Paul's death he was a brat, the despot in embryo, ruling tin soldiers as he was to rule Russia.

At that time, the earth was oscillating beneath the tread of a human volcano beside whom no nation could live. Hugo, with his usual sobriety, said that Napoleon inconvenienced God. Napoleon would have taken the remark very seriously. Humour, which is Satan's saving grace, he contrived to lack. Napoleon did not inconvenience God, but he disturbed the equilibrium of Europe.

A little before he had run literally from school into a riot, leaped on a horse and made himself general. After which he conquered Italy, conquered Egypt, attacked everybody and vanquished everywhere. A simple tale, it still astounds. In the echoes of his passage come the crash of falling cities, the cries of the conquered, the death-rattle of nations, the surge and roar of seas of blood. Through their reverberations, Napoleon looms, dragging destruction after him, hurling it like a bomb in the face of kings that were cowering still from the spectacle of the

Revolution and of which he was the appalling issue.

At the time of Paul's death, he was planning a bout with England. Turning suddenly on Austria, he sent the old Germanic empire sprawling. Prussia came next. Then it was Russia's turn. On a raft in the muddy Nieman, Alexander pledged him eternal friendship.

Friendship may cover a multitude of robberies. Over the usual question of booty, the two fell out. Napoleon, meanwhile, had become impersonal. In lieu of the volcanic there was virulence. He was spreading, as cholera spreads, from one end of the continent to the other. In the contagion, was the totter of dynasties, the reversal of thrones. There too was the victor, pale, impassible as destiny, confronting fate like an equal, provoking it almost with disdain, peering through magic casements at the universal monarchy which he dreamed was to be his.

Into that dream another entered, a minor dream, the dream of a parvenu. There was barely a royal residence on the continent which he had not occupied. There was hardly a sovereign in whose bed he had not slept. For the vulgar satisfaction of sleeping in one other, he entered the Kreml. There, beneath a mattress, he left his crown.

In his northern progress, it had been imagined that he would not advance beyond Lithuania, but when he had taken Smolensk, the key to the empire, the eldest town in Russia, Alexander's generals realised that another conversation was inevitable and any resistance vain. Instead of contending, they circumvented. The outlying lands were laid bare. The result is epic. Famine began what ice completed. Napoleon found himself in an empty refrigerator. That refrigerator Alexander burned.

Then began the conversation that continued all along the road to Paris. For climax it had Elba, with Waterloo for finale.

The conversation was not a tête-à-tête. The flames had been a signal. All Europe took part. But in the great débâcle, Alexander greatly rose. He acquired the palms of a hero, the nimbus of a god, a dignity quite Roman, before which the flunkeys of history have solemnly salaamed.

A Greek of the Lower Empire, Napoleon called him, which being translated means a swindler. Good-looking, though, a middle-aged Cupid in whiskers, the burglar tastes of his problematic house fused in him with a sanctimoniousness that was all his own. After the proper tsaral fashion, he had married a German, Betty of Baden. The Comtesse de Choiseul-Gouffier, who wrote of both with a maidservant's ecstasy, described her as a pathetic angel, tear-stained by the handkerchiefs which, in the exercise of his droit du seigneur, he tossed here and there, yet always so discreetly! Turpitudes in the dark, but never a scandal. Tartuffianism above all.

An oleaginous mummer, Uriah Heep and the Artful Dodger combined, indulgently he agreed to rule in accordance with the law—which he made. With the same benevolence he built schools and universities—on paper, not omitting to stuff his pockets with everything he could lay his hands on, with Finland, of which he robbed Sweden; with the plunder of further burglaries to the south and east; promising a lift to Austria and leaving her in the lurch; doing quite as well by Prussia, who deserved it; hoodwinking everybody, including history, the world and the devil; hoodwinking Napoleon and it was an archcrook who could do that; deceiving perhaps even himself and ending his robber rule in mystic projects and Swedenborgian beliefs.

He might have done worse. Swedenborg lifted fringes of the curtain which recent occultism has partially raised. Alexander's introduction to the *Arcana Celestia* was due to a woman, the Baroness Krudner, whose forte, to put it delicately, had been her weakness. Apoplexy battened on her husband when he learned its extent. The passing of the man brought her the light. The amoureuse became a voyante. She saw. In seeing she foretold the return from Elba, the hundred days, the restoration. Time verified the clairvoyance, which interested Alexander, as well it might, yet particularly perhaps because, in an interview that ensued, the baroness told the emperor—what he already suspected—that he was predestined to accomplish God's will on earth. So are autocrats and mummers won. Alexander took her to Paris, where it is history that she inspired the Holy Alliance, a chimerical imbecility on which, over a century later, the outlines of the League of Nations were ignorantly framed.

Alexander was the silver lining between Paul, who was mad and Nicholas, who was insane. Every silver lining has a cloud. Alexander had brains, a will of his own, the power to use it, the ability to make Russia as preponderant in Europe as Peter had made her preponderant in the north. During the better part of his reign, he drove the empire straight on with the ease of a whip tooling a drag. Personally he had his graces. In spite of a mediæval idea of his own dignity, he could unbend, and, when he did, he charmed. Though a robber, he was a big one. Though a crook, he was great. Even in hypocrisy he contrived to be large. He inspired confidence, and very naturally, he was a confidence man. There is the silver lining.

Here is the cloud. Bossuet defined a heretic as a person who has ideas of his own. Alexander adopted that very advanced view. Already, in connection with the course of the stars, Paul had forbidden the use of the word revolution. Alexander ukased the Copernican system out of the realm. He made it a felony to think. Like Paul, he was mad. The army was sane. In tramping after Napoleon the officers had seen strange things—liberty, which they did not know could be; freedom, which had been unimagined.

These things astounded. Constitutional government amazed. Amazement is the beginning of truth. For the first time, perhaps, officers realised the iniquity of a despotism that made patriotism treason, the folly of having but the right to obey, the nonsense of rescuing Europe from one tyranny while Russia endured another. Such views disorganise.

When they got back, their easy ways and careless talk bewildered. The astounding sans-gêne was incomprehensible. As understanding came, the regeneration which foreign marvels effect was whispered, talked about, talked always a bit louder.

Tsardom had never known a revolution. The hydra waiting for it then was to be killed. Like Dmitri, it had more lives than one.

In the barracks, a plot was hatched. Alexander was to be offered honey on the point of a sword—either a constitution or the fate of Paul. He could take his choice. In sharpening the sword and ladling the honey, the plotters may have been too amateur to appreciate that an autocrat, however autocratic, cannot grant a constitution. An autocrat who is not absolute is a contradiction of terms. Nicholas the Last tried it. He granted a constitution which was so liberal that at any time any Russian could be shot. Among the unconsidered Russians was himself. With him tsardom ceased to be. But though an autocrat must be absolute, he can die. Alexander pretended to. The pomp and pageantry of imperial rites were given to a bogus corpse. Meanwhile, hidden in a monastery at Tomsk, where neither honey-ladlers or history could follow, he cheated amateurs as he had swindled experts.

Night again unfurled her great black fan.

The next in line was Constantine. He refused to move up. He said he lacked the talent. Certainly he did, but he lacked, too, the courage. He was afraid of being assassinated. The fear was not unreasonable. At a review, to show a foreign prince how agreeable it is to be a Russian grand-duke, he drew his sword, marched up to a general and, without a word, ran him through.

Nicholas was next. Like Alexander, he was unlike Paul. But there was nothing cherubic in his appearance. He had the face of the fallen, the scowl of a fiend, a despot's sinister demeanour. History used to regard him as a great man. History saw but the façade. His mind, a rendezvous of zeros, functioned, he believed, altitudinously and only. He had other beliefs, equally inoffensive, yet principally that he was the direct and incarnated emanation of God, the source from which everything proceeded and to which all returned. He believed himself not merely autocrat but omnipotent. Anywhere else, except where he happened to be, he would have been clapped in an asylum.

At this distance, you see the lunatic. On the day he became tsar, he was a hero, to himself that is, yet also to de Custine, a looker-on in

Verona, to whom he related the incidents of the accession, though not all of them, and a few of those which he did relate, he dreamed.

The streets of Petersburg used to be the dreariest and the emptiest in the world. In winter the cold is paralysing. More crippling than cold was dread. The cold came from the pole. It was from the palace that fear's icier fingers stretched.

On that day the Neva was frozen. Flakes of snow were falling, little petals of white roses that were to change to red. But momentarily the sleet of fear had lifted. In addition to roses there was rebellion in the air. Before the palace, suddenly the great square filled. The conspirators that had been eyeing Alexander brought their bayonets there. Beyond, in the converging streets, was that rarity, a crowd. Not one of the crowd, and none of the troopers knew that Constantine had refused to be tsar. In such minds as they had, Nicholas was not next in line, he was out of place. Their leaders had told them that, told them other things also, which, without understanding much of it, they believed.

In front of the palace, on a high pedestal, was a bronze chariot, drawn by winged horses which an enigmatic figure, perhaps that of destiny, led.

On that day its gilded face seemed gay. Perhaps it was. Perhaps, with eyes that saw and foresaw, it was considering, not the pigmy rebels massed below, but a giant that was approaching.

Hoarsely, meanwhile, the prompted pigmies shouted:—"Konstitusia! Konstitusia! Live the Constitution!"

From a window opposite, Nicholas stared. He did not understand. How could he? Coups d'état and palace revolutions there may have been, but soldiers and civilians mutinying in the open streets, that was impossible. It was a moment before his dull brain could grasp it. During that moment, the imperial lupercalia might have ended forever. God save the tsar! About the palace, a sapper regiment was summoned and aligned. Then, from the cavernous porte cochère, out the hero rode. Fancy a shepherd contemplating bleating sheep. That was his attitude. That was the attitude that he dreamed for de Custine's pen.

"On your knees!" he commanded.

In the dream he was obeyed. What followed was not dream, it was in the order of things. Instantly the little white roses changed to red. Mitrailleuses were mowing criminals whose crime was not that they were sheep but that they were parrots. They had been crying for a constitution and at the same time and very sensibly they had been nudging and asking:—"Who is this Konstitusia? Is she Constantine's wife?"

Even otherwise what business was it of theirs? Those that did not die in the streets, died in the Neva, shoved through holes cut in the ice, though some were beaten to death, others peopled Asia and a few were hanged. Among the latter, three fell from the gallows and broke their legs. They were hanged again. Afterward they were decently buried. On their graves, in lieu of the usual cross, Nicholas put little gibbets. "Under Tiberius there was quiet," Tacitus, with dramatic brevity, noted. There was quiet then.

Thereafter the lupercalia became a drama at which you were permitted to assist, but given any disturbance on your part, any remarks, any criticism, any whispering, anything whatever except applause, and out you went, tossed into a sudden grave, or, less fortunately, into a living one. Russia soon discovered that. So did Poland.

Poland still lived, still prayed, murmured occasionally; occasionally, too, fevered with hope, she bandaged her wounds in national rags and sang. The song was of her past. In earlier days, Muscovy had been her vassal. As Russia rose, Poland fell. Three butchers tripped her.

Sharpening their knives, Catherine, the Austrian ruler, the Prussian king, agreed that her body and blood should be a sacrament of communion. Mutilated, dismembered, but not dead, Poland crawled through time to the feet of Nicholas. He stamped on her.

In the atrocities of Caligula there was a reason. He wanted to leave a name that history would preserve. In the atrocities of Nicholas there was also a reason. From history he wanted a name erased. He wanted to exterminate a nation. He deigned to decree—the term is official—that millions should change their language for his, abjure their religion for him. He deigned further to provide a ritual of the worship due to himself. At any objection, the knout, exile, the gallows. Poles were driven in hordes to Tartary, or, more expeditiously, to death. Ten thousand children were taken from their parents, engulfed in Russia, lost there. Rather than have them go, other children were killed by their parents. Like Caligula, Herod also left a name. That of Nicholas exceeds it.

The crime of the revolutionists was that they had tried to think. Poland's crime was that she had succeeded. Nicholas was determined that there should be no thought ir Russia save such as issued from the zeros in his head. Any other variety he regarded as atheism.

To prevent the entrance of foes, Ivan ringed the realm with forts. To prevent the entrance of light, Nicholas quarantined it. Within, Ivan made a cemetery; Nicholas, a camp. Immense improvement. Petersburg became a parade-ground of soldiery constantly defiling, a bivouac in which everything was exacted, nothing permitted and before which, gun in hand, Nicholas paced like a sentry, guarding the past, challenging enlightenment, bidding progress begone, calling at the world:—"Qui vive?"

A German from head to foot, without a drop of Russian blood, he had married a Prussian, Charlotte of Hohenzollern, who acquired a moribund air, the result of being a mother too often.

"S'épuiser en grand-ducs, quelle destinée!" said de Custine after scrutinising her at a court ball, which he described as not splendour merely, but poetry.

The high walls were mirrors banked with flowers, framed with gold, heightened with lustres, and their effect, which was that of diamond curtains in a shadowless fairyland, turned the vast hall into a spaciousness where there was but light and illusion and where the dancers multiplied themselves indefinitely. It was magical, de Custine added.

Magic is not gaiety. No one laughed, no one talked, people conversed about nothing in whispers. There was constraint there, there was fear, that fear that brooded over Russia and which lurked in the palace of the Cæsars. In the assembly, were kingdomless kings, queens discrowned, slave sovereigns—revivals of the pomps of Rome—and a heat that was Senegambian.

Polar zephyrs annoyed the presiding Teutons. The independence of nature shocked them. De Custine said that the surest way to please Nicholas was to treat Petersburg as though it were Nice and to go about without furs in winter. Flatter the climate and you flattered the tsar, whose intelligence even Victoria regarded as limited.

It would have been pleasant to have seen those two at Windsor. It would have been pleasanter yet to have seen him afterward, when she sent him the ultimatum which was the fanfare to the Crimean war. The ultimatum was delivered to Nesselrode, who was his foreign minister. Nesselrode—to-day a pudding—said that his august lord would not deign to notice it, which was tantamount to telling her to go to hell. It was she who sent him there, more exactly, it was Russia's subsequent allies, England and France.

A very ignorant, a very brutal and—at this distance—a very amusing person, Nicholas none the less was a real figure, not a lay one, an iron man, liberty's exterminating angel, a being who annihilated the goddess whenever she appeared. In that was his glory, such as it is, and, such as it was, for thirty years he sustained it over Russia awed and Europe coerced. For thirty years, Ivan to his people, he was Agamemnon among kings.

Europe, though coerced, could think. It occurred to her that the iron man might be a scarecrow. With Russia it was different. Submissive she lay at the feet of her paradomaniac, who knew but one joy, the sight of troops constantly parading, and but one consolation, the conviction that he was the great I Am. The conviction was an illusion which Europe presently proceeded to ablate. The shock of the loss of it killed him. The story of it all is called the Crimean War.

That inglorious scramble into which England entered with the stern spirit of a policeman and France with the vendetta views of a bandit, began over a question of therapeutics. Nicholas declared that the Sultan was a Sick Man. The diagnosis was his own. By way of regimen, he proposed to break into the patient's room, first finish, then rob him. But though the diagnosis was novel, the second-storey treatment was not.

Constantinople, the old imperial city, Tsargrad as Muscovy called her, had been the secular goal of Slav ambition. Sophia Palælogus, Ivan's grandmother, was a descendant of the final Byzantine emperor. Later tsars regarded themselves as that Cæsar's heir. Russia's historic pretensions to Stamboul had no other origin. In the initial stages of the subsequent world war, it was therefore highly diplomatic of England to think of offering it to her, particularly as she thereby succeeded—and to Germany's glee—in alienating both Bulgaria and Greece. The Coburg adventurer expected to sit there. So also did Constantine and his Hun Klytemnestra.

But, at this time, England could not countenance the Slav ambition. The Dardanelles Russian, the Mediterranean would be a Muscovite lake and Turkey a carpet to the Indus. England could not permit that, nor France either.

France, formerly the most militant of nations, yet then very bourgeois, had her hand forced. The bait of revenge was dangled at her. The dangling was done by Louis Napoleon, who already had deceived everybody twice—first in pretending that he was a fool; afterward, in pretending he wasn't. Revenge was not his object. He wanted to get into society and take his wife there. More exactly, it was the lady who wanted him to do both. So much for Helen. Now for Agamemnon.

Asiatically, with Tatar contempt, the German bastard eyed the Frenchman and asked if he remembered what Russia had done to the other fellow. Then the allies went at him. Sevastopol was their objective. Their object was less certain. The troops did not know whether they were for or against the Sick Man, who was quite as real to them as the Pierrot in the moon. The high command, better informed perhaps, was not for that reason overburdened with intelligence. They thought the serfs would rise and Sevastopol topple.

Official Russia had an equivalent understanding of the allies. "We have only to shy our hats at the imbeciles," she carelessly remarked. Half a century later, her opinion of the Japanese was as cheerful. "Monkeys with the brains of parrots," they were grand-ducally described. But though she was not happy in her views of the coalition, she was happier with it than with

Nippon. The sum total of the allied achievements was the reduction of a single citadel.

That citadel, Sevastopol, the arsenal of the empire, held, behind a veil of forts, a fleet that was to make the Sick Man sicker. Once the arsenal taken and the fleet destroyed, the patient was safe. So argued the allies. Into the Euxine they sailed, on the sacred Chersonese they landed. From heights above the Alma, a river to the north of Sevastopol, the Russians blazed at them. The allies crossed the river, climbed the heights, said, "How are you?" and let them run, which they did, to Sevastopol, bewildered by such civility. To show perhaps that they had not come for mere amenities, the allies went around to Balaklava, on the other side of the arsenal, tried to pound it from there, pounded it, or tried to pound it, from the sea, failing in each effort, finding that instead of a naval excursion, they were confronted by an army then eager to get at them.

That army, at which the Light Brigade made a dash so magnificent that Bosquet exclaimed, "Ce n'est pas la guerre!" and Tennyson, very originally and unobviously added, "Some one had blundered," that army drew the allies at Inkerman into a sublimated Donnybrook Fair, a rough and tumble, in the dark, in the rain, in which it was beaten but only because the allies were the bigger gluttons. Of generalship there was none. English tactics were simple. It was "Up boys and at 'em." French strategy was not more complicated, nor was the Russian finer. But the accounts make very agreeable reading, so agreeable that, in considering them now, anyone who did not know better might mistake the Russians for titans and the allies for gods.

Ultimately, the gods muddled through, but not until they had out-manœuvred the titans' chief of staff, General February, General Cholera and the usual traitor in the allies camp, General Stupidity. These interfered. So did another strategist, the Weather. Allied ships, bearing supplies, were overtaken and sunk by storms marshalled by General February. General Stupidity saw to it that provisions that eluded the gales either rotted obscurely or else landed safely in Russian mouths. General Stupidity, reinforced by General Cholera, arranged that the sick had no succour, the maimed no aid. Yet, presently, there were correspondents to tell of these things—inkbeasts as Bismarck subsequently called them. Presently, also, there were angels to relieve—English women from whose work the Red Cross resulted.

Meanwhile the siege progressed and very curiously. It was a siege that involuted, doubled on itself, presenting an oddity, the spectacle of beleaguers as beset as the beleagued, of forces contending with other foes than each other, of incompetence pitted against corruption. Finally, after routs and heroics, ramparts were scaled, redoubts were taken, Sevastopol fell. It fell as Moscow fell. Like Moscow it was burned. Its sables were shrivelled, its fortresses dumb, the wings of the eagles were clipped.

For the time being that is. Twenty years later Russia was again at the Sick Man. She was at his door. But for the police she would have had him. As it was she got away with a lot of his goods. Said Salisbury admiringly: "We put our money on the wrong horse."

At this time matters were very different. At the crash of the fall of the arsenal, Russia awoke. Humiliated by the presence of hostile legions on her sacred peninsula, dismayed in the Crimea as she was to be in the East, startled by the totter of bastions which official corruption had undermined, aghast at the cries of soldiers to whom that corruption had been the bitterest foe, bereft of her belief in imperial might, Russia rose from her secular slumber and arraigned autocracy at the bar of God.

Nicholas, the iron man, sank back. A cartoonist pictured General February also turning traitor and poking a frigid finger at the emperor's heart. Nicholas had no heart. What he did have was a thoroughly mistaken idea of his own importance. That gone, fright replaced it.

Fright plucked at his sleeve, shoved him to bed, then to his grave, nodded good-riddance, turned to his heirs and destroyed them. Over, beneath, around and about them, it set a tyranny more tyrannic than their own.

Tsars, hitherto, had the freedom that waves possess. Thereafter, behind their own high throne, a higher one stood. In it sat the giant whom the gilded eyes of destiny perhaps foresaw on that day when the white roses changed to red and Nicholas hushed the parrots. The giant was King Terror.

Perhaps Nicholas also foresaw him. He had no imagination, but life is a book that man reads when he dies. In its pages that vanish as you touch them, myopia may become clairvoyance and obtuseness understanding. It may be that from before the flickering eyes of the dying tyrant a veil was lifted. It may be that he saw red hosts trampling tsardom into the things that were, tossing the last of the breed to the bats of a Siberian Avernus. It is said that he did not die of pneumonia, as was officially announced, but of a drug of his choosing. Like books, drugs, too, have their sorceries and his may have shown him that the fate of autocracy is the hell from which it came. But probably it did nothing of the kind. Probably he remained to the end, heavy-witted, unenlightened. Yet if it be true that the dead turn in the grave at what they see, long since he must have been in perpetual motion.

IX

KING TERROR

ROME had other gods than the Cæsars, herds of them, so many that they outnumbered the population. Except a few little gods and one very great divinity, they were all foreigners. Most of them were known to everybody. But not the great god. His name, a secret, only the hierophants knew. A senator was put to death for having uttered it. Engendered perhaps by Pan who engendered Panic, the great god was Pavor—Terror. With him, Rome conquered the world. Then he turned and tore her.

The history of Russia is an expurgated edition of that of Rome. There are blanks in it. One blank is nine hundred years long. The rest is the chronicle of an orgy at which autocrats feasted longly. After Sevastopol, history turned, reversing the orgy, putting the table on top and despots beneath, revealing to their cowering eyes one greater than they, the old god who then was king. He, too, could feast and from their cups of mud and blood he tore them.

The first Nicholas escaped him only by dying. Yet such was the shock of the sight of his face, that that hangman, who was Liberty's executioner, gibbered, "Emancipation!"

Here enters his son, Alexander II. History shows how the great monarch dogged him; how he shadowed his successor; how he annihilated the last of the lot; how disinterring the forgotten, he instituted a despotism more destructive than theirs and became an evocation of Genghiz. Attila wanted to destroy civilisation. Genghiz wanted to destroy humanity. Terror can be quite as gentle.

There is an odd tale of a wizard who kept in a bottle an imp that he worshipped. One day the imp got out and slew him. Terror resembles that imp. Terror used to be a fetish of the tsars. The day came when the fetish was headsman. In history as it is written, the second Alexander was killed by a bomb. That is a superficial view. An autocrat was killed by his ikon.

A tall German, with a heavy jowl, a receding forehead, a cavalry moustache and mutton-chop whiskers, Alexander II. was the portrait, in blood, of Nietzsche's blonde beast. Like Nietzsche, he had frequented the antique sages. When anything annoying confronted them, they confronted it, waved it away, denied its existence. Excellent tactics. Alexander employed them on Poland. Drugged with the poppies of her eternal hopes, Poland rose up before him. With a stare, he blighted her.

After Poland, nihilism. In between—and the margin has the width of years—stood the Porte. The tsar stared at the sultan who stared back. Abdul the Damned was quite as vulperine as any other autocrat and considerably more astute. "Time and I against all comers," was the motto that hung in the Yildiz Kiosk. He was ill though, sick with the same malady that Dr. Nicholas had diagnosed. Yet, invalid though he were, he liked to bundle Christians off the earth. It distracted him. Gladstone could not stand that nor, to Gladstone's disgust, could Alexander.

Alexander cared nothing about Abdul's amusements. Former tsars had dispatched too many Christians for additional dispatches to vex him. But the tsaral heritage, the antique Greek throne, the immemorial desire to slake an imperial thirst in the waters of the Golden Horn, that was another aria, highly melodious, yet held profane in the European Sunday-school concert. The familiar and altruistic hymn concerning the purification of St. Sophia was much more decorous and entoning it he marched Skobeleff against Abdul, who countermarched, nearly marched over him and then marched back, farther, farther still, from the Shipka Pass and Plevna to San Stephano and the slim gilt gates of Stamboul.

Skobeleff had him. Byzantium, the imperial houri, Roman in body but Greek in soul, whose fair beauty even the ferocious apostolicism of the Turks could not wholly mar, was in his grasp. At that moment British ironclads entered the Dardanelles. Skobeleff snapped his fingers. Alexander commanded him to glove them and salute. Skobeleff's anger was Homeric. It shook the legions. They adored him. With them he would have taken Alexander and hanged him. The Cæsars had their brews. So had the tsars. Skobeleff, hero of Plevna, a national idol, was poisoned. History can only record it. History is an endless book. Nihilism was writing a page in it then.

Nihilism, mother of bolshevism, came, as her daughter came, from Germany. A simple creed, it held that the happiness of mankind requires the abolition of everything. Assuming that to be true, happiness remains to be defined, which it never has been, except by Voltaire, who called it a myth invented by Satan for man's despair. Utopia is perhaps as mythical and general happiness a chimera. General contentment seems less illusory. Its main factor, perhaps, is non-interference and that may come when man shall have learned that nothing is important.

Nihilism is a term that a saint invented. In the *De civitate Dei,* Augustin said:—*"Nihilisti appelantur quia nihil credunt et nihil docent."* Nihilists believe in nothing and teach it.

Russian nihilism first took shape after the Crimea. After San Stephano, it took substance. Weening, trundling, training it, was old King Terror.

Nihilism, originally a theory, afterward a doctrine, became a force. The theory interested, the doctrine impressed. The force developed a generation new to Russia, a generation that thought. To think was always forbidden and very unnecessarily. No one dreamed of such a thing. Besides, it was a depraved occupation. It induced disease. It induced it then. It caused a form of neurosis of which poverty of the blood and empty pockets were contributory. The new generation lacked food. In the open, before the palace, it cried for reform. Alexander stared. The cries redoubled.

Alexander deigned to admonish. Solemnly, he stated that reforms come not from below but from above.

He might have added that revolutions display the same phenomena. He might have explained that the Convention was the work not of plebeians but of philosophers. He might have shown that in France, after everything had been demolished, everything was rebuilt. He might have demonstrated that in the upheaval only names were changed, that instead of a king by right divine, there was a dictator by might infernal.

These platitudes he could have adorned with anecdote. But, son of an iron man and father of another in an iron mask, he was not otherwise ironic. He lacked the wit to deduce the paradox that Russia could be worse off than she was and the humour to declare that he would facilitate it. In circumstances such as confronted him, it was the fashion of his house to turn everybody into mincemeat. Instead of decimating, he vacillated; instead of jesting, he promised. To his subsequent regret that promise he kept. Freedom was tossed to the people like a bone to a dog. Forty million human chattels had an in perpetuum mortgage on them lifted.

Former tsars gave them away by the thousand and as readily as a snuff-box. They were won and lost at cards, auctioned with furniture and cows, sold with lands designated as "inhabited estates." Actually chattels, descriptively serfs, technically they were souls—when male. A woman had no soul. With Alexander's permission she acquired one. It was very considerate of him. But to the owners, robbed of their goods, the whole thing was a despotic caprice. To the manumitted it was confusing. The bone they got was bare as your hand. Was it even a bone? They had their doubts. To their lords they had been accustomed to say:—"We are yours, but the land is ours!"

Abruptly, through some legerdemain, they ceased to be anybody's, the land ceased to be theirs, apparently free to come and go, they had nowhere to go to. The earth had opened. All that remained was their hovels, where they could continue to starve—on paying for the privilege. If that was liberty, they preferred slavery. More exactly, they preferred to believe that somewhere, very far no doubt, but somewhere, the little father on a high throne sat waiting and willing to give them such land as they needed. Otherwise, what did this word emancipation mean?

Nihilism explained. Emancipation meant that for land to be free it must first be manured with the blood of mythical Romanovs. There are explanations that do not explain. There are also natures that are not receptive. To the people, the Romanovs, however mythical, were sacrosanct, quasi if not wholly divine. The idea is absurd, but the absurder an idea the more fanatics it can claim. The certainties of mathematics are not exciting, but for chimeras nations have fought and died. What is more remarkable, they have drudged. Russia had drudged too long for the tsars to turn on Alexander. Even otherwise the manumitted were dull. Ages of despotism had not soured their minds. They had none. They had only a few wants reduced to a minimum, a few instincts knavish and primitive. They liked to get drunk. They liked to rob. But for the knout they had a pathetic respect; they had an inherited hatred of novelty, and an ingrained awe of the tsar. To such as they, the explanations of nihilism were as wind on the steppes. Ideas could not be planted on wastes that so long had been bare. What tyranny had not stirred, theory could not affect.

Nihilism, outfaced by stolidity, wheeled.

From the peasant, it turned to the palace. Islam had converted with the sword, the Inquisition with the stake, the Convention with the guillotine. Demonstrations being futile, nihilism took to dynamite. Murder clubs mushroomed in Petersburg. Autocracy became a despotism tempered by bombs.

Between the foregoing sentences there are years. There are concessions, too—of the kind that put Louis XVI. in the tumbril. Like that imbecile, Alexander II. had inherited a situation which he had not created. He differed from him in every other respect. America called him Lincolnoffski. Europe was salaaming to him for his treatment of the Turk. He had a government of iron, a people absolutely subservient. In between was but a thin red line.

To efface that line Alexander did his best, and also his worst. He used all means to conciliate; those failing, all means to suppress. Nihilism already outfaced by stupidty, indifference might have squelched. Indifference is highly coercive. But though Alexander had frequented the antique sages, he had also loitered over the annals of his house. When philosophy deserted him, ferocity stepped in. Moreover, the courage which previously he had lacked, Plevna supplied. Young men who had just left the universities were given post-graduate courses in Siberia. Young women, less advanced perhaps, were taught that of all brutes, pliocene, miocene, lampsacene, the most ignoble is man. These lessons, instead of correcting, corroded. After each deportation to Siberia, when it did not happen to be Shame, the places of the exiles were filled, and so fully that you would have thought that terrorists covered the land. Generated spontaneously, multiplying with the rapidity of insects, swarming everywhere, they presented a curious spectacle, the infinitely little contending with the infinitely great.

To Petersburg, then, came larger prisons. To the mines were longer lanes. In the mines was the dry guillotine; in the prisons there was torture, the rack re-established, applied for nothing, for a look, for a word, for holding a pamphlet, for throwing it way. Very properly, too, and with the finest sense of law and order. Defendants were tried in public. What more could they ask? It is true they were always convicted. But what did they mean by looking, by talking, by having or not having things in their hands? To teach them better, torture followed. The torture was private. To make it more private the condemned were never seen again. If they had been, perhaps only their mothers could have recognised them.

Then, face to face, were two terrors; the white terror radiated by the tsar; the black terror radiated at him.

One does not choose between tears, or perhaps between terrors. Yet of those two terrors, the more terrifying was the black. The white terror terrified the little. The great, being large, are more receptive. The mighty were terrified most.

Black terror is nihilism in its acute form. Usually maniacal, sometimes in its delirium it has expressed that which was inarticulate in a nation. Always hideous, sometimes it is sublime. In France, it had been grandiose. But Russia lacked a Mirabeau; the terrorists, a Danton; the people, a Voltaire, who, even if they had had him, they could not have read. They were otherwise blessed. With them, to a man, was the imperial clan.

The latter, violently opposed to Alexander's concessions, saw in reform a diminution of themselves. Peter would have devoured the lot. Alexander lacked the stomach. By policy a philanthropist, though by instinct a thug, physically scrofulous and mentally unsound, congenitally aphasiac and consequently incoherent, freeing Russia and regretting the act, history, with her gallery taste for shams, saw what she could mistake for the righteous liberator and applauds him still. No one need begrudge him that. For the first time since tsars were invented, the orgy palled. In what otherwise would have been his normal enjoyments, terrorism interfered, absolutism as well.

Whether the two combined in uncertain. In the tenebrous chronicles of the great carnivora there is always much that is obscure. But in his court, which of all courts was the most regal, he became afraid to stir. One evening, it was fortunate for him that he omitted to.

Long before he had married a Hessian. On that evening she was ill. Another lady presided. This other, the Favorita, was the Princess Dolgorouki, whom presently, when the Hessian was dead, he married and who, at the time, had a court of her own.

Without, in the hollow square that fronted the palace, cavalry was stationed. Within, on a wide stair, ran a hedge of rose-tunicked Cossacks, a line of Circassians in silver and pale blue. Beyond that rainbow, in a red-gold hall, which a thousand candles lit, was this man, his mistress and their court. Where the cavalry were was ice, a wind that had knives. Within, in the glowing hall, was the atmosphere of a seraglio perfumed with turpentine and Russia leather—an odour which this palace always exhaled. From above, in a gallery, fell a tinkle of balalaikas, accompanying the conversation which must have been dull. Adjacently, or more exactly, less than a quarter of a mile away, was another hall, equally pleasant, where these people were to dine.

Like the conversation, the minutes dragged. The tsar, the princess, the court, were waiting for a German, a boor, one of the Hesse tribe, who was guest that night. Finally, a breath, a rumour, an announcement. The royal brute strode in. The usual brilliancies. The formation of the usual procession, which, just as it started, shook.

Lights flared, the hall oscillated, mirrors fell. Into the scented atmosphere came another odour, a trifle acrid, the smell of smoke which a concussion had preceded. From a guard-room, directly beneath the dining-hall, terrorists had blown up the table, blown off the ceiling, killed the guard below, the pages above, sixty in all. An unpunctual Hun had saved the tsar that night.

The night was in February, 1880. A year passed during which other attempts were made, but not without the police knowing beforehand that they would be. In the subsequent reign, the third Alexander saw an officer of his household approaching and, not recognising him, shot him dead. The second Alexander also saw a man approaching and also fired. It was at himself that he shot, at his figure reflected from a mirror. Enviable existence.

Presently it was learned that he was to inspect the troops. As he might go one way and return another, or vice versa, at both ways two men, each with a bomb, were stationed. Afterward it was said that the explosive employed looked and smelt like honey. If that be true, a new and fragrant death was hurled at him in two bombs, both of which, wrapped in cotton, looked like snowballs. The second bomb killed the terrorist and the tsar. What remained of Alexander II. was removed on a carpet.

In a very human effort to avoid that bomb, Alexander, a few days before, had arranged to placate terrorism with a constitution. To placate is to disarm—but not everybody. That which may pacify one, can infuriate another. It may be that, in planning a sop to Cerberus, he aroused another dog. Yet, in any event, previously, there had been minor precautions.

To prevent the entrance of foes, Ivan ringed the realm with forts. To prevent the entrance of ideas, Nicholas established a quarantine. To prevent the entrance of death, Alexander put police. Incoming ships were searched, incoming travellers stripped. Bales of tea, brought on camels from China, were turned inside out. For an incautious word, the mines! On the vaguest suspicion, the gallows!

To death, what were these precautions? It had not quite got him yet, but terror had and so potently that this man who was potent also, signed a ukase convoking a national assembly.

It is said that Alexander's son protested. He was put under arrest. It is said that Alexander's brother also protested but, more adroitly, to others than the tsar. It may be a coincidence but promptly the honeyed death was served. Similarly, it may be another coincidence that the ukase, already in type, disappeared. But it is a fact that absolutism remained.

After one Alexander, another. After a scrofulous father, a scrofulous son, a composite being at once Torquemada and Jack the Slipstring, a sceptred prisoner projecting death from his cell and feeding on fear, a hulking giant strong enough to fell an ox and afraid of his shadow, an obese butcher with the brains of a mujik and the virulence of a plague.

A younger son, he had not been awaited or desired on the throne. The death of a brother, then his father's, put him there. He did not want it. Reigning over Russia, once the grandest of mundane vocations, terrorism had divested of any charm. The savour of the orgy had gone. As grand-duke, if he knew little else he knew at least that. But into dull brains dreams will creep. He fancied that he had been miraculously chosen to incarnate the theocratic power which his father said, and not only said but believed, was a gift personally bestowed on him by the Almighty. He fancied that the sacrament of coronation induced regeneration and that in the attending hypostasis he would be transformed into a god.

It is unbelievable, but everything is unbelievable in this creature who managed to be both a nigger king and a state prisoner and who, however he may be regarded, supped terror with a long spoon. That terror he felt it his divine mission to disperse. Dissent was, he imagined, the cause, and dissent meant to him everything that was not orthodox and illiterate. Terrorists, nihilists, Jews and Gentiles, he jumbled confusedly in what little mind he had. They were all abominable in the sight of Heaven, vermin that it was for him, as Heaven's emanation, to destroy. Piously and austerely he began, for pious and austere he was.

Pobiedenostsev, procurator of the holy synod, a thin-lipped hyena with a vulture's beak, catered diabolically to that piety. In submitting measures, diabolic in themselves, he always cited a text from the Bible. Vichnegradski, minister of finance, a clever rogue, heard of it and cited two texts. He impressed the tsar greatly. Dagmar of Denmark, Alexander's wife, a gentle soul, gentle at least by comparison with him, cited texts also and cited them but once. Charity is the New Testament told in a word. In connection with his Judenhetze she reminded him of it.

"Ah, yes, my dear," the sanctimonious Nebuchadnezzar replied. "But we must never forget that it was the Jews who crucified our Lord."

The Jews did nothing of the kind, but that is another page from the arcana celestia, in addition to being beside the issue, which this man made very poignant. His father had established courts where defendants were at least tried in public. The son abolished them. Then the Jew baiting began.

At the time there were five million Jews in Russia, exactly five million too many, almost every one of whom was more intelligent than the emperor. They were evicted, despoiled, plundered, hounded and hunted into pariah communities, piled in on top of one another like grasshoppers in a ditch. Here and there were priests' hunts. The Judenhetze was everywhere. It would have been joy to him could he have destroyed them all. Nor was Israel alone afflicted. The attitude of the fourteenth Louis to the Huguenots was courteous by comparison to the third Alexander's treatment of the Lutherans. In Nero, Christianity had a foe less malign than he. He issued edicts that would have penalised the Apostles, ukases that would have outlawed the Christ. At any criticism in the *Times,* which Dagmar read, he foamed at the mouth. Had the editors been in Russia their shrift would have been short.

"They are a set of hogs," he wittily remarked.

Yet it was this man that kept Europe at peace. The dishwashers of history have said that his motive was religious. The motive, less spiritual than physical, was due to the fact that a fat tyrant, afraid of nothing but danger, did not care to incur the risk and discomfort of mounting a horse. He had other risks to consider. Barring his father, no modern monarch had more. Barring his son, no autocrat led a life such as he.

ALEXANDER III

In Petersburg, when he drove, a cloud of Cossacks enveloped him. The empty streets were swept. No one was permitted there. When he journeyed, it was over rails uninterruptedly guarded, minutely patroled. The route was a lane of troops. The train, divided into four sections, made it difficult to conjecture in which of them he hid. But not impossible. The right one was dynamited. From the wreck he disentangled his wife, his daughter and himself. About them were guards dead and dying. The girl, flinging herself at him, cried:—"Oh, papa, now they will come and murder us all!"

At that cry, the charwomen of history have wept. But at the cries of countless children whom this Nebuchadnezzar devoured, not a word. Perhaps it was a negligible detail. But though terrorists did not again alarm the girl, they had not done with him. Terror, more constant than they, had not either.

Thereafter, his residence became a secret. On his palaces flags flaunted, but, among them all, where he was, Russia did not know. In town, his home was a fortress; in the country, a bastille. Approach to either was impossible. Every avenue was guarded. Every hour the guard was changed. Princes, who happened to be stopping at one or the other of them, were forbidden at any time, night or day, to lock their door. However becoroneted their belongings, they were searched.

Visits were not encouraged. The man fought shy even of his relatives. He knew them. On an Easter egg he found a terrorist threat; in a family album a terrorist face. In spite of patient precautions, death's-heads fluttered in the dreary halls through which he slunk, a hangman shaking at shadows, an emperor who continued to be executioner but who had ceased to be tsar, a monarch turned mole, burying himself behind walls which could not shelter him from fright, invoking saints and signing the death-warrants of officers of his household, leaving to take care of itself an empire which he was no more fitted to rule than a sea-serpent is competent to be an apothecary, going mad before going to his Maker, driven mad by one who had come unawares as thieves and angels do.

The visit, a little drama in itself will be told in a moment.

Meanwhile, Israel agonised. In a district where other game was scant, a prince hunted Jews. One appeal remained, it was to God. In secret synagogues, the candles were reversed and in the name that contains forty-two letters; in the name of the Tetragrammaton; in the name of the Globes and the Wheels; in the name of Him who said, "I am that I am and who shall be," the great ban, Schammatha, was pronounced. Ofanim were implored to repeat the malediction. Jehovah was supplicated to rain on the tsar every curse in the Roll of the Law. The Lord of Hosts was adjured to blot him out from under the sky.

In the Orient, mantras are believed to be effective. Russia was always Asiatic. The incantations of the secret synagogues vibrated, ascended and perhaps were heard.

At Livadia, the emperor fell ill. The ailment was slight, an attack of coryza, which normally lasts a week, unless the patient is carefully tended, in which event it may persist. The imperial coryza persisted and pleurisy developed.

In Moscow, at the time, was a specialist, eccentric and successful. His name was Zakkarin. Summoned to the Crimea, he came and diagnosed. It would have been interesting to have seen him at it. If he had been a terrorist he could have killed the tsar and been torn to bits the next minute. Zakkarin was not a terrorist. He was a physician. As physician he prescribed a remedy which, precautionally, he had brought. Uncomplainingly, the august patient deigned to take it. Zakkarin was looking at him.

It would have been still more interesting to have seen that look. Shakespearian, disquieting and yet serene, it was a look that said, "At last!"

There was not much room in the camp-cot which the third Alexander habitually used, but in it, from before that look, he shrank.

Beside him, stood the physician. The room, vast, high-ceiled, furnished in the large Victorian manner, was covered with wall-paper manufactured in Manchester to frighten children. Behind Zakkarin, was Dagmar. Behind her was the procurator of the holy synod, together with an officer of the household. In the hall were servants. Beyond were guards. Without, enveloping the palace, was a sotnia of Cossacks. Yet, unperceived, unheralded, unannounced, with no show of royal honours, a great king had come.

The emperor, unaware as yet of that, but subconsciously stirred, poked his head at the physician.

"What are you?"

Zakkarin, leaning forward, whispered it. "A Jew."

"A Jew!" the obese butcher shrieked.

Zakkarin turned and explained. "His majesty is delirious."

He turned anew to his patient and whispered again. "You are doomed."

Alexander, to shriek his fright, had raised himself. But the whispers were potent. More potent still was the drug. He fell back. The ban, too, had fallen. Israel had triumphed where terrorism failed.

"Weep, Russia!" ran the official notice in the next issue of the *Novoye Vremya.* "The emperor is dead!"

Zakkarin was given the Nevski decoration and the usual diamonds. In derision, he accepted them.

Another Te Deum mounted. But the orgy, long since embittered, was drawing to a close.

X

THE WHIRLWIND

IT has been said that England conquered half the world in a fit of absent-mindedness. A fit of abstraction, let us say. While England abstracted, Russia absorbed. She absorbed steadily, stealthily, civilly, avoiding noise and offence. Her policy, the most unscrupulous and successful in history, was one which there was no change of administration to alter, no incoming government to reverse. Technically what the tsar willed, it consisted in considering the end, never the means, in turning treaties into memoranda of agreements that were not to be kept, in retreating the better to advance, in avoiding haste but ever forward, in transforming an obscure principality into an empire that covered one-seventh of the land surface of the globe.

Relatively untrammelled and very gay, until latterly it was a round of festivities, soirées in the fairyland of Scheherazade that were followed by a frog dance through Manchuria.

Not so long ago either. One can still hear the admirable orchestra of a nation, apparently invincible, executing Slav airs in Cathay, serenading the dowager, singing to her that they were natural affinities, that, under the khans, Muscovy and Mongolia were one. En sourdine, were roulades not intended for her ear, blythe airs that told of a state dinner in the Forbidden City, with after revels in Delhi and Stamboul.

Quelle rêve! Too fair though, at any rate for Russia, thought the Wilhelmstrasse, where also hung that opium dream.

Obliquely, China eyed them both. The dowager of nations, the eldest of realms, anterior to every monarchy and indifferent to all, she has sat in history aloof, her robes of silk about her, in an attitude of supreme disdain. Beside her arts and wiles, those of dead Greece and buried Rome were modern creations. Before Nineveh, before Eridu and Ur, China was. She has had all time, as these have had their day. The rise of kingdoms, the fall of empires, left her unmoved. Russian cajolements and Prussian snares might disgust, her repose remained unaltered.

At the time, the Shah of Persia, the Shah-an-Shah, King of kings, Regent of the Prophet, was a spider in Russian jelly. The winged bulls that guarded the palaces of Xerxes and of Darius were dead Turn as he might from them to Mekka, he was doomed. Doomed, too, was that other venomous insect, the Shadow of God on Earth, who throned in Stamboul.

Already, in Afghan passes, Cossacks were peering at the gates of Herat. At a signal, they would have occupied Kabul and fought on and down perhaps, or tried to fight, to the monkey-haunted temples of Benares and the blue gulf of Bengal. It is improbable that they could have got there. Yet, given that signal and the history of the world might have changed. The powers invisible willed otherwise. What they willed, Napoleon perhaps foresaw.

"Prussia," said Napoleon, "will develop into a Germany reconstituted, but that phase will be brief. Anarchy will throw her back where she began. Austria will crumble, Italy become united, and the rôle of France be intellectual."

Napoleon added:—"The supremacy of the world will be divided between England, mistress of Africa, and Russia, established at the Golden Horn."

In Russia, everything goes wrong. That is her history. Her history is an uncompleted book. In some future chapter Napoleon's prediction may come true. "Watch Russia," an adept admonished when the war of the world began. "Great things are gestating there."

Meanwhile, in the gaieties of the Muscovite revel, Germany urged Japan to interpose. Japan needed no urging. A dozen years or so before, she sprang at China, threw the old lady down, and would have pulled her clothes off, had not the police interfered. What Japan had then in view she subsequently acquired, with Wilson's blessing. But at the time, Russia got in the way, not omitting while she was at it, to subtilise a few odds and ends from the dowager's handbag.

To Japan that was highly unjust. The view is amusing. Russia and Japan were like two dogs over the same bone, only, of the two, Russia had the bigger teeth. The teeth were false, but so perfectly adjusted that perhaps Russia herself did not suspect it, though certainly Japan did.

Japan, affecting her usual naïveté, backed away, yet inwardly ravening, nursing her suspicions, her grudge, her arsenals, her warships, her Togo, until—Banzai!—the guns popping at Port Arthur disclosed to a bewildered world the gigantic humbug of Russian might.

Nikolai the Last was then at Tsarskoie Selo, occupied with the puerilities of his empty mind.

The war did not matter. Word was brought him that his fleet was destroyed. At the moment he was playing tennis. Without interrupting the game, he remarked that it was a fine day.

The attitude, curious in itself, was characteristic. In any crisis, he displayed it. When told that he must abdicate, his composure was identical. When arrested he was equally unmoved. A prisoner in his own gardens, his equanimity endured.

Such an attitude is beautiful. But in his case it proceeded not at all from the impassibility of the sage, nor yet from the serenity of the philosopher, but from the indifference of the witless, unless it were the apathy of the drugged.

In an interview that appeared—shortly after the fall of the empire—in the *Novoye Vremya,* Prince Youssoupov, a young man related to the imperial clan, said that Nikolai Alexandrovitch was usually under the influence of a drug which a Thibetan lama had supplied and which was administered by his wife.

None the less he could be witty. Relatives of his wrote, begging him to be merciful to a kinsman. Admirably he replied that their audacity in addressing him was amazing. Admirable, too, was his retort to petitioners humbly praying for a less rigorous régime:—"Don't indulge in senseless fancies."

These epigrams and that attitude serve in a measure to delineate the messiah of the Hague Convention, which Dr. Dillon called an ignoble farce, and which was designed to jockey Europe into peacefully disarming while peacefully Russia armed.

Shifty and shallow, physically and mentally incapacitated even for military duty, his incompetence was so adequately estimated that, before the great ban was pronounced on his father, he was sent on a junket through the Orient, where, in some tiger-hunt, perhaps, he might decently succumb. In Japan he nearly did. An assault was made on him there, though whether it were prearranged or not, one may surmise and never know. Then indolently the gorgeous East disgorged the offered prey. Clearly he was destined to renew the orgy, to drink and make merry, though not to his fill. In view of the fashion in which the cup was torn from him, there is little in history more curious than an incident that occurred at his coronation and which exactly paralleled an incident that happened at the coronation of Louis XVI. On each occasion the blood of thousands cascaded.

Otherwise it were interesting to have been at

Moscow when the tsar appeared. In a dark uniform, on a pale horse and pale himself from the fast that preceded any coronation, the last and least of the great carnivora rode in. Behind him, in a gilded coach which an imperial crown surmounted, his mother came, bowing to the right, to the left, with a grace mechanical but sovereign. Already she had recovered from the loss of her Nebuchadnezzar. Behind her, in another gilt coach, but minus the crown which as yet was withheld, the tsaritsa sat, rigid, disdainful, her mouth contracted by lines that were to change her face, then singularly beautiful, into a tragic and wasted mask. Along the route, rigid also, but very gorgeous, glittered the imperial guard. Back of these swarmed the stage-managed unwashed. Above was the turquoise of the mid-May sky.

In the Kreml, on the morrow, the archaic, fastidious and highly poetic ceremonial was ministered to a weak young man, for whom the crown was too heavy—in the same manner that, at Rheims, the sixteenth Louis found his crown too big—and who, bent beneath its weight and that of the bullion on his cloak, dropped the sceptre, which any gypsy could have foretold he was destined to drop again. Beside him his bride, born Alix of Hesse, but then Alexandra

Feodorovna of All the Russias, stood erect, her triply tiara'd head unbowed.

Afterward, in the glowing and legendary pomp of long ago, the couple emerged on a terrace, draped with imperial purple and cloth of gold, where they looked on the trained and kneeling crowd beneath, and where an eye-witness, Marie of Rumania, likened them, in their youth and splendour, to the young divinities of old Greece.

The comparison, trite perhaps, is not inapt. On that day, at that moment, both leaned from a parapet of the ideal. The parapet was very fragile. On that day, throngs of the lowly that had come to acclaim, remained to die. Herded together, they were trampled to death. The reign which that day began in blood, ended as bloodily. In it were whole scenes re-enacted from the history of Louis XVI.

Only the interludes differ. Yet, even there, there are similarities. From the old memoirs of the old French court, magicians peer. Through them passes the enigmatic figure of Cagliostro whom, in the court of Nicholas II., Rasputin aped.

In the Winter Palace and afterward when, for a reason that will be recited, that palace was abandoned, crystal-gazers, astrologers, soothsayers were ceaselessly employed, until, Rasputin supervening, they were thanked and dismissed.

In the interim, minor events occurred. The tsaritsa who had snubbed everybody, including Victoria R. I., contrived to present the curious spectacle of an empress boycotted in her court. Perhaps there is no debt more faithfully acquitted than that of contempt, and the disdain which this woman dispensed was such that, barring officials and other people too servile to be affronted, those commanded to court-functions neglected to appear. Had these negligences been confined to a few, the manners of the negligent might have been corrected in the finishing school that Siberia was. But the penalising of all the aristocracy being, not impossible certainly, but perhaps injudicious, the Winter Palace which, the Vatican alone excepted, was the largest and most regal residence extant, became a haunt of caretakers, a haunt, too, of ghosts.

The domestic life of the sovereigns was, meanwhile, eminently correct. Nikolai Alexandrovitch, a model husband, maintained and very sumptuously a lady of the ballet. Therewith, a devoted father, he had but one regret. He lacked an heir. To comfort him, the birth of the tsarevitch was mediumistically foretold, though, it may be that in the child's advent, Prince Orlov collaborated. So at least it has been said. It has been also said that the boy's potential ability to have children of his own an anarchist eliminated.

These tales may be untrue. What exceeds them is the spectacle of an empress owned by a peasant. Rasputin dominated that woman who, domineering herself, dominated her husband. Yet that could not have been difficult. Without any will of his own, without any ideas except such as concerned his prerogatives and, like the Emperor Claudius—Messalina's husband—always of the opinion of the one who spoke last, which, in this instance, was the tsaritsa, Nikolai Alexandrovitch presented a perfectly defined case of aboulia. It was not he who ruled, it was his wife, whom Rasputin governed. At a gesture from the latter, policies were altered, measures reversed. At a gesture, anyone, no matter what the rank and the higher the better, was dismissed. At any remonstrance, exile.

In the gardens of Tsarskoie Selo, there was a chapel and, under it, a crypt beautified with Byzantine art, with jewelled marvels, with brocades which the centuries had faded; a crypt mystically embellished and of which the peace was stirred only by the choir in the chapel above. There, the haughtiest woman on earth consorted with an ignoble and sinister satyr.

Rasputin entered history, dramatically, in a murder and, quite as dramatically, vacated it, murdered in turn. Originally a vermin-eaten peasant and always a venomous brute, the murder with which he was associated singularly resembled the one related by Erckmann-Chatrian in the *Polish Jew*. The details are nearly identical, except that while, in the novel, the criminal went mad, Rasputin went free—to become a prophet, a saint, possessed, as he pleasantly described himself, by the Holy Ghost.

In spite of which, in spite too of practises that only reticences can convey, he rose, as Peter's laundress rose, on the escalator of fate, from the soil to the throne. There he was waited on by the dignitaries of the empire, as Zubov was valeted by the princes of the realm. In him the Pompadour lineage revived. For the first time in history, a mujik was tsar.

A swarthy blackguard, thaumaturge and comedian, his power over the empress was due to two factors, perhaps to three. The third may have been the woman's dementia. Apart from that, Rasputin possessed the coercive spells of magnetism and clairvoyance. The other fac-

ALIX OF HESSE

WIFE OF NICHOLAS THE LAST

tor, and probably the most potent, was a doctrine that he advanced as his own but which, a century earlier, Boileau summarised as the enjoyment in paradise of the pleasures of hell.

The doctrine, known as quietism, originated with Molinos, a Madrilene monk. Morbid as was everything that came from Spain, it held that temptations are the means employed by God to purge the soul of passion; that to mortify the flesh it should be gratified; that in the omnisapience of the divine, man is saved not merely by righteousness but by evil, by crapulence as well as continence.

These tenets which Rasputin imposed, were accepted by the empress in that crypt, where she was followed by her daughters, whose governess, Mademoiselle Toutschev, complained to their father that Rasputin visited them at night. Whether actual relations occurred is obscure and unimportant. It has been more or less authoritatively stated that they did occur and whether the statement be true or false, it was one of the causes that led to the mujik's death.

At the time, as in Rome before the fall, everything was for sale. Before the fall of the Russian empire, place, power, army contracts, ministerial portfolios, everything, the virtue of women, the honour of men, the defense of the realm, everything was up for auction, except the throne and that only because in it sat the auctioneer, who had to sit somewhere pending its projected sale to curio-collectors in the Wilhelmstrasse.

Before that could occur, in the streets, theatres and basilicas of the capital, the national anthem was sung. The anthem was a thanksgiving for Rasputin's death. Rasputin, invited to supper at the residence of Prince Youssoupov, went there flanked by the prefect of police whom the prince ejected. Then he was killed and his body, thrown in the Neva, from which it was fished, was buried in the crypt beneath the chapel at Tsarskoie Selo. After the fall of the empire, the body was exhumed, spat on, destroyed.

Sic semper, perhaps. A blackmailing tyrant in Germany's pay, Rasputin was hated as thoroughly as Nikolai was despised. Other sovereigns had been feared, loathed, revered, ignored and forgot. For Nikolai Alexandrovitch there was only contempt, in which his wife joined. She regarded him as Catherine the Greater regarded Peter the Small and, through a myopia which the glare of regalia may have induced, regarded herself as another Star of the North.

An ungracious woman, tactless, acrimonious and stupid, a woman who never unbent and never smiled, she was highly imaginative. Marie of Rumania, a kinswoman who was as close to her as anyone could get, said that she believed herself infallible, supreme, unique, lifted immeasurably above all mankind. It was a belief that some of the Cæsars entertained and from which their madness resulted. In sharing it, this woman may have become insane, though quite as readily her dementia—if demented she were—may have been congenital. Insanity is hereditary in the Hessian house of Brabant. Her brother's favourite recreation was tatting. But the woman's opinion of herself was otherwise and quite as agreeably exemplified. Fancying herself supernormal, she believed in spiritist mysticism, believed too that her station required that she should appear in gala robes at breakfast. The robes themselves were those of a parvenu. Yet always perhaps a false conception of religion is inseparable from bad taste in dress, and her taste was such that even after the gala vulgarity was abandoned, the smart women of Petersburg took her costumes as models of what was not to be worn. Later still, she affected a simplicity of attire that would have been ostentatious were it not for the ribbons of jewels that she wore even in the privacy of her own apartments, where she sat by the hour, without moving, without speaking, lost in some dream, perhaps of Orlov, who had killed himself and whose grave she covered with flowers and tears.

It was years later that the mujik appeared and departed. Yet when this woman also departed, and on a journey that took her farther and deeper than any empress ever went, the guards at Tsarskoie Selo shouted their derision:

"Goodbye, Madame Rasputin!"

Her husband has been described as a shadow. A shadow, yes, but a shadow that crushed. Long before, on what is known as Bloody Sunday, a body of workmen set out to present a petition to him, their little father. Before they could reach the Winter Palace, their little father had them mowed. A few, that were wounded merely, survived. It was forbidden to collect a kopeck for them.

At that time the orgy had been resumed. Yet for the fair chalices of crime, the jewelled cups of mud and blood, and that table set with the épergnes of felony, the tuberoses of torture and imperial behests, another reveller, a noceur gayer than all the autocrats of all the Russias, stood by, laughing and jesting, waiting with gallant unconcern until the clock should strike.

When the clock did strike, when Nikolai Alexandrovitch after being deported was shot, the alien and perhaps unconsidered verdict was that he had been murdered. On another plane that ruling may have been reversed. Long since, a court of last resort may have decided that the rifle that killed him was charged only —and yet how amply!—with the tears, the groans, the cries of the helpless, sent to typhus, to insanity, to death, massacred at his command.

Commonsense might have preserved him. But in his case, in view of the indigent mentality of his presumptive ancestors, commonsense would have been abnormal. Instead was a derangement, clinically known as uranomania. A dwarf fancied himself divine. It was a family illusion which, other things being equal, he might have retained. His wife interfered. She also had illusions. She fancied that she looked like Marie Antoinette. It was Bazaine whom she resembled. Anything is possible. The day may come when she will be canonised.

In Hungary, Attila is a saint. In Russia, Alix of Hesse may be beatified. Even otherwise, when history is more intelligently viewed, it may be realised that the powers unseen guided this woman to open the prison in which Ivan caged a nation and for that, it may be, men will rise and call her blessed.

Previously, during a revolution that succeeded the Japanese war, this woman and that shadow hid in a palace that even from afar one was forbidden to stop and look at. Guarded by sotnias of Cossacks, there they crouched. Not alone. Terror crouched there also. Through grated casements the kramola peered. From that mysterious tribunal of the revolutionists, fluttered the death-heads that the previous incumbent knew and from which he, too, had shrunk.

In proportion as graves multiplied and the population of Siberia increased, the revolution waned. With a rictus, Terror passed, waving a hand, calling, "Au plaisir!" When he returned, he came riding a whirlwind that startled a world already inured to the startling and in which the seven times twisted coil of state snapped like a withered twig.

The cell, the knout, torture, exile, insanity, death, what could be more instructive? For centuries Russia had had a university training in all that was meant and done by the tsar's command. There is no shape of demonism, no form of horror that she did not know by heart. That poor heart of hers was a doctor of philosophy in imperial crime. When, therefore, the tsar ceased to instruct and it was Russia that taught, the benefits of her liberal education leaped.

Hunland, long since, had launched her holy crusade. Russia, then, was needy as a knife-grinder. Internally disorganised, bureaucratically corrupt, she lacked every equipment, brains included. Otherwise she was admirably prepared. There were Huns in the army, in the navy, in the ministry of war, at the tsar's elbow, in his bed. It was from these batrachian influences that bolshevism afterward developed. Germany paralysed Russia with that ankylosis which was to make her wolfishly hideous and rid her of religion, commerce, money and sense. But the situation, highly problematic, has another aspect which, shortly, will be considered. Meanwhile, gangrened already, Russia fought.

Presently the Wilhelmstrasse, confronted by collapse, floated offers of ambiguous peace. The allies rejected them. Privately the Kaiser applied to his kinswoman, Alix of Hesse, granddaughter of Victoria, of whom he was grandson. In the service of a cousin and of Germany, the Russian empress ordered a masquerade. The mask was famine. Russia beheld that spectre, conjured, a jack-in-the-box, by a woman. There was food in plenty, only it was hidden. The famine was bogus, hence the disguise.

The Duma lifted it. Behind, was the tsaritsa. Behind her were the court reactionaries. Behind them was the prefect of police. All were evoking the spectre, inciting riots, serving Germany, engineering a separate peace.

The Duma informed the tsar. For reply, the tsar ukased the Duma out. The Duma ignored the ukase. Ignored it! Any former tsar would have had every canaille in the assembly first knouted, then dispatched. But formerly there were two Russias; one above, the other below; one, the tsar; the other, the nation. With a sleight-of-hand unparalleled and incomparable, the Duma transposed them.

Nikolai Alexandrovitch was then at military headquarters. He started for Petrograd. On the train he was the autocrat from whom everything emanated, emperor of All the Russias, viceroy of the Divine, sovereign of a hundred races, lord of myriad hosts, an anthropomorphic god. When he alighted, he was the perception of a perceiver, a bundle of nothing who ceased shortly to be even that.

"Omnia fui, nihil prodest," said an expiring Cæsar, whom this final Cæsar might have mim-

micked. Might have, yes. He lacked the wit.

Over Russia, then, night still hung. Beyond was a dawn that was to send that night reeling back into the enigma of history from which Russia had come. The night was basaltic. The dawn was livid. In search of one like it, astronomers will have to look in the astral. It was the dawn of primitive man. From the night of an ended orgy, Russia, livid as that dawn, lapsed back to the stone age.

History has no parallel for the relapse. But the benefits of a very liberal education had made Russia a saint and a savage, a millionaire in rags, a genius without culture, an entity to whom meum and tuum were transposable abstractions, and which produced a type that fused idealism and knavery, the spiritual and the brute, superstition and intelligence, a type that craving anarchy endured absolutism and which resulted in what the world had never seen, a nation attacked by hydrophobia.

Hydrophobia is excessive, yet, when a shadow alighted from a train, a page of history turned, the great book of autocracy closed, and with a crash so loud that the noise shook down a prison's walls. A hundred and eighty million ignorant, helpless, hungry, angry, innocent prisoners found that they were free.

Dumbly, as prisoners will, they had dreamed of freedom. Impotently, as prisoners do, they had struggled for it. But in the dream, they had no belief; in the struggle, no conviction. It was all too utopian. When, suddenly, overnight, without conscious effort, Utopia stretched before them, it set them mad. What had seemed utopian became bedlam.

Madmen have a point of view which, when considered, is always interesting. The idea of these insane children, of some of them at least, was to destroy everything, destroy the world, build it anew. The idea seems insane, but seen from an angle higher than our own, may not the world need refurbishing? In occult sanctuaries where causes appear and criticism vanishes, sovietism is viewed as a supernormal phenomenon, propelled from planes where events are marshalled, and designed to be the obstetricy of universal palingenesis. If the view is correct nothing can prevail against it. But it may not be correct. In convulsive accouchements Greece tried to save her soul and lost her independence. Similarly, Rome dissolved from a republic into an empire and France saw the royal lilies change into imperial bees. Scepticism is history's bedfellow. History doubts that Russia's travail will be less abortive, though philosophy believes that it may be a boon. For assuming that bolshevism proceeds from a supermundane impulsion, the design may be to provide the world in general and communism in particular with an object lesson in the slavery and rationed misery that constitute the triumph of soviet ideals. Unfortunately, an age of enlightenment has never dawned for the proletariat and from philosophy clairvoyance has been withheld.

Yet when Germany launched her holy crusade, a chela admonished:—"Watch Russia! Great things will come from there."

What are these things? The Lords of Karma alone can tell. But Muhammad is suggestive. The Prophet said that paradise lies in the shadow of swords. Muhammad was pleasantly figurative and so are the swords. But, to reach paradise, always there is a desert to cross, a desert swept by simooms, peopled with djinns. The Lords of Karma alone can tell what simooms await humanity.

New York, June, 1920.

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PURPLE AND FINE WOMEN

PURPLE AND FINE WOMEN

by

EDGAR SALTUS

With an Introduction by

W. L. GEORGE

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Introduction

By W. L. GEORGE

IN his books the author places not only what he knows, but what he dreams; not only what he is, but what he would be. Half fact, half vision, thus is a book made. So when I take up a book that counts, by a man I never knew, I am curious not only of what he tells, but of what he is. Some authors, such as Flaubert, hide; others, like Mr George Moore, proclaim; yet others, and Saltus is one of these, peer at the reader like a nymph in the woods toying with a dull satyr, half-tempted to come out, yet instinctively reluctant. I do not suppose that many people understood Saltus; he had probably too much pride to expose himself easily. No doubt he shared with all of us the desire to express himself, but something held him back, that pride perhaps, a delicacy of feeling, a capacity for laughter which hides so much capacity for suffering. I feel all that as I read this book of stories. I am tempted to make a synthesis of what they reveal, to figure Saltus as he may have been.

Thus proceeding, I have a vision of an interesting, erratic man, where dominate two characteristics: the first is Parisianism. France, the (reputed) Latins in general, convey to Saltus an idea of refinement, split ideas, delicate irony. His passion for France is shown by his continual use of French words and expressions, *à propos* of which it is worth saying that in no single instance does he make a mistake. This is a mere linguistic tribute, but it is worth paying since a reading of the most august English and American authors, even Henry James, occasionally yields absurdity in the use of French. Saltus, one feels, was permeated by France. It is said that an Englishman Italianate is a devil incarnate; upon an American the French influence is, as Mr Polly would have put it, more 'benifluous.' It gives to the American character a *je ne sais quoi,* a sort of icing akin to the gilded portion of the most luxurious type of cake. French influence suits America better than England; it sits upon the Englishman like pink ribbons on an elephant. The Englishman writing about the French is almost invariably imbecile. He sees them as picturesque, faintly pathetic and lightly humorous. Mr Leonard Merrick, whenever he writes about Tricotrin and his friends, exhibits the immense reservoir of ineptitude which lies behind the mind of a clever Englishman.

The American does not suffer so because the pink ribbons sit better upon him; he wears them instead of scarlet ribbons. He is not so afraid of giving himself away. Thus, in these stories, we find Saltus taking naturally to France, and particularly to the *grand monde*. Saltus did not inherit from the nineties an impulse to realism. He has no kinship with Zola, whose soul, according to Mr Anatole France, was too completely concerned with zinc factories and flatirons. There are no flatirons in Saltus. He is essentially oriental and fantastic. Drink is served in a flask of gold. A party is given by the morganatic widow of an emperor. He makes a world about him, sensuous and æsthetic, a world of chinchilla, emeralds, and Malines lace, where evolve only people to whom work is an incident, and perhaps love an accident. In this world he evolves as a philosophical jester. He loves it, but he is not deceived by it, does not take it seriously. In many of the stories he plays a trick upon the reader. The conclusion is perhaps not so much a trick as a revelation that the story is not true. The reader has been taken in.

It may be that he describes himself on page one, when he says: ‘I had not a care on my mind, a regret on my conscience, a speck on my shoes.’ One conceives him again when he remarks: ‘Frequentation with Epictetus makes one very civil.’ I am sure that Saltus was civil, providing one did not mind his being a little *distrait.* One imagines him hating a bore as Mrs F's aunt hated a fool. His mind is easily wearied; in the middle of a story, his attention wanders as he realizes with horror that the tale-teller is about to become pathetic. He is essentially negligent. Things are what they are, and things do happen: in the turmoil he sits, Olympian, but secretly watchful of anything that might amuse him.

Through Saltus runs strongly the cynical strain. When a lover relates his interview with the spirit of his dead beloved, Saltus remarks: 'He grows lyrical.' In the same story, he retorts to the haunted lover that his shoemaker was annoyed by apparitions of deceased customers. Of two lovers he observes that 'they had interchanged all those lovely vows which means so much and also so little.' He sums up a vulgar rich woman who got into society by saying that 'there was a sesame in her dollars.'

Thus Saltus, in the *grand monde,* remains unimpressed; he likes it as a show; he is never deceived by it. When he introduces characters he is apt to call them de Chose or de Machin. He does not give them magnificent names. He ironically calls them 'Chose' and 'Machin,' which is the French for Tom, Dick and Harry. And no doubt he gives them a 'de' only so that they may fit the atmosphere. To him they are 'de' because people are 'de,' and they are not de much. One feels this again whenever the story drifts across a duke, for in the mind of Saltus the duke is always amiable, but wholly aimless. He is not on his knees to dukes, normal features of the landscape. They merely provide him with merriment. A continuous trickle of humor passes through his pages. The dowager in 'The Top of the Heap' is sister to the Oscar Wilde duchess. When Saltus causes the dowager to say of her son: 'He has a perfect mania for going to the dentist's, and that, I think shows so much conscientiousness,' we recognize that woman, and crave her acquaintance. Again, Saltus sums up a character as 'Alphabet Jones, a man of polite letters.'

Perhaps we strike the completely sincere Saltus whenever he talks about women. He has for them a perfectly French passion. He looks upon them, not only as utensils for reproduction, but angels fathered by demons; to an extent he agrees with Nietzsche in looking upon women as a reward, but he has a certain disdain for the warrior, and might say, parodying Nietzsche: 'Man is for art, and woman the reward of the artist.' Subject to an ironic outlook, Saltus loves women as they are, women as he sees them. He sees them in an atmosphere of light, color, scent, as exquisite phantoms which a kiss materializes. He speaks of 'the silk of her mouth.' A little further he gives an ideal description of his vision: 'Her eyes were pools of purple, her hair was a garland of flame, her mouth a scarlet thread.' He himself applies the *mot juste* to his own dream: Sultry. He defines when he says: 'Her hair made a garland of gold. Her eyes were sultry, her lips were scarlet.' In another story he rises further to definition: 'Her purple eyes were sultry, her scarlet mouth was moist, the red tangles of her hair made a burnous of flame, her fingers glowed, and her wrists were such as those on which, in days gone by, falcons alighted and kisses fell.'

It is not easy to sum up Saltus, nor is it necessary. I have lost the taste for classification, and I am not concerned to know what place posterity will assign to him. He may, in five hundred years, figure in the cyclopedias of literature, or again he may not. If at that time his tenuous spirit hovers in the Place Vendome, or over the Corso, he may be moved by curiosity to note what they think of him after so long. If anything is written there, he will probably laugh at it, thinking it solemn and rather *pompier*. And if nothing stands there, I am convinced that he will truthfully remark: *'Je me'en fiche.'*

PURPLE AND FINE WOMEN

A Bouquet of Illusions

HAS THE FIGARO again succeeded in losing itself?

The temperature was heavenly. I had had a beautiful swim in the beautiful sea. I had breakfasted on dishes a poet had prepared. The evening previous I had passed with some of the most agreeable people in Europe. At baccarat, the night before, I had managed without effort to rid myself of ill-gotten gains. I had not a care on my mind, a regret on my conscience, a speck on my shoes. In spite of which, or perhaps precisely on that account, as I stood that morning in the reading-room of the Cercle de Biarritz I found nothing better to do than to affect annoyance because The Figaro was not under my monocle.

'Pardon, monsieur,' said the lackey to whom I had spoken. 'Behold a gentleman who is reading it.'

I had beheld the gentleman before. Who he was I did not know; but, to use a localism of the land, he had intrigued me. He had the appearance of a Somebody, the distinction that study and suffering bring.

He suggested perspectives and possibilities that the entirely amiable yet perfectly aimless dukes and princes by whom the club was frequented neglected to supply. Merely in the manner in which he turned his head there was manifest that preoccupation which is characteristic of those whose existence is cerebral. Twice already I had met him — once with one of the little Pignatelli princesses and once with the Prime Minister; but on each occasion his name had escaped me. Yet not the timbre of his voice. It was grave and deep, and presently in his beautiful baritone he addressed me, recalling an incident that had occurred at the Casino and asking whether I had won.

'Le baccarat apporte, emporte mais ne rapporte pas,' I answered, and after a few other platitudes I gathered up The Figaro, which meanwhile he had offered me. When I put it down he had gone.

On the morrow I met him on the road that skirts the Chambre d'Amour and which through kilometers of pines leads to the Adour, a river so beautiful in itself that all the ingenuity of Bayonne has been unable to make it wholly hideous. The next day I ran into him at Bidart, a hamlet so silent that you might fancy it enchanted by the spells and marvels of its languid afternoons. And again I encountered him on the Route d'Espagne, than which even the Corniche is not lovelier.

On these occasions we rode a while together, and in the process I discovered that he was alarmingly learned. He appeared to have been everywhere, met everybody, and studied everything. He appeared, too, to be remarkably intuitive, and flattered me — very basely, I have since thought — by telling me I was a born novelist. 'And there are precious few,' he was insidious enough to add.

As a result I found him highly interesting. It is, I believe, a recognized fact that though you may have in yourself nothing that particularly appeals to your neighbor, yet if that neighbor appeals to you, at once a bond is created. Admiration is like love and like light, a fluid that affects us unconsciously. And so it fell about that on the evening of the day on which I met him on the Route d'Espagne, the effect of which I speak — unless, indeed, it were some other — became obvious. He did me the honor to take me into his confidence.

I remember that evening as never any since. The dusk had been sudden. The ocean resembled nothing so much as an immense blue syrup. The sky after hesitating between dead rose and apple-green chose a lapis lazuli, which it changed to indigo, and with that for ballroom the stars came out and danced. To enjoy their sarabands I had seated myself on the balcony of the club. It was there he joined me. At the moment it rather annoyed me that he should do so. I was alone with the Infinite, and I know of no better companion. But all this he appeared to divine, and gravely, in his beautiful voice said:

'I fear I interrupt a tête-à-tête?'

To a remark so spacious in its compliment, what could I do except to express my pleasure? That expression I noticed he accepted as only his due, and presently he began monologuing — a trifle pontifically, it seemed to me — on the avatar and the sheer bliss of believing that hereafter we shall vagabond from sphere to sphere of increasing delights until we reach the peace that passeth understanding.

'That peace will be grateful,' I interjected.

'All peace is,' he answered. 'But on earth there is none. For me, at least,' he hastened to add. 'Would you regard it, sir, as indiscreet if I venture to tell you why?'

A wretched Latin stupidity about nothing human being extraneous slipped from my tongue. But, however stupid, it must have contained the invitation which he sought. In his alluring way he began at once talking very fascinatingly about a fascinating girl.

'Believe me, sir, that merely in raising her arms she exhaled the reason of love. She affected me as no one ever had, as no one now ever can. It was at Dammartin I met her first. Among our vieilles chansons there is one that runs:

> ' "A Dammartin l'y a trois belles filles
> L'y en a z'une plus belle que le jour ——"

'The song, though old, seemed made for her. It accompanied and announced her. It was part of the rustle of her skirts. I can hear it now as I can hear the rustle. For years the echo of both has haunted me. There have been days without number and nights without end when it seemed to me that echo would drive me mad. On one occasion I was convinced it had. But that was long afterward. At the time she filled my life, or perhaps it would be more exact to say she filled my dreams. For of my life she herself had little part. It was the vision of her that possessed me. She represented the goal in that eternal steeplechase after happiness in which, shirted and capped in the colors of hope, we all take part. Does it not seem to you, sir, that few of us get there? We either fall by the way or miss it entirely. It was my misfortune — a misfortune by no means unique — to have been thrown at the last hurdle. A furlong more and the cup was mine. Dear God! how I strove to get it! Perhaps, had I succeeded, it would have lost its savor. It may be that happiness is what we think it, but on condition that we think it is what we have not got. It may be that had she cared for me I should have ceased to care for her. The fact that she did not may have been the woof of my love. Paradise lies always just beyond. The thirst for the unobtainable consumes us all. What abysses the human heart conceals! But pardon me, I am wearying you with this story.'

'On the contrary,' I answered, 'c'est du Bourget.'

He smiled. Evidently the reply had pleased him. 'Do you care for his work?' he asked.

In any fabric it is easy to pick holes. But when praise is expected I have found it easier to supply it. It saves time, labor and breath. 'Enormously,' I replied. 'But you were saying ——'

'Ah, yes,' he continued. 'Well, you have now the central situation. At first I was part of the landscape to her. Presently on that landscape I succeeded in becoming a blur. She was interested, and had been since her childhood, as I afterward learned, in a cousin, a young man named, let us say, De Machin, but he had nothing, and her people, who belonged to the small nobility, had less. Now, in your country, among your milliardaires, I should be out at elbows, but, everything being relative, at Dammartin I was rich. As a consequence, when I asked it was given. But you will understand, of course, what I at the time did not, that her people forced her hand. Meanwhile her indifference to me, which was patent, I regarded but as the normal attitude of the unimpressed jeune fille. After marriage I told myself it would be my care and my joy — and what a joy! — to change that attitude. Sir, I did change it, but I changed it from indifference into detestation. Sir, did I but touch her she shuddered. My presence was torture to her, and that torture of hers was agony to me. Mais passons. A fairer bride I at least have never seen. Her face was a flower, her eyes were songs. In a week the flush on her face had faded, the light from her eyes had gone. In a fortnight she was haggard. In a month she was dead.'

My attention had wandered. From that which Mr Swinburne has catalogued as the golden, remote wild West, a memory had surged. I was re-living an episode that had aromatized my youth. But at this climax I started.

'Yes,' he repeated, 'dead.' He raised his hands and waved them. 'Like that. In a minute. It was the heart, they said, that poor little fragile heart of hers which my adoring but awkward hands had broken. . . . We Latins, sir, are perhaps more emotional than you. In any event, I collapsed. During the obsequies that ensued, each minute was a separate death. Sir, it is said we should hasten to cherish those whom we love lest they leave us forever before we have loved them enough. Therein was the bitterness of it. Though in the few brief weeks during which we were together I had cherished her to the point of idolatry, I knew and felt, and it killed me to know it and feel it, that I had cherished her better had I seemed not to cherish her at all. Perhaps then she would have consented to remain, and who knows but that in after years — perhaps, too, of her own accord — she would have put her hand in mine? For there are dreams that come true, are there not? Mine, though, was done. I tried to forget — not to remember, rather — but with grief who shall argue? To exorcise it one of our moralists has noted that there is but Time and Silence. It occurred to me that he should have added Work. I turned to mathematics, as another might to drink. Its problems, indeed, vacated my mind of her, yet, once solved, there in haunting loveliness she stood. "I am damned!" I kept repeating, and ultimately, in a final effort to get away from myself, I took to travel. Sir, believe me, in conditions such as mine travel is as futile as study. Wherever I went I found myself there in waiting. I found her, too, grief as well. Who was it — Ariosto? — that said:

' "Da me stesso sempre fuggendo
Arò me sempre appresso."

'I had journeyed to Valparaiso and from there to

Florence before I realized the hideous truth those lines contain. The memory of her became an obsession which, battening on me by day, plucked in sleep at my sleeve, woke me, sat at my side and talked torrentially of her. Grief had convoluted into monomania, and one day, as I have already mentioned, I told myself that I was mad — yes, and any one else would have thought me so, too — for I felt that I had seen her, or rather I felt that my crumbling brain had from its ruins projected an illusion of the ghost of the dead.

'I was then in Florence. The illusion had occurred in that lovely park that is called the Cascine. It seemed to me that she passed me there, rapidly in a carriage; so rapidly that in an instant she had gone. Abruptly everything grew dim. There came to me the curious and by no means enviable sensation of falling from an inordinate height, a sense of struggle with the intangible and the void into which my brain seemed to tip. When finally, on the morrow, it righted sufficiently, I got to the French Consulate, where I obtained the address of a physician, on whom I then called and to whom in detail I related the story I have summarized to you. "I am mad, am I not?"

' "Pas plus qu'un autre," he replied. "Tout le monde est plus ou moins fou. You may have a delusion or two. What of it? Delusions are very delightful. What should we do without them? Yours, however, are not very complex. You fancy that you have seen a lady who is dead. In reality you have seen some one who resembles her. I think I can convince you of that. Afterward, if you will but convince yourself of the inutility of grief, you will say bonjour to an obsession. My carriage is at the door. Favor me."

'Driving, sir, as no doubt you know better than I, is the chief Florentine distraction. At the hour when this gentleman invited me to accompany him all the elegance of the Lung' Arno was in the park. Thither we proceeded. Hardly had we reached it when I clutched him by the arm. "La voilà!" I cried. For there, in a victoria with a man whom I knew at her side, sat my wife.

'The doctor smiled, raised his hat and turned to me. "That is Mme De Machin, one of my patients, a charming woman, of whom I shall ask leave to present you."

' "But, doctor," I cried, "De Machin, the man with her, is the man with whom she was in love."

' "Precisely," the doctor, with entire calm, replied, "and a very amiable individual he is. His wife is in love with him too. His wife, though, is not your wife. Your wife is dead. You are not, however, on that account the dupe of an illusion; you are merely forgetting the psychological fact that a man cares not necessarily for one particular woman, but for one particular feminine type. De Machin consoled himself for the loss of the young gentlewoman who became your wife by marrying a lady who resembled her. Affection is merely an instinct when it does not happen to be a habit."

'Dosing me with little platitudes of this kind the doctor ran on. As you will readily believe, they left me unaffected. I was at once firmly convinced that my wife was resurrected, and equally convinced that the conviction was the figment of my disordered brain. But divining the inutility of argument, and fearing, moreover, that did I persist, the doctor might, in view of my condition, retract his offer, I managed to appear relieved.

' "You are a magician," I said to him. "An hour ago I was ready for a straight-jacket. Since then, through your wizardry, an illusion has been ablated. You have but now to enable me to exchange speech with this lady and the marvel of your cure will be complete. Without indiscretion, when shall that be?"

'We had reached the hotel at which I was stopping. "Not later than tomorrow," he answered, and left me at the door.

'That morrow never came. The next day I waited him in vain. The day after I went to his bureau. He was not at home. I left a note reminding him of his promise and asking when I should see him again. In the course of the evening I received a reply appointing an hour on the following day. But of the promise and its fulfillment not a word. In the circumstances there was nothing to do but to wait, and burning with fever I waited. Finally, as arranged, he appeared.

' "All my excuses," he exclaimed at once. "And how are our little delusions today? Entirely evaporated?"

' "And that lady?" I asked.

' "That lady? What lady? Oh, yes. Yes. Yes, Mme De Machin. Yes, indeed. Well, I have not enjoyed the pleasure of seeing her since the other afternoon."

'He was lying. I saw he was lying, and he saw that I saw that he was.

' "Tell me the truth," I muttered.

' "The truth, the truth," he repeated, sparring, as it seemed to me, for wind. "What is truth? — verity to one, error to another, an elenchicism fit only to be concealed."

' "Never from him who is worthy to hear it," I replied.

'He had been walking up and down, throwing his hands about, tossing his head. But at this he stopped short and looked me in the eyes. Apparently the scrutiny satisfied him.

' "Worthy, yes," he answered at last. His manner had changed, his tone as well. He spoke now very gravely. "But are you fit?"

'Comprehending that only manifest calm could seduce him, I ran my nails into my flesh and answered, "I am resigned."

'He opened his mouth, closed it, ran his fingers through his hair, drew a chair next to me, proceeded to feel my pulse, and without warning, but with the same gravity, said, very slowly, "I have the regret to inform you that that lady was your wife." His hand was still on my wrist, but it had tightened. The precaution was useless. I had fainted away.

'Sir, an hour later I was in possession of myself and of the facts. From them it appeared that after the funeral, De Machin, with the object of securing a lock of her hair, had gone to the tomb. There something convinced him that she had been prematurely buried. He carried her off, revived her, and she, touched by such a proof of love — for it was one — left with him for Florence.

'According to the law of France, and for that matter, of Italy, my rights were clear. I had but to demand that she return to my domicile. In due course that demand I made. But there was a point

I had overlooked. Registered as dead, the registry was incapable of revision. And my wife, though actually living, legally was dead to me.'

He paused, drew out a large cigar, lighted it with studious care, contemplated the stars for a moment and presently, in an everyday tone, inquired casually, as if he were asking the time, 'Do you see any climax?'

The question, joined to his change of manner, seemed to me so surprising that my bewilderment must have answered for me. Immediately, in the same light way, but with an entirely contented smile, he added:

'In your quality of novelist, I mean. If not, should one occur to you, will you — unless, as I fear, I have bored you too dreadfully — will you, when next we meet, tell me how you think such a tale should end?'

He rose, raised his hat, passed into the hall to the door beyond.

At the exit the porter stood.

'Who is that gentleman?' I asked

'That gentleman,' he repeated. 'Why, sir, I thought you knew him. That gentleman is M Paul Bourget, the celebrated romancer.'

Alma Adorata

Alma Adorata

LES VOYAGEURS pour Paris en voiturrre!'

The call rang musically through the night. I had forgotten that the train had stopped. Epictetus was with me. I am familiar enough with him, but he always seems to have something new to say. In that he differs from others of my friends. On a train, he is particularly serviceable. He stimulates your imagination, and that spares your eyes. But, at the call, I looked up, and then at the door of a compartment which I was occupying on the Sud-Express, and in which, thus far on the trip, I had, to my satisfaction, been alone.

Now a man was entering, assisted by two servants. They got him seated directly opposite me, and then from the corridor fetched a lot of rugs and bags which they distributed about. Presently they vanished. I looked at the man. He was a sallow creature, with great, burning, black eyes, and dressed with that absence of smartness that is sometimes the result of philosophy, but more often of indifference, the which, after all, is a form of philosophy itself. As I was inventorying him, I saw that he was inventorying me. As our eyes met, he smiled. Meanwhile, the train had started.

'You do not remember me,' he said, in English. 'Yet, of course, I have changed a lot, and you haven't a bit. I am George Capel.'

'Certainly, I remember you,' I replied; and so I did when he told me who he was. We had been at school together at St. Paul's. That is fully a generation ago. Since then, I had lost sight of him. But as memory raised a latch, and he emerged from behind it, a scatter of reminiscences trooped after him.

I recalled that his people were disgustingly rich, and that, after Harvard, he had been billeted as attaché to our minister — we had ministers then — at St. James's. In that effulgence he departed. I saw him going in to dinner directly after royals, and discussing with them the disadvantages of not being born. What is worse, I saw him purchasing as many trousers as he liked without fear of interference at our docks. I saw the magnificence of this splendor, and nothing more, for, almost immediately, a change in the White House had been followed by a change in our representatives abroad, and, of Capel, I heard nothing further. And now, there he sat before me. Such are the surprises of life and of trains-de-luxe.

'No,' he continued, 'you have not turned a hair.

But, then, what a delightful existence you lead! C'est beau la vie littéraire. Whereas I ——'

He paused, looked out of the window, then back at me, and asked abruptly, 'You know what happened, do you not?'

'After your recall from London?'

He nodded.

I shook my head. It was quite one to me. But Epictetus admonishes us to be considerate. I saw that he wished to talk, to abuse somebody or something, to use me, perhaps, as a sewer, and I proceeded to let him. Presently, from the odds and ends of his speech, an idea glimmered. By way of overture, he was executing a fantasy on St. Paul's.

'You remember Manners, do you not? He was in the sixth form when we were in the fifth.'

'Yes,' I answered, 'I do remember Manners, and I remember, too, that he had precious few of them.'

'Candidly, he was a brute. That, though, is a detail. After leaving London, I met his sister. How did you feel when you first read Victor Hugo?'

'Sunstruck.'

'Precisely. That is the way I felt when I first saw her. In London, I had seen beauty by the acre. But not beauty such as hers. The charm of it was so heady that I reeled. I cried "Gloria!" and my heart answered, "In Excelsis!"

He stopped again, and again looked out into the night. I ventured to prod him.

'Well?'

'Well,' he answered, at last, but remotely, as though returning from some inordinate distance; 'well, I had cut Manners long before. There was one difficulty, for their parents were dead, and she lived with him. How I bridged that is immaterial. But I did bridge it. Then, I encountered another difficulty. She was engaged. Meanwhile, she treated me as though I were part of the landscape. There was about as much chance of my getting her as of becoming Emperor of the French. Do you mind if I smoke?'

'Not in the least.'

'Eh bien alors, voilà la situation,' Capel continued, when he had found and lighted a cigar. 'But there are miracles. By the way, do you believe in ghosts?'

'Everything is possible,' I replied. Yet, as I handed out that platitude, I minded me of a lady who, being asked the same question, had answered, 'No, but I am dreadfully afraid of them.' I am quite as much afraid of bores. I did not say so to Capel, however. Frequentation with Epictetus makes one very civil.

'Yes,' Capel retorted, 'yes, everything is possible. You are right — perhaps even more so than you fancy; perhaps more than any one could fancy. For, ultimately, through circumstances which would take me too long to disentangle, there occurred nothing less than a procession of miracles. In the first place, she consented to permit me to vacate the landscape of which I had been a part. There was miracle number one. Then she broke her engagement. There was the second miracle. Finally, she put her hand in mine.'

At this climax, Capel, in a crescendo of triumph, stared at me through his great, black, burning eyes.

'Ah,' he ran on at once, 'ah, the sheer intoxication of the bewilderment of it! The past became a mirror, mirroring nothing save the dream of the coming of her. The future grew wholly solid, brutally beautiful, dreamless and real. While, as for the present, there, fairer than the desire of a fallen god, she stood, her hand in mine.'

In the excitement of the retrospect, Capel, with magnificent unconcern, flipped the ashes from his cigar partly over himself, partly over me. But, at once, noticing his carelessness, he apologized and asked would I do him the favor to call his man.

I looked out in the corridor. The servants were seated there with the porter. I beckoned to one of them.

'A boire, Ferdinand,' said Capel, when the man appeared.

'Monsieur désire-t-il à manger aussi? Il y a des cailles en aspic.'

'Will you eat anything?' Capel asked of me, and, on my thanking him, ordered some mandarin liqueur which Ferdinand presently produced in a flask of gold, and, arranging the little table, with which these compartments are supplied, set it there between us, and with it two little cups, also of gold, which from the workmanship I judged were Deccan.

At Capel's invitation, I took a taste of the liqueur. For a wonder, it was not the imitation. Capel tossed off, one after the other, two of the little cups, and began with his tale anew.

Yet something, the story, perhaps the country through which we were passing, or both, evoked a memory, and, losing myself in it, I ceased to listen.

When, at last, I caught up with him again, I found he had been telling me of the wedding. From what I gathered, it had occurred out of town — at Lenox, perhaps — and, immediately after, he and his bride had driven to the station. On the way, they were run into. Whether by an auto or a trolley I did not hear. In any event, there was a crash. It was the crash that aroused me.

'When I recovered consciousness,' Capel was saying, 'they were carrying Alma away. She was dead.'

'What!'

'Dead,' he repeated; and, as he uttered that monosyllable, in which all of life is resumed, he looked down, and in those great, burning, black eyes of his I divined that there were tears.

For a while he sat, his head still bowed. The guard entered, offering to make the beds. I waved him away. But, at the interruption, Capel looked up at me again.

'You will, perhaps, understand what it meant. At the moment she was mine I had lost her. For a shock such as that there is nothing earthly that can palliate or console. My whole life had gone down with hers.'

'I do understand,' I answered. 'Many another would have followed her.'

'And do you know why I did not? But how could you know? That which kept me from killing myself was the fact that I did not believe it.'

'Believe what?'

'Why, that I had lost her! After efforts on my part, of which the recital is needless, but of which many were hopeless and all inconceivable, there, just when I had got her, suddenly, in an instant, without warning or premonition of any kind, from the carriage in which we sat, from my side, from my arms, she was tossed into death. It was too abrupt. I could not believe it. I told myself that it was not true, that it was a nightmare from which I should wake.'

'Yes, yes,' I threw in, 'I can understand that also.'

'When I was able, I got to town, to the house which we were to have occupied. There I immured myself. The servants were told never to approach me. Such orders as I had to give I put in writing and threw out in the halls. Months passed, during which I neither saw nor spoke to any one. The nightmare was about me still. I was waiting to awake. "Everything is possible," you said. Awake, at last, I did.'

'Yes, yes,' I repeated, 'I can understand that, too. For sorrow there is but one cure — time and silence. And,' I added to myself, 'some one to beguile them both.'

But the little à part might have been uttered aloud. Capel was too feverishly intent to heed. He was looking now less at me than through me, on some vista visible only to himself.

'I awoke,' he continued, 'to find that it was not true. You must have read De Vigny,' he interrupted himself to remark, 'and you will probably recall a passage in which he speaks of a vault opening in the far blue sky and showing a shaft that ran up through millennia, on through the æons, and up that shaft he mounted, mounted, mounted ever further yet.'

I did not remember the passage, but my interest, that had waned, increased, and I nodded as though I had.

'One night I, too, mounted that shaft. How? Clairvoyantly, like De Vigny, I suppose. But I cannot be sure. I only know that mount it I did, and that there, very near the summit, among cascades of light, cavalcades of beauty, cataracts of harmony, and convulsions of splendor, Alma stood, her arms outstretched. As I reached her, she leaned forward, and down the shaft of azure we sank together, down through lambencies of amber and emerald, deeper and ever deeper yet, through resplendent perspectives, through pulsations of life unto life, deeper, deeper still, through ascensions of immaculate joy, through tempests of forms and farewells, deeper, still deeper through diminishing consonances, through the undulations of tumults, the trepidations of passion, through swooning splendors, through interrupted delights, deeper, deeper still, through measureless abysses, through millennia, through æons, through kalpas of time and of space, deeper, always deeper, further and further yet, until peace slept upon us as dawn upon the sea.'

'Il devient lyrique,' I mused.

'On the morrow, when I opened my eyes, it was to the accompaniment of music. I was in my room in town, and at the other end of it, at a piano, Alma sat. She was playing an air that I had never heard. It was the melody of it that had aroused me. I went toward her. As I did so, I could see that she was fairer than ever, etherealized, aërial, quasi-transparent, wholly divine. As I approached, she turned. The rhyme of her lips parted ineffably, and she smiled. I took her hand, or, rather, tried to take her hand, but my fingers closed on nothingness. At this, she smiled again. In words not articulated, which, however, through some process similar to that of clairaudience, seemed to vibrate within me, "You forget, do you not," I heard her say, "that I am but a spirit now? Yet kiss me. It shall be the seal of our marriage eternal." At that, she rose to me, and on my lips I felt the volatile caress of a perfume.'

Capel had been looking at me, intently. But now his expression changed to one of inquiry. 'There is nothing improbable to you in this, is there?' he asked.

I was about to answer that there was, but Epictetus, whom I still held in my hand, restrained me.

'No,' I answered, 'I see in it nothing improbable. A crustacean extracts from the water substances wherewith to make a shell. From food a bird produces feathers. Similarly, an animal creates bone. These processes are marvelous, yet so common that we give them no heed. But, in view of them, it is quite conceivable that a spirit may so utilize particles and elements of air that materialization ensues. What you tell me is not, therefore, improbable, and as Alma — I beg your pardon — as Mrs

Capel was your wife, there is nothing improper in it, either.

'On the contrary,' I added, after a moment, 'quite the reverse. But tell me, have you suffered from cataract?'

Capel stared at me, blankly.

'At Heidelberg,' I continued, 'I remember that my shoemaker became annoyed by the apparitions of deceased, and possibly defaulting, customers. One day, when I was trying on a pair of those magnificent boots that harmonize so beautifully with student caps, he was good enough to take me into his confidence. Had he been an Italian, I should have counseled exorcism; as he was a Teuton, I recommended an ophthalmic surgeon. The surgeon, I subsequently learned, came, examined, and operated. In no time, those ghosts were laid.'

The stare from Capel's face had gone. He was looking at me now with diligent disdain.

'But your experience,' I resumed 'is, of course, entirely different. It accords very perfectly with many another set forth at length by the Society for Psychical Research. Moreover, it is directly in line with experiments conducted by Sir William Crookes. Ce monsieur n'est pas le premier venu. He is a scientist. As such, he was, a few years ago, honored by the visit of a young and very pretty spirit, named Katie

King. She sat in his lap, decorated his buttonhole with a rose, and told him all manner of delightful things. Said Sir William, in a subsequent monograph concerning her, “I do not say that such things may be; I say that such things are.” Personally, had I been similarly honored, I should have refrained from publishing anything calculated to reflect on Miss King’s conceptions of the convenances. But, then, I am not a scientist. Then, too, it may be that Miss King gave him permission. There are women who like publicity. It may be that there are spirits with similar tastes.

‘But apropos,’ I added, ‘permit me to ask you a question. We have agreed, have we not, that everything is possible? Let us also agree that everything is explicable. There is no such thing as mystery. There is only ignorance. Now, what I should like to ask is this: May it not be that some of your friends, alarmed by your claustration, and seeking, perhaps, to divert you, succeeded in introducing into your house some — some fairy, let us say, who was fortunate enough to possess a resemblance to your wife?’

From Capel’s face, the high disdain had gone. In its place had come that rapt look which mediums share with the insane. Whether or not he had heard my query, I could not tell.

‘When Alma kissed me,’ he resumed, ‘the music continued, the melody, too, of her inaudible words. It was all quite real — as real, that is, as the intangible can be. There she was; I was kneeling to her, gazing up in her eyes, watching the changing rhymes of her mouth, dazzled by her beauty, transported by her presence, idolizing her with an idolatry no mortal heart has known before, yet unable to touch her, unable to get more than the savor of her perfume on my lips. Real, did I say it was? It was insensate.'

'No,' I objected, 'not that. You had all the raptures of love, with none of the disillusions of life — l'ivresse du baiser sans le contact des lèvres. And that, believe me, is the ideal. But, if I may ask without indiscretion, did the materialization prolong, or was it renewed?'

'Every day she came to me, sometimes every hour. With colored vapor she reproduced herself, reproduced the gown, the lace, the pearls, the flowers which at high noon she had worn that day in church. Were it not that instead of the silk of her mouth my lips met nothingness — at most but the subtlety of an impalpable perfume — the illusion of her presence would have been complete. At a little distance, her translucence was barely apparent. Though but a vision, she was a distinct delight — to my eyes, at least; to my heart as well. But, otherwise, the fable of Tantalus was accentuated, augmented, and multiplied a thousandfold. To behold her near me was beatific, but to be unable to hold her to me was torture sublimated and distilled. It was torture so acute that one night I sprang at a pistol, thinking that in death, thinking were my flesh thrown aside like a garment, I could mingle my spirit with hers. Instantly, she was at my side, compelling me to desist, warning me that I was separating myself from her, not forever — no, not that — but until I returned in the Ship of the Thousand Years.'

'What is that?' I asked. 'I have never heard of it.'

'Nor had I. Nor did she explain. She was not permitted to, she told me later. But the threat of it sufficed.'

'Et puis?'

Capel waved his hands. 'That has been my life since then. She is always with me when I am alone, that is, and, save an occasional journey taken, as this is, at her wish, alone I always am.'

The train was stopping. Through the door of the compartment the porter peered.

'Bayonne! Dix minutes d'arrêt.'

Capel started. Yet, that was natural. From the uplands of the occult to a southern prefecture, the distance is appreciable. He had been far away; I, too, and to change the air I got up and went out to the station beyond.

There it occurred to me to enter the buffet and order a mazagran. As I passed into the restaurant, a cry followed me, succeeded immediately by the noise of hurrying feet. Turning, I saw a gathering crowd of guards, officials, passengers. I got among them. Capel appeared to have fallen. His servants were lifting him back into the car.

'It is a syncope,' said Ferdinand, in French, when we had him stretched out in the compartment, 'one of the attacks to which he is subject. Jules,' he added, to his comrade, 'telegraph to madame to meet us.'

'Jules had better stay here,' I said. 'I will attend to the message. To whom is it to go?'

'To his wife, monsieur; to Madame Capel, 11 bis, Avenue Kléber. Monsieur is very kind.'

'To his wife!' I exclaimed. I felt as though I were having a syncope myself. 'I thought — I thought ——' Truly, I did not quite know what I did think. 'He is recently married, then, is he not?' I managed to ask.

'But no, monsieur. Monsieur and Madame Capel have a son who is going on his eighteenth year.'

Thereat, at once, in reply to my heightening and manifest bewilderment, Ferdinand answered me in a manner eminently discreet:

'My master has perhaps been divagating to monsieur. A year ago, he was injured in the explosion of a launch. He hurt his spine, and' — as the man spoke he touched his forehead — 'it upset him here. Apart from that he is as good as bread. Et d'une douceur! C'est un enfant.

'Ah! voilà. J'y suis.'

I looked down at Alma's adorer. He seemed to be recovering — to be returning rather to that world invisible and fantastic in which poets and madmen dwell.

Such are the stupidities and vulgarities with which the rest of us are surrounded that I envied him the unreal that was real to him. 'Cheat yourself and dream,' said Epictetus. Capel had known how better than I who have frequented that sage. He had known how better, perhaps, than Epictetus himself. There was indeed reason to envy him, a thousand reasons to envy his immaculate and imaginary amours.

And, reflecting that of all traveling companions — Epictetus included — lunatics are the most stimulating, I went back to the station, dispatched the message, and got aboard again, as the guard called through the night,

'Les voyageurs pour Paris en voiturrre!'

The Princess of the Sun

The Princess of the Sun

'A LOS piès de U.'

From what abyss of memory I dragged the phrase the Lord only knows, but I got it out by virtue, perhaps, of what poets and gamblers call inspiration.

The lady to whom I addressed it bowed gravely, deeply, distantly, with that swanlike movement which has never been customary here and which is not now frequent abroad. It is a form of greeting that belongs to an elder day. But it is very fetching. I was properly pleased, and I should have renewed the expression of my homage but my host prevented. Offering the lady his arm he led her, myself in leash, to the dining-room beyond.

My acquaintance with both these people dated literally from that moment. I had never set eyes on either of them before. A few days previous I had left at this house, which is in upper Fifth Avenue, a letter of introduction that had been furnished me, beneficently, by one of those charming people whose names you may read in the papers every day of your life and who form what is colloquially known as the smart set. The furnishing of the letter had come about in this fashion.

I had been furiously at work on a book of the kind which when published is handsomely bound and never read. The subject had, however, absorbed me. It concerned the Incas. I knew nothing at all about them, but I had found that the best way to master a subject of which you are ignorant is to write it up.

To that end I had haunted the Astor Library. Yet in my séances in those halls there were impressions, fugacious, elusive, which I just discerned and never got. To use a technical term, the atmosphere was lacking. There was not an ounce of local color in the shop. I wanted it by the pail, and there had come to me a foreboding that in search of it I might have to go to Peru.

I hated the idea of that. It is a beastly trip. Besides, at Palm Beach there was at the time a young person with whom I had interchanged all those lovely vows which mean so much and also so little. By every other post I was receiving assorted insults from that girl. It was inconceivable to her then, and has been since to me, how I could prefer the society of dead Incas to her own liveliness. And she suspected, and made no bones about saying so, either, that it was all gammon, that the Astor Library was a blind, that I was engaged on something unfathomably nefarious, and that if I did not drop it and come at once I need not come at all, et voilà, et cetera, and so forth.

I was, therefore, in what I think I have seen described as a quandary. To literary people writing a book is like having a baby. Any interruption in the process is at the expense of the child. Girls never understand that. Though you be willing to give them everything you have and more, too, except one thing, your time, your time is the one and only thing that will content them. Girls are very unreasonable. This young person was extraordinarily so. It was one of her charms, and of charms she had many. So many, in fact, that I did not want to lose their possessor.

I was therefore up a tree. I knew that in sitting about at the Astor Library all the local color I could fish would find a large and ample playground on the head of a pin. I knew, too, that if I presumed to go to Peru nothing earthly would convince that girl that I was not an out-and-out criminal. Meanwhile there was the baby, or, rather, the book, and what was I to do?

At this juncture Providence so ordained that I took tea with the Le Grand Waldrons, who, as you know, are society folk of the toppest notch. These people poured balm all over me. More for conversation than comfort I explained my difficulties and immediately they had a cure.

'I tell you what I will do,' said Waldron. 'I will introduce you to Don Ruis Ixar.'

'You will not have time, dear,' Mrs Waldron interrupted. 'We leave for Aiken tomorrow.'

'Well, I will give you a note to him, then,' Waldron continued. And he did, explaining while he was writing it that Don Ruis was a Peruvian, very eccentric, very rich, very artistic, the very man to tell me everything.

'Particularly about that woman,' Mrs Waldron had interjected.

'What woman?' I had asked.

'Nobody knows. She was at the opera with him last night. The whole house was staring at her. She is a most extraordinary-looking creature.'

'She is devilish good looking,' Waldron corrected. 'Here,' he presently resumed, 'is the note.'

It was as a result of this note that a few evenings later I found myself going in to dinner behind the lady at whose feet, through some prodigy of memory, I had been able to precipitate myself.

When, a moment before, I had entered the drawing-room, she was seated at a piano. At once Don Ruis had come to me, welcoming me in French, then he had turned to this lady, taken her by the hand

and, addressing her in Spanish, had presented me to her.

As he did so I realized at once that in all my life never had I seen, or dreamed of seeing, a human being so exquisite. She displayed in their perfection the three great feminine desiderata — perfect figure, perfect features, perfect grace. Her eyes were pools of purple, her hair was a garland of flame, her mouth a scarlet thread.

By comparison the young person at Palm Beach, whom I had regarded as a pocket Psyche, would have, had I thought of her, looked rather plain. But I did not think of her. On the contrary, mentally I was submerged by this woman's beauty, which from beneath the chandelier under which she stood, radiated with a light so unique that I was in doubt how to define it. It seemed to me to belong to a type of civilization more effective than our own. Mentally, as I have said, I was submerged, but optically I was dazzled. About her were suggestions of the celestial and with them evocations of the damned.

I throw that in not because I think it sounds well, but because I felt that she was a realized ideal. Yet, though I felt that way I could not very well tell her so. In the first place, my knowledge of Spanish is limited to six lessons which I received in boyhood from a German, and in the second place I am slavishly conventional.

'A los piès de U.' (at the feet of your Grace), was all I managed to get out, and how I did that the Lord, as I have said, only knows. Then she had bowed, gravely, deeply, distantly, but with ineffable charm, and on the arm of Don Ruis had proceeded, I following, in to dinner.

The table was a pleasure to look at. The cloth was gold. The plate was gold. For centerpiece there was a gold tree, in the golden branches of which there were apples of gold, the golden fruit of the Hesperides. The lusters were gold, and in dishes of gold were golden flowers.

It was all quite agreeable. So, too, was the dinner. At the latter, which a squad of lackeys served, there presided the high gastronomic muse of Savarin and of Brisse. There was, for instance, a strawberry soup the like of which I have never eaten out of Petersburg, and rarely there. For roast, too, there was a delight. Instead of the inevitable canvasback there appeared a royal cygnet, the neck arched, the feathers replaced, an orchid in its beautiful beak. For sweets, apart from this lady, who was gowned deliciously and, I assume, extravagantly, though I cannot be sure, for I lack the huckster's eye — apart from her there was but a single dish, zambalione, of which the constituents are plovers' eggs beaten with champagne into an ethereal foam.

During the progress of these and other courses equally classic Don Ruis held forth very amiably and delightfully on the subject of nothing at all.

Mephistopheles is supposed to be slim. Fancy him fat and you can see Don Ruis. His eyes were chocolate, and in them was that gleam that comes from secret and intense satisfaction. He wore a mustache and a great beard cut fan shape. Both were black, blue black, specked with gray. When he laughed, as he often did, he threw his head back, the mouth open, and in the latter I saw that his teeth, after a curious South American custom, were filled with diamonds — with little diamonds, of course. On the thumb of his right hand he wore a big one.

With that hand now and then, during the progress of the dinner and the interludes of his talk, he took hold of the wrist of the lady and, bending forward, addressed her caressingly in his caressing tongue.

On such occasions she would turn to him gravely, leisurely, with that grace with which she had bowed to me, and answer him briefly with the 'Si' which is 'Yes' in Spanish.

Don Ruis ate largely. The lady let dish after dish go by. Infrequently she raised a glass to her mouth and touched her lips to it. Over the soup I had addressed to her in French some observation. Before she could reply Don Ruis answered in her stead, and from the subject passed to others, holding forth, as I have noted, very agreeably.

When the zambalione had come and gone I addressed her again.

'Do you not speak Spanish?' Don Ruis interrupted.

'Alas!' I exclaimed, looking not at him, but at her. 'Alas! all I know is a bit from one of your singers:

> ' "Por una mirada un mundo! Por una sonrisa un cielo!
> Y por un beso! Yo no se que te diera por unbeso!"

'which being interpreted means: "For a look, a world. For a smile, a heaven. And for a kiss! I do not really know what I could give you for a kiss." '

The recitation was not in accord with my usual slavish conventionality. But something, the wine with which the squad of lackeys kept refilling my glass, the woman herself, the vistas which she evoked, all these things, perhaps others, too, must have affected me. Yet barely had the words slipped out before I was conscious of their stupidity.

I was about to say as much, to protest rather, that in letting this thing go I had done so as a beast of a parrot might; but immediately Don Ruis, bending forward again, grasped the houri by the wrist.

At that, quite as though my bad taste were another homage, she bowed to me, while he, throwing himself back in his chair, laughed longly as he bawled out 'Bravo!'

Thus encouraged, I might have fumbled in memory for more stuff of the same kind, but the lady was rising. On the arm of my host she passed through under portières which lackeys held open.

There he bowed to her, the portieres fell, he returned to the table, where we both resumed our seats, and where presently I succeeded in extracting from him whiffs of the atmosphere for which I had come.

Don Ruis talked with a profusion of gestures, volubly, picturesquely, but so abundantly that under the douche of words my interest, already distracted, waned a bit and my thoughts veered from Peru to the supernal loveliness of that woman.

Who could she be? I wondered. Manifestly she was not his wife, otherwise he would not have taken her in to dinner. Manifestly, too, she could not be a relative. He was black as hate, and she was fair as hope, fairer even, so fair that it pleased me to think that she might be an Inca, some ultimate descendant of the Princes of the Sun that ruled Peru with blinding splendor before the Conquistadors chanced that way.

Into the core of that fancy perplexity came. I began to conjecture where and how I could manage to see her again, and I determined to cultivate Don Ruis, to be insatiable of color and atmosphere, to haunt him and his house on the chance of a word with her.

'Ah, but,' he was saying, 'I mind me now I have pictures of Cuzco — Cuzco, you know, the Sacred City of the Sun. I have pictures of the coraquienques, the sacred peacocks. Yes, I mind me I have pictures of all of these. Your permission. I will fetch them.'

Rising from the table, Don Ruis passed through a door that led, not into the drawing-room from which he had come, but into some other part of the house.

As he disappeared I turned and looked at the portières behind which the beauty had vanished. Long since the servants had gone. The room was very quiet. But from afar I could hear the voice of Don Ruis. He was singing an air from some opera, one of Verdi's, I thought, but which? Then suddenly from behind the portières came a noise, slight yet noticeable, a noise much like to that of a chair overturned.

From beyond there filtered the voice of Don Ruis, 'La donna e mobile.'

It was 'Rigoletto,' I told myself, that he was singing, and telling myself, too, that I might perhaps enjoy a moment with the other donna, I got from my seat, and, brushing the portières aside, passed into the adjoining room.

There I looked in vain for the gorgeous Princess of the Sun. The room apparently was empty. Toward the further end of it the projection of a grand piano, at which she had sat when I first entered, masked a corner, and, thinking that perhaps she might be there, I went forward.

To my unutterable surprise, there immediately I beheld her on the floor, flat on her back, the skirt of her dress disordered, an overturned music stool beside her.

It was, of course, at once obvious that she had fainted. Instantly I was looking down at her exquisite face, from which, to my astonishment, her purple eyes stared up.

'Can she be dead?' I cried.

But no, that I saw was impossible. The scarlet of her mouth was as vivid as before. In her face and the lobes of her ears the pink flush of breath and life was present. Yet still her eyes stared up at me.

In my heightening bewilderment I bent down.

'Madame!' I called. Then tentatively I took her hand. It was cold and rigid, very hard, with a hardness that no hand has ever had, and as with a shudder and a strangled shriek I dropped it I divined rather than detected that this Thing on the floor was not human.

At the moment my brain seemed to tip. To steady myself I turned and clutched at the piano, and as I turned Don Ruis, singing still, erupted.

To have saved my life I could not have spoken, but at that Thing I pointed.

'Eh? What?' said Don Ruis in answer to my gesture. 'Eh? What?'

But at once he, too, saw, and, throwing back his head, the diamonds glittering in his fangs, the brute laughed long and loud. It was a laugh like to that which Swinburne has catalogued as heard in hell, far down. And still he laughed. But at what? And why? Was I mad? I asked myself. Or was he?

'Ha! ha!' he roared. 'Ha! ha! ha! Por una mirada un mundo. Por una sonrisa un cielo. Ha! ha! Forgive us, dear sir. We did not mean to affright you. Our little beauty has merely run down. One moment. You shall see.'

Thereat, drawing a key from his pocket, he got down on the floor, inserted the key somewhere in the waist of the Thing, gave it a twist, another, a dozen perhaps, and stood up, raising with him that which I had taken for a houri, an Inca, a Princess of the Sun, and which I then saw was a mechanical doll.

'How delicious!' I exclaimed. Abruptly my amazement had departed. In its place delight at such perfection of workmanship had come. 'How delicious!' I repeated.

'Is it not?' Don Ruis answered appreciatively. 'Is it not? And, believe me, so very agreeable to have about the house. The phonograph in her throat only says the things that I like to hear. Where is the woman who would be so particular? And no cause for jealousy, not one. But for envy! Ah! that is another guitar. At the opera, where I take her; in the park, where we drive, every man who sees her looks as though he could eat her up. And the fine ladies, they are green. Yes, green. Aren't they, Mariquita?' he added, turning to his doll.

'No, believe me,' he continued, turning again to me, 'with her I have peace.'

As he spoke he tossed a hand in the air as though waving away unhallowed reminiscences of women in the flesh.

'No,' he resumed, 'she is like the rose, she charms, she does nothing but that. And so docile! A squeeze of her wrist and my way is hers. But come, Mariquita will come, too, and we will look at my pictures of Cuzco and the sacred peacocks of the Sun.'

'Thank you, Don Ruis, thank you,' I answered, for by this time I was tired out. 'With your good leave I will come another day.'

'At any time. It will be always a pleasure. Mariquita!'

Grasping the doll's wrist with one hand, with the other touching a button, he summoned a servant to see me out.

'Mariquita!' he repeated.

And as I bowed to Don Ruis, Mariquita bowed to me gravely, deeply, distantly, with the swanlike movement I had admired so much.

And I, not to be outdone in courtesy, repeated, as I backed to the door, my initial salute:

'A los piès de U.'

The Dear Departed

The Dear Departed

I

ONE by one the guests had gone, and with Trella now there was but a poet who had elevated rhyme to the dignity of a sport. His name was Villiers. In addition to rhyme and other gymnastics less violent, he cultivated paradox. At the moment, he was twisting his painted fingers, fumbling his hostess with his yellow eyes. Then, pontifically, he addressed her:

'There is but one enduring delight — certainty in love. Certainty that it exists, certainty that it is returned, certainty that it will never diminish.'

Trella looked at him so fixedly that he tacked.

'The idea suggests itself,' he hastened to add, 'in connection with the Infanta of whom we were talking at dinner. Nobody seems to recognize that the one to blame for her conduct is her father. Don Carlos is a most ordinary person. He goes about talking, "God and my country," by day, wrecking households at night, as ignorant of Molière, as my masseur. Evil exists only in the noise that it makes.

' "Et ce n'est pas pécher que pécher en silence.'
'Le scandale du monde est ce qui fait l'offense."

'Have you been hearing things about me?' Trella interrupted.

Villiers promptly assumed the appearance of an idiot.

'Do you believe them?' she asked.

He waved his painted fingers. 'Dear me!' he exclaimed. 'I have heard so many lies concerning myself that how can you expect me to believe the stories I hear of others? No,' he continued, remotely, 'had Don Carlos only known enough to cram Tartuffe down the girl's throat she might not have carried on as she has. And then, again, she might have. Bad taste is in the Bourbon blood. The Princess Isabelle let herself down thirty feet out of a window, and ran off with a Polish mucker. They were caught and married by main strength.'

Trella patted a yawn.

'Tell me of yourself,' he agilely added. 'What have you been doing? Or, rather, what have you not been doing? Do you know, I should love so to put my ideas of you in a poem. For private circulation, of course. It would have to be, wouldn't it, unless it appeared in Latin?'

But, as for all reply she smiled indifferently; the poet stood up, and, balancing himself on his heels, smiled, too.

'"Our Lady of the Immaculate Conversation," would, I think, be a very good title for that poem. Bonsoir, belle dame.'

Raising her wrist, he brushed it with his lips. In a moment he had gone.

As he passed from the room a servant entered. On a little tray he had a telegram which he brought her. Dated London and addressed to the Countess of Cloden, Avenue Marceau, Paris, it contained these words: 'Will be with you tonight.'

With a gesture, she dismissed the man, and, leaning on a mantel, stared in a mirror, stared through it into the past, stared beyond it into the future, and then at herself, at her royal beauty, at the sunburst of flesh which she was.

In all our great Northwest, her grandfather, Commodore Verelst, had been accounted the richest and hardest of men. As a lad he tracked muskrats in the Michigan marshes. As a man, he constructed and commanded a fleet of lake steamers. As a corpse, he left millions. He had one son, who took them all, took them away to New York, and married. The result of the union was Trella. The original Verelst was a German, his wife was French. There was the gold of the Rhine in the glisten of Trella's hair. In the faint umber of her skin, in the mobility and droop of her lips there was France. When Teuton and Latin combine there can be some very fetching results. Witness the Venetian. But when to these elements is added the magic of Manhattan the result not merely fetches, it astounds. Trella developed into an astounding young person.

As a girl, she reminded you of what the Argive Helen may have been in her teens. Her mouth seemed to promise more than any mortal mouth could give. Her voice was so insinuating that it conveyed the sensation of a kiss. She had glances as she had intonations, which dispensed a charm quite incandescent. Her eyes were particularly enthralling. They were large and blue, blue as the sea and bluer. Generally, she was prudent enough to keep them half closed. When she opened them they revealed a number of things — curiosity, restlessness and that je-m'enficheisme which is mistaken for frankness. When she chose, she could flood them with languors. She just lacked being tall.

In the process of the production and development of these witcheries her father concluded to leave for another world. After a proper period of regret, his widow left for another world, also. But it was Europe she selected. Though a New Yorker by birth, and inordinately rich, she had never succeeded in forcing certain portals. Such things annoy a woman. Hence the migration.

The migration effected, Mrs Verelst discovered that to be decently lodged, two domiciles are obligatory. Mrs Verelst took three. One in Paris, one on the Riviera, and one in Normandy. To these she added a fourth. The last was a cemetery. Her residence in that resort was not, however, immediate. She waited for certain things, primarily until her daughter was married.

It was on the Riviera that the preliminaries to this event occurred. Entrance to the penal colony, which is called Society there, is a matter of entire ease. Mrs Verelst knocked and it was opened. There was a sesame in her dollars. There was another in Trella's looks.

The particular section of the Riviera which she had selected is, geologically speaking, a Mediterranean cliff; descriptively, it is a sublimate of Paris in a tropic frame; pictorially, it is a fairyland in duodecimo; socially, it is striated with all the variegated hues of beautiful cosmopolitanism, and, familiarly, it is Monte Carlo. You may meet there kings, outlaws, demi-reps, professional beauties, cheap trippers, and Spanish grandees.

In the air is a smell of vitriol and violets, of vice, patented, prodigal, and perfumed. There is not an old-fashioned virtue in the place. There are tears, though, rivers of them, heightened by the click of the ball on the roulette table, the call of the dealers at trente-et-quarante, the music and monotony of Rien ne va plus. People go mad there. Others kill themselves. Some fall in love. Among the latter was Trella.

This extraordinary event occurred in a commonplace manner. At a rout given by the morganatic widow of an emperor the girl and her mother were present. During a pause in a dance, in a crash and subsidence of the orchestra, an Englishman caused himself to be presented. Before speech was possible there arose from beyond the voice of the world's best tenor. It was an aria from the 'Somnambula' that he was singing, the 'Perche non posso odiarte,' which, for sheer beauty, is perhaps the most entrancing in all of Italy's enchanting repertory.

The melting measures proceeded. The Englishman looked at the American girl and she at him. As they looked, the madness of the music seemed at first but the accompaniment of their thoughts, and then at once to transmit those thoughts from one to the other. Involuntarily, he moistened his lips. Into the perfection of the girl's features a flush had come. To use a localism of the land, c'était le coup de foudre.

Trella let her long lashes fall. It was as though she had dropped a curtain. The man turned to her mother. That lady was whispering something. Yet what, he neither knew nor cared. The measures had swooned. The hush was broken by a ripple of applause.

'It is very warm,' Mrs Verelst announced.

Before any one could engage with her in meteorological observations, the tenor, by way of encore, was distributing the enchantment of his notes anew.

Back of Trella a balconied window opened on the April night. Already she had investigated its possibilities, and raising those lashes again, she led the Englishman to the stars without. The aria followed them. He never forgot that song. Nor, perhaps, did she.

II

Life is packed with pleasures. One of the most delightful is to awake with the consciousness of being in love. On the morning succeeding the rout Shane Wyvill awoke to just that delight. He was turbulently intoxicated by a girl whom he had never seen before, and whose name he did not know.

But the morning was a replica of others. Moreover, it was a family trait to wake up with that sensation. So far back as the family went, and it went as far back as any of the other families which Mr

Burke has so diligently catalogued, the Shane Wyvills — the Shame Wyvills as custom had corrupted the name — had, in love, been freebooters. Titularly lords of Cloden, typically they were a bad lot.

The last earl, after filling the Continent with the uproar of his debauches, gave up the ghost with a shriek. What visions he beheld he lacked the time to relate. It may be assumed that they were not very cheerful. The youth of the existing incumbent had been what the French call stormy. After the storm, the calm. The past twenty years he had passed at Shane Towers, contemplating the landscape. That landscape had been so successfully postobited that it produced less than would suffice for a sweep.

The wants of the earl were many. But they were entirely spiritual. Pending their attainment he sat in a dressing-gown at peace with all the world, including his nephew, Shane Wyvill, who was incidentally his heir.

In the latter's father, hereditary characteristics had been so in abeyance that he had been regarded as a nonentity. He had married one of the Villiers girls, and done nothing worse than lose a portion of her portion in the City. Then he had died, she, also, leaving this heir and what was left of her property. The amount was just enough to enable him to get along on.

Apart, then, from the advantage of being in line for an empty earldom and the further advantage of good teeth and good looks, Shane Wyvill had, from the point of view of the world at large, nothing whatever to boast of.

Even otherwise, he was not of a boastful nature. By way of compensation he enjoyed the formidable repute of being the best-dressed man in London. But the repute was unrighteous. He was too sensible to do more than put himself in the hands of the right people and then forget all about them — except their bills, which he paid, as he paid all such things, on presentation. It will be seen, therefore, that if not boastful, at any rate, he was proud. No one is perfect.

But the imperfections of Wyvill will be the better understood through a showing that this mid-April morning, on which he awoke with the consciousness of being in love, was but a return of sundry others. Fed, as every decently educated lad in England is, on the psalms of Aristophanes, he had also taken a course in Theocritus. In the green pastures of a long vacation he encountered a maiden whose studies had been less elaborate. Their defects he undertook to remedy. One noon he read to her an episode from an eclogue. At its close their eyes met. To quote Dante, they read no more that day. Subsequently, he encountered her, not in green pastures, but in Piccadilly, and at an hour nearer midnight than noon. In the interval she had convoluted into a chorus girl. Her salary was precisely twenty-five shillings a week. At no properly conducted London theatre is it permissible for a lady whose salary does not exceed thirty shillings to drive to the stage door in her brougham. The rule may seem arbitrary, but there it is, and in this case there it was. The young person who perhaps had grown luxurious, regarded it not merely as arbitrary, but awkward. For the sake of old times, Wyvill got her higher pay. Then for the sake of old times, also, she blackmailed him pretty nearly out of his boots. Such was his initiation into the charms of love and Leicester Square.

In politer spheres he presently discovered consolations. These consolations lasted until the lady's husband began uncivil proceedings, from the result of which Wyvill was saved by a succession of events which converted him to a belief in miracles. The lady explained everything so satisfactorily to her husband that the proceedings were withdrawn, whereupon she eloped with another and a richer man. Such was his initiation into the horrors of matrimony and Mayfair.

It is said of those who beheld the mysteries at Eleusis that thereafter they ceased to smile. Wyvill's experiences were quite as chastening. The pleasure in things that had pleased him waned. He tried hunting, and gave it up. It cost too much. He went forth to shoot in Canada, and returned disillusioned. Yet, in default of wealth, one must have a raison d'être. It was in the search for that raison that he encountered Trella. Her effect on him was instantaneous. Before he slept he was conscious of a new conception of beauty. When he awoke it was to the consciousness of a new conception of life. From the conjunction of these conceptions there mounted like a flame the delight of a dream of possessing the girl.

In fairyland you have but to ask and it is given. Since Perrault lived and labored, Monte Carlo is the nearest approach to that country. In its sorceries are solvents so surprising that you may land there a pauper and leave a plutocrat. You may also reverse the order of things. Where the enchanted rose is, there, too, is the disenchanting thorn.

But on the slopes which a syndicate in collaboration with nature has strewn with diaphanous days and electric lights, such thorns as grew Wyvill passed unheeding, and, in passing, promenaded straight into the domain of a beauty who, however, was not sleeping, but thoroughly wide-awake.

On the way, Wyvill gathered certain facts, which were so many flowers; the domain's precise position, for instance, its name and the kilometers it took to get there. For even in fairyland, and perhaps particularly in fairyland, there are always mileposts in high hats and others in low neck to provide you with just such information.

In serving Prince Charming they also served the Wide-Awake Beauty. As a consequence, when, in due course, the two met again, had they been first cousins they could not have known more of each other. To Prince Charming the Wide-Awake Beauty was an American heiress, and to the Wide-Awake Beauty Prince Charming was heir to an earldom. What could be more succinct, what more satisfactory? Especially when it is remembered that it had required but one meeting, complicated by nothing more quotable than the melting measures of an aria, for the parties concerned to experience the coup de foudre.

To Trella the coup had all the charm of entire novelty. In New York she had flirted right and left. She liked men, liked admiration and a bold glance, and a squeeze of the hand she was none too shy to return. Apart from a liking for such things, they left her unaffected. After the boldest glance and the tightest squeeze her pulse registered normal. That, however, was less to her credit than to the discredit of the glancers and squeezers. Their seductions were limited to gymnastics.

In Paris and on the Riviera the liking for men continued, but men were scarce. One look at Wyvill had told her that he was of a different breed. Never before had she met any one with less manner and more ease. Never before had she beheld a human being so perfectly sent out. Never before had a presence impressed her so suddenly and so absolutely. For the first time, her pulse ceased to be normal. For the first time she saw a man, and in that man she saw, also, and for the first time, too — or thought she did — her master. At sight of him she flushed. Why, she did not know. But it seemed to her all very new and inexpressibly delightful.

In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, when on the Casino's esplanade, chance brought these two people face to face again, only an exchange of platitudes resulted. Yet, in circumstances not similar, perhaps, but cognate, people do not say what they think. As a rule, they do not think at all. They occupy themselves as best they may in sparring for wind. Such sparring as then occurred was rendered more vigorous than otherwise it might have been by the presence of the girl's mother, who stuck to her, not with any un-American view to the observance of the proprieties, but simply because she had come out with her, and objected to being stranded.

The next day matters were more propitious. Wyvill dined with the Verelsts at their villa, took them afterward to the gambling rooms, and accompanied them home again, where he required no urging whatever to remain for a brandy and soda; no urging, either, to dispense with platitudes. After the good old American fashion, Mrs Verelst made herself scarce, and the two were free to gaze at the Mediterranean moon and then at the avowals of each other's eyes.

As weeds of the sea loosened by one current, stayed by another, mount slowly yet surely before achieving their gradual yet certain ascent, so did these avowals, arrested now by query, again by an objection, rise from the depths of their being and mount to their lips.

From avowals to action no appreciable time is required. In a moment they were in each other's arms; in a week they were engaged; in a month they were married. In fairyland lovers don't dilly-dally.

It was not, though, of course, at Monte Carlo that the marriage took place. Against its taking place at all Mrs Verelst protested vehemently. She had an ardent desire to be the mother of a duchess, and the

Duca di Cherella, a young Neapolitan, whom Trella treated as part of the landscape, had, in that desire, collaborated as ardently as she. Failing him, there were others. Besides, Mrs Verelst, who, as the phrase is, had her police, knew that Wyvill's uncle was capable of living forever. In accordance with a good old American custom, she wanted her money's worth, and a title in futuro did not in the least satisfy her ideas of What's What. As a consequence, she protested vehemently. She might just as well have held her tongue. Trella paid not the slightest attention to her. Seeing which, after another American fashion, Mrs Verelst gave in. The marriage took place in Paris, and after the ceremony, through the scented streets, the bride and groom who had met in fairyland set out for paradise.

III

Love is a fever. Marriage is a febrifuge. That is the rule. This marriage was not an exception. Only its antipyretic effects were not immediately observable. At stations along the route the fever lifted them to chimerical altitudes, sank them to spaceless depths, lowered them deeper, lifted them vertiginously, caught and carried them beyond the earth, beyond the horizons of the known, beyond the confines of the real, disclosing through vistas undivined, those mysterious affinities that similarize the flesh and spirit. In fresh ascensions, the fair, illusory promises of love and life were uttered by them both. In new descents the vain, yet lovely vows, Forever, Never, were interchanged again. And so it went.

The duo is very archaic, but to them it seemed highly original, essentially unique, entirely their own composition. It seemed too capable of infinite variations. Through its interludes the memory of a murmur of other songs once filtered in on Wyvill, and jarred him as an oath will jar. Trella's memories were less resonant. They were pages that girlhood had left quite blank, and at which along the route now and then she stopped and mused. With the refrain of that duo shaking constant stars in her ears it seemed inconceivable to her that such blankness there could be. Whereupon, after considering the past, she contemplated the future. The perspectives looked very spacious.

Meanwhile, impeded by nothing more than a maid and a valet, and delayed solely by a courier and a cargo of boxes, they journeyed circuitously from the scented Bois to the pink and crocus of Seville, and on through the ghosts and treasuries of Spain to its summer court at San Sebastian.

During the journey wherever Trella had shown herself admiration had been ambient. She had trailed it as a torch trails smoke. To that she had been always more or less accustomed. But in Seville, after the good old Andalusian custom, it was manifested vociferously, in open compliments of her mother's handiwork, in shouts of Olle tu madre — hurrahs for that absent lady, which infuriated Wyvill, but which, through their fascinating indirection, delighted Trella, as, indeed, every novelty did.

In Castile, the admiration, while quite as fervent, became less noisy, and at San Sebastian so sedate that it would have been colorless had not chance — a function at the palace aiding — embodied it in the Duke of Thule.

The duke, who had an amiable, aimless way, made up in guile what he lacked in sense. Seen across the room, you would have taken him for Teuton; close to, for a fool. Trella saw but the royal. Barring the Regent to whom she had just been presented, she had never met one before. The encounter seemed to her uplifting. It heightened her in her own esteem.

It was at that juncture that she contemplated the future. The more she considered it the more spacious it grew. Then presently, little by little, one after another the delayed effects of the febrifuge appeared. The duo rang less starlike in her ears. The heights began to assume the aspect of the déjà vu, the ascensions to horizons beyond the known acquired the proportions of undertakings, and the affinities, similarizing sufficiently, had nothing more to say.

Everything being possible, it may be that, in the course of time, Wyvill also would have experienced the premonitory effects of the antipyretic, but Trella's symptoms, at first unnoticed, then misinterpreted, subsequently evident, yet wholly enigmatic, left him perplexed.

Where is the Vandal that invented marriage? Wyvill put to himself some such question, but long after, when San Sebastian was but a halt in the trip and they were back in Paris again.

This occurred in the autumn. At that time, pending the termination of touches on a house which the girl's mother had bought, Wyvill and Trella were lodged at the Bristol. There, one noon, the duke breakfasted with them. Afterward, Wyvill, with the purchase of some horses in view, joined their owner, the Vicomte de Chose, at a neighboring club, and, by virtue of a previous arrangement, drove with him, at 3 o'clock, to Saint Cloud, where the horses were stabled. On the way, Trella, looking nice enough to eat, whirled by in a brougham. Wyvill turned and kissed his hand to her. But the salute was unnoticed. She had not seen him, and continuing his way, he reached the stables, saw the horses, put them through their paces, and returned to the Bristol just in time to dress for dinner.

'What did you do this afternoon?' he asked, when the soup had gone. Without waiting for an answer, he told her about the horses. 'Ce sont des alezans superbes,' he added — a phrase which he had caught from De Chose.

Trella did not know what alezans were. He explained. Then again he asked what she had done, but indifferently, as a husband may, not out of curiosity, but for the sake of talk.

'Nothing,' she answered. 'After you went out my mother came and stayed here with me until nearly 5. Then I took a turn with her in the Bois.'

'Five is rather late nowadays for the Bois, is it not?' he asked, with the same air of indifference.

'The air does me good,' Trella replied, and let the subject drop.

Wyvill stared at her. Her hair made a garland of gold. Her eyes were sultry, her lips were scarlet. About her throat was a diamond collar. Her bodice was sewn with pearls. Between the diamonds and the pearls there glowed the silk of her skin. Never had she looked more beautiful. In the poise of her head, in her appearance and costume, she exhaled a charm almost intolerably aphrodisiac. She seemed created for love, for life at its fullest, and, as it now occurred to Wyvill, for lies.

The dinner proceeded. A maître d'hôtel after presenting a dish for inspection, superintended the serving of it by his underlings. Covers succeeded each other. Of what they consisted Wyvill did not notice. It had been arranged that he and Trella were to go that night to a première and afterward to the Embassy. This arrangement a remark of hers recalled.

Through the flowers and lights on the table he stared over at her again. When a man loves a woman, it is not an excess of ambition on his part to wish to trust her also. And suddenly a solution visited Wyvill. Might she not have accounted for her afternoon as she had, solely to save him and herself the boredom of the narration of some tiresome occurrence?

The solution was so stupid that it soothed. But even in the process of welcoming it there were incidents unconsciously recalled which trooped out and interfered. There was, for instance, a secretiveness which she had recently displayed in regard to such letters as were brought her. Recently, too, it had been obvious to him that she had preoccupations which she did not wish to disclose, thoughts to which he was a stranger. Moreover, there was that change in her, one that had filtered through such subtle gradations that only latterly the portent had perplexed.

Those who have suffered from jealousy know that it is physical, they know that it can no more be argued away than can any other distemper, and they know, too, to their own cost, perhaps, that its most torturesome form comes of thoughts that are hidden, and emotions they may not share.

To Wyvill the lie returned, but unvarnished now, and with it that determination to *know* which, in certain crises, is as imperious as famine. But of the inward tumult he gave no sign.

'What did your mother say?' he asked, leisurely.

By way of reply, Trella contented herself with shrugging her bare white shoulders.

'And you were here with her until nearly 5?'

Trella nodded.

'Why not tell me the truth?'

At this she started. If he had struck her she could not have flushed more highly. But Wyvill omitted to pursue the advantage. At the sight of her confusion there came to him a sense not of anger, but of sorrow for himself and her.

The maître d'hôtel and his underlings had gone. Wyvill got from his chair and moved it nearer to her own.

'Distrust and affection don't hit it off very well together, Trella. If you thought that I was deceiving you, you would think, too, that I was ceasing to care. It may be that you are ceasing to care for me. In that case, how shall I blame you? We cannot command affection. It commands us. Then, too, the quantity of it being limited, some day or other it must give out. When it does, love ends. No effort can prevent it. You have loved me now for a long time — almost six months. Unfortunately for us both, this is not a love affair, it is a marriage.'

He hesitated, hoping for an interruption, for some explanation or protest, but as she sat, tantalizingly beautiful and irritatingly dumb, he bent forward and, probing her with his eyes, very deliberately he asked:

'Where were you this afternoon?'

'I have told you.'

'No, forgive me, you are mistaken, you have not. You told me you were here until 5. At 3 you passed me in the Rue Royale. Where were you going?'

Trella stood up, and with a little princess air which she could assume very well when she chose, she looked him in the face.

'You appear to be cross-questioning me.'

'Ah!' said Wyvill, rising, too. 'Very good. I shall not presume to do so again. But I will presume to call your attention to the fact that you have lied to me. You have lied stupidly, wantonly. Whether the lie was meant to cover something equally stupid and wanton, I do not know. I do, though, know that while a wanton act may be shameful yet human, a wanton lie is shameless and vile.

'What is it, Harris?' he interrupted himself to ask. 'No one rang.'

'No, sir, thank you, sir,' his valet, who had entered, answered, producing a dispatch which he had brought. 'The carriage is at the door, sir.'

Wyvill opened the message. 'Then you may dismiss it,' he ordered.

He turned to Trella. 'You cannot go out, with my permission at least. My uncle is dead. I leave for London tonight.'

IV

Wyvill left Paris in a fury, determined to discover what Trella was up to if he had to employ a detective to do it. In the Channel the fury evaporated. When he reached Shane Towers he was glad he had probed no deeper. When the funeral was over he was glad that he had not questioned more.

As to that he was right. To expect some women to tell the truth is as naïf as to expect them to go about naked. They simply can't. Then, too, there are mysteries concerning them which we may determine to solve, but which if time but intervene we prefer to ignore. Wyvill's attitude was, therefore, perfectly natural. But in upbraiding the lady he had been absurd. There are complaints that are compliments, and reproaches which are testimonies of love.

Some inkling of this Trella probably intercepted. In any event, he was presently urged to return. But to return to what? He was still passionately in love with the girl who but a few months before had become his wife; the beauty and the charm of her were as dear to him as ever, dearer, even, by comparison; for in her place there seemed to have come a woman whom he had never known, and who, though her counterpart in charm, was otherwise a counterfeit.

Presently another letter came. He was urged again to return. But to whom? To Trella? Yes, and at once. The trains and the boats were not built that could take him to her fast enough. But with that stranger who had come in her place he had no concern whatever.

Then more letters came. Some were from his wife, offering to join him, and some were from Mrs Verelst, whom Trella's prompt elevation to the rank and attributes of peeress had entirely appeased.

It was then winter. But the winter passed and the spring came before he himself felt appeased. The appeasing was due to a note from the lady, in which she expressed a wish to explain.

As he read the note he could not but recall other explanations of which he had been cognizant. Yet, then, also, he could not but let them go. Time is a strange emollient. In its mysterious potency it softens without our knowledge. We are unaware that it has been acting on us, and suddenly a whisper, a breeze that passes, shows that it has done its work.

That night Trella received the telegram which was brought to her as Villiers was leaving her house.

Meanwhile she had found herself entertaining and being entertained by all that is best and worst in that curious cosmopolis which is called Tout-Paris. Yet there, even the worst have fits of propriety. Society abroad is very much the same as at home. It is not censorious. Provided a woman lives, outwardly, at least, on good terms with her husband; provided, as Villiers had noted, that there is an avoidance of open scandal, a lady is free to be as unladylike as she likes. With the men, at all times everything goes. Yet, now and then they do object to certain associations for their wives.

Of Lady Cloden stories began to be told. To begin with, she was not living with her husband, and it was rumored that, for reasons, which, however interesting, would not look well in print, he did not propose to live with her again. Such things dishearten. Moreover, it is not pleasant for a woman of position to see that position fade. Men acquire with her an easy form of address. They bow to her sometimes when they should not, and again omit to when they should. Matters had by no means come to that pass yet with Trella, but unless a halt were called social dégringolage was on the way.

And now on this particular night, as she stared in the mirror, at the sunburst of beauty which she was, it was of these things that she thought.

A step aroused her. She turned, glanced at the great, bare, brilliant room, then at the telegram which had been brought. Some one was approaching. She turned again. At the door her husband stood. With a little bleat which, if not of joy, was a very good imitation of it, she moved to meet and greet him, and at once, before he could speak, with a volubility to which she had not accustomed him, she acknowledged that she had been at fault, begging his forgiveness, relating things which he had never known, that she had a brother, that the latter had disgraced himself, that he had got into fresh difficulties, that that last afternoon at the Bristol she had gone to aid him, and that if she had hid the truth, it was out of delicacy, and the Lord knows what else, besides.

She paused, for lack of breath, perhaps. At the moment, from the avenue without, through the open window, came pouring the madness of a song of love. Wyvill had heard it somewhere, sometime, a long while ago, yet where or when he could not recall. Then suddenly he was back again in fairyland. The air was scented with flowers, he was speaking to some one, there was an aria that seemed to help his speech, that seemed to multiply the music of the replies. It was from the 'Somnambula,' of course. He remembered now. Perhaps so, too, did she.

Pretty as a peach, and just as witty, savorous as a pineapple and with quite as much heart, commonplace in everything except in beauty, that aria in filtering through her pulp, must have stirred a memory, encountered a fiber, awakened an echo, for to her face she raised a hand and from her eyes there fell a tear.

Wyvill saw that tear. At once his arms were about her, his lips on hers. It seemed to him that they had parted only to reunite, that the past was a nightmare, that she loved him, that he loved her, better, even, than on the route to Paradise.

V

There are lakes which a breeze from the valley disturbs, but which the high winds from the summits leave unruffled. Then, for no appreciable reason, they reverse the order of things. There are natures that resemble those lakes. You never know where you are with them.

In attempting to display the cumulative incidents of this drama, no better analogy occurs by which to explain the opposite effects that circumstances, relatively identical, produced on Wyvill.

They were then at Deauville. Meanwhile, the stranger had gone, and with her every doubt of Trella. She was charmful, the more so, perhaps, because she had had what is called an experience with her husband, and it is said that experience teaches. Mrs Verelst, who had had something in the nature of an experience also, tried to profit by it in offering to restore Shane Towers, and to maintain the place in proper fashion. At this Wyvill protested. It was, he declared, the gloomiest keep in England. Mrs Verelst paid no attention to his nonsense. Trella, either. Paris had palled on her. For reasons of her own she was glad to evolve from it into what her mother termed her rightful sphere. All this was pleasant to Wyvill. The present was pleasant, also, and the future looked, as the future always does look, even pleasanter. And so the days fell by until, the Grand Prix over, they went down to Deauville.

There Mrs Verelst contented herself with a suite in a hotel. But for Wyvill and Trella there was a house. This house, known, locally, because of its arrangements, as the Villa Portugaise, squats sumptuously before the sea. It is of two stories. The bedrooms are on the ground floor, the dining and reception-rooms adjoining. Between the two principal suites is a wide hall. One of these suites Trella selected for herself. Wyvill took the other. Both are splendid, and the villa itself is a gem.

It was early in July when they reached there. At that period Deauville is usually delightful. But in August it becomes infernal. The season is then at its height, and to its confluence surges a mob of viveurs and rastas.

Among others who appeared there that year was the Duke of Thule. Yet, owing to an attack of Anglophobia with which France is periodically afflicted, he came incog., as a private gentleman, merely. For the purposes of his sojourn he also had a villa. About it night and day men in plain clothes strolled unobtrusively. So are the mighty guarded.

The royal villa was next to the Villa Portugaise, and there, occasionally, as a friend and neighbor may, the duke dropped in, sometimes in beautiful flannels for a game of tennis, sometimes alarmingly begoggled for a flight in an auto, but always amiable and aimless.

And so the days fell by, punctuated by the diversions of Deauville — dips, drives, dinners, dances, polo matches, hurdle races and baccarat, but particularly by that general deviltry which, in an atmosphere dripping with ammonia and desire, scented with caprices and seaweed, those consorts of Society, wealth and idleness, inevitably produce.

Through the diversions and the deviltry of them the confidences apprehensible were truffled with a sans gêne quite idyllic. In the flow of these confidences there was, apparently, not an honest woman in the place. Everything being possible, such may have been the case.

One night the possibility occurred to Wyvill. That afternoon the Prix de Deauville had been run. He and Trella had been driven to the course by the duke. At the track he left them for a look in the paddock. On the way back his progress was momentarily impeded. Before him were two men. In a brief halt which a congestion of the crowd occasioned he garnered a snatch of their talk.

'C'est sa maîtresse,' one was saying.

'Ah! ah! Et le mari?'

'Il faut croire qu'il trouve ça charmant.'

But the congestion had diffused, Wyvill passed on, mounted to the tribune, where, looking down, he saw two men looking up. They were raising their hats.

Their names he might have remembered, but he had forgotten their faces. He raised his own hat. The duke raised his. There was a clamor, a scurry, a clearing of the track, a careering of thoroughbreds, a riot of color, a shout, the horses were off, the Prix was being run, and the incident forgot.

Truth is an objective phenomenon. It acts in us and on us like a chemical precipitate. You may have given it no thought, and there it is revealed. That night, apropos to nothing, the incident returned to Wyvill. With it, from the depths of his being, there issued an obsession vague and obscure, something opaque and formless, but which, little by little, took shape and changed from an impossibility into a monstrous fact. Wyvill disowned it, disavowed it, would have none of it. But there it was. Presently the disavowals ceased. In certain conditions we get used to monsters. The soul makes itself at home with what it must.

Wyvill was seated in the library. An hour previous Trella, pretexting some one or other of those many malaises which women always have within beck and call, had disappeared for the night. Latterly these malaises and their coincidental disappearances had been frequent, and in considering them the dialogue overheard at the track returned, but freighted now with significance. The soul may accustom itself to what it must, but it will struggle first. We believe less what we should than what we wish.

For relief from the obsession Wyvill got up. He would have gone to Trella. But, presumably, she was asleep. In any event, he divined that her door was locked, and he knew that if she answered his knock at all, it would be but to reproach him with having disturbed her. Even otherwise, what could he say? He had suspected her before, and she had been good enough to overlook that suspicion. She had done more, she had produced a brother. There was nothing to prevent her now from producing a sister. With a lady so resourceful conversation was futile.

Wyvill looked at his watch. It was after two, much later than he had thought. Trella must have been asleep for hours. But the obsession had left him restless as a panther. Through the open window he stepped out to the lawn.

It was a perfect night, starful, silent, serene. From beyond, the recurrent hush and retreating wash of the waves accentuated the quiet, calming him unconsciously, allaying his restlessness, reducing the tension of his nerves. Under their influence he sauntered about the grounds a while, and then, turning back, reached Trella's window.

Through the curtains a dim light filtered. As he looked at it, there was projected on the curtains a silhouette, faint but defined. If he hesitated, he never knew it. The window, undefended, opened at his grasp, and tearing the curtains aside, he sprang into the room, sprang at a man that was there, and, with a blow that would have felled a bullock, struck him between the eyes, hurling him backward against a mantel where, falling, his head struck. It cracked like a nut.

Satisfied but not satiated, he turned to Trella. Before he could reach her, the window had become a passageway. A cry, 'Au secours!' had rent the night, and men in plain clothes that guard the mighty were tumbling into the room.

'Hors d'ici, canaille!' Wyvill shouted. 'Out of here, or I'll brain the lot of you!'

Raising a chair above his head, with all his force he flung it at them, but, deflected in flight, it went crashing against the wall; he was struggling with three men at once, while a fourth, falling at the foot of the mantel, was screaming, 'My God! my God! he has killed his Royal Highness!'

'Tant mieux,' Wyvill, struggling still, threw back. But he was struggling with men who had no wish to struggle, who were seeking and uttering words of pacification.

'On ne veut pas faire du mal à Monsieur le Comte,' one kept repeating. 'N'est ce pas, Paul? n'est ce pas, Jules? Seulement ——'

With a maneuver which Wyvill had acquired in arguments with bargees on the Isis, Paul went spinning one way, Jules another, their mate rolling doubled in a corner.

'Hors d'ici!' he shouted again. 'Hors d'ici, canaille, et enlevez votre crapule de prince.'

He turned in search of Trella. In the commotion she had vanished. But a door leading to the hall beyond was open, and leaving the men, in plain, and now tolerably tattered clothes, to their duty, through the door he passed to have a word with her.

Without, were scared and huddling servants. Scattering them to their quarters, Wyvill ransacked the house, searched the grounds. All he discovered was that an obsession had fled, and that Trella had got away through the night to her mother. Then, divining, perhaps, that she would regard any attempt to follow her as an excess of civility, he turned in and went to bed.

It was as well, perhaps. For what shall a man say to a woman who has ceased to care for him? That she has cared for him? It is better to let the subject drop. So, at least, Wyvill decided. Afterward he was glad that he had not tried to pursue the conversation further, glad that the dear departed had dispensed with the formality of farewell. And so, in the end, matters adjusted themselves, as, in the end, all matters do.

The next day the lady, chaperoned by her mother, journeyed from France, proceeded to this country and then to the land of the Dakotas, where, on the entirely justified plea of cruelty, complicated with desertion, she solicited and obtained a divorce.

The decree was received with general satisfaction. As a nation we do not approve of these matches. Moreover, through Mrs Verelst, everybody knew that Wyvill was a sullen drunkard, with whom no self-respecting woman could live. Trella was more indulgent. She admitted that Wyvill was not, perhaps, all that he might have been, but she declared that she forgave him entirely. That certainly was very nice of her.

Of Thule she never spoke. The press of two worlds gave it out that he died of pneumonia, suddenly, as mortals do die, but decorously, as royals should. Trella never undeceived a soul on the subject. That certainly was nice of her, too.

The Princess of the Golden Isles

The Princess of the Golden Isles

OBERKELLNER!'

'Zu befehl, Herr Baron.'

It was the dining-room of the Kurhaus at Eichwald. On arriving I had given the head waiter a florin or two. Hence the title of Baron with which he was gratifying me and which, for another florin or two, he was prepared to heighten into Graf and elongate into Durchlaucht. During dinner I had exchanged a few words with a man who sat opposite to me, a tall, spookish person with a face of ghastly pallor. At the conclusion of the meal he had vanished. But now his face, returning, haunted. I could have sworn I had seen him before. Yet where?

'Sagen sie mir,' I said to the waiter, 'wer war der Herr der eben das Zimmer verliess?"

'Ein Französe, Herr Baron, ein Advokat. Er sheint mir ——'

The waiter ran on into voluble digressions, but I had ceased to hear. At the mention, not of the stranger's nationality, for with that, of course, his speech had acquainted me, but of his profession, memory raised a latch, years retreated and I was back in Paris assisting at a celebrated case.

The case, though celebrated, was simple. Some time previous, at one of the Philadelphia assemblies, a girl effected what is called her début. Her name was Mary Asher. In appearance she was slight, very fair, with the features of a cameo. Her mother was a Hemingway, and her father, an Asher of Asherton, was known to everybody as one of Philadelphia's leading physicians. Socially the girl was all right, and financially an heiress.

At that assembly there was also present the Vicomte de Cléry, a young viveur, no better off than the law allows and alarmingly good looking. The girl sat out the cotillion with him and, after the ball, retired to Spruce Street, where she dreamed such dreams as maidens may. The Vicomte had made short work of her. He did not stop there. In a short time he made her Vicomtesse. The pair proceeded to Paris, where they proceeded to enjoy both love and life.

In the process a year passed, then another. Ultimately one morning M de Cléry started out as usual for a gallop in the Bois, returned the picture of health, sat down to breakfast with his wife, tumbled over and died. The grief of the widow was tragic. So also was that of the dead man's mother. But through the grief of the latter a suspicion filtered. At first microscopic as a minim, that suspicion magnified itself into a mountain. As a result, the Vicomtesse was arrested.

To that assembly where Mary Asher had encountered De Cléry I had gone on from New York in a party. There were just forty of us — Forty Thieves, as we were afterward called, and not inappropriately either, for the majority of my companions demonstrated a superior ease in the filching of hearts and partners. But, to pursue the simile, their lay was not mine. I was a looker-on in Vienna, an idler in Italy, an observer at this particular ball. Among the objects of my observation was Mary Asher. I found occasion to be introduced to her, and, though it was her beauty that had allured, her charm detained. That charm resided not merely in her manner, which was refreshing, but in her eyes, which were frank. In their light I could see that if ever a girl deserved to be trusted, there she stood.

Two years later, when I learned of her arrest, these impressions returned. It is abominable, I decided, and, as I happened to be in Paris, I determined to be present when the case was heard.

In that determination others collaborated. The pretorium was invaded by the street, the court taken by assault. In the tribune were first-nighters, society women, boulevardiers, dramatists, and magistrates. At the bar, on the steps of the judiciary, in the laps of journalists, in the seats of the jury even, were cabotins and criminals. The air was suffcoating. There was not room to budge. The aspect of the place was that of an arena. There was the same avidity, the same cynicism, the same thirst for blood. The riffraff of Paris had flooded the hall as the rabble of Rome filled the circus. And to an audience such as that Mary Asher was tossed like a prey.

I saw her as she entered. In my life never have I seen such an expression of such utter despair. Grief had ravaged her face like vitriol. She could barely walk, and fell, rather than dropped, at the dock. It was pitiful, and the pity which I experienced others must have shared. In spite of the ambient cynicism, a murmur of sympathy circled. To me her appearance was incompatible with guilt. It is the misfortune of a novelist to be obliged to investigate all things, crime as well as virtue, and every real criminal whom I have seen in court has been unabashed, either indifferent or defiant. Mary Asher reminded me of nothing so much as a flower that has been trampled. Near her, Maître Lefroid, a tall, lanternjawed man, was seated, and, on the same bench, I recognized her father. Both were speaking to her. Their conversation the greffier interrupted. The indictment was being read. At its conclusion the president — the presiding justice — a valetudinarian in a crimson gown, turned and addressed her:

'Madam, I will ask you to rise. You are an American. Your father is a physician. From notes before me contained in your diary I assume that you familiarized yourself with his library. Subsequently you met and married M de Cléry. It was a love match. You accompanied your husband to Paris. For a while, between you everything was sugar and honey. But presently your husband began to neglect you.'

At this, the accused, who stood, a handkerchief to her eyes, bowed her head. She was sobbing.

The president continued: 'For this neglect you reproached him. Reproaches do not reconquer a man. M de Cléry neglected you more. Quarrels ensued which your servants witnessed. On one occasion you were heard threatening him. Scenes of this nature wearied M de Cléry. Finally he affiché'd himself with an actress. Your patience was already exhausted. Then, very suddenly, M de Cléry died. Your grief was such that it became necessary to administer morphine. While you were under the influence of this drug, your mother-in-law discovered among your effects certain things I have here before me. One is your diary. In it, day by day, you recount your disillusions. I will read but two extracts. The first is the copy of a letter which you appear to have addressed to your husband. It is as follows: "If you knew the tortures which you make me suffer, you would weep for shame. You are not so wicked as you seem. At least, I hope not. Yet, if by your conduct you convince me that you are, I shall weep no longer. It will kill me. Oh, Maurice, before I do anything rash, come back to me, for I swear to you that otherwise one of us must die. I am at your feet, kneeling there, calling to you before it is too late, crying to you for mercy." The other extract is limited to a word, one with which I may admit I was unacquainted until I saw it here, but which the jury will appreciate. That word is "muscarine." What is muscarine, madam?'

For answer the accused, who stood, a handkerchief still at her eyes, shook her head. As before, she was sobbing.

'I am not to understand, am I, that you do not know? No. Merely that you do not wish to answer. I then will answer for you. Muscarine is a poison. Its effect is sudden. The mention of it in your diary has a significance which is heightened by this other object found among your effects—a picture of your husband on the back of which you have written, "Maurice, who shall die by my hand." Madam, be seated.'

The accused sank back. The hall, which had been hushed, broke into such commotion that the president threatened to evacuate it. Barring a court officer, no one paid any attention to him. The uproar continued, lulled only by a procession of witnesses succeeding each other on the stand — servants and experts, one of whom testified that muscarine leaves no traces and that the reagents employed in the autopsy had determined only slight discolorations superinducible as well by natural causes as the reverse. Thereat the summing up ensued, whereupon Lefroid addressed the jury.

'Gentlemen,' he began, 'in the years that I have pleaded and during which I have been obliged to probe the depths, often obscure, of the conscience of my clients, I have remarked in women a curious ability to deny evidence, to distort testimony, to embroider facts, to evolve explanations, and to lie — even to their attorney. To get at the truth, I have been compelled to treat them as pathologists diagnose disease, and when at last the diagnosis was complete, again and again I have despaired of their acquittal. But in the present instance my experience has gone for nothing. The lady who sits there had no story to tell me, no imaginary defense, none of those tales which women invent and which, tenaciously reiterated, they end in believing. That lady has been too overwhelmed by death to consider life, too prostrate with grief to harbor fear, too crushed for invention. Gentlemen, they are most hopeless who have hoped the most. The hopes of my client were such that in losing them she has lost even the instinct of self-preservation. Of all human beings I have known, she is the most despairful. She adored her husband, and not merely is he taken from her but she is charged with his murder. It is true she reproached and threatened him. But what are a woman's reproaches but testimonies of love? What are her threats but confessions of weakness? Though a woman reproach the man whom she loves with a hundred crimes, though she threaten him with a thousand deaths, he knows that if he but return, his crimes are absolved; that in her heart always there is forgiveness.'

The address continued, punctuated with applause. The sincerity of the man was obvious, and that sincerity he strewed about him as seed is strewn, full-handed, with increasing conviction. You could see it germinating among the jury, budding into blossoms of commiseration, preparing to flower into acquittal, and that, too, despite the evidence, despite the facts.

Then suddenly, without transition, the sower was replaced by the reaper. With a logic, mathematical in its precision, Lefroid took each count in the indictment, one after the other, demonstrating its nullity, giving to each its proper perspective, winnowing evidence from truth, showing that though muscarine was mentioned in the exhibit, nowhere else had it been found, and insinuating the idea that the accused intended to administer it, if administration there must be, not to her husband, but to herself.

Amid fresh applause, he turned to the dock and addressed the prisoner:

'Courage, madam. That man took everything from you — your youth, your love, happiness and confidence, the dreams and illusions of your girlhood, everything,— yes, everything, even to your money. Freedom will not replace what you have lost. The verdict of the jury will acquit you, but it will not console. Yet, little by little, in the years to come your tears will be dried and peace restored. My task is done. I leave you to these gentlemen, confident in their justice.'

Lefroid sat down. The jury filed out. Presently back they came, and at once, to the accompaniment of a clamor and frenzy and bravos, I caught the

French equivalent of 'Not guilty.' The noise was deafening. Those who were not shouting were clapping their hands. But my enjoyment of it was impaired by women who were using me and the press table at which I sat as a stair to Mary Asher, in whose arms they flung themselves with jubilant shrieks.

And now, as I sat in the Kurhaus, memory raised a latch, the sights and shrieks returned. Yet at the moment the reason of their visit was obscure. It was years since the trial was held, years since I had thought of it at all. In its parade the digressions of the waiter had continued unheeded.

'Ja, Herr Baron,' he was saying. 'Ein Französe, ein Advokat.'

I looked up at his fat, honest face. 'Und sein Namen?' I asked.

'Lefroid,' he answered. 'Der hochwohlgeboren Herr Lefroid.'

The digressions continued. Unconsciously I gathered the fact that the lawyer had come to Eichwald for the baths, which, of course, the Romans had built; and I asked myself, Where is the spot in which they did not build baths? — or, rather, where is the European bath of which the origin is not attributed to them? But the query fainted, submerged in the surprises of memory. It seemed odd to me that the entire drama should unroll for no other reason apparently than because I had exchanged speech with a man whom I had forgotten, and mentally I determined, should the chance occur, to ask him what had become of his client.

The next day I looked for him at the baths and again in the perfumery of a garden where a Viennese band was distributing the waltzes of Keler Bela. But it was not until evening that I met him, and then in the dining-room, where he appeared already to have supped and where he sat, a glass of Voslauer before him. As I took my seat he bowed to me, and presently, after I too had ordered and enjoyed a glass of that splendid Austrian wine, I opened the conversation with the announcement that I had had the privilege of listening to him during the trial of Mme de Cléry.

'She is a compatriot of mine,' I added. 'May I ask if you know what has become of her?'

At the moment he was raising a glass to his lips, but at the question his hand so shook that the contents spilled on the table. Ghastly pale, he seemed, if possible, to grow paler.

'It is my nerves,' he muttered by way of excuse. 'Ah,' he continued, casting about, it seemed to me, in an effort to change the subject, 'you then are an

American.' With that abruptly he got up from the table and left the room.

People go to Marienbad for obesity, to Teplitz for lumbago, for neurasthenia to Eichwald. It is the haunt of mattoids. Anywhere else the conduct of Lefroid would have perplexed me. But at these baths — to which a series of shocks, induced however by nothing more severe than baccarat, had sent me — I accepted it as a matter of course. He has been overworked, I told myself, and, dismissing the subject, returned to Voslauer and pheasant.

Yet, whether it was because of the baths, or the fact that we were both strangers in a strange land, or some other factor as yet unexplained, in any event, as the 'Kur' proceeded my acquaintance with Lefroid so far progressed that presently we got into the habit of sitting together over our wine. He was not very communicative, and manifestly he was very nervous, but when he did talk he talked well. Then it so happened that a patient in the establishment committed suicide, as patients there sometimes do, and that evening conversation turned on the subject.

'Have you ever been drawn that way?' he asked.

'Who has not?' I replied. 'But two things have always preserved me — an interest in political economy and the fear of getting hurt.'

'Stendhal must be a friend of yours,' he answered, and consulted the ceiling; adding after a moment, yet more to the ceiling than to me, 'Mme de Cléry attempted it.'

'Before her arrest?'

'After her acquittal. At that time — but — but let me see.' He hesitated, paused, raised a glass, emptied it and stared at the ceiling again. 'Ah, yes,' he resumed, 'I remember. It was this way. At that time she was done with life, done with it completely — or, to put it more exactly, she had done with love, and to some women love is life. Having lost the one she had no use for the other. But the possibilities of youth are inscrutable. Then, too, love returns to the heart as the leaf returns to the tree. I told her that. I told her everything that I thought could, if not console, at least convert. At first it was as though I were speaking to the dead — to the drowned, rather, in whom there is still a chance of resuscitation. She seemed to have sunk into the depths where my voice could not follow, into those deepest depths where life is without form, without color, without sensation of any kind. But precisely as I had determined that she should be acquitted, so after the acquittal I determined that she should revive. And indeed, either because of her youth or my effort — because, it may be, of an influence not higher but the reverse, *because she had* *not suffered enough* — presently death loosed its hold, retreated, left her; life beckoned to her again, caught her, wrapped her in its arms, rocked her, whispered to her and lured her back into convalescence. The possibilities which I had evoked came to her, plucked at her sleeve, sat with her, displayed their chimeras, accustoming her to their witcheries, familiarizing her gradually with their enchantments, until imperceptibly, little by little, after infinite hesitations, relapses, retrievals, issuing from that convalescence, she put her hand in mine.'

'What!' I started so suddenly that Lefroid, who had been monologuing far more to himself than to me, started too.

'Sir, it is as I have the honor of telling you. She became Mme Lefroid. The name is bourgeois, is it not? You recall her beauty. With that beauty it clashed. That I decided to remedy. On our wedding trip we went to the Isles d'Or — to Hyères, as the place is more generally known. It is a charming spot, and it so charmed her that I bought a bit of property and, influences at the Vatican aiding, bought also a patent of nobility which enabled her to call herself Princesse des Isles d'Or — Princess of the Golden Isles. You will agree that the title fitted her. She took in it a pleasure as entire and as innocent as a child will in an unexpected toy.'

'It is pretty,' I threw in. 'But, how fantastic! It sounds like a reminiscence from a fairy tale.'

'Sir, it was in fairyland we were living. In the dream of it, rather. Yet dreams do not last.'

He hesitated again, looked at me, at the ceiling, perhaps through it at the past.

'Sir, she adored me. However much she had loved De Cléry, she loved me more. The man was a brute. It never occurred to me that his brutality I could exceed. And yet I did. It killed her.'

The Voslauer was having its usual effect and I was getting sleepy. But this climax shook me. It seemed to me that there were tears in it, regret too, the regret that is made of remorse. Here is melodrama, I reflected, and as the article is one of which I am always in search, mentally I bolstered my attention.

'Sir, up to the very last, perhaps even at the very last, she adored me. Her notebook, which I afterward found, showed me that, showed me, too, the anguish of an agony which she concealed from me and which not for a moment did I suspect. No, and for the infamous reason that I was too occupied with other suspicions, with suspicions which, to my eternal perdition, I was vile enough to express. Sir, it was that which killed her.'

He waved his hands. I noticed that the muscles of his mouth were twitching. But at once he was off again.

'Sir, we were then in Paris. There one day she was obliged to dismiss a servant. She never dismissed another. As I afterward discovered, the reptile thanked her, expressing a feigned joy that he had escaped being poisoned. The venom of that must have affected a nature as vibrant and sensitive as hers. But presently other things added their quota. A case was called for trial, one quite parallel with her own, a woman accused of murdering her husband. The feverishness with which she followed the reports you may imagine. In these reports she saw her own procès mentioned. That was but natural. The two were so similar, yet differing in this: the woman was convicted. The conviction must also have affected her profoundly. But other incidents supervened. Among her acquaintances she noticed that some had become absent-minded, others near-sighted. In receptions at which she appeared, people eyed her furtively, talked inaudibly, whispered together, moved away. These things — others, too, no doubt, of which I am ignorant, for she never mentioned them, never complained — stayed her steps, preyed on her, undermined her health. I saw that always there was present something of which she never spoke. If I asked, she answered at random, alleging fatigue, advancing any one of those myriad malaises which women when they wish have within beck and call. It was as though she were sitting in the shadow with a phantom between us. But why was she in the shadow? What was the phantom? I did not know. Then, from being unable to understand the present I turned to the past, to the day when in prison for the first time I saw her and tried to solve the mystery of De Cléry's death.'

'It was rather odd,' I interjected. 'What was it after all? Heart disease?'

'Sir, he had no heart. After considering his death, I began to consider our marriage. Why had she taken me? Je ne suis pas beau, non, n'est-ce pas? Alors, pourquoi? That pourquoi haunted me. In search of an answer I got out the dossier and went over the case anew. The arraignment seemed to me then convincing enough and my own plea absurd. Between the two her figure surged, but differently from before. A figure composed half of hysteria, half of passion, a woman insatiable of pleasure and, in pursuit of it, irresponsible, monomaniac, hesitating at nothing, even at crime. At once her silence became communicative, her preoccupation clear. In that shadow she was concocting something. The phantom was its success. The Why flew away. In its place came When? As that query leaped into my brain, I shuddered. The shudder was succeeded by fever. I wondered, could When mean Already? Abruptly I ran to her. "What is the antidote for muscarine?" I shouted, and at what seemed to me her feigned bewilderment, "How did you give it to De Cléry?" I cried. "I am not well, I am certain that ——" For reply she looked at me. Shall I ever forget that look? There was in it the heart-rending fright of a child pursued. There was in it despair, agony, something suffocating too; and, abruptly, as I had run to her, with a scream she ran from me. I followed after, but she got to her room, threw the door to, and locked it. When I succeeded in breaking through, she was on the floor, her face convulsed, her mouth distorted, an empty vial at her side.'

'Verzeihen, meine Herren, die gnädige Frau lasst fragen ——'

It was Karl, the head-waiter, who, unperceived by either of us, had approached and was addressing Lefroid. With a word of apology, the latter got up from the table and left the room. As he went, a sense of infinite pity possessed me — pity for him, pity for the fair girl whom he had harried down to death — and for a while I lost myself in the tragedy, in returning and retreating visions of the Princess of the Golden Isles — Golden Isles indeed, on whose sharp reefs her fragile bark, illy steered by him, had foundered. A dozen questions occurred to me. At the moment I contemplated waiting Lefroid's possible return. But it was late, fully 10 o'clock. I too had come to Eichwald for my nerves, and, reflecting that they had supped sufficiently on horrors, I postponed the questions till the morrow and ambled off to bed.

But on the morrow Lefroid was not in his accustomed seat. It was occupied by a very large woman, unmistakably middle-class, a medallion under her triple chin, an expression of extreme decision in her face, and, about the corners of her mouth, a pronounced mustache in gray.

Karl was hovering about, and, calling him, I asked after Lefroid.

In a whisper, with a touch at his forehead, the man informed me that Lefroid was not well, and, bending yet nearer, added, 'Die Dame gegenüber ist seine Frau.'

'Unsinn!' I exclaimed.

The 'dame opposite' must have heard. As I stared at her she stared at me.

'Pardon,' I said in French. 'The waiter tells me that I have the honor of addressing Mme Lefroid. I have the privilege of knowing M Lefroid.'

The creature nodded and helped herself to some peas.

'May I, without indiscretion,' I continued, 'venture to inquire how long he has enjoyed the advantage of being your husband?'

In the voice of an ogre the creature manipulating those peas with her knife replied, 'Five-and-twenty years, monsieur.'

'Ah,' I exclaimed, now thoroughly flabbergasted; 'ah, indeed. I congratulate him. But last evening he was telling me about Mme De Cléry, the Vicomtesse de Cléry, whom he once defended. She is a compatriot of mine. Do you happen to know what became of her?'

'Perfectly, monsieur. After the trial Mme Cléry returned to the Americas with her father.'

'Ah,' I repeated in a crescendo of bewilderment, through the apogee of which, however, a glimmer of understanding suddenly shot. 'Ah, indeed. M Lefroid, I regret to hear, is not very well.'

'If he were, monsieur, what would he be doing here? You do not seem very well yourself. But in this place'— and the ogress juggled again with the knife —'every one seems off.'

'Ca y est,' I reflected. 'I see.' And with a smile which that creature must have construed into a leer quite as lunatic as any which her husband could display, I decided that my nerves had got all the good they could out of Eichwald.

'Karl,' I called to the waiter, 'die Rechnung.'

'Zu befehl, Herr Baron.'

The Noose Matrimonial

The Noose Matrimonial

MR JONES, mem, is downstairs, and your aunt and your father. Your father, mem, he has been here three times.'

It was Harriet, Marie's maid, talking vainly through the door.

Marie turned on a pillow and carefully, as though engaged in a matter of great importance, made with a hairpin little punctures in it. The room was big and bright. From without there mounted the rumble of Fifth Avenue.

The puncturing of the pillow continued. There was a square, quite even, which she completed, and into which she stuck, one by one, a row of dots. In the middle she planted the hairpin, left it there and turned again.

Because of the silks with which the bed was covered it looked like a garden, and in it the girl resembled a flower, a rose chimerically fair. Her purple eyes were sultry, her scarlet mouth was moist, the red tangles of her hair made a burnous of flame, her fingers glowed and her wrists were such as those on which, in days gone by, falcons alighted and kisses fell.

She patted a yawn and interrogated a clock. It was not yet noon, but she had fancied it earlier. Pushing the silks aside, she got from the bed to the bath. Before the latter was a mirror. For a moment, the point of her tongue just visible, she looked herself up and down. Then absently, her thoughts on other things, she perfumed the water and hid herself there.

The chill aroused her. Presently, without haste, she began to dress. The ceremony was one which she always accomplished alone. The presence of her maid annoyed her exceedingly, and, though this morning differed from all others, it was not until she had her hat on that she opened a door and called:

'Harriet!'

'Yes, mem.' The maid entered, prim as a Puritan Sunday. 'They are waiting for you, mem. Your father ——'

Marie interrupted her. 'Put those things in the bag and give it to Harris with the boxes. Are they packed? How do I look? Go down and tell Mr Usher I am coming. When did my father get here? This morning?'

'Yes, mem.' The woman nodded and turned.

Marie went back to the mirror. Her dress was of cloth, light violet. It had fur effects that were repeated on her hat. In spite of her coloring, or, perhaps, because of it, it became her. And now, as she looked, she bent forward and kissed herself in the glass.

'Good-by, Marie.'

She looked about the room. On a mantel were some photographs.

'Good-by, everybody.'

Her voice was contralto. As she spoke she smiled and showed her teeth. They were small, slightly uneven, and semi-transparent.

On the stair beyond was a man. He looked as though he had seen worse days and never intended to see them again.

'I was coming for you,' he began. 'I must speak to you.'

Marie interrupted him as she had her maid. 'I expected you last night. How do you like my hat? Have you seen Paul?'

From an adjoining room a clergyman issued. He was in full canonicals. The girl went back a step, stretched a hand, showed her teeth and the point of her tongue.

'I am Miss Mermex.'

'For but a brief while now,' the clergyman answered.

‘This is my father,’ she added.

‘I am just in town,’ Mr Mermex announced. ‘I got here an hour ago from San Francisco. I ——’

Marie interrupted him again. She gave him a slight shove, which he obeyed, and down the stair all three went.

In the wide hall below people straggled from the drawing-room to greet her. There was her aunt, Mrs Metuchen, a little old frump. There was her immediate husband, Paul Usher. There was Mrs Usher, his mother. There were the Enevers, society folk of the toppest notch. There was also Alphabet Jones, a man of polite letters.

Mrs Usher’s costume indicated mourning, Mrs Metuchen’s the Flood, and Mrs Enever’s the Rue de la Paix. Marie, fair as an angel, yet, of course, much better dressed, beamed on them all.

Usher took her hand and kissed it. Had he not been a broker you would have suspected him of it. Marie, smiling still, showed again the point of her tongue. It was like a little piece of watermelon. Meanwhile, everybody was talking to her; Mrs Metuchen very shrilly. Mrs Usher approached, gratified her with a frosty caress, and stepped gingerly away.

‘Many happy returns,’ Jones murmured, seductively.

'Gracious!' Mrs Enever exclaimed. 'Gracious!' she repeated, delightedly. 'What a congratulation to a bride!'

'She reminds me,' Mrs Usher whispered, 'of a beautiful animal. But I have found it well not to be too precipitate.'

'Gracious! I should hope so!'

'Marie,' began Mr Mermex. He had got near his daughter again, but Mrs Enever's husband was talking to her. The girl interrupted them both.

'Suppose we go in.'

The group parted. Through it, into the drawing-room, the girl passed, the clergyman following, the others at his heels. At one end, between the windows, two cushions had been placed. The clergyman got behind them, his back to the wall, and, fumbling in his skirt, produced a book. At once he assumed an attitude that was amiably austere.

' "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here ——" ' Before him the bride and groom were standing. The others, distributed as for a photograph, seemed reverently disposed. Mr Mermex alone was restless, and, in a moment, as the opening exordium concluded with the mandate, ' "If any man can show just cause why these two persons may not be lawfully joined ——" ' he raised a hand, his mouth opened, something trembled on his tongue. But, save Marie, who turned, smilling still, no one noticed.

' "I require and charge you both, as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment." '

Marie had turned again. She was listening now devoutly. Into her sultry eyes there had entered an expression almost saintlike. From her moist mouth the smile had gone.

'Paul, wilt thou take this woman ——'

The questions continued. At the demand, ' "Who giveth," ' Mr Mermex made a gesture. Though vague, it sufficed. The promises were exchanged. The troth was plighted. Bride and groom knelt and arose again.

' "Those whom God hath joined," ' the cleric continued, and, mumbling the phrases that follow, concluded with the finishing 'Amen.'

'Let me congratulate you, Mrs Usher.'

Abruptly the man of God had disappeared. It was the man of the world who was speaking now. Then, extending his hand to the husband, he was about to ask for the paper which the Bureau of Vital Statistics exacts, but Mr Mermex gave him no time. He had the groom by the sleeve.

'I want to speak to you.'

'What about?' Usher asked.

'Come from here and I'll tell you.'

With a hand still on that sleeve the father led the son-in-law from the room. In a moment the clergyman rustled and vanished. Marie had seated herself, Enever on one side, Mrs Metuchen on the other.

Across the room Mrs Usher mère had also seated herself. Mrs Enever and Jones were sharing the charm of her talk.

'It is incredible,' she was announcing to both from behind a fan, 'but I am not sure that any one knows my son's wife, that any one knows her father, either.'

'Gracious!' Mrs Enever exclaimed. 'That is such an advantage, isn't it? Just look at the Menemons! When they first appeared I heard people saying, "Shall we receive them?" In no time those very same people were asking, "Will they receive us?" '

'It may be that I am censorious,' the groom's mother continued, expansively. 'It may be, though it is a fault which I try to guard against. But I am not precipitate, and that, I fear, Paul is. You will not believe me when I tell you that he has not known his wife eight weeks.'

'Gracious! I thought they had made mud pies together. Perhaps they will. Matrimony, don't you think, is just full of adventure?'

'And I need not tell you,' Mrs Usher added, 'how grateful I am to the dispensation of Providence which, in putting me in mourning, relieved me of asking people here today. So, while there is that for which I am thankful, there is also that which perturbs. Do you not agree with me, Mr Jones?'

'Entirely, Mrs Usher. Every silver lining has its cloud.' The novelist was about to add further novelties, but Marie beckoned to him. He crossed the room.

'Where is Paul?' the girl asked.

'Playing billiards with your father, I fancy. In Latin countries it is customary for a bride to be taken aside by her mother. Here it is becoming fashionable for a father to disappear with the groom. But don't let it worry you. Disappearances are deceptive.'

In the doorway the butler loomed.

'Harris,' the bride called, 'is the carriage here? Fetch me a cup of bouillon.' She turned to the others. 'It is after 1. The ship sails at 2. But you will all stop and lunch with my father, won't you? Mr. Jones, would you mind very much telling Paul that the carriage is here?'

'It is so unusual,' said Mrs Usher mère, 'for young people to sail for the tropics on their wedding day. Does it not seem unusual to you, also, dear Mrs Metuchen?'

'Gracious!' Mrs Enever exclaimed. 'When I was married I took my husband to Iceland.'

The butler reappeared, preceding a footman who carried a tray, on which there were little cups.

Marie took one. So also did the dowager. As the servants were leaving, Jones, followed by Usher, reëntered the room.

'Before we go, Paul, don't you want some bouillon?' Marie asked.

But either he did not hear or else he did not heed. 'Mother,' he said, 'bring Mrs Enever and come.'

Mrs Usher, who was drinking, lowered her cup. 'We are to lunch here after you and Marie are gone.'

'Marie and I are not going anywhere.'

As he spoke he looked at his bride, and as he looked the cup which she held fell from her hand, spilling over her dress, and then to the floor, where it broke, musically, after the fashion of Sèvres.

Her eyes followed it meditatively. When, presently, she lifted them, the front door had opened and closed. Usher had gone.

'What is the meaning of this?' demanded the dowager. She turned to Mrs Metuchen, from her to Mrs Enever, then to Jones.

'What is the meaning of this?' she repeated. This time she addressed the girl.

Marie nodded, tried to smile, tried, perhaps, to speak. The effort, though, must have been too great. She dropped forward on her face.

Mrs Metuchen made a dive at the girl. But almost immediately the latter straightened herself.

From without there came a ring.

'Gracious!' exclaimed Mrs Enever. 'It is like a scene in a play.'

Jones blinked appreciatively. 'It is better. This is real drama in real life.'

'But, gracious! what do you suppose ——?'

Jones, however, had no time to waste on Mrs Enever. The groom's mother, with the air of a Gorgon, was promenading toward the door. She seemed smitten by that disease which pathology catalogues as noli me tangere. Her eyes were open to their widest extent, her mouth shut very tight. But Jones was not afraid.

'You'd best wait a moment, Mrs Usher; there is a newspaper man in the hall.'

But the lady herself was not afraid. Her promenade across the room continued, rigidly, almost mechanically, perhaps pleasurably. In a moment she, too, had gone.

Jones turned to the bride. Apparently now she had wholly recovered. She looked precisely as she had five minutes before, as pretty as she could stick, a Venus in her teens. Mrs Metuchen, talking as though the tongue would fall from her mouth, was standing on one side of her. Mrs Enever, doing her best to get a word in edgewise, was standing on the other. Though the one was old and the other young, conjointly they set her off.

Jones was not permitted to stare at her undisturbed. Enever had him by the arm.

'If you love Mammon and abhor righteousness,' the latter was muttering, 'and even if you don't,' he interrupted himself to add, 'tell me what all this mystery is about.'

There are men who can't say, 'I don't know.' It sounds too flat. Jones was one of them. Pontifically, in his deepest note, he replied, 'Mystery, dear boy, exists only in the dictionary. There is no such thing. But there is ignorance, and that is very fertile. The less we know the more we believe. Now, if you want a guess ——' and drawing Enever nearer he whispered in his ear.

Enever shook him off. 'Nonsense!' he sputtered.

'Well, perhaps,' Jones, with silken sweetness, answered, 'perhaps it is nonsense; but then, you see, we have been exchanging ideas.'

The shot might have told, yet it lacked the time. Before it could hit, there was Mr Mermex.

'Archibald,' chuckled Mrs Metuchen, 'look at your work! You have killed your daughter, you ——'

Marie interrupted her. She had risen. 'You might better have stayed in Frisco, I think. Don't you?' she added, longly. As she spoke, she smiled. 'And just look at my dress! I am dripping with soup.'

Brushing her father aside, leisurely, without haste, smiling still, she crossed the room and left it.

'There goes a dream in lilac,' Jones confided to Enever.

'One from which Usher appears to have awakened.'

'The more fool he, then.'

Enever had no chance to reply. His wife sailed up to him and sailed him away.

Mrs Metuchen had evaporated. Jones and Mr Mermex were alone.

The latter coughed. 'You are a literary man, I believe?'

'Oh, no. I write little things for the magazines. There is nothing literary in that.'

To this Mr Mermex assented, but absently. It was evident that he was sparring for wind. 'At least, you are a friend of these people, a friend also of my daughter; and here I have few. Will you give me a moment?'

'The plot thickens,' Jones reflected. 'He is going to use me for a sewer.'

'Now,' Mr Mermex continued, 'when you met my daughter last summer, did it occur to you to ask her where she had been?'

'But, my dear sir, a man of sense never asks a lady where she has been. He asks where she is going.'

'No doubt. Even otherwise Marie would not have told. Explanations are not her weakness. But that is a detail. She had just left Sioux Falls.'

'Ah!' In the rug which Jones had been studying abruptly understanding dawned. An entire panorama unrolled — the cat, the bag, the key to the whole situation. 'Was that what you told Usher?' he asked.

Mr Mermex nodded.

'But permit me, why, of all other moments, did you choose the one which you took?'

'Why, indeed! I had to take what I could get. I only reached here an hour ago.'

'Of course. Then, too, postage is dear and telegraphing expensive; yet I can't help thinking, since the matter appears to have weighed on your conscience, that a little extravagance ——'

The father coughed again. 'There is the point. Marie wrote me that she was to marry Usher. I wrote her to go ahead. On the train this morning I met the beast from whom I thought she was free. He told me that he had never been served, that the divorce was invalid, that he intended to rip it up — all of which I had to tell Usher, and when I did, you saw what occurred. He reasoned, I suppose, that if Number One got at him he would be in for damages, and heavy ones, too. Don't you think so?'

'Really, the processes of Usher's reasoning exceed my powers of imagination. If your supposition be correct, certainly his commercial instinct is beautifully developed. But personally I regard it as a great mistake to neglect pleasure for business.'

'Now,' said Mr Mermex, 'there is a reporter out there. What shall I say to him? There is no use keeping him waiting.'

'None at all. Particularly as in all probability he enjoys it. Tell him the reverse. Tell him it is a great mistake to neglect business for pleasure.'

'Quite so.'

The doorbell rang again.

'There is another of them, I suppose, and that reminds me, you will stop, won't you, and have lunch with us?'

'No, thanks very much; but you might say to your daughter, with my compliments, that divorce is the mother-in-law of invention, and that I wish her again many happy returns.'

'You are very thoughtful of others,' a lady in lilac called from the adjoining room, 'yet in the circumstances a trifle cynical, too.'

Jones picked up his hat., 'I dare say, but then, you see, it is in thoughtfulness of others that cynicism begins.'

'Yes, indeed,' said a voice from the doorway, 'let us think of ourselves. There,' Usher continued, as he entered where they stood, 'I have been off reconnoitering. The divorce is all right. The forces centripetal and centrifugal couldn't touch it. Marie, where are you?'

From the adjoining room the bride strolled — a festival of beauty in the festival of life.

With a look cannibalistic in its longing to eat her, Usher added, 'My dear, we have lost the boat.'

The girl's moist lips, parting in a smile, disclosed the point of her tongue. 'Then can't we,' she inquired, with an air of innocence which was simply seraphic, 'can't we manage to find a train?'

'Any port in a honeymoon,' Usher answered. 'Let's be off at once.'

'My blessing on you both,' cried Mr Mermex.

' 'Twas ever thus,' said Jones. 'Woman proposes and a poor devil accepts. For such is the noose matrimonial.'

A Drama in a Drawing Room

A Drama in a Drawing Room

IN the multiple brilliancies of the dining-room I found myself at the left of the Duchess Sally. Ever since her girlhood I had known her. At Narragansett Pier, in the good old nights before the Casino was dreamed of, I had sat with her on verandas that were vibrant with osculations. That was some time ago. Her subsequent transatlantic triumphs and spectacular marriage to the Duc de Malakoff are now ancient and familiar history — so ancient even that I am dispensed from noting that Sally is no chicken. But though her youth had gone, her heart is young. Hence, no doubt, in disregard of every canon of precedence, my place beside her. But then, as I have intimated, she never was ceremonious.

Across the glittering service, beyond the gold branches of the lusters, sat Monsieur de Malakoff. Between him and Sally there were, including myself, fourteen other people. Over the bisque I had taken them in. Barring a nuncio and an aunt of Sally —

Mrs Nicholas Manhattan — I knew none of them. Barring two others, the rest of the party interested me but mediocrally. Of these two one was a vision in white, a delicious apparition that suggested the pays des songes; a face infinitely delicate and of exceeding beauty. The other was a young man who looked as the musketeer Aramis might in modern dress. His features were chiseled. On his lip was a mustache that seemingly had been drawn with a crayon. His hair was black, slightly curled; his eyes were Polar blue, and their lashes long as a girl's. I should have thought him too good-looking for a man had it not been for his chin, which was resolute, and the expression of his mouth, which was as firm and as chill as steel. Next to him was the vision. They were talking inaudibly together.

The bisque had gone. The maître d'hôtel, followed by valets de pied, was presenting sturgeon from the Volga. Turning to Sally I asked who the young man was.

'The Marquis de Parabole,' she answered. 'That is his wife, next to you.' Sally would have said more, perhaps, but the nuncio was claiming her attention.

Already I had noticed my neighbor, a little, red-headed woman, who, in face and manner, suggested a bird — yet, perhaps, a bird of prey. In any event, a bird that, with beak and talons, knows how to defend its own. In the word or two that I had already exchanged with her I knew by her accent that she could not be French, or, for that matter, Anglo-Saxon.

Presently our earlier conversation was resumed. At some remark of mine she smiled. I have never forgotten that smile. It disclosed a front tooth filled with a diamond.

The effect was startling and at the same time evocative. I recalled that the arrangement was affectioned in certain sections of South America, and it occurred to me that the lady might be a Brazilian — a supposition which subsequent developments confirmed. Yet that which at the time intrigued me most was her relationship to the young musketeer. I could have sworn that she would never see 40 again, and that he was yet to see 29. It seemed to me that I must have misunderstood Sally. But a look, which, in a pause of our talk, she shot across the table, undeceived me. It was double-barreled and aimed point-blank at the musketeer and the vision. There was hatred in it. Had I not already likened the lady to a bird I should add that there was venom in it, too. Could a look kill, there would have been murder then and there. A moment and it had gone. Her beady eyes shifted to mine.

A filet of reindeer was being served. From beyond came the rich voice of Monsieur de Malakoff. He appeared to be philosophizing on the degree of decomposition that renders game most savorous. Meanwhile, in the constant replenishment of blond wines, conversation and the tone of it heightened. The young musketeer was still talking inaudibly with that vision, but otherwise the table was united. Topics were tossed like balls. Jests flared as pinwheels do. Wit, or at least a passable imitation of it, became common property, until, in a ripple of laughter created by a suggestion only a trifle more scabreux than the last, Sally arose, and from the gayety of the room we passed into others yet gayer.

It was not for the sake of gayety that I was then in Paris. On the contrary, I was at work on a history of the young empresses of old Rome. For such labors there is nothing more serviceable than the Bibliothèque Nationale. Hence the sojourn.

The morning succeeding the dinner I went as usual to the Library. The documents that I there obtained held certain stupefactions; but my surprise at what I read was exceeded by my surprise at what I saw. At a table beyond was the young musketeer. Fancy a panther in a conservatory! Yet there he sat, fronted by a pile of MSS., and as lost in them as presently I became in the Subura. When I emerged from that Whitechapel of the past, he saw me and smiled in recognition.

A few days later at the Café Anglais, where, because of its proximity to the Library, I was in the habit of lunching, we met again, and in meeting, joined tables. For a while conversation drifted impersonally, but presently the moi popped out.

'May I, without indiscretion,' I asked, 'inquire the nature of your distractions at the Bibliothèque?'

'Alchemy,' he answered. 'But,' he added, with a smile in which there was amusement at my manifest surprise, 'let me ask what are your distractions there.'

'Nothing half so fascinating,' I replied. 'I am merely a writer.'

'In that case,' he retorted, 'you are an alchemist, too. A wad of paper and an ounce of ink you transform into bank notes. The transmutation of metals is a process only a trifle more elaborate. Others have practiced it successfully, and what has been done may be repeated.'

'No doubt,' I answered; 'but the age of miracles has gone.'

'Has it?' he asked, with an air of great innocence. 'That, really, I did not know. I fancied that it had come. I believe that could the people who lived in what you call the age of miracles return they would be far more astonished at contemporary wonders than we are at those of the past. Tenez, monsieur. Just across the river is the Église de Ste. Chose. Its construction must have cost a lot, yet it was built by a poor devil of a bookseller who emerged from grinding poverty into abnormal wealth — relatively speaking, that is, for in his time even the richest were none too well off. For that matter, they are none too well off now. It is in wealth alone that the world has not progressed. Kings today have to count the pennies. Budgets are out at elbows. France, the most opulent country in Europe, is obliged to consider penuriously the cost of an ironclad. In early times there was nothing of this. The kings that were built at will cities of enchanted dwellings, shimmering avenues, and walls so wide that they were race courses. The treasures that Alexander looted provided him with coin to the value of fifteen billion francs, a sum tolerably large, and yet paltry beside the four hundred and twenty-five billion that is estimated to have been the value of the treasure heaped on the pile of Assurbanipal.

'Whence did wealth in such proportions come? Through what wizardry were the fairylands that existed then created? Obviously, there was a secret, and that secret has been lost. At the beginning of the present era the total amount of money in circulation was a hundred times inferior to that which in earlier days a single satrap possessed. Thereafter the world grew steadily poorer. It was not until after the discovery of the Americas that wealth began to look up. But what are the world's riches now in comparison to what they were? There was not only a secret, and a secret that has been lost, but that secret was the transmutation of metals. Its fading memories used to haunt the minds of men. The attempts of Caligula to regain them are historic. They hallucinated the Middle Ages. Geber's theory, that metals are compound bodies made up of mercury and sulphur in different proportions, fascinated every alchemist, even to Roger Bacon, for he, too, had crucibles, alembics, and aludels at work. In Paracelsus the effort culminated. He demonstrated that there is an unknown element, a quintessence, which he called the alcahest, and which when recovered would do the trick. That quintessence, Flamel, the bookseller whom I mentioned, found. I was going over one of his manuscripts today. There, monsieur ——'

For a moment he fumbled in his pocket. Then he drew out an envelope, which he handed me. On it were signs quite cabalistic and figures equally abstruse. Yet from it there emanated an odor of orris, and I could not but notice that it was addressed to the marquis at a club. It naturally occurred to me that in addition to the distractions that he admitted he probably had others that he concealed. I am not censorious, and in view of the lady with the diamond tooth, I did not blame him in the least.

'There,' he resumed, 'are the component parts. I jotted them on that envelope,' he interrupted himself to explain, 'because it was the only bit of paper I had. But that is the formula.'

With that he ran on into technical terms, which conveyed no meaning to me, and my attention wandered until arrested by an entirely intelligible mention of flesh and blood.

'Human?' I asked, with pardonable surprise.

'Yes,' he answered, 'that is best. But nowadays people have such prejudices. Yet there is the alcahest.'

He paused, glanced at the envelope, from it to me, and then, with that grace of manner which only Latins have, apologized for the dissertation. 'Anything theoretical is so tiresome,' he added, in his winning way. 'Yet if by chance the subject has the merit of interesting you, I should be glad if you would accompany me to my shop. My home,' he continued, 'is in the Avenue Marceau, but for this work I have a maisonnette in the Rue de la Pompe, which I fitted up expressly. There I could have the pleasure of showing you an experiment or two.'

The stupefactions of the Subura claimed me still.

I had counted on a long afternoon at the Library. I was stupid enough to prefer the society of a dead empress to a living alchemist, and I thanked him. Whereupon, after paying our scores — scores that included strawberries at a franc apiece, which, I mind me now, were fully worth it — we got out into the sunshine and absinthe of the street, where, little dreaming in what dramatic circumstances I was to see him again, we parted.

The dead empress detained me in Paris until, ejected by the heat, I ran down to Etretat. There, at the Casino one noon when looking over The Figaro, I jumped as though a dog had bitten me. I think any one else might have done so, too. I had happened on the account — with which all the world has since been familiar — of the arrest of the Marquis de Parabole for murder.

On the esplanade without was the usual throng of people that gathers there during the hour that precedes the déjeuner and succeeds the dip. Among them was my old friend, Mrs Manhattan. Thinking that I might furnish a fillip for her breakfast, I approached her.

I have sometimes thought that horrors appeal to women more than they do to men. I am often in error; I may have been then, yet, as I greeted this lady, it seemed to me that she was reveling in the revelations. It is true that she knew De Parabole, and acquaintance with people lends an admitted charm to anything that you may read about them. The worse it is the better you like it. Mrs Manhattan was radiant. From the manner in which she spoke it seemed to me that nothing had pleased her more since the day the news reached her of Sally's engagement. I presumed to say as much, but she turned on me quite viciously.

'When a man kills his wife ——' she began.

'His wife!' I exclaimed. 'The Figaro did not say that.'

'Bother The Figaro! It was his wife he killed. First he took her money, now he takes her life. If a man marries a Hottentot, then, Hottentot though she be, he ought to treat her decently, instead of which, after making her life a curse, he boils her up in a cauldron.'

'Nonsense!' I threw in. 'Besides, she isn't a Hottentot; she is a Brazilian.'

'It is quite the same to me,' Mrs Manhattan, with superb indifference to ethnology, threw back. 'He ought to be drawn and quartered. In my presence once he contradicted her flatly.'

'Yes, that is just it,' I managed to remark. 'A woman will act on a man's nerves day in, day out, and if, under constant fire, his nerves once give way and he calls his soul his own, he is nothing more or less than a brute.'

'That's right,' Mrs Manhattan, with great irony, retorted; 'that's right. Justify him entirely. A man who murders his wife ought to decorated. I know all that. I have heard it before. But only in France. And since in France you feel as Frenchmen do, I can't see why you don't run up and congratulate him.'

Abashed and hushed, I had no recourse but to retreat. When, a few weeks later, I reached Paris, the preliminary examination had been concluded and the trial was announced. At that trial I determined to be present. Others did, too. So many, in fact, that but a fraction got in. But journalism is a sesame. As a member of the press I succeeded where members of Parliament failed. I not only succeeded in getting in, I succeeded in getting a seat — a stall, rather. In the interrogatory that ensued a drama unrolled.

For setting, there were bare white walls, which a crucifix dominated. Fronting the audience was the tribunal. There, robed in red, the president and the assessors sat. Before them was a display of exhibits. To the left was the jury. In the dock, to the right, was the prisoner. As I seated myself he looked over at me and smiled, very much as he had in the

Library. He seemed as out of place in the Cour d'Assises as he had in the Bibliothèque Nationale. There he had suggested a panther in a conservatory, here a prince in the galleys; and I could not but marvel at the intricacies of the mystery we call life, which had led him from one to the other.

These meditations a greffier interrupted. The indictment was being read. At its conclusion the president turned to the prisoner.

'What have you to say, De Parabole?'

'That you wish my head, monsieur,' the marquis answered, as he arose. 'I regret to be unwilling to oblige you with it.'

The president pursed his lips and surveyed the court. 'That is natural,' he answered, at last. 'But for the moment it is beside the issue. Where were you on the night of the 12th of July?'

'That question I have already refused to answer.'

The president pursed his lips again. He reminded me of nothing so much as a salamander. His mouth had the same width and his chin the same recession.

'Yes, I am aware of it,' he continued. 'You left the juge d'instruction to infer that you were occupied with some gallant adventure. For the moment we will let that go, too. Meanwhile, you may tell me the object of your separate establishment in the Rue de la Pompe.'

'Experimental researches.'

'That, I am also aware, is your defense. It is not unadroit. It explains the presence there of an arsenal of chemicals. But it does not explain the presence of other things concerning which you shall have an opportunity of enlightening the jury. You have frequently quarreled with the deceased.'

'If,' the marquis answered, 'you refer to Madame De Parabole, I do not know that she is dead. Nor,' he added, with entire courtesy, 'do you.'

'I at least know that she is not to be found. The prosecution has searched for her everywhere. But the search was not otherwise fruitless. It has been discovered that at the time of your marriage you had nothing but your title. Your wife, previously a widow, was the daughter of a rich Brazilian. Her property you dissipated. That accomplished, you again had nothing but your title. With a view to bartering it anew you devise an elaborate scheme. You give out that you are an alchemist. You fit up a laboratory. You stock it with chemicals. On the evening of July 12th you lure your wife there. She drives up to the door in her carriage, dismisses it, and enters the house. She has never been seen since that moment. But later that evening a passer hears a scream. At midnight another passer notices a reflection of flame. What were you doing at that hour?'

'I have forgotten.'

'Very good. I will tell you. You were destroying the remains of your wife whom you had murdered. But you did not destroy them entirely. In a cauldron in that den of yours were discovered, together with bits of bone, some thick, brown ooze in which were traces of caustic soda and caustic potash. Experts will demonstrate that by means of these chemicals a human body can be converted into just such ooze. Do you deny it?'

'On the contrary, it is quite true. Only in this instance it happens that the ooze was the residue of the body of a gorilla which I had obtained from the Jardin d'Acclimatation.'

'That defense you advanced before the juge d'instruction. Inquiries made of the management show that you did acquire a gorilla. But it was only a part of this plot of yours. It was only that, in case of misadventure, you might have a ready answer. In any event, the gorilla obtained by you did not, I suppose, have a tooth filled with a diamond. A tooth set with a diamond was found in that ooze. A tooth filled with a diamond was the peculiar characteristic of the deceased. Here it is. I invite you to be seated.'

'Silence!'

The courtroom, suddenly murmurous with indignation, hummed like a wasp's nest. I could see men gesticulating. A woman fainted.

'Silence!' a crier repeated.

The prisoner seemed unmoved. A fat man approached and addressed him. I heard some one say that it was Maître Dupin, his advocate.

The president, who had reminded me of a salamander, looked now like a wolf; but a wolf that has fed. Turning to a huissier, he ordered him to call the first witness, and presently the coachman who, on the night of the 12th of July, had driven the marquise to the Rue de la Pompe was testifying to that effect. He was succeeded by other witnesses — by agents and experts, who corroborated the president's arraignment. When they had gone the avocat général addressed the jury, summing up the evidence, deducing from it the guilt of the accused, clearly, logically, without oratory or literature.

'Any question of mitigating circumstances,' he concluded, 'is out of place in a case such as this. Yet if your conscience hesitates, it is your duty to acquit that man. But if you are absolutely convinced that he is an assassin, it is equally your duty to declare him guilty. I have no wish to say that the blood of his victim cries for vengeance. Of vengeance I know nothing. What I demand of you is justice.'

'Silence!' the crier repeated.

Again the room was humming like a wasp's nest. But this time it was murmurous with applause. In the subsidence of that applause the fat man stood up. In his hand he held a paper, at which he glanced. Then he bowed, first to the bench, afterward to the jury.

'Gentlemen,' he began, 'it had been my intention when I reached here this morning to open my address to you with a citation, not from the code, but from a novel. In the "Affaire Lerouge," the most famous story of the famous Gaboriau, a man is arrested for murder. Against him are advanced proofs quite as convincing as those that have been brought against Monsieur de Parabole. But the magistrate having asked him where he was during the night of the crime, and he having refused to reply, the magistrate cried: "Release him; he has no alibi, he is innocent." Gentlemen, after reminding you of that subtle and, as it was subsequently shown, correct deduction, it had been my intention to demonstrate to you that the essence of crime is the motive, and that here none has been shown. It had also been my intention to display to you my client in his true light, a young seigneur who, through unfortunate speculations at the Bourse, had lost, not merely his wife's fortune, but his own, and who was seeking to recover both through the transmutation of metals. Whether such transmutation be possible, whether or not — as Monsieur de Parabole had confided to me — he was on the point of recovering that solvent which is alleged to have existed, I am not competent to affirm. But on entering here this morning I did feel competent to use the exhibits that are piled on this table, and to show from them that whether or not the pursuits of Monsieur de Parabole were chimerical, at least they were not criminal. Among those exhibits but one object embarrassed me. That object is the diamond tooth. Even with my client's aid and my best endeavors I felt unable to explain its presence by any theory of coincidences that would have been satisfactory, but it had been my intention to leave it to you to decide whether a man should lose his head because some one else had lost a tooth. These demonstrations that I was prepared to set before you I am now dispensed from elaborating. I let them go, vaguely outlined as they are, for, gentlemen, the Marquise de Parabole is dead indeed, only she did not die in the Rue de la Pompe, she did not die on the 12th of July. She died the day before yesterday in Rio de Janeiro!'

'Silence in this court!' It was the president who was commanding quiet now. There was no longer a murmur, there was a tumult, in which the whole vast room had joined.

'Silence!' he commanded again. Then, turning to Maître Dupin, 'What evidence,' he asked, 'have you in support of this statement?'

'A cablegram brought to me half an hour ago, which I shall have the honor of submitting to you. Dated Rio, it is addressed to Dr Rosa e Silva, the Brazilian Consul here, and it states that Madame de Parabole died there, as I have represented, the day before yesterday, twenty-four hours after landing. I am aware, monsieur le président, that it will have to be verified, but meanwhile I ask that the trial be adjourned.'

Mopping his fat face, Maître Dupin bowed and sat down. I could have embraced him. I wanted to tell him so. But the avocat général was speaking now.

'The obvious good faith and high professional standing of the gentleman for the defense relieve me,' he was saying, 'from opposing his suggestion. Yet I must admit ——'

What he was about to admit no one heeded. The salle was again in commotion. Everybody was talking at once. At the moment I could not see the prisoner. Maître Dupin was bending over him, and presently, through the tumult, circulating above and accentuating it, mounted the shrill call of the crier. Then I became conscious that I had assisted at a coup de théâtre which, for sheer poignancy, I had never seen equaled on the stage, and, precisely as from a play, I found myself drifting out with the crowd to the street.

It was months later, in the multiple brilliancies of the Malakoff dining-room, that the last act was given. Meanwhile I had gone to New York and returned. It was June again; and again, in defiance of every canon of precedence, I was seated at Sally's left. Across the table was the young musketeer, and across the table, too, was the delicious vision. On the other side of me was Mrs Manhattan. From beyond, through the gold branches of the lusters, came the rich voice of the duke. He was philosophizing, as a great noble may, on the superiority of white truffles over black. In appreciating the fine discrimination I could not but reflect that his ancestor, the Napoleonic hero, who had won a duchy with a sword, would have appreciated it still more. These reflections Mrs Manhattan interrupted.

'There is a subject for you. Why not write it up?'

'Monsieur de Malakoff's physiology of taste?' I asked.

'No; Monsieur de Parabole's physiology of marriage. You know, do you not, that he is engaged to ——' and Mrs Manhattan, with a quiver of the eyelids, indicated the delicious vision. 'That is what killed the Hottentot. The poor old thing knew what was going on. A man may betray the woman who loves him, but never can he deceive her.'

'Quite so,' I answered; 'and it was by way of love-token, I suppose, that she extracted that ornament from her mouth and left it where the police could make the worst of it. When I read in the papers that this lady had first planted her tooth and then vanished in order that he might be guillotined for her murder, mentally I took off my hat to the medievalism of her imagination. But though I took off my hat, were I De Parabole I would have taken her life had she not conveniently died in the interim.'

'Oh, yes,' Mrs Manhattan returned, with a suggestion of sarcasm, which at the moment escaped me. 'You, of course, would have done wonders.'

'But I must ask him,' I continued, 'whether or not he is still in search of the alcahest.'

'The what? The alcahest? What is that?'

'A synonym for happiness,' I explained. Then after glancing at some blond wine that a footman was serving I looked over at the delicious vision.

'And happiness, to my thinking,' I added, 'consists, if it consists in anything, in the kiss of one girl.'

But my views were unnoticed. Sally was rising, and from the brilliancies of the dining-room we passed to other rooms yet more brilliant.

The Top of the Heap

The Top of the Heap

BLIND obedience and the truth. That's what I want from you. Nothing else.'

Mr Beamish, as he spoke, glared imperially. There are men whom it is more agreeable to avoid than to meet. Mr Beamish had succeeded in becoming one of them. He was fat, and quite as fascinating as vulgarity and a French tailor could make him. What a French tailor can accomplish in that line exceeds the powers of prose. Yet, though fat, he was forceful, and if vulgar, valiant.

It was his son whom he addressed. The room, large, oblong, furnished in red, tropically hot on this mid-May noon, had the tawdriness of a Paris hotel written all over it. Through an open window the sun lurched. Beyond were the Tuileries. From below came the cries of the hawkers that are never still, 'Le Matin! Demandez Le Matin!'

'Now disobey me if you dare ——'

The boy made a face. He was rather good looking, and quite athletic.

'Disobey you! Disobey a father who is a phenomenon, a father with thirty million and three chins! What do you take me for? But how do you know she won't object?'

'Because she does what her mamma wishes.'

'But I don't see why her mamma should wish anything of the kind, or, for that matter, you either.'

'You don't, eh? I am decently fixed, am I not? I did the fixing myself, didn't I? What did I do it for? Why do you suppose that after mining in Montana I monkeyed with Morgan, rolled Rockefeller, and got ahead of Gates? For the fun of it? There is no fun in a job like that. To donate libraries? That is Carnegie's patent. I want to splurge. In that new house of mine on Fifth Avenue I want to give cotillons and dinner dances — cotillons with automobiles and Russian sables for favors, dinner dances with government bonds for boutonnières. I want to be top of the heap.'

'Noble ambition.'

'And why not? Supposing I am self-made. I am as rich as Crœsus, whoever he may be, and just as good as the rest of them. The trouble is that in New York I don't know anybody — except from 10 to 3. Out of Wall Street I am seven-eighths offered and nothing bid. But here it is different. On this side people who have position don't seem to be as much afraid of losing it as they are at home. You have noticed that yourself, haven't you?'

The young man yawned and nodded.

'Anyway,' Mr Beamish resumed, 'that's been the case with the Finsburys. They are bankrupt, it is true, but they are not bounders, and provided I produce enough they are willing that you should marry their daughter and take her back to New York. There all you will have to do is to fill my house with the smart set. And they'll come, too; they'll come on a run when they find a duke's daughter is there to receive them.'

'But what if I don't like the girl?'

Mr Beamish stood up and reached for a hat. 'You have got to like her,' he answered shortly. 'Come. It's time for business. Ring the bell, and see if the auto is ready.'

The auto was. And presently, after a series of touf-toufs, a whizz up the Champs Elysées, a bolt into the Avenue Marceau, father and son were let into the drawing-room of an appartement meublé, a miniature salon, cream and gold, and tenderly pink, where loomed a dowager, robust and rancid, flanking a tall, large-mouthed, small-eyed girl.

'Duchess, this is my son Harry,' Mr Beamish began, and, plucking at his collar, and finding it moist, mopped himself abundantly.

The duchess assumed an expression of great amiability. 'My daughter, the Lady Angelica,' she announced, with a wave of her fan, and with another, she added: 'I am so sorry Finsbury is not in. But he has a perfect mania for going to the dentist's, and that, I think, shows so much conscientiousness. Do sit down.'

The girl had moved to a sofa. Harry took a seat at her side. Mr Beamish and the duchess ranged themselves opposite.

'Warm day,' said the fat man. At once he and his hostess lost themselves in cognate reflections.

'Do you like Paris?' Harry asked of the girl, who just raised her eyes to his. 'I prefer London. But New York is good enough for me. You have never been there, have you?'

The Lady Angelica flushed, her eyes flickered, her lips half parted, then, as though by a sheer effort of will, her mouth shut tight. What she meant by the mummery Harry could not tell. But he took it for British reserve.

'Yes,' Harry continued, indifferently, 'New York is a mighty nice place. We make a specialty of tall houses, high winds, beautiful manners, ready-made clothes, and pretty girls. It is all due to the climate, I believe. Did I understand you to say that you had been there?'

'My daughter,' the duchess overloudly interrupted, 'has not traveled much; she ——'

Harry turned. His father was contemplating a Cupid on the ceiling. The duchess seemed to have one eye on him, the other on Angelica.

'She is only recently out of the schoolroom, you know, and —— Come here, Posey!'

Suddenly from somewhere, presumably from under the sofa, there filtered the cry of a cat.

'Come here, Posey, Posey, Posey.' And the duchess, leaning forward, snapped her fingers enticingly.

Mr Beamish stood up. Harry also was rising; the girl, too. Previously flushed; now she was pale.

'They seem to have forgotten to give poor little Posey his breakfast,' the duchess added, in smiling explanation. 'But you are not going, are you? Finsbury will be so sorry. Yet, why not dine with us tomorrow, just a plain family dinner at 8, and afterward my little girl can show you her water colors. She fairly dotes on water colors, and that, I think, shows such a pure mind.'

'Tomorrow, I am afraid,' Harry interjected, but his father managed to kick him.

'He will be proud to come. But how about today? Couldn't you both lunch with us at Paillard's? My auto can take you there and back in a jiffy.'

'That is my brother's stepdaughter,' the duchess remarked to Harry, who was examining a photograph on the mantel. 'Do you think she resembles Lady Essex? So many do.'

Harry moved closer to the picture. The duchess seized the opportunity to whisper to Mr. Beamish behind her fan. In a moment Harry turned.

'We shall love to,' the duchess resumed. 'Lunching at Paillard's will be quite an escapade. But we shan't trouble you to bring us back. Our brougham can fetch us. And you won't mind waiting a moment, while we put on our hats? Angelica!'

Trailing her daughter behind her, the duchess sailed from the room. Father and son were alone.

'Nice girl,' Mr. Beamish remarked, as the door closed.

'A peach. And so chatty.'

'Now see that you make up to her at luncheon. There is nothing like catching a girl on the fly.'

'Give me a hundred thousand a year, and catch her yourself, then. Matrimony, with a pretty girl at the other end, must be jolly good fun. But with her! Cæsar's ghost! It would be medicine. That's the truth.'

'It is, is it? Well, I want obedience also. You may take your medicine or your walking-stick. Just say which, and be quick.'

Harry glared about the room. Through its cream, and gold, and tender pink, the future surged. Divested of its garland of millions that future looked quite bleak.

Mr. Beamish stamped a foot.

'Which?'

'Medicine,' the boy answered, savagely. 'I'll be shot, though, if I don't take it in capsules.'

'Don't be slangy,' retorted the plutocrat, in whose phraseology capsules had no definite meaning.

'Scat!' cried Harry. 'There's that beastly cat again.'

From beyond there filtered anew a shrill meow. But immediately a door opened. The duchess, trailing her daughter, reappeared, and, presently, during an interchange of uplifting intellectualities, the street was reached, the auto hummed into the Champs Elysées, bowled down the avenue, and drew up at Paillard's.

The canopied terrace was filled with people of manifest distinction, with horizontales and femmes du monde, exotics and cercleux, diplomats, and rastas. From a hall adjoining there issued the murmur of harps, the kiss of flutes, the caress of clinging measures. In the air was the savor of pine apples, the smell of orris, the odor of food and flowers, of pretty women and smart men, the atmosphere of what the French call High Life, and pronounce Hig Leaf. Mr Beamish inhaled it voluptuously. Preceded by two mâitres d'hôtel, he led his guests to a table.

'Do you chauffe?' Harry asked Angelica, when all were seated.

'Do you, Mr Harry?' the duchess inquired, in her stead. 'I have not let my little girl learn yet, but she is passionately fond of collecting postage stamps, and that, I think, shows so much adaptability. But automobiling is very jolly, is it not?'

'It beats bridge,' Harry answered. 'Wouldn't you like to learn,' he continued, turning to the girl.

The Lady Angelica could not speak; her mouth was full of melon.

'That is the King of the Belgians,' said the duchess, indicating a voluminously bearded old party, who was being helped to a chair near by. 'And is not that Mr Astor, over there? We used to think,' she continued, expansively, 'that he might marry among us. But his daughter will. Our young men have such a fondness for your pretty compatriots, and that, I think, shows so much entente cordiale. No, Mr Beamish, no champagne; a drop of Eau de Vals if you will. After Paget, and Essex, and Craven and Curzon, then Marlborough, and, recently, Manchester, not to speak of my brother, who married a

New Yorker, a Mrs Morningside, of Morningside Park, a widow, with a daughter, such a dear, too, who, I fancy, will marry among us also. You know my brother, do you not, Mr Beamish? But fair exchange, I often think, is not snobbery; is it, Mr Harry? And does it not seem to you as though some of you young Americans should begin now, and lay siege to our lovely English girls. Thank you, a bit of the wing, nothing else.'

Harry turned anew to the Lady Angelica. 'How would you like to be besieged by an American?' he asked, seductively.

The girl flushed. Apparently, she was about to reply, but British reserve may have prevented. She flushed afresh and looked away.

With superior tact the duchess intervened. 'Tell me, Mr Harry, is not that your ambassador over there?'

Harry turned. As he did so he heard a little plaintive cry. He turned again.

'The large, handsome man near the entrance,' the duchess insistently continued, and actually pointed with her fan.

Harry was forced to turn once more. The cry was repeated, but less plaintively, in a note louder and more shrill.

Again Harry turned. Others were turning, too.

The King wheeled in his chair. A cocotte near him put her glasses up.

Angelica's face was hid by a fan. Her thin frame shook. She seemed convulsed with laughter, with a churchlike desire to conceal it, too. Mr Beamish was examining his fork as though it were a great curiosity.

In hasty astonishment an omnibus began ferreting under the table. With the same superior tact the duchess waved him away.

'Ce n'est rien,' she announced. 'Une petite Angora, voilà tout. Angelica, you ought not to have brought her. Mr Harry, would you be good enough, that is, my man out there'—as she spoke she motioned at the street—'would you mind fetching him? I will send Posey home by him. Poor, dear, little thing, it is the smell of ris de veau. She just dotes on ris de veau.'

'And that,' said Harry, in open mimic of the duchess, 'shows, I think, such a candid nature.'

He got from his seat and made for the entrance. But in the street he discovered that he must have misunderstood the lady. The man he fancied hers spoke no human tongue. He bothered for a moment or two with another servant, but the latter turned out to be the King's.

Harry started to go back. As he did so, he beheld the duchess entering a cab that stood a trifle beyond. Angelica was at her heels. Mr Beamish was helping them both.

Harry hurried forward. 'You are not going to take Posey home, are you?' he asked, a hand on the door. 'Why, give her to me. I'll do it myself. Where is she?'

He looked from mother to daughter. Both were seated now. The girl had her veil down, but through it, at the question, he could see her mouth contract, then it opened, and from it issued a distinct meow.

Mr Beamish slammed the door. 'Allez', he bellowed.

Quite flabbergasted, Harry fell back. His astonishment was not unnatural. Not until that moment had it occurred to him that the cat and the girl were one. Then, also, he had never heard a girl meow before. Yet, girls have, and will. Not often, of course, but semi-occasionally, in certain clinics — which Harry had never visited — and in certain treatises — which he had never read. To this inexperience and illiteracy his surprise was due.

'So — so, that is Posey?' he stuttered. 'So that is Posey, is it?' he repeated instantly, in a voice more assured. 'Well, you may marry that tomcat yourself. For I shan't,' he added, defiantly. 'Not for a million a month. Not for the top of the heap.'

But he addressed the Champs Elysées. His words were lost in the roar of the wide, white street. Mr Beamish had swung into an automobile, and, in derision, perhaps, was touf-toufing away.

The machine floated on and up toward the Arc, through the glittering haze, through the swarm of glittering traps. Harry watched it go. As it fled a fantasy of finance, felines, and felonies formed and fluttered before him.

Then suddenly the vision of plutocracy and caterwauls faded away. A diminutive groom, impertinent yet correct, had, from the box of a brougham, swung, an inch from his toes. But it was not the boy, nor yet the brougham, nor even an obese coachman, who held the reins, that had vaporized his thoughts. Within the carriage a girl sat staring straight into his face.

As his eyes mingled with her own she turned. He could see her profile. He could see, too, that he had seen it before. But where? In dream? In the Louvre? In the picture of Psyche made by Gérard? Neither the lady or her tiger gave him time to determine. A door was being opened, and she was stepping out.

Then, in the perfection of the ravishment of a frock such as perhaps Doucet alone in all the world can produce, he beheld a waist that would fit in a garter, the figure of a willis in a ballad, the incandescence of beauty beautifully bedraped.

But what was she saying? Was it language of Olympus, or the tongue of France, in which she was deigning to address the groom? Yet manifestly the latter understood. He was tipping his hat. And immediately, too, Harry was enlightened. In those accents which certain sections of Fifth Avenue share with Mayfair there fell from lips of silk the perfectly plain and entirely intelligible Anglo-Saxon order: 'Follow me.'

At once, under the chaperonage of the brougham, of the enormous coachman and diminutive groom, up the wide avenue she strolled.

The majority of women walk badly. It was a pleasure to watch this young person, and that pleasure Harry proceeded to enjoy. When she had stepped from the carriage, he had enveloped her with that look which strips from neck to knee. But she had not condescended to notice it, and now, her head erect, her nose in the air, her body unswayed, she passed along, disdainful, indifferent, and serene.

These airs affected him but mediocrally. It occurred to him that she was probably taking that promenade which succeeds the morning canter, and precedes the divertissements of the five o'clock, and in those divertissements he determined to participate.

How he was to manage it he did not bother himself to ask. Once he passed her, but, of course, she did not look his way. He dropped behind, yet in the dropping there was not so much as the quiver of an eyelid to betoken a consciousness of his impertinence.

Women admire the brave when they do not prefer the audacious. Harry recognized the beauty of the truth of that axiom, even though he omitted to formulate it. He wanted to be devilish. He longed to. Yet how, barring downright caddishness, is it possible to be devilish with a young person who not only offers no encouragement, but who, in addition to the chaperonage of a brougham, is chaperoning herself with airs of profound contempt?

Reflections of this order are not propitious to enterprise. Only the unexpected is. Then, precisely as it always happens in life, and sometimes in fiction, the unexpected occurred. The Rue de la Boëtie — seductive and significant name! — had been reached, and through the torrent of traps which of a May afternoon pours that way, the girl was attempting to cross the avenue.

Midway on that avenue is a refuge. Before she could land there a tricycle swooped suddenly. It was within an inch of her. But athletics serve one in some stead. Before that inch could be covered Harry grabbed her, lifted her off her feet, pulled her bodily back. She was in his arms, and he, with calm effrontery, was smiling in her face.

'Are you an heiress?' he asked. 'If so, you have got to marry me. You nearly had us both run over. After telling me to follow you, too ——'

'I told you nothing of the kind. I never spoke to you in my life.'

Furiously she shook herself free, and angrily looked about her. But in the torrent the brougham must have been submerged. It was nowhere in sight.

'And now that you don't seem to be able to take care of yourself,' Harry continued, 'and, what's more, as you seem to have no one to do it for you, I propose to take you home.'

'You will take yourself off,' the girl retorted, with the same show of splendid anger. 'I never saw you before. I never want to see you again.' And her eyes, that were porcelain blue, flashed mightily.

'That's just it,' Harry dulcetly interjected. 'If you were not so uncharitable you would help me. I am a poor orphan, and I need assistance.'

'What you need is a policeman,' the girl threw back. 'Now go find one, and let me alone.'

Caress a panther, and it will not necessarily rend you. The girl had shown her teeth. They were royal. But now from her voice the anger had gone. From her eyes the flash had subsided. Harry noted the change, and construed it properly. Château qui parle et femme qui écoute. From impudent he became resolute.

'Where are you stopping?' he asked.

At the question he stared deep into her eyes. She was fragrant as only a girl can be who has accounts all along the Rue de la Paix, and whose face is a wondering rose. As he stared at her she turned and looked much as the shipwrecked are rumored to do when in search of a sail. But in the seething maelstrom of the avenue, only tearing tilburys, scudding Stanhopes, and fleeting phaetons were discernible. The brougham was nowhere in sight, and helplessly she sighed and smiled.

'Across the way, at the Albe,' she answered at last, the point of her tongue just visible.

'Hurry, then, here's a chance.' And without further preliminaries, yet with two fingers on her elbow, Harry propelled her through a channel which a sergeant-de-ville had conveniently engineered.

'You know', he added, when ultimately the opposite shore was reached, 'that when they run you down here they fine you, too. That is the reason of my solicitude.'

'Then your solicitude may cease. This is my hotel. If you presume to follow me any further, there will be somebody to show you the door.'

'Why, I can see it from here, and a very fine door it is. Would you wish me to examine it more in detail?'

But at this he raised his hat. A cab had rattled up, and a gray-bearded Englishman, who had got from the cab, was addressing the girl.

'You are just in time,' she exclaimed. 'Lord Chudleigh, let me introduce a gentleman — whom I do not know.' And, with an expression that succeeded in being both diabolic and demure, she passed into the porte-cochére.

Harry's eyes accompanied her. Then, with a look of entire sweetness, he turned:

'Yes, there's the devil of it. I haven't the honor of knowing her, either. A locomotive was pouncing upon her a moment ago, and I took the liberty of saving her life. My name is Beamish,' he added, modestly.

'Hello! No relation to Josiah T.?'

'Unfortunately, his son.'

'Hello! Why unfortunately?'

'Oh, for a hundred reasons. I'll skip two or three. He wants me to marry. Wants, did I say? He is holding me up.'

'That's Josiah T. all over. He wants what he wants more than all others that want it, too. But, never mind. I'll have a talk with him. One good turn deserves another. Meanwhile, you might come in and give us all the facts in your melancholy case. My daughter must be expecting them. Yes?'

'Why, you are a brick,' Harry exclaimed. 'I had an idea, though, that your daughter was an American.'

'Yes? This way.'

Then, presently, Harry found himself au premier, in a canary-colored salon, staring again at the prettiest little girl in the world. She seemed but indifferently surprised to see him and but indifferently interested in the rather delayed introduction which ensued.

'Yes,' added Lord Chudleigh, when that ceremony had been effected. 'You might give him some tea. And some tears, too, Maud. Unless he marries somebody or other he will be cut off with a million. Yes. I'll be back directly.'

'He is a brick,' Harry announced, as the door closed. 'I just told him so. Now I may add that you are an angel.'

'And I may remark that you are very presuming.'

The girl was seated in a low chair. Her hat was gone, her gloves, too. She was playing with her fingers, the sunlight shuttling her hair, an image of Caprice retouched by Doucet. 'And so you are to be married, are you?'

'I hope I am,' Harry, with sudden rapture, replied.

'I would marry tomorrow if you would have me. Marry tomorrow!' he interrupted himself to exclaim: 'I would marry right now.'

'Nonsense, you are to do as you are told. Who is the lady?'

'An escaped lunatic.'

The girl nodded, with curious sympathy. 'You poor thing,' she murmured. 'No wonder I thought you needed protection. And you are such a dear,' she added, absently. 'I do think it a shame.'

Harry moved closer. 'Am I a dear?' he asked, in a little innocent voice. 'Tell me that I am.'

'You are a very enterprising young man, that's what you are,' she cried, releasing a hand he had caught. 'Can't you behave?'

But already Harry had retreated. From without there had come the sound of familiar voices, punctuated by an equally familiar wail.

'As I am a sinner,' he gasped; 'there's that tom-cat!'

'Don't be ridiculous. It is only some relatives of mine. By the way, didn't I see you this afternoon helping them into a cab?'

Harry, unnerved, unmanned, undone, was too abject for reply. The door had opened, and before him a horrible trio; the duchess, her daughter, and his father, stood.

'Hello!' and through a lateral entrance a bearded face emerged.

'Yes, Chudleigh, it is I,' the duchess announced. 'The butler fell dead, and while he was being removed Angelica suggested coming here, and that, I think, showed such a sweet disposition.'

'Seraphic! But where did you pick up Beamish?'

'Oho,' said the fat man, 'I stopped in for tea at your sister's, and when the butler dropped dead, as the duke was at the dentist's ——'

'And if that isn't Mr Harry,' the duchess interrupted. 'Angelica, did you see Mr Harry?'

Harry, at the moment, was crossing the room.

'How did you get here?' Mr Beamish, in a hurried whisper, hoarsely inquired of him, and as hoarsely continued: 'Don't you know that — er —that little fascination of our friend is but a slight nervous affection, which only shows itself when she is excited, and which, anyway, matrimony will cure?'

'When who is excited?' Maud had surged, a hand extended. 'Mr Beamish, since every one has forgotten to introduce us, I am Miss Morningside.'

'We were talking, Miss Morningside,' the plutocrat answered, with a bow, which he executed as though it were a feat, 'we were talking of your charming connection, the Lady Angelica, and I was asking this young man if he knew that she had consented to marry me. Yes, Me. We settled it just before the butler ——'

But the sentence was never completed. Harry exploded:

'Great Cæsar!' he cried. 'I don't wonder the poor devil dropped dead. But isn't that too jolly?' he added, turning to Maud. 'We shall be connections, too.'

'What? What's all this about matrimony?' Lord Chudleigh called out. 'I say, Beamish, you mustn't ballyrag that boy into marrying any one of your choosing. Give him his head.'

'Thank you, Lord Chudleigh,' Harry called back. 'But I wish you would give me your daughter instead.'

'His stepdaughter,' the duchess severely corrected. 'Before her mother married my brother she had lost her first husband, and that, I think, showed so much savoir faire.'

Apparently, Lord Chudleigh did too. 'What?' he exclaimed. 'Give you Maud?'

'He saved my life,' the young woman serenely suggested.

'Hello! So he did! So he did! Pulled you out from under a runaway baby carriage, I believe. Beamish, what do you say?'

'What do I say?' answered the stock rigger, who, with Wall street agility, had calculated to an eighth the value which this new vista of smartness unrolled, and who, in one swift, rapt vision beheld in his house a duke's daughter handing out grand pianos and polo ponies by way of cotillon favors, and an earl's step-daughter distributing diamond collars and four-in-hands. 'What do I say? Why, it rather strikes me that we'll corner the market; that we'll be top of the heap.'

'And that,' said the duchess, 'shows, I think ——'

Yet what it showed to the duchess no one seemed to heed. A maître d'hôtel, preceding a footman who was weighed down with tea things, had entered the salon, and was supervising their arrangement in a corner of the room.

During the progress of these solemnities Harry, who had been standing in the embrasure of a window with the prettiest little girl in the world, edged over to his father again.

'Did I understand you to say that that little fascination of the Lady Angelica only manifests itself when she is excited?'

'Well, what of it?'

'Miss Morningside and I have been talking it over, and we have decided on a wedding present for her, which, we think, may be of use.'

Mr Beamish sniffed with sudden suspicion. 'You are getting devilish thoughtful of others. What is it?'

'A nice little cage!'

'And it is thoughtful of us, isn't it?' Harry remarked, as a trifle overhurriedly, perhaps, he returned to where Miss Morningside stood.

'Yes, indeed; but let us think of ourselves,' that young woman answered, whereupon her hand was openly squeezed.

'Hello!' cried Lord Chudleigh. 'What's all this? Maud, come out of that window and pour the tea.'

'Yes,' said Mr Beamish, 'we don't want any more waiters falling dead. One is enough on a day like this. Isn't it?' he added, turning to Angelica.

And the duke's daughter, looking down at the carpet, blushed, as she answered: 'Meow.'

The Elixir of Love

The Elixir of Love

I AM married to a woman who is not my wife.' It was on a liner, after dinner. The big ship had lurched. Into the smoking-room where I sat Lord Silverbridge had lurched with it. He had dropped into a seat beside me. I had asked how he did. It was in answer to that question that he made this curious remark.

As he spoke he looked down and away and ran his long, thin fingers through his bright, thick hair.

'What!' I exclaimed.

'And she is one of your compatriots, too.'

Lady Silverbridge — formerly Miss Fanny Bunker — was a Bostonian. Of that I was perfectly aware. At her wedding I had sent with my felicitations a fish-knife. I had not been previously honored with her acquaintance. But Silverbridge I had known through a series of tolerably orgiac semesters at Heidelberg, where his name was merely Jones.

Through what miracles of Death such processions of relatives were mown that from nobody he had become peer, it is idle to burden this narrative. Yet the fact that we had worn identical student caps and fought identical student duels had eluded time; it had eluded, too, transitions and still survived. It was to this survival that I attributed the rather intimate confidence of his curious remark.

Of the purport of it I had not so much as an idea. The day previous I had embarked at Cherbourg for New York and found Silverbridge on board. It was then early in August. His marriage had taken place in London late in May. At the time I was on the Continent. It was the fish-knife that represented me. Subsequently the press supplied me with accounts of the wedding, of the bride's beauty as well. I never believe a word I read in the papers. But of the girl's beauty I knew by repute. In her picture I had seen that she embodied the ideal, filled the heart, and stirred it, too — just as Austin Dobson said of Autonoë — with pulse of Spring.

These things take long in the telling. But when Silverbridge made his curious remark, memory promptly ladled them out. I throw them in here to get rid of them.

'What!' I repeated.

Silverbridge looked up. 'Yes,' he presently resumed, 'it is beastly to boast, but I am up a bigger tree than any one you ever heard of. My wife is not my wife, and, though I am married to her, I am not her husband.'

At this, of course, possibilities of anterior entanglements suggested themselves. It occurred to me that when Silverbridge was Jones, he might, in some unhallowed moment, have gone and done it.

'You are not beating about the bush to tell me that there is another of them, are you?' I asked.

He turned to me quickly. 'How did you hit on it? Is it common — in the States, I mean?'

'Common! Common!' I murmured. 'I don't know that I should quite call it that. It seems to me devilish awkward. I haven't the Penal Code on the end of my fingers, but I fancy it must be ten years. How much do they give you in England?'

'For what?' he threw at me.

'Why, for bigamy,' I threw back.

He turned to me anew. 'I am not talking about bigamy.'

'Then what in thunder are you talking about?'

'Something worse.'

Smoke is a sedative. I hailed a steward, got a cigar, and proceeded to light it. Before the process was completed he was at me again.

'I have only one wife. That is to say, I have been married but once. But where my wife is I do not know.'

On the table before me was a passenger list. Already I had looked it over. Now I examined it once more. Among the S's was the following entry: 'Silverbridge, Graf und Gräfin mit Dienerschaft.'

'Isn't she on board?' I asked.

'No.'

'Then, without indiscretion,' I continued, handing him the list as I spoke, 'who is the lady mentioned here?'

At this he nodded to me, ran his fingers again through his hair, and made answer: 'There's the point. I do not know.'

'But,' I gasped, 'doesn't she know?'

'Yes, she knows.'

'Well, then, who does she say she is?'

'Miss Fanny Bunker.'

'But, confound it,' I cried, 'Miss Fanny Bunker is the girl you married.'

'Precisely,' he replied, and nodded again as though it ought now to be all perfectly clear. 'But then you see the Fanny Bunker whom I married and the Fanny Bunker who is on board are not the same.'

'Of course not,' I exclaimed. 'How could she be since she is now Lady Silverbridge. Previously she was a young girl. Now she is a married woman. That is difference enough.'

'The difference is wider than that,' he rejoined. 'Much wider. They are not the same person.'

I pitched my cigar away. 'Then will you please tell me how things got so damnably mixed?'

'Candidly, I can't.'

At that, in mounting irritation, I would have left him. It seemed to me that he was cracked. I was about to say as much. But something in the melancholy of his eyes prevented.

'No,' he added, 'I do not know how. But perhaps you can tell me. By the way, what was that stuff you used to stow at Heidelberg?'

'Psychology?'

'Yes, that's it. I thought of it when I saw you getting aboard. I thought, too, that because of it I might ask your advice. I am not boring you, am I?'

'Boring me! Give me the gist of this thing or you will drive me to drink.'

Silverbridge, however, was not to be hurried. He got a letter from his pocket, consulted it, consulted the ceiling, then, leaning forward, he made this extraordinary statement: 'There are two of her.'

I looked at him, but said nothing. After all, what was there to say? Yet, in my silence, there must have been the encouragement which he sought, for he ran on at once, quite volubly.

'It was in April we met. I cannot be sure, but I think between us it was love at first sight. I am sure, though, that I adored her at once. She exhaled all that is fetching in woman; simplicity, sympathy, sweetness, and strength. There was about her, too, an alertness, a vivacity, which I had never known. She went to my head. I think, too, I must have impressed her, for when I asked it was given. Our marriage was immediate. Somebody or other, a Frenchman I think, said that there are plenty of delightful marriages, but none that are delicious. The beggar was wrong. Ours was. But so appallingly brief! Four weeks, that is all. Yes, in four weeks she left me. One morning I awoke, aroused by a cry. At the other end of the room she was crouching and calling, "Where am I? Where am I?" And when I sprang up to go to her, she crouched yet further away, screaming, "Who are you? Who are you?"'

'The devil!' I muttered.

'You will understand in a moment what I did not. I assumed, of course — and it was horrible to assume it — that she had gone suddenly mad. But no, she was entirely rational, except in this, she denied any knowledge of or acquaintance with me. She denied that she was my wife. At first it was difficult to get her to believe even that she was in England. When

I convinced her of that she accepted the fact, but not the marriage. She said she had had no part in it. Meanwhile, it was obvious that she herself was totally different. Her speech and manner had altered. In no way was she the same. I got Simpson in. Simpson you know is ——'

'Physician-in-ordinary,' I interjected.

'Yes, and he asked me concerning her antecedents. I could tell him but little. She had come to London for the season with some friends, and so soon after I met her as I could manage it we were married by special license. I told you it was love at first sight. I told him so, too. He advised me to write to her people.'

'Well?'

'I did. Here is a letter from her father. In it he says that had he had the time, had our marriage not been so precipitate, he would have told me — what do you suppose? That within her are two souls. Is such a thing possible?'

'Goethe said it was. "Within me," he declared, "two souls reside."'

'But did they alternate? Her father says ——'

'That hers is a case of dual personality.'

'Yes, those are his very words. But is there such a thing?'

'No,' I answered, after a moment. 'It is a term serviceable merely for lack of a better one. You know, however, that the mind is dual. Ordinarily the two hemispheres of the brain work together. Now and again there is discord. The result is insanity. Less frequently while one of them is awake the other falls asleep, and vice versa. That, I suppose, is the case with Lady Silverbridge. What do you propose to do?'

'I have no choice. At her insistence and at her father's request I am taking her to Boston.'

'As Lady Silverbridge?'

'She won't admit that she is that. She declares that she is Miss Bunker.'

'Permit me. What is her attitude toward you?'

'H'm. Civil, but chilly. I think she hates me.'

'And you want my advice?'

To this question Silverbridge nodded hopelessly.

'Then,' I added, 'take her back as you took her from church.'

With the same hopeless look Silverbridge nodded again. 'Yes, it is easy to say, but nowadays there is no elixir of love.'

'Indeed there is,' I retorted. 'Given tact, opportunity, propinquity, and the desire and any man — who is a man — can change frigidity into affection; hate into love. But the ingredients must be fused. They constitute the elixir.'

To this Silverbridge assented. 'That's of course. But, for the elixir to work, the girl must be normal. Fanny isn't. She is abnormal.'

'I am not so sure,' I replied. 'And yet, if you come to that, are any of us normal? How often it happens that we do or say things that we had no intention of doing or saying, things which afterward we are unable to account for. In the course of every life there are such changes of personality that, could each phase of our existence he incarnated into distinct individuals and those individuals got together, so dissimilar and antipathetic would they be, that it is only a question of time when they would come to blows.

'No,' I presently resumed. 'We all change. It is a law of nature. But we change so gradually that the change is unperceived. Lady Silverbridge has changed, too, only the change in her instead of being gradual has been abrupt. But she is not, therefore, abnormal. For that matter nobody is. Every being, however constituted, has his or her raison d'être.'

'Yes,' said Silverbridge, after a moment. 'That is probably true. Yet, even so, I don't see how it helps me.'

'Why, very greatly,' I replied. 'The moment you recognize that the condition of your wife is normal you may proceed to administer the elixir. Your wife is a young and sensitive woman. Barring a violin there is nothing more impressionable than a woman who is young and sensitive. Take, by the way, the violin for analogy. In the hands of an artist it is vibrant with harmony. In the hands of an artisan it is discordant. Of course, there are violins so wretched that no artist could draw from them quavers other than cracked and thin. But, given a virtuoso and a Cremona, and what duos, what trios even, the conjunction will produce! A young and sensitive woman is a Cremona in flesh and blood. The harmonies, the duos and trios of which she is capable depend on the maestria of the man by whom she is approached. Now you, I will assume, are a virtuoso and your wife a violin. If you wish her to go with you to Boston as she went with you from church, treat her as an artist should.'

Silverbridge beckoned a steward and ordered beer.

'That is all very fine,' he remarked, when I stopped to draw breath. 'Very fine in theory, but in practice ——'

'In practice,' I interrupted, 'it is finer still. You know the ingredients of the elixir. These ingredients you have. You have but to compound them, feed her with them, and once more she is yours.'

The steward approached with the beer. Silverbridge swallowed it, student fashion, at a gulp.

'Were not Lady Silverbridge already your wife,' I resumed, the process which I am about to indicate would be perhaps inconvenient, certainly unconventional, but not impractical. As it is, it will appeal to you as being entirely proper, poetic to boot, and psychologic as well.'

Silverbridge looked at his empty glass and then inquiringly at me. But, though there was an inquiry in his eye, the melancholy and hopelessness in them abided.

'Go to her stateroom tonight,' I continued. 'Go there when she is asleep. Go there when she is in her first sleep. Then whisper your name in her ear, whisper it again. Then again. Whisper to her that she loves you. But be careful not to awake her. In an hour return and whisper anew. Then leave her. The breathing of your name and the suggestion in her ear will make her dream of you, and in that dream it may be that the two hemispheres of her brain will begin to work in unison, or it may be that the one that knew you will be aroused and the other submerged. But in any event, whichever Fanny Bunker awakes tomorrow that Fanny Bunker will be yours. Then it will depend but on you to renew the harmonies you created.'

I stood up to go. For a moment yet he detained me. His face, previously drear, now was flushed.

From his eyes the melancholy and hopelessness were departing.

'Is — is this receipt one of your own manufacture or — or ——'

'You will not find it in the pharmacopœia,' I answered. 'But you will find it sovereign.'

'It has been tried?'

'Again and again.'

'Successfully?'

'Always.'

At this Silverbridge got also from his seat. 'Thank you,' he said very gravely. 'Thank you. I, too, will try it.'

With that for the night we parted. The next day I looked for him. He did not seem to be about. On the morrow, on the promenade deck, I ran into him. At his side was a beauty.

'Let me introduce you,' he said.

As he spoke, he smiled. The beauty smiled also. That smile of his and of hers supplied me with obvious deductions.

An exchange of the usual platitudes ensued. But the deductions I was in haste to examine. I made them into a bundle which presently, after more platitudes, I took with me to the smoking-room. There, later, Silverbridge joined me.

'The prescription worked all right, did it not?' I asked.

'Like an essence of bonbons,' he answered. 'I am married now to a woman who is my wife.'

'But to which of them?'

'To both,' he luxuriously replied.

'Lady Silverbridge is certainly a host in herself,' I ventured to remark. 'But then, so too is every Cremona. So is every impressionable woman. Should she get away again ——'

'If she should,' Silverbridge, with hopeful and beautiful confidence, exclaimed, 'if she should, have I not the psychologist's stone in this lovely elixir!'

'You have something better than that,' I concluded. 'You have love's writ of habeas corpus.'

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NEW YORK
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FAIR HAVEN AND FOUL STRAND

The quarantine doctor was a man of five-and-sixty, well-preserved, short, slim and elastic, with a military bearing which recalled the fact that he had served in the Army Medical Corps. From birth he belonged to the eccentrics who feel uncomfortable in life and are never at home in it. Born in a mining district, of well-to-do but stern parents, he had no pleasant recollections of his childhood. His father and mother never spoke kindly, even when there was occasion to do so, but always harshly, with or without cause. His mother was one of those strange characters who get angry about nothing. Her anger arose without visible cause, so that her son sometimes thought she was not right in her head, and sometimes that she was deaf and could not hear properly, for occasionally her response to an act of

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kindness was a box on the ears. Therefore the boy became mistrustful towards people in general, for the only natural bond which should have united him to humanity with tenderness, was broken, and everything in life assumed a hostile appearance. Accordingly, though he did not show it, he was always in a posture of defence.

At school he had friends, but since he did not know how sincerely he wished them well, he became submissive, and made all kinds of concessions in order to preserve his faith in real friendship. By so doing he let his friends encroach so much that they oppressed him and began to tyrannise over him. When matters came to this point, he went his own way without giving any explanations. But he soon found a new friend with whom the same story was repeated from beginning to end. The result was that later in life he only sought for acquaintances, and grew accustomed to rely only upon himself. When he was confirmed, and felt mature and responsible through being declared ecclesiastically of age, an event happened which proved a turning-point in his life. He came home too late for a meal and his mother received him with a shower of blows from a stick. Without thinking, the young man raised his hand, and gave her a box on the ear. For a moment mother and son confronted each other, he expecting the roof to fall in or that he would be struck dead in some miraculous way. But nothing happened. His mother went out as though nothing had occurred, and behaved afterwards as though nothing unusual had taken place between them.

Later on in life when this affair recurred to his memory, he wondered what must have passed through her mind. She had cast one look to the ceiling as though she sought there for something—an invisible hand perhaps, or had she resigned herself to it, because she had at last seen that it was a well-deserved retribution, and therefore not called him to account? It was strange, that in spite of desperate efforts to produce pangs of conscience, he never felt any self-reproach on the subject. It seemed to have happened without his will, and as though it must happen.

Nevertheless, it marked a boundary-line in his life. The cord was cut and he fell out in life alone, away from his mother and domesticity. He felt as though he had been born without father and mother. Both seemed to him strangers whom he would have found it most natural to call Mr and Mrs So-and-so. At the University he at once noticed the difference between his lot and that of his companions. They had parents, brothers, and sisters; there was an order and succession in their life. They had relations to their fellow-men and obeyed secret social laws. They felt instinctively that he did not belong to their fold.

When as a young doctor he acted on behalf of an army medical officer for some time, he felt at once that he was not in his proper place, and so did the officers. The silent resistance which he offered from the first to their imperiousness and arbitrary ways marked him out as a dissatisfied critic, and he was left to himself.

In the hospital it was the same. Here he perceived at once the fateful predestination of social election, those who were called and those who were not called. It seemed as though the authorities could discern by scent those who were congenial to them. And so it was everywhere. He started a practice as a ladies' doctor, but had no luck, for he demanded straightforward answers to his questions, and those he never received. Then he became impatient, and was considered brutal. He became a Government sanitary officer in a remote part of the country, and since he was now independent of his patients' favour, he troubled himself still less about pleasing them. Presently he was transferred to the quarantine service, and was finally stationed at Skamsund.

When he had come here, now seventeen years ago, he at once began to be at variance with the pilots, who, as the only authorities on the island, indulged themselves in many acts of arbitrariness towards the inhabitants. The quarantine doctor loved peace and quietness like other men, but he had early learnt that warfare is necessary; and that it is no use simply to be passive as regards one's rights, but that one must defend them every day and every hour of the day. Since he was a new-comer they tried to curtail his authority and deprive him of his small privileges. The chief pilot had a prescriptive right to half the land, but the quarantine doctor had in his bay a small promontory where the pilots used to moor their private boats and store their fishing implements. The doctor first ascertained his legal rights in the matter, and when he found out that he had the sole right of using the promontory and that the pilots could store their fishing-tackle elsewhere, he went to the chief pilot and gave them a friendly notice to quit. When he saw that mere politeness was of no avail, he took stronger measures, had the place cleared and fenced off by his servants, turned it into a garden, and erected a simple pavilion in it. The pilots hailed petitions on the Government, but the matter was decided in his favour. The result was a lifelong enmity between him and the pilots. The quarantine doctor was shut in on his promontory and himself placed in quarantine. There he had now remained for seventeen years, but not in peace, for there was always strife. Either his dog fought with the pilots' dog, or their fowls came into his garden, or they ran their boats ashore on each other's ground. Thus he was kept in a continual state of anger and excitement, and even if there ever was quiet for a moment outside the house, inside there was the housekeeper. They had quarrelled for seventeen years, and once every week she had packed her things in order to go. She was a tyrant and insisted that her master should have sugar in all his sauces, even with fresh cod. During all the seventeen years she had not learnt how to boil an egg but wished the doctor to learn to eat half-raw eggs, which he hated. Sometimes he got tired of quarrelling, and then everything went on in Kristin's old way. He would eat raw potatoes, stale bread, sour cream and such-like for a whole week and admire himself as a Socrates; then his self-respect awoke and he began to storm again. He had to storm in order to get the salt-cellar placed on the table, to get the doors shut, to get the lamps filled with oil. The lamp-chimneys and wicks he had to clean himself, for that she could not learn.

" You are a cow, Kristin! You are a wretch who cannot value kindness. Do you like me to storm? Do you know that I abominate myself when I am obliged to get so excited. You make me bad, and you are a poisonous worm. I wish you had never been born, and lay in the depths of the earth. You are not a human being for you cannot learn; you are a cow, that you are! You will go? Yes, go to the deuce, where you came from!"

But Kristin never went. Once indeed she got as far as the steamer bridge, but turned round and entered the wood, whence the doctor had to fetch her home.

The doctor's only acquaintance was the postmaster at Fagervik, an old comrade of his student days, who came over every Saturday evening. Then the two drank and gossiped till past midnight and the postmaster remained till Sunday morning. They certainly did not look at life and their fellow-men from the same point of view, for the postmaster was a decided member of the Left Party, and the doctor was a sceptic, but their talk suited each other so well, that their conversation was like a part-song, or piece of music, for two voices, in which the voices, although varying, yet formed a harmony. The doctor, with his wider mental outlook, sometimes expressed disapproval of his companion's sentiments somewhat as follows:

"You party-men are like one-eyed cats. Some see only with the left eye, others with the right, and therefore you can never see stereoscopically, but always flat and one-sidedly."

They were both great newspaper readers and followed the course of all questions with eagerness. The most burning question, however, was the religious one, for the political ones were settled by votes in the Reichstag and came to an end, but the religious questions never ended. The postmaster hated pietists and temperance advocates.

"Why the deuce do you hate the pietists?" the doctor would say. "What harm have they done you? Let them enjoy themselves; it doesn't affect me."

"They are all hypocrites," said the postmaster dogmatically.

"No," answered the doctor, "you cannot judge, for you have never been a pietist, but I have, and I was—deuce take me—no hypocrite. But I don't do it again. That is to say—one never knows, for it comes over one, or does not—it all depends on——"

"On what?"

"Hard to say. Pietism, for the rest, is a kind of European Buddhism. Both regard the world as an unclean place of punishment for the soul.

Therefore they seek to counteract material influences, and in that they are not so wrong. That they do not succeed is obvious, but the struggle itself deserves respect. Their apparent hypocrisy results from the fact that they do not reach the goal they aim at, and their life always halts behind their teaching. That the priests of the church hate them is clear, for our married dairy farmers, card players and good diners do not love these apostles who show their unnecessariness and their defects. You know our clergy out there on the islands; I need not gossip about them, for you know. There you have the hypocrites, especially among the unfortunates, who after going through their examination have lost faith in all doctrines."

"Yes, but the pietists are enemies to culture."

"No, I don't find that. When I came to this island it was inhabited by three hundred besotted beasts who led the life of devils. And now—you see for yourself. They are not lovable nor lively, but they are, at any rate, quiet, so that one can sleep at night; and they don't fight, so that one can walk about the island without fear for one's life and limbs. In a word, the simplest blessings of civilisation were the distinct result of the erection of the prayer-house."

"The prayer-house which you never enter!"

"No, I don't belong to that fold. But have you ever been there?"

"I? No!"

"You should hear them once at any rate."

"Why?"

"You daren't!"

"Daren't! Is it dangerous?"

"So they say!"

"Not for me."

"Shall we wager a barrel of punch?"

The postmaster reflected an instant, not so much on the punch as on the doctor's suspecting him of cowardice.

"Done! I will go there on Friday. And you can carry the punch home in a boat, if you see anything go wrong with me."

The day came and the postmaster ate his dinner with the doctor, before he took his way, as agreed, to the prayer-house. He had told no one of his intention, partly because he feared that the preacher might aim at him, partly because he did not wish to get the reputation of being a pietist. After dinner he borrowed a box of snuff to keep himself awake, in spite of the doctor's assurance that he would not have any chance of sleeping. And so he went.

The doctor walked about his garden waiting for the result of the experiment to which many a stronger man than the postmaster had succumbed. He waited for an hour and a half; he waited two hours; he waited three. Then at last he saw the congregation coming out—a sign that it was over. But the postmaster did not appear. The doctor became uneasy. Another hour passed, and at last he saw his friend coming out of the wood. He came with a somewhat artificial liveliness and there was something forced in the springiness of his gait. When he saw the doctor, he made a slight wriggling movement with his legs, and shrugged his shoulders as though his clothes were too tight for him.

"Well?" asked the doctor. "It was tedious, wasn't it?"

"Yes," was the only answer.

They went down to the pavilion and took their seats opposite each other, although the postmaster was shy of showing his face, into which a new expression had come.

"Give me a pinch of snuff," said the doctor slyly.

The postmaster drew out the snuff-box, which had been untouched.

"You did not sleep?" resumed the doctor.

The postmaster felt embarrassed.

"Well, old fellow, you are not cheerful! What is the matter? Stop a minute!" The doctor indicated with his forefinger the space between his friend's eyes and nose as though he wished to show him something, "I believe . . . you have been crying!"

"Nonsense!" answered the postmaster, and straightened himself up. "But, at any rate, you know I am not easily befooled, but as I said that fellow is a wizard."

"Tell us, tell us! Fancy your believing in wizards!"

"Yes, it was so strange." He paused for a while and continued:

"Can you imagine it? He preached, as was to be expected, especially to me. And in the middle of his preaching he told me all the secrets which, like everyone else, I have kept most jealously hidden from my childhood's days and earlier. I felt that I reddened, and that the whole congregation looked at me as though they knew it also, which is quite impossible. They nodded, keeping time with his words and looking at me simultaneously. Yes, they turned round on their seats. Even regarded as witchcraft it was——"

"Yes, yes, I know it, and therefore I take care. What it is I don't know, but it is something which I keep at arm's length. And it is the same with Swedenborg. I sat once in an ante-room waiting for admission. Behind me stood a bookcase from which a book projected and prevented me from leaning my head back. I took the book down and it was part of Swedenborg's 'Arcana Cœlestia.' I opened it at random and—can you imagine it? in two minutes a subject which just then occupied my thoughts was explained to me in such detail and with an almost alarming amount of expert knowledge, that it was quite uncanny. In two minutes I was quite clear regarding myself and my concerns."

"Well, tell us about it."

"No, I won't. You know yourself that the life we live in thought is secret, and what we experience in secret. . . . Yes, we are not what we seem."

"No." His friend broke in hastily. "No; our actions are very easy to control, but our thoughts . . . ugh!"

"And thoughts are the deeds of the mind, as I have read somewhere. With our silent, evil thoughts we can infect others; we can transfer our evil purposes to others who execute them. Do you remember the case of the child murderess here ten years ago?"

"No, I was away then."

"She was a young children's nurse, innocent, fond of children, and had always been kind, as was elicited in examination. During the summer she was in the service of an actress up there in Fagervik. In August she was arrested for child murder. I was present in court when she was examined. She could not assign any reason for her action. But the judge wished to find out the reason, since she had no personal motive for it. The witnesses declared that she had loved the child, and she admitted it. At her second examination she was beside herself with remorse and horror at the terrible deed, but still behaved as though she were not really guilty, although she assumed the responsibility for the crime. At the third examination the judge tried to help her, and put the question, 'How did the idea come to you of murdering an innocent child whom you loved? Think carefully!' The girl cast a look of despair round the court, but when her eyes rested on the mother of the child, the actress, who was present for the first time, she answered the judge simply and naturally. 'I believe that my mistress wished it.' You should have seen the woman's face as these words were uttered. It seemed to me that her clothes dropped from her and she stood there exposed, and for the first time I thought of the abysmal depths of the human soul, over which a judge must walk with bandaged eyes, for he has no right to punish us in our interior life of thought; there we punish ourselves and that is what the pietists do."

"What you say is true enough, but I know also that my inner life is sometimes higher and purer than my outward life."

"I grant it. I have also an idea of my better ego, which is the best I know. . . . But tell me, what have you been doing for a whole hour in the wood?"

"I was thinking."

"You are not going to be a pietist, I suppose," broke in the doctor as he filled his glass.

"No, not I."

"But you no longer think the pietists are humbugs?"

To this the postmaster made no reply. But the drinking did not go briskly that evening, and the conversation was on higher topics than usual. Towards ten o'clock a terrible howling like that of wild beasts came over the Sound. It was from the garden of the hotel in Fagervik. Both the philosophers glanced in that direction.

"They are the crews of the cutters, of course," said the postmaster. "They are certainly fighting too. Yes, Fagervik is going down because of the rows at night. The holiday visitors run away for they cannot sleep, and they have thought of closing the beer-shops."

"And of opening a prayer-house, perhaps?"

This question also remained unanswered, and they parted without knowing exactly how they stood with each other.

Meanwhile the report spread in Fagervik that the postmaster had been to the prayer-house, and when the next afternoon he found himself in his little circle at the hotel with the custom-house officer and the chief pilot, they greeted him with the important news:

"So! you have become a pietist!"

The postmaster parried the thrust with a jest, swore emphatically that it was untrue, and as a proof emptied his glass more thoroughly than usual.

"But you have been there."

"I was curious."

"Well, what did they say?"

The postmaster's face darkened, and as they continued to jest it occurred to him that it was cowardly and contemptible to mock at what in his opinion did not deserve mockery. Therefore he said seriously and decidedly: "Leave me in peace! I am not a pietist, but I think highly of them."

That was tantamount to a confession, and like an iron curtain something fell between him and his friends. The expression of their faces changed, and they seemed all at once strange to him. It was the most curious experience he had had, and it was painful at the same time.

He kept away for a few days and seemed to be in an introspective mood. After that, by degrees, he resumed his old relations to them, came again to the hotel, and was gradually the same as before, but not quite. For he had "pricked up his ears" as the phrase goes.

The Saturday evening *tête-à-tête* were resumed as before. Now that the postmaster had become more serious, and showed interest in the deeper things of life, the doctor considered the time had come to communicate to him some of the stock of observations which he had made on human life, without any reference to his own particular experience. It was reported that he had been married and had children but no one knew exactly the facts of the case.

After he had satisfied himself that the postmaster liked being read to aloud, he ventured to suggest to him that they should spend the Saturday evenings in this higher form of recreation, after they had first exchanged opinions on the questions of the day, as suggested by the events of the week. The subject-matter read would then provide occasion for further explanations and expressions of thought.

Accordingly, on Saturday evening after supper, while the weather outside was cold and wet, they sat in the best room of the doctor's house. After searching for some time in a cupboard the doctor fished out a manuscript; at the last moment he hesitated—perhaps because it was autobiographical. In order to give himself courage he began with some preliminary remarks.

"I don't think that, in your recollection, I have expressed my views on a certain question—the most important one of our time. This question, which touches the deepest things in life, and is treated most superficially because it is taken up in a spirit of partisanship. . . . I mean——"

"Never mind! I know!"

"You are afraid of it, but I am not, for it is no question for me, but a riddle or an insoluble problem. You know that there are insoluble problems whose insolubility can be proved, but still men continue to investigate the unsearchable."

"Come to the point! Let us argue afterwards."

"And they have tried to make laws to regulate the behaviour of married people to each other; that is as though one should lay down rules for forming a friendship or falling in love. Well and good! I will tell you a story or two, and then we shall see whether the matter comes under the head of consideration at all, or whether the usual laws of thought apply in this case."

"Very well."

"One thing more. Don't think because quarantine is mentioned in the story that it is *my* story. That is buried deeper. Now we will begin."

THE DOCTOR'S FIRST STORY

THE DOCTOR'S FIRST STORY

I

They had gone off, taken the almost matter-of-course flight. An outcry rang through their social circle; people pressed their hands to the region of their heart, shuddered, lamented, condemned, according as each had figured to him or herself the terrible tragedy which had been played; two hearts had been torn asunder, two families raged against each other; there was a lonely husband and a deserted child; a desolate home, a career destroyed, entangled affairs which could not be put straight, and broken friendships. Two men were sitting in a restaurant and discussing the affair.

"But why did they run away? I think it disgusting!"

"On the contrary! I consider that ordinary decency requires that they should leave the field to the irreproachable husband; then at any rate they need not meet in the streets. Besides, it is more honest to be divorced than to form an illicit tie."

"But why could they not keep their faith and vows? We for our part hold out for life through grief and joy."

"Yes, and how does it look afterwards? Like an old bird's-nest in autumn! Other times, other manners."

"But it is terrible in any case."

"Not least for the runaways. Now it will be the turn of the man who took all the consequences on himself. He will be paid out."

"And so will she."

The story was as follows. The now divorced married pair had met three years before in a watering-place, and passed through all the stages of being in love in the normal way. They discovered, as usual, that they had been born for the special purpose of meeting each other and wandering through life hand in hand. In order to be worthy of her he gave up all doubtful habits and refined his language and his morals. She seemed to him an angel sent by God to open his eyes and to point him upwards. He overcame the usual difficulties regarding the publishing of the banns, convinced that those very difficulties were placed in his way in order to give him an opportunity of showing his courage and energy.

They read the scandalous anonymous letters which generally follow engagements together, and put them in the fire. She wept, it is true, over the wickedness of men, but he said the purpose of it was to test their faith in each other.

The period of their betrothal was one long intoxication. He declared that he did not need to drink any more, for her presence made him literally drunk. Once in a way they felt the weirdness of the solitude which surrounded them, for their friends had given them up, considering themselves superfluous.

"Why do people avoid us?" she asked one evening as they walked outside the town.

"Because," he answered, "men run away when they see happiness."

They did not notice that they themselves avoided intercourse with others, as they actually did. He, especially, showed a real dread of meeting his old bachelor friends, for they seemed to him like enemies, and he saw their sceptical grimaces, which were only too easy to interpret. "See! there he is caught! To think of the old rascal letting himself be hoodwinked!" etc. For the young bachelors were of the opinion then, as now, that love was a piece of trickery which sooner or later must be unmasked.

But the conversation of the betrothed pair kept them above the banalities of everyday life, and they lived, as people say rightly, above the earth. But they began to feel afraid of the solitude which surrounded them and drove them together. They tried to go among other people, partly from the need of showing their happiness, and partly to quiet themselves. But when after the theatre they entered a restaurant, and she arranged her hair at the glass in the hall, he felt as though she was adorning herself for strangers. And when they sat down at the table, he became instantaneously silent, for her face assumed a new expression which was strange to him. Her glances seemed to parry the looks of strangers. They both became silent, and his face wore an anxious expression. It was a dismal supper, and they soon left.

When they came out she asked, somewhat out of humour at being disappointed of a pleasure, "Are you vexed with me?"

"No, my dear, I cannot be vexed with you. But I bleed inwardly when I see young fellows desecrate you with their looks." So their visits to the restaurant ceased.

The weeks before the marriage were spent in arranging their future dwelling. They had discussed carpets and curtains, had interviewed workmen and shopmen, and in so doing had descended from their ideal heights. Now they wanted to go out to get rid of these prosaic impressions. So they went, but with that ominous silence when the heads of a pair feel empty and someone seems to walk between them. He tried to rally himself and put her in good spirits but unsuccessfully.

" I hang too heavily upon you," she said, and let go of his arm. He did not answer, for he really felt some relief. That annoyed her and she drew nearer the wall. The conversation was at an end, and they soon found themselves before her door.

" Good night," she said curtly.

" Good night," he replied with equal curtness, and they parted obviously to their mutual relief. This time there was no kiss in the passage and he did not wait outside the glass door to watch her slender figure move gracefully up the first flight of stairs.

He went down the street with an elastic gait and drawing a deep breath of relief. He felt released from something oppressive, which nevertheless had been charming for three months. Pulling himself together, he mentally picked up the dropped threads of a past which now seemed strong and sincere. He hurried on, his ego exulted, and both his arms, as they swung, felt like wings.

That the affair was over he felt no doubt, but he saw no reason for it, and with wideawake consciousness confronted a fact which he unhesitatingly accepted. When he came near his door he met an old friend whom, without further ado, he took by the arm, and invited to share his simple supper and to talk. His friend looked astonished, but followed him up the stairs.

They ate and drank, smoked and chatted till midnight, discussing every variety of topic, old reminiscences and affairs of State, the Reichstag and political economy. There was not a word regarding his betrothal and marriage, or even an allusion to them. It was a very enjoyable evening and he seemed to have gone back three months in his life. He noticed that his voice assumed a more manly tone, that he spoke his thoughts straight out as they came, without having to take the trouble to round off the corners of strong words to emphasise some expressions, and soften down others in order not to give offence. He felt as though he had found himself again, thrown off a strait-jacket, and laid aside a mask. He accompanied his friend downstairs to open the house-door.

"Well, you will be married in eight days," said the latter with the usual sceptical grimace. It was as though he had pressed a button and the door slammed to in answer.

When he came to his room, he felt seized with disgust; he took the things off the table, cleared up, swept the room, and then became conscious of what he had lost, and how low he had sunk.

He felt he had been unfaithful to his betrothed, because he had given his soul to another, even though that other was a man. He had lost something better than that which he thought he had gained. What he had found again was merely his old selfish, inconsiderate, comfortable, everyday ego, with its coarseness and uncleanness, which his friend liked because it suited his own.

And now it was all over, and the link broken for ever! The great solitude would resume its sway, the ugly bachelor life begin again. It did not occur to him to sit down and write a letter, for he felt it would be useless. Therefore he tried to weary himself in order to obtain sleep, soaked his whole head in cold water, and so went to bed. The little ceremony of winding up his watch made, to-night, a peculiar impression on him. Everything had to be renewed at night, even time itself. Perhaps her love only needed a night's rest in order to recommence.

When he awoke the following morning, the sun shone into the room. An indescribable feeling of quietness had taken possession of him, and he felt that life was good as it was, yes, better to-day than usual, for his soul felt at home again after a long excursion. He dressed himself and went to his office, opened his letters, read the newspaper, and felt quite calm all the time. But this unnatural calm began at last to make him uneasy. He felt an increasing nervousness and a feverishness over his whole body. The vacuum began to be filled again with her soul; the electric band had been stretched, and the stream cut off, but it was still there; there had only been a break in the current, and now all the recollections rushed upon him, all their beautiful and great experiences, all the elevated feelings and great thoughts which they had amassed together, all the dream-world in which they had lived, so unlike the present world of prose where they now found themselves.

With a feeling of despair he betook himself to his correspondence in order to conceal his emotions, and began to answer letters with calmness, order, and clearness. Offers were accepted on certain conditions, and declined on definite grounds. He went into questions of coffee and sugar, exchange prices and accounts with unusual clearness and decision.

A clerk brought him a letter, which he saw at once was from her.

"The messenger waits for an answer," he said.

Without looking up from his desk, the

merchant had at once decided and replied: "He needn't wait."

In that moment he had said to himself: "Explanations, reproaches, accusations—how can I answer such things?"

And the letter lay unopened while his business correspondence went on with stormy celerity.

When his fiancée had parted from him on the previous evening her first emotion had been anger—anger to think that he, the merchant, had dared to despise her. She herself belonged to an official's family and had dreamt of playing a rôle in society. His warm and faithful affection had made her gradually forget this. Since he was never weary of telling her what an ennobling influence she exercised on his life, and since she herself perceived how he became refined and beautiful under her hand, she felt herself to be a higher being. His steady veneration kindled her self-esteem and she grew and blossomed in the sunshine which his love spread around her. When that was suddenly extinguished, it grew cold and dark around her; she felt herself dwindle down to her original insignificance, shrivel and disappear. This discovery that she had been the victim of an error and that his love was the cause of her new life and the enlargement of her personality, aroused her hatred against the man who had given her such clear proof that her existence depended on him and on his love. Now that he was no longer her lover, he became the tradesman whom she despised.

"A fellow who sells coffee and sugar!" she said to herself, as she fell asleep, "I could change him for a better one."

But when she awoke after a good night's sleep, she felt alarmed at the disgrace of being given up. A broken engagement, after two offers, would always cast a shadow over her life and make it difficult to procure another fiancé.

In a spiteful mood she sat down to write the letter, in which in a lofty, insulting tone she demanded an explanation, and at the same time asked him to come and see her.

When the messenger returned with the news that there was no answer she fell in a rage, and prepared to go out. She intended to find him in his office, where she had never yet been, and before the eyes of his clerks throw his ring on the ground to show how deeply she despised him. So she went.

She stood outside the door and knocked. But since no one opened or answered she entered and stood in the hall. Through the glass pane of the inner door she saw her betrothed bending over the large ledger, his face intent and serious. She had never seen him at work before. And when at work every man, even the most insignificant, is imposing. Sacred work, which makes a man what he is, invested his appearance with the dignity of concentrated strength, and she was seized with a feeling of respect for him which she could not throw off.

Just then he was inspecting in the ledger the entries of the expenses of furnishing their house.

They had absorbed his savings during the ten years he had been in business, and though not petty-minded, he thought with sorrow and bitterness, how they were all thrown away. He sighed and looked up in order not to see the tell-tale figures. Then, all of a sudden, he noticed behind the glass pane of the door, like a crayon drawing in a frame, a pale face and two large eyes full of an expression of pain and sympathy. He rose and stood reverently, mute in his great, virile grief, interrogative and trembling. Then he saw in her looks how the lost love had returned, and with that all was said.

When after a while they were walking past Skeppsholm, bright with their recovered happiness, he asked: " What happened to us yesterday? " (He said " us " for he did not wish to raise the question whose fault it was.)

" I don't know; I cannot explain it; but it was the most terrible experience I have had. We will never do it again!"

" No! we will never do it again. And now, Ebba, it is for our whole lives, you and I!"

She pressed his arm, fully convinced that after this fiery trial, nothing in the world could separate them, so far as it depended on themselves.

II

And they were married. But instead of hiding their happiness in their beautiful clean home, they set out on a journey among strange, indifferent, curious, and even hostile people. Then they went from hotel to hotel, were stared at at tables d'hôte, got headaches in museums, and in the evening were dumb with fatigue and put out of humour by mishaps.

Torn away from his work and his surroundings, the industrious man found it difficult to collect himself. When his thoughts went back to the business matters which he had left in the hands of others, he was inattentive and tiresome. They both longed for home, but were ashamed to return and to be received with ridicule.

The first week they occupied the time by talking over the recollections of their engagement; during the second week they discussed the journeys of the first. They never lived in the present but in the past. When there was an interval of dullness or silence he had always comforted her with the thought that their intercourse would be easier when they had amassed a store of common memories, and had learnt to avoid each other's antipathies. Meanwhile, out of consideration, they had borne with these and suppressed their own peculiarities and weaknesses as well-brought-up people usually do. This led to a feeling of restraint and being on one's guard which was exhausting; and the time had come for making important discoveries. Since he possessed more self-control than she did, he was careful not to say too much, but concealed one inclination and habit after another, while she revealed all hers. As he loved her, he wished to be agreeable, and therefore learned to be silent. The result was that with all her inherited habits, peculiarities, and prejudices she had so insinuated herself into his life that he began to feel himself attenuated and annihilated.

One evening the young wife was seized with a sudden desire to praise her sister, a hateful coquette, whom her husband disliked because she had tried, from selfish motives, to break their engagement. He listened to his wife in respectful silence, now and then murmuring an indistinct assent. At last his wife's praise of her sister mounted to a pæan, and though he thought her affection for her relatives a fine trait in her character, he could not entirely place himself in her skin nor see with her eyes. So he took refuge in the kind of silence which is more eloquent than plain words. This silence was accompanied by a gnawing of the lips and a violent perspiration. All the words and opinions he had suppressed found mute expression in these movements of his lips—he merely " marked time " as actors say—and the breaths which were not used in forming words, he emitted through his nose. Simultaneously the pores of his skin opened as so many safety-valves for his suppressed emotions, and it became really unpleasant to have him at the table.

The young wife did not conceal her annoyance, for she feared no revenge. She made an ugly gesture, which always ill becomes a woman; she held her nose with both fingers, looking around to those present as if to ask whether she was not right!

Her husband became pale, rose, and went out. Several people were sitting close by who witnessed the unpleasant scene. When he came out on the streets of the foreign town, he unbuttoned his waistcoat and breathed freely. And then his thoughts took their own course ruthlessly.

"I am becoming a hypocrite simply out of consideration for her. One lie is piled up on another, and some day it will all come down with a crash. What a coarse woman she is! And it was from her that I believed I should learn and be refined into a higher being. It is all optical delusion and deceit. All this 'love' is merely a piece of trickery on the part of nature to dazzle one's sight."

He tried to picture to himself what was now happening in the dining-room. She would naturally weep and appeal with her eyes to those present as if to ask whether she was not very unfortunate with such a husband. It was indeed her habit so to appeal with her eyes, and when he expected an answer from her, she always turned her looks on those around as if asking for help against her oppressor. He was always treated as a tyrant, although out of pure kindness he had made himself her slave. There was no help for it!

He found himself down by the harbour, and caught sight of the swimming-baths—that was just what he wanted. Quickly he plunged into the sea, and swam far out into the darkness. His soul, tortured by mosquito-stings and nettle-pricks, was able to cool itself, and he felt how he left a wake of dirt behind him. He lay on his back and gazed at the starry sky, but at the same moment heard a whistling and splashing behind him. It was a great steamer coming in, and he had to get out of the way to save his life. He made for the lamp-lit shore and saw the hotel with all its lights.

When he had dressed, he felt an unmeasured sorrow—sorrow over his lost paradise. At the same time all bitterness had passed away.

In this mood he entered his room and found his wife seated at the writing-table. She rose and threw herself into his arms without a word of apology; naturally enough he did not desire it, and she had no idea of having done wrong.

They sat down and wept together over their vanished love, for that it had gone there was no doubt. But it had gone without their will, and they sorrowed over it, as over some dear friend which they had not killed but could not save. They were confronted by a fact before which they were helpless; love the good genius who magnifies every trifle, rejuvenates what is old, beautifies what is ugly, had abandoned them, and life stretched before them in naked monotony.

But it did not occur to them that they would be separated or were separated, for their grief itself was an experience they shared, which held them together. They were also united in a common grudge against Fate, which had so deceived them in their tenderest emotions. In their great dejection they were not capable of such a strong feeling as hate. They only felt resentment and indignation at Fate, which was their scapegoat and lightning-conductor.

They had never talked so harmoniously and so intimately before, and while their voices assumed a more affectionate tone, they formed a firm resolve to go home and commence their domestic life. He talked himself into a state of enthusiasm at the thought of home, where one could exclude all evil influences, and where peace and harmony would reign. She also dilated on the same topic with similar warmth till they had forgotten their sorrow. And when they had forgotten it, they smiled as before, and behold! love was again there, and not dead at all; its death was also a delusion and so was all their grief.

III

He had realised his youthful dream of a wife and a home, and for eight days the young wife also thought that her dream had come true. But on the ninth day she wanted to go out.

"Where?" he asked.

"Say, yourself!"

No, she must say. He proposed the opera, but Wagner was being performed there, and she could not bear him. The theatre? No, there they had Maeterlinck, and that was silly. He did not wish to go to an operetta, for they always ridiculed what he now regarded as sacred. Nor did he like the circus, where there were only horses and queer women.

So the discussion went on and they privately discovered a great quantity of divergences in tastes and principles. In order to please her, he proposed an operetta, but she would not accept the sacrifice. He suggested that they should give a party, but then they discovered that there was no one to invite, for they had separated from their friends, and their friends from them.

So they sat there, still in harmony, and considered their destiny together, without having yet begun to blame each other. They stayed at home, and felt bored.

Next day, the same scene was repeated. He now saw that his happiness was at stake; therefore he took courage, and said in a friendly way but decidedly, "Dress yourself and we will go to an operetta." She beamed, put on her new dress, and was quickly ready. When he saw her so happy and pretty, he felt a stab in his heart, and thought to himself, "Now she brightens up, when she can dress for others and not for me." When he then conducted her to the theatre, he felt as though he were escorting a stranger, for her thoughts were already in the auditorium, which was her stage, where she wished to appear, and where she could now appear under her husband's escort without being insulted.

Since they could already divine each other's thoughts, this alienation, while they were on the way, changed into something like hostility. They longed to be in the theatre in order to find something to divert their emotions, though he felt as though he were going to an execution.

When they came to the ticket-office there were no tickets left.

Then her face changed, and when she looked at him, and thought she saw an expression of satisfaction, which possibly was latent there, she broke out, "That pleases you?"

He wished to deny it, but could not, for it was true. On the way home he felt as though he were dragging a corpse with him, and that a hostile one.

The fact that she had discovered his very natural thought, which he had self-denyingly repressed, hurt him like a rudeness, for one has no right to punish the thoughts of another. He would have borne it more easily if there had been no tickets left, for he was already accustomed to be a scapegoat. But now he lamented over his lost happiness, and that he had not the power to amuse her.

When she observed that he was not angry, but only sad, she despised him. They came home in ominous silence; she went straight to her bedroom and shut the door. He sat down in the dining-room, where he lit the lamps and candles, for the darkness seemed to be closing round him.

Then he heard a cry from the bedroom, the cry of a child, but of a grown one. When he came in he saw a sight which tore his heart. She was on her knees, her hands stretched towards him, wailing as she wept, "Don't be angry with me, don't be hard; you put out the light round me, you stifle me with your severity; I am a child that trusts life and must have sunshine."

He could find no answer, for she seemed sincere. And he could not defend himself, for that meant arraigning her thoughts, which he also could not do.

Dumb with despair, he went into his room and felt crushed. He had pillaged her youth, shut her up, torn out her joy by the roots. He had not the light which this tender flower needed, and she withered under his hand. These self-reproaches broke down all the self-confidence he had hitherto possessed; he felt unworthy of her love, or of any woman's, and felt himself a murderer who had killed her happiness.

After he had suffered all these pangs of conscience he began to examine himself calmly and with sober common sense.

"What have I done?" he asked himself. "What have I done to her? All the good that I could; I have done her will in everything. I did not wish to go out in the evening, when I had come home after the work of the day, and I did not wish to see an operetta. An operetta was formerly a matter of indifference to me, but now it is distasteful, since through my love for her I have entered another sphere of emotion which I do not hesitate to call a higher one. How foolish of me! I had the idea that she would draw me out of the mire, but she draws me down; she has drawn me down the whole time. Then it is not she but my love which draws upward, for there is a higher and a lower. Yes, the sage was right who said, 'Men marry to have a home to come to, women marry to have a home to go out of.' Home is not for the woman but for the man and the child. All women complain of being shut up at home, and so does mine, although she goes about the whole morning paying visits, and haunting cafés and shops."

He began to work his way out of this slough of despond, and found himself on the side where the fault was not. But again he saw the heart-rending spectacle of his young wife on her knees begging him, with outstretched hands, not to kill her youth and brightness with his severity. Since it was foreign to his nature to act a part, he felt sure that she was not doing so, and felt again like a criminal, so that he was tempted to commit suicide, for the mere fact of his existence crushed her happiness.

But again his sense of justice was aroused, for he had no right to take the blame on himself when he did not deserve it. He was not hard but he was serious, and it was just his seriousness which had made the deepest impression on the young girl and decided her to prefer him to other frivolous young men. He had not wished to kill her joy; on the contrary he had done everything in his power to procure for her the quiet joys of domesticity; he had not even wished to deny her the ambiguous pleasure of the operetta, but had sacrificed himself and accompanied her thither. What she had said was therefore simply nonsense. And yet her grief had been so deep and sincere. What was the meaning of it?

Then came the answer. It was the girl's leave-taking of youth—which was inevitable. It was therefore as natural as it was beautiful—this outbreak of despair at the brevity of spring. But he was not to blame for it, and if his wife perhaps in a year was to become a mother, it was now the right time to bid farewell to girlish joys in order to prepare for the higher joys of maternity.

He had, therefore, nothing to reproach himself with, and yet he did reproach himself with everything. With a quick resolve, he shook off his depression and went to his wife, firmly determining not to say a word in his defence, for that meant extinguishing her love, but simply to invite her to reconciliation without a reckoning.

He found his wife on the point of being weary of solitude, and she would have welcomed the society of anyone, even that of her husband, rather than be quite alone.

Then they came to an agreement to give a party and to invite his friends and hers, who would be sure to come. This evening their need for domestic peace and comfort was so mutual that they agreed, without any difficulty, who should be invited and who not.

They closed the day by drinking a bottle of champagne. The sparkling drink loosened her tongue and now she took the opportunity to make him gentle and jesting reproaches for his egotism and discourtesy towards his wife. She looked so pretty as she raised herself on tiptoe above him, and she seemed so much greater and nobler when she had rolled all her faults upon him, that he thought it a pity to pull her down, and therefore went to sleep laden with all the defects and shortcomings which he had taken on himself.

When he awoke the next morning he lay still in order to think over the events of the past evening. And now he despised himself for having kept silence and refrained from defending himself. Now he perceived how the whole of their life together was built upon his silence and the suppression of his personality. For if he had spoken yesterday, she would have gone—she always threatened to go to her mother when he "ill-treated" her, and she called it "ill-treatment" every time that he was tired of making himself out worse than he was. Here they were building on falsity, and the building would collapse some day when he ventured on a criticism or personal remark regarding her.

Reverence, worship, blind obedience—that was the price of her love—he must either pay it, or go without it.

The party took place. The husband, as a good host, did all he could to efface himself and bring his wife into prominence. His friends, who were gentlemen, behaved to her in their turn with all the courtesy which they felt was due to a young wife.

After supper music was proposed. There was a piano in the house, but the wife could not play, and the husband did not want to. A young doctor undertook the task, and since he had to choose his own programme, he had resort to his favourite, Wagner. The mistress of the house did not know what he was playing but did not like the deep seriousness of it. When at last the thunder ceased, her husband sat uneasily there, for he could surmise what was coming.

As a ladylike hostess, she had to say something. She thought a simple " thanks " insufficient, and asked what the music was.

Then it came out—Wagner!

Her husband felt the look which he feared, which told him that he was a traitor who perhaps had wished to entice her to praise in ignorance " the worst music which she knew." During the time of their engagement she had certainly listened attentively to her fiancé's long speeches in defence of Wagner, but immediately after their marriage, she had declared openly that she could not bear him. Therefore her husband had never played to her, and she feigned not to know that he could play. But now she felt insidiously surprised, and her husband received the before-mentioned look which told him what he had to expect.

The guests had gone, and husband and wife sat there alone.

In his father's house he had learnt never to speak anything but good of departed guests, but rather to be silent. She had also heard something of the kind, but here she felt no need of restraint. So now she began to criticise his friends; they were, to put it briefly, tedious.

He gnawed his cigar in silence, for to dispute about likings and taste in this case would be unreasonable.

But she also considered them discourteous. She had been told that young men should say pleasant things.

"Did they venture to say anything unpleasant?" he asked, feeling uneasy lest anyone should have forgotten himself.

"No, not exactly."

Then came a shower of petty criticisms; someone's tie was not straight, another had too long a nose, another drawled, and then, "the fellow who played Wagner!"

"You are not kind," said her husband with a lame attempt to defend his friends.

"Yes! and the friends you trust in! You should only have heard and seen the words and looks which I heard and saw. They are false to you."

He continued to smoke and kept silence, but he thought how low he had sunk to deny his old and tried friends; how despicable it was to plead for forgiveness with his eyes for the performance of Wagner. His thoughts ran parallel with her loud chatter, and he spoke them in silence.

"You despise my friends because they do not court their friend's wife, do not pay her little compliments on her figure and dress; and you hate them because you feel how my strength grows in the circle of their sympathies for me. You hate them as you hate me, and would hate anyone else who was your husband."

She must have felt the effect of these thoughts, for her volubility slackened, and when he cast a glance at her, she seemed to have shrunk together. Immediately afterwards she rose, on the pretext that she felt freezing. As a matter of fact, she was trembling and had red flames on her cheeks.

That night he observed for the first time that he had at his side an ugly old woman who had enamelled her face with bright cosmetics and plaited her hair like a peasant woman.

She did not bother herself to appear at her best before him but was already free and easy and cynical enough to make herself repugnant by disclosing the unbeautiful secrets of the toilet.

Then for a moment he was released from his enchantment, and continued to think of flight till sleep had pity on him.

A couple of weeks passed in dull silence. He could not get rid of the thought that it was a pity about her, and when she was bored, it was his fault for the moment, because he was her husband—for the moment. To seek for others' society was now no longer possible, since his friends had been rejected, and she had no more pleasure in her own. They tried to go out each his own way but always returned home.

"You find it hard to be away from me, in spite of all!" she said.

"And you?" he answered.

She remained compliant and indifferent, no longer angry, so that they could talk, i.e. he ventured to answer.

"My jailor!" she said on one occasion.

"Who is in jail, you or I?" he answered.

When they perceived that they were each other's prisoners, they smiled at the relationship and began to examine the witchcraft of which they were victims. They went back in memory and lived over again the engagement period and their wedding journey. Consequently they lived always in the past, never in the present.

Then came the great moment he had waited for as a liberation—the announcement of her expecting to be a mother. Her longings would now have an object, and she would look forward instead of backward. But even here he had miscalculated.

Now she was angry with him, for her beauty would wither away, and it was no use his trying to comfort her by saying she would get up rejuvenated with recovered beauty, and that the crowning happiness awaited her. She treated him like a murderer, and could not look at him for his mere scent aroused her dislike. In order to obtain light on the matter, he asked their doctor. The latter laughed and explained to him that in such cases women always thought they smelt something;—this was either pure imagination or a physical perversion of the olfactory nerve.

When at last this stage was over, a certain calm succeeded which he was short-sighted enough to enjoy. Since he was now sure of having his wife in the house he perhaps showed that he was happy and thankful for it. But he should not have done so, for now she saw the matter from a new point of view.

"Ah! now you think you have me fast, but just wait till I am up again!"

The look which accompanied the threat gave him to understand what would happen. Now he began a battle with himself whether he should await the arrival of the child or go away first, in order to avoid the wrench of parting from it.

Since the married pair had entered into such a close relationship that one could hear the thoughts of the other, he could keep no secrets from her which she did not seize upon forthwith.

"I know well enough that you contemplate deserting us and casting us on the street."

"That is strange," he remarked; "it is you who have threatened the whole time to go off with the child, as soon as it came. So whatever I do is wrong; if I stay you go, and then I am both unhappy and ridiculous; if I go you are the martyr, and I am unhappy and a scoundrel to boot! That comes of having to do with women!"

How they got through the nine months was to him a puzzle. The last part of the time was the most tolerable, for she had begun to love the unborn child, and love imparted to her a higher beauty than she had before. But when he told her so, she did not believe him, and when she observed that he was lulling himself to sleep with dreams of perpetual happiness by her side she broke out again, saying: "You think you have got me safe now."

"My dear," he answered, "when we vowed to each other to be man and wife, I believed that I would belong to you and you to me, and I hoped that we should hold together so that the child should be born in a home, and be brought up by its father and mother."

And so on *ad infinitum*.

The child came, and the mother's joy was boundless. Ennui had disappeared and the man breathed freely, but he should have done so more imperceptibly. For two sharp eyes saw it and two keen looks said: "You think that I am tied by the child!"

On the third day the little one had lost the charm of novelty and was handed over to a nurse. Then dressmakers were summoned. Now he knew what was coming. From that hour he went about like a man condemned to death, waiting for his execution. He packed two travelling-bags which he hid in his wardrobe, ready to fly at the given signal.

The signal was given two days after his wife got up. She had put on a dress of an extremely showy cut and of the colour called "lamp-shade."

He took her out for a walk and suffered unspeakably when he saw that she whom he loved, attracted a degree of attention which he found obnoxious. Even the street urchins pointed with their fingers at the overdressed lady.

From that day he avoided going out with her. He stayed at home with the child, and lamented that he had a wife who made herself ridiculous.

Her next step to freedom was the riding-school. Through the stable the doors to society were opened for her. By means of horses one made acquaintances in the upper circles. Horses and dogs form the transition stage to the world from which one peers down in order to be able to discover the pedestrians on the dusty highways. The rider on horseback is six ells high instead of three, and he always looks as though he wished that those who walk should look up to him. The stable also was her means of introduction to a lieutenant who was a baron. Their hearts responded to each other, and since the baron was a clean-natured man, he decidedly refused to go through the stages of guest and friend of the house. Therefore they went off together, or rather, fled.

Her husband remained behind with the child.

IV.

The baron jumped into the Stockholm express at Södertelje where he had arranged to meet her. Everything had been carefully arranged for them to be alone together at last, but Fate had other designs. When the baron entered the railway carriage he found his beloved sitting wedged in tightly among strangers, so tightly that there was no room for him. A glance in the adjoining coupé showed him that it was full also, and he had to stand in the corridor. Rage distorted his face, and when he tried to greet her with a secret and loving smile, he only showed his back teeth, which she had never seen before. To make matters worse, he had, in order not to be noticed, put on mufti. She had never seen him in this, and his spring coat looked faded, now that it was autumn. Some soft summer showers in the former year had caused the cloth to pucker near the seams, so that it lay in many small wave-like folds. Since it had been cut according to the latest fashion it gave him the appearance of having sloping shoulders which continued the neck down to the arms with the same ignoble outlines as those of a half-pint bottle. He perspired with rage, and a fragment of coal had settled firmly on his nose. She would like to have jumped up and with her lace handkerchief wiped away the black smut but dared not. He did not like to look at her for fear of displeasing her, and therefore remained standing in the corridor with his back towards her.

When they reached Katrineholm they had to dine if they did not wish to remain hungry till evening. Here the man and the hero had to show himself, and stand the ordeal or he was lost. With trembling calves and puckered face he followed his lady out of the train and across the railway lines. Here he fell on his knee, so that his hat slipped to the back of his head and remained sticking there like a military cap. But the position which made the latter look smart did not suit the unusual hat. In a word it was not his good day, and he had no luck.

When they entered the dining-saloon, they looked as though they had quarrelled inwardly, as though they despised each other, were ashamed before each other, and mutually wished themselves apart.

His nerves were entirely out of order, and he could not control a single muscle. Without knowing what he was doing, he pushed her forward to the table saying, "Hurry up!"

The table was already surrounded by passengers, who fell on the viands in scattered order and therefore could not open their ranks. The baron made a sally and finally succeeded in seizing a plate, but as he wedged in his arm to get a fork, his hand encountered another hand which belonged to the person he least of all wished to meet just then.

It was his senior officer, a major who presided at military examinations.

At the same moment a whisper passed through the crowd.

They were recognised! He stood there as though naked among nettles. His neck swelled so unnaturally and grew so red that his cheeks seemed to form part of it. He could not understand how people's looks could have the effect of gun-bullets. He was literally fusilladed and collapsed. His companion vanished from his mind; he could only think of the major and the military examination which might destroy his future.

But she had seen and understood; she turned her back on everyone and went out. She got into the wrong coupé but it was empty. He came afterwards and they were alone at last.

"That's a nice business, isn't it?" he hissed, striking his forehead. "To think of my letting myself be enticed into such an adventure! And the major too! Now my career is at an end!"

That was the theme which was enlarged on with variations till Linköping. Hunger and thirst both contributed their part to it. It was terrible.

After Linköping they both felt that the mutual reproaches they had hitherto held back must find a vent. But just at the right moment they remembered her husband and attacked him. It was his fault; he was the tyrant, the idiot of course, "a fellow who played Wagner," a devil. It was he who had given the major a hint, no doubt.

"Yes, I believe you," said she with the firmest conviction.

"Do you? I know it," answered the baron. "They meet on the Stock Exchange, where they speculate in shares together. And do you know what I begin to suspect? Your husband, the 'wretch' as we call him, has never loved you."

The wife considered a moment. Whether it was that her husband's love was indubitable, or that it was necessary to suppose that he loved her, if she was to have the honour of having made a fool of him—enough, he must have loved her, since she was so lovable.

"No! now you are unjust," she ventured to say. She felt herself somewhat elevated by being able to speak a good word of an enemy, but the baron took it as a reproach against himself and recommenced.

"He loved you? He who shut you up and would not accompany you to the riding-school! He——"

The safety-conductor seemed used up, and threatened to deflect the lightning to one side in a dangerous way. So they took up a new thread of conversation—the question of food. Since this could not be settled before Naujö, which was still half a day distant, they soon dropped it again. In her extremity, and carried away by a torrent of thoughts and emotions which she could not resist, she hazarded a conjecture as to how her child was. To this his answer was a yawn which split his face like a red apple to the uvula where some dark molars resembled the core of it. Gradually he let himself slide down into a reclining attitude on the sofa, but remembering that he ought to make some apology for his unseemly behaviour, he yawned and said: "Excuse me, but I am so sleepy."

Immediately afterwards he went to sleep, and after a time he snored. Since she was no longer under the influence of his looks and words, she could reflect quietly again, see who her travelling companion was, and began, involuntarily, to institute comparisons. Her husband had never behaved like this; he was refined compared with the baron, and was always well-dressed.

The baron, who had drunk much punch the day before, began now to perspire and smelt of vinegar. Besides that, he always had a stable-like smell about him.

She went out into the corridor, opened a window, and as though released from enchantment, she saw the whole extent of her loss and the terrible nature of her position. As the spring landscape swept past, a little lake with willows and a cottage, she remembered vividly how she had dreamt of a summer holiday with the child. Then she broke into weeping, and tried to throw herself out but was held back. She remained standing a long time, and stamped with her feet as though she wished to stop the train and make it go backwards. All the time she heard his snoring, like grunts from a pigsty at feeding-time. And for this . . . creature, she had left a good home, a beautiful child, and a husband.

The snoring ceased, and the baron began to employ his recuperated thinking faculties in considering the situation and settling his future. He did not know how to be sad; instead of that he became angry. When he saw her holding her handkerchief to her eyes, he got in a rage, and took it as a personal reproach. But quarrelling was tedious and unpleasant; therefore assuming a light tone, and caressing her as one might a horse, he clicked with his tongue and said: "Cheer up, Maja!"

Two such opposite moods, in colliding, cut each other and each fell on its own side of the knife. A dead silence was the result. They were no longer one person, but two, irrevocably two, who did not belong together.

Yet another half-day in wretchedness and boredom; a night with changes of train in the darkness, and at last they were in Copenhagen. There they were unknown and had no need to feel embarrassed. But when they entered the dining-saloon, she began to pass the "searchlight" of her looks, as he called it, over all those present, so that when the baron looked at her he never saw her eye except in profile. At last he became angry and kicked her shin under the table. Then she turned away and appealed with her eyes to the company. She could not look at him—so hateful did he seem to her. Upstairs in their room the corks were drawn out. They reached the stage of recriminations. His spoilt career was her fault . . . she had lost her child and home through him. So it went on till past midnight when sleep had mercy on them.

Then next morning they sat at the breakfast-table, silent and ghastly to look at. She remembered her honeymoon journey and very much the same situation. They had nothing to say to each other, and he was as tedious as her husband had been. They kept silence and were ashamed of being in each other's presence. They were conscious of their mutual hatred, and poisoned each other with nerve-poison.

At last the deliverer came. The waiter approached with a telegram for the baron, who opened and read it at a glance. He seemed to consider, cast a calculating glance at his enemy, and after a pause said: "I am recalled by the commanding officer."

"And mean to leave me here?"

He changed his resolve in a second: "No, we will travel back together." A plan suggested itself and he told her of it. "We will sail across to Landskrona; there no one knows you, and you can wait for me."

The idea of sailing had a smack of the adventurous and heroic about it, and this trifle outweighed all other considerations. She was kindled, kindled him, and they packed at once. The prospect of leaving her, for however short a time, restored his courage.

Accordingly, some hours later, he took his seat in a hired sailing-boat with his beloved by the foresail and put off from Lange Linie like a sea-robber with his bride, blustering, ostentatious and gorgeous.

In order to conceal his plan he had only spoken to the owner of the boat of a pleasure-trip in the Sound. His intention was to telegraph from Landskrona and send the money due for the boat and have the boat itself towed by a steamer.

As they were putting off from shore, the boat owner stood near and watched them. But when he saw that they were directing their course to the Island Hven, he put his hands to his mouth and shouted: "Don't go too near Hven," and something else which was carried away by the wind.

"Why not Hven?" asked the baron aloud. "The shore is steep, so that there are no rocks under water."

"Yes, but if he tells us so, he must have had some reason for it," she objected.

"Don't talk nonsense! Look after the foresail!"

The wind blew a light gale on the open sea, and since there was a considerable distance between the foresail and the stern there was no need for conversation, much to the baron's relief.

Their course was directed towards the south-east corner of Hven, though at first not noticeably so. But when she at last saw whither they were going, she called out: "Don't steer for Hven!"

"Hold your——!" answered the baron and tacked.

After an hour's good run they had come abreast of the white island and a light pressure on the rudder turned the boat's prow towards Landskrona, which appeared in the north.

"Saved!" cried the steersman and lit a cigar.

At the same instant a little steamer put out from Hven and made straight for the sailing-boat.

"What is that steamer?" she asked.

"It is a custom-house boat," answered the baron who was at home on the sea.

But now the steamer hoisted a yellow flag and whistled.

"That has nothing to do with us," said the baron, and kept on his course.

But the steamer took a sweep round, signalled with the flag, and let off several short, sharp whistles like cries of distress, increasing speed at the same time. Then the baron jumped up wildly at the stern as though he intended plunging into the sea. He remembered the outbreak of cholera at Hamburg and cried: "It is the quarantine! Three days! We are lost!"

The next moment he sat down again in his place, hauling taut the main-sheet and drifting before the wind, straight towards the Sound. The chase began, but soon the steamer stood athwart the bow of the sailing-boat, which was captured.

The whole carefully-thought-out device of the baron to avoid the gaze of curious eyes was defeated, and as their sailing-boat was towed into the harbour of Hven, the unhappy pair were saluted from the bridge by hundreds of their fellow-countrymen with derisive applause and peals of laughter, though the latter did not know whom they were applauding. But the chagrin of the captured pair was greater than the others guessed, for they believed that people were ridiculing their unfortunate love affair.

To make matters worse the baron had unpardonably insulted the quarantine doctor by upbraiding him on board the steamer. Therefore no special consideration was shown them, but they were treated like all others who come from a cholera-infected port. Since their incognito was bound to be seen through sooner or later, they went about in perpetual fear of discovery. Full of suspicion, they believed every other hour that they were recognised.

No one would have the patience to read the story of the torture of those three days. So much is known, that the first day she spent in weeping for her child, while he walked about the island. The second day she enlarged upon the excellent qualities of her husband as contrasted with the execrable ones of her lover. On the third day she cursed him for having taken her away, and when she ended by calling him an idiot for not having obeyed her own and the boat-owner's advice to avoid Hven, he gave her a box on the ear. . . . On the fourth day when they were really discovered, and newspapers arrived with the whole story, they went into a crevice in the rocks to hide their shame.

When at last two steamers came to fetch the unfortunates, each went on board a different one. And after that day they never saw nor knew each other again.

It was nearly midnight when the reading was ended. An interval of silence followed, but the postmaster felt he must say something. "One generally says 'thanks!" he remarked. "Meanwhile, after you have said all, there is not much to add: I will only ask myself, you, and everyone a general question: 'What is love?' "

"What is love? Answer: 'I don't know.'

Love has been called a piece of roguery on the part of Nature. I don't believe that, for I know that Nature has neither made itself nor can it think out pieces of roguery. But if we accept that proposition, we descend to zoology, and that I do not wish to do. I do not share the theoretical veneration for woman which my contemporaries cherish; on the other hand, I instinctively place her higher than ourselves. She seems to me to be formed out of finer material than we men, but I may be wrong, for she seems to be furnished with more animal functions than we are. If I were a theosophist, I should believe she was only a kind of intermediary chrysalis stage on the way to man, only a temporary manifestation, out of which love, i.e. man's love, creates in her possibilities of being and seeming. When he finds this really lifeless form of existence and breathes his immortal breath into it, he shares the Creator's joy on the seventh day. The process of refining, which his coarser substance hindered him bringing about in his own soul, he brings about in hers, and through reaction—no! it is too difficult for me to explain; it is like dividing an angle into three equal parts. Anyhow, the fact is certain, and my story is an illustration of it, that when a man is deceived in his love as he always is, his whole being revolts against the government of the world, which seems to him to have condescended to mock at his holiest possession, the holiest thing in all creation. If Providence is consonant with such deceit and such coarse jesting then he discovers a devil where he thought he had seen a good angel. After that what shall he trust, what shall he value, at what shall he not make a grimace? And when after marriage the veil falls, and like Adam and Eve they are naked and ashamed, then even the most unbelieving is conscious of something resembling the Fall. Then comes a fresh error and they think they have deceived each other, which they have not done. So they scourge each other for crimes which neither has committed. A second deception follows the first."

They were again silent. Then the postmaster gave the conversation another turn and descended to the earth. "You can guess that I, at any rate, recognise the lady of your story. She lives in her own little house, here on the island by the shore."

"Yes she does! I know her, and I was quarantine doctor at Hven when she was captured. Now that she is elderly she has renewed her acquaintance with me, and it is from her own mouth that I heard the story. She has been in love countless times, and declares that every time she believed she had found the right man who had been predestined for her from the foundation of the world."

"Does not reason feel its helplessness before such riddles, riddles of every day?"

"Yes and therefore . . . yes, next Saturday you shall hear another story, and I think we shall approach the riddle a little more closely, i.e. we shall find its insolubility more strongly proved."

"I shall be glad to hear it. But why don't you have your stories printed?"

"Because I have been a doctor, and a woman's doctor. I have no right to reveal what I have heard in my official capacity. Sometimes I should like to be a writer with a prescriptive right to find material for his art in men's lives and destinies; but that is a calling and a task which is denied to me."

"Very well; good night till next Saturday."

When Saturday evening came round, the two old men sat in the corner room with their toddy and tobacco and a large pile of manuscript on the table. The postmaster looked a little nervously at it, as a child might at a family book of sermons.

"We can give two evenings to it," said the doctor soothingly.

"Ah no! we have the whole evening before us and to-morrow is Sunday. Fire ahead! We will have an interval for refreshments."

The doctor began to read at six o'clock and had finished when it struck eleven.

THE DOCTOR'S SECOND STORY

THE DOCTOR'S SECOND STORY

He had left his Christiania full of bitterness because a public injustice had been done him. At forty years of age he had written the best modern drama and had invented a new form of play with a new plot which answered the expectations of the generation which was growing up. But the older generation was still alive, and spectators, actors, and critics felt that their ideals were leaving them in the lurch, and that they themselves would be involved in their fall. If the public taste took a new direction which they could not follow, they would be regarded as superannuated, and be left behind. Accordingly his masterpiece had been called idiotic and had been hissed off the stage, and it had been suggested to him that he should return to America, where he had already been and left his wife, from whom he was separated.

But, instead of going to America, he went to Copenhagen. In the centre of the city he set up a restaurant where he foregathered with Swedes and Finns. After some months' delay he succeeded in getting his drama performed at a Copenhagen theatre. It was decidedly successful and his reputation was saved. He had felt that he had done with life, but now he began to wake up and to look about him. But when he did enter into life again, he did so with dull resignation and an almost fatalistic spirit which found expression in his favourite motto: "Prepared for everything!"

His dramatic success resulted in his receiving social invitations. One evening he went to a soirée at a distinguished author's, round whom the younger stars in art and literature were accustomed to gather. The supper was long and brilliant, but several unoccupied places were waiting for guests who should arrive after the theatres had closed. At half-past ten there was a stir in the company, for the expected guests came—three ladies and three men all unknown to the Norwegian. But one of the three ladies greeted him as an acquaintance and reached the stranger her hand. Immediately afterwards he asked the hostess in a whisper who it was.

"Who is it? Miss X—— of course! You talked with her at Doctor E——'s supper."

"Really! It is strange that with my good memory I cannot recall her appearance. One evening lately, in a well-lit theatre lobby, I passed her without a greeting."

"Of course you don't see that she is pretty."

"Is she?" He leant forward to look at the young lady who had taken her seat far down the table. "Yes she doesn't look bad."

"Fie! Fie! She is a celebrated beauty of the best Copenhagen type."

"Oh! Formerly I only admired blondes but latterly have confined my admiration to brunettes." Then they talked of something else. After supper the company gathered in the drawing-room and the beautiful Dane and the Norwegian sat so close together that he put her cup down for her. When she asked who would escort her home, he answered: "I of course," and his escort was accepted. When at last the company broke up, he and she found themselves in the same mysterious way so deep in conversation that a group of ladies and gentlemen formed a circle round them with a mischievous air to watch them. The pair, however, did not observe this, but continued to talk. As they went down the steps they heard a "good night!" and a ringing laugh overhead from the young and charming hostess who was leaning over the balcony-railing. They went along the shore, and past the bridges, continuing their conversation without a pause.

When they came to X—— Street she invited him to supper the following evening to meet a young female artist. But she prepared him to find her surroundings very simple, as she was staying in a *pension* kept by a strict old lady. Then they parted as though they had been old acquaintances and colleagues.

As he walked home alone through the night, and tried to recall the events of the evening to his mind, he noticed again the curious fact that he could not remember her appearance. Yet as a former reporter, he had been so accustomed to photograph people and scenes, landscapes and interiors with his eye that he could not understand it. Moreover, he observed that she was quite a different person this evening to what she had been the first time they met. There was now no trace of "independence" about her, only a mild yieldingness, a certain melancholy, which became her well and aroused sympathy. When they talked of the unfortunate fate of a certain person, there were tears in her voice. It was the voice which he remembered more than anything else about her—somewhat deep and melancholy with a slight accent which carried one far away from the great town and awoke memories of wood and sea, the sounds of nature, shepherds' huts, and hay-rakes. He now recollected how they had really treated her like a child the previous evening, had teased her about her writings, and asked her for recommendations, at which she had only smiled. She also had the unfortunate habit of letting fall naïve expressions, which were really seriously meant, but sometimes had a repellent effect.

The only one who had taken her seriously was himself, the foreigner. And he had seen that she was no child but a woman with whom he could speak of men and books and all that interested him, without once having to explain his remarks.

When he awoke the next morning, he tried to call to his mind the events and persons of the previous day. It was his habit, when he made a new acquaintance, to seek in his memory for the "corresponding number," as he called it, in order to get a clear idea of his character; i.e. he thought which of his old friends most nearly resembled the person in question. This psychical operation was often performed involuntarily, i.e. when he tried to call up the image of his new acquaintance, the figure of an old one rose up in his mind and more or less obliterated the latter. When he now recalled his yesterday's memories of Miss X—— he saw her with an elderly married cousin, to whom he had always felt indifferent. This suppressed any sentimental feeling, if any were present, and he only thought of her as a kindly woman-friend. Accordingly, in the evening, he felt perfectly calm and without a trace of that embarrassment which one sometimes feels in attempting to make oneself agreeable to a young lady. He was received with perfect frankness as an old acquaintance and led into a lady's boudoir elegantly furnished with a well-appointed writing-table, flower-plants, family portraits, carpets, and comfortable chairs.

Since the lady painter had been prevented coming, he had to be content with a *tête-a-tête*, and this somewhat jarred on his sense of propriety. But his hostess's simple and unaffected manner caused him to suppress some remarks which might have hurt her feelings.

So they sat opposite each other and talked. Her black silk dress had blue insets and was cut in the "empire style," with dark lace trimmings which hung from her shoulders like a sleigh-net. This gave her a somewhat matronly appearance, and when he noticed her tone like that of an experienced woman of the world, he thought for a moment: "She is divorced!" Her face, which he could now examine in full light, showed a flat forehead which looked as though it had been hammered smooth and betokened a determined will without obstinacy. The eyes were large and well-defined as with Southerners. The nose seemed to have altered its mind while growing, for it took a little bend in the middle and became Roman by degrees. This little unexpected "joyful surprise" lent a cameo-like charm to her profile.

Their conversation was still more lively this evening, for they had already amassed a small store of common experiences to discuss, acquaintances to analyse, and ideas to test. They sat there and cut out silhouettes of their friends, and as neither of them wished to seem spiteful, they cut them in handsome shapes, and not with pointed scissors.

During this innocent interchange of thought, he had glanced at a very large flower-basket full of splendid roses. She had divined his thoughts, and just as a servant brought in a bottle of wine and cigarettes, she got up and went towards the roses.

("She is engaged!" he thought and felt himself superfluous.)

"I was given these by a friend on his departure," she said.

But in order to show that she was not engaged she broke off a stem carelessly. It was fastened with wire, and she had to look for her scissors. As these were in her work-basket on the lowest shelf of her work-table, she knelt down and remained kneeling. She remained in that attitude while she fastened two of the finest roses in his buttonhole, and she only needed to stretch out an arm to reach a glass of wine and drink to his health.

"'Roses and wine!' I have used that as a refrain for a ballad," he said. He thought the situation somewhat strange but insignificant in itself.

"Oh! do repeat the ballad!"

He had forgotten it.

She rose up and sat on her chair, and he persuaded her to tell him something of her life. She had early left her parents, who lived separated without being divorced, for they were Catholics. She had been educated in convent-schools in London, Paris, Italy, and elsewhere. In Paris especially, when with English ladies, she had been bothered with religion, but had finally thrown it all overboard. She certainly felt an emptiness without it, but expected, like everyone else, that some new substitute was coming into the world. Meanwhile, like her contemporaries, she devoted her energies to the deliverance of humanity from pauperism and oppression. She had superficially studied Nietzsche among others and laid him aside again after finding in him a slight corrective to over-strained expectations of universal equality.

While she was talking, he noticed that light fell through a curtain behind her back, which screened a door apparently leading into the interior of the house. Like lightning the thought struck him that he might be the object of a joke, and was to be surprised in the ridiculous position of a woman-worshipper. Or perhaps it was only for propriety's sake that communication was kept open with the main building. This wholesome doubt kept their conversation free from all tincture of flirtation, and when supper was served he reproached himself for having suspected his hostess of evil purposes or a want of trust in him.

About half-past eight he was about to go, but she only needed to express a suspicion that he was longing for the café to make him remain. About half-past nine o'clock he was going again but was kept back.

"But," he remonstrated, "it is my part as the elder and more prudent to spare you any unpleasantness."

She understood nothing, but declared that she was independent and that the lady who kept the *pension* was accustomed to her suppers.

At last his instinct told him that it was a mistake to stay longer; he rose and took his leave. On his way home, he said to himself, "No, people are not so simple, and cannot be labelled by formulas, for I don't comprehend an atom of this evening or of this woman."

The next time they met it was in a museum. Her outer dress made her look like a young married woman of thirty or more. Her mouth had a tired expression and had fine little wrinkles near it, as is the case with those who laugh often. But she was melancholy, hinted at having had a breach with her father, and spoke of taking her departure shortly. She inquired regarding her friend's relations to theatres and publishers, and offered to help him with advice and influence. To-day she was mere motherly tenderness, and a certain carelessness in her toilet suggested that she did not want to please as a woman.

But when she proposed that they should go to the theatre together he declined, from a feeling that he ought not to compromise her, nor expose himself to danger, for his precarious pecuniary position did not permit him to think of a love affair.

He proposed to her instead that they should go for a stroll together, and she suggested that he should escort her from her new lodging, for she had changed her rooms.

("They have given her notice at the *pension*, because of me," he thought, but said nothing.)

By this time his curiosity as an author was aroused, and he wished to learn the riddle of this woman, for he had never seen any other change their appearance as she did.

When in the evening he rang at her door, he was shown into a side room and asked to wait. When she was dressed he was let out into the front hall, where they met. This, then, was a new order of things.

They went westward by an empty street which led to the Zoological Gardens, and entered a restaurant which she seemed to know well. In her fur jacket and with a kerchief on her head she looked in the dark like an old woman, and as she stooped somewhat, she seemed to have something witchlike about her. But when they entered the well-lit restaurant, and she laid aside kerchief and jacket she stood revealed all at once in her youthful beauty. A moss-green, tightly fitting dress showed the figure of a girl of eighteen, and with her hair brushed smooth, she looked like an overgrown schoolgirl. He could not conceal his astonishment at this witchery, and looked her all over as though he were seeking a concealed enemy with a searchlight. ("Eros! Now I am lost!" he thought. And from that moment he was indeed.)

She saw quite well the effect she had produced, and seemed to glisten there in a sort of phosphorescent light, sure of victory, with a triumphant expression round her mouth, for she saw that he was conquered. He felt a sudden fear. She had his soul in her pocket, and could cast it into the river or into the gutter; therefore he hated her at the same time. He saw that his only chance of safety lay in awakening a reciprocal flame in her, so that she might be as closely bound to him as he was to her. With this half-conscious purpose, he did what every man in his place would have done—insinuated himself into her confidence, made himself as little as a child and aroused her sympathy, the sympathy of a woman for a lacerated and damned soul which has no more hope of happiness. She listened to him and received his confidence as a tribute, with calm majestic motherliness, without a trace of coquetry or pleasure at hearing of another's misfortune.

When at last, after eating a cold supper, they were about to go, he rose to look up a train in a railway guide. When he returned to the table and wished to pay the bill, the waiter informed him that it had already been paid by the lady! Then he flared up, and wrongly suspecting that she thought he had no money, demanded that at any rate he should pay for himself.

"I don't know the customs of your country," he said, "but in mine a man who lets a lady pay for him is dishonoured."

"You were my guest," she answered.

"No, we went out together, and we cannot come here again. Don't you know what kind of a reputation you will give me, and by what a hateful name this waiter may call me?"

When he recalled the waiter to make good the mistake, there was another scene, so that he rose angrily and laid his share on the table. She was sad, but would not acknowledge herself in the wrong. They were both out of humour, and he noticed that she was thoughtless, just as thoughtless as when she invited a gentleman alone to her room so late in the evening. Or was it an expression of feminine independence demanding to be treated exactly like a man in spite of propriety and prejudice? Perhaps it was the latter, but he fell it to be a piece of presumption, and was angry. There threatened to be an uncomfortable silence between them as they walked home, but she put out her hand and said in a kind, confidential voice: "Don't be cross."

"No I am not that, but, but . . . never do it again."

They parted as friends, and he hurried to the café. He had not been there for a long time, partly through a certain dislike to the tone prevailing there, which no longer harmonised with his present mood, and partly because he had promised his friend to be moderate. He found the usual company, but felt somewhat out of place, and made a clear resolve never to bring her there. Accordingly, he soon went home and sank in meditations which were partly gloomy and partly bright. When he recollected the moment of emergence of the youthful beauty from the fur skin of the animal there seemed to him something weird and ominous about it. It was not the youthful beauty which is clothed in reflections from a paradise of innocence, but a dark, demoniac beauty which becomes a man's death, the grave of his virile will, and which leads to humiliation, ruin, and disgraceful bargaining. But it is as inevitable and unescapable as Fate.

The next day he was invited, together with her, to dinner at an art professor's. She then appeared in a new character, talking like a woman of the world in a confident tone, firing off smart sayings and epigrams and never at a loss for an answer. At intervals she seemed indifferent, blasé, and cruel.

The professor, who had just been sitting on a jury, told us that he had joined in giving a verdict of guilty against a child murderess.

"I should have acquitted her," said Miss X——. The professor, who belonged to the Danish Academy and had the entrée to the Court, was astonished, but did not argue with her. He construed her answer as a burst of caprice and let the matter drop. The conversation at table was somewhat forced. The Norwegian, who had been invited by the lady of the house, did not feel at ease in this circle where everything revolved round the Court. Probably his friend had arranged this invitation with the kind intention of making him known and of investing him, who had the reputation of being half an anarchist, with an air of gentility. The discord was felt when the talk turned upon Art, and the professor was in a minority of one with his opinions and academic ideals.

Therefore, when at dessert time his hostess asked the Norwegian whether he would come to one of her receptions, where he would have the opportunity of meeting many celebrities, she received such a sharp look from her husband, that the Norwegian declined the invitation decidedly. Just then the Scandinavians were in ill favour in the higher circles of society because a Norwegian artist by his new style of painting had caused a schism in the Academy.

Again he had let himself be enticed by his friend's thoughtlessness. She had brought him into a circle to which he did not belong and in which he was not welcome. On the other hand she seemed to notice nothing of it, but was as much at home and at her ease as before.

After dinner there was music. The young beauty behaved as though her friend was not there and never looked at him at all. When the party broke up, she took leave of him as though of a stranger, and let herself be escorted home by someone else.

II

It was a Sunday afternoon in February. They were walking in one of the outer streets of the city towards the west, where they were sure to meet no acquaintances. Finally they entered a restaurant which lay off the road. She spoke of her approaching departure, and he said he would miss her society.

"Come along too," she said simply and openly.

"Yes," he answered, "it is really all the same to me where I stay."

That was an idea which seemed to drive away certain clouds. She now began to speak of Berlin, the theatrical prospects there, and so on.

"But," he objected, "it would be too far from my children."

"Your children! Yes, I have often thought of them. Have you their portraits with you? Do let me see them!"

He really had the portraits with him, and as she repeated her wish, he showed them. The two girls did not interest her much but she was delighted at the eight-year-old fair boy with the upturned look. "What a lovely child's face! Isn't it a happiness to have such a child!"

"To have it to-day, and lose to-morrow!" he replied.

She now examined the photograph more exactly and began to compare it with the father somewhat too closely. He began to feel some of that shyness which a man feels before a woman when she assumes this rôle.

"It is you," she said, "and not you also."

He asked for no explanation, and she requested that she might keep the portrait by her.

They resumed the discussion of the proposed journey, but she was absent-minded and often let her looks rest on the photograph.

He could not guess what was in her mind but he noticed that there was a struggle of some kind and that she was on the point of forming a resolution. He felt how a network of fine sucker-like tendrils spread from her being and wove itself into his. Something fateful was impending. He felt depressed, longed for the circle of male friends whom he had abandoned, and asked her to release him from his promise not to go any more to the café.

"Are you longing to go down *there* again?" she said in a motherly voice. "Think of your little son!"

They went out silent in the dark but starlit evening. He had for the first time offered her his arm and the cape of his coat flapped loose in the wind and struck her face. "I have already dreamt this once," she said. But he gave no answer.

When they came to her door, she took him by both hands, looked him in the eyes and said: "Don't go to your friends." Then she let her veil drop, and before he divined her intention, printed a kiss through the veil on his mouth. As he stretched out his arms to embrace her, she was already behind the door, and closed it. He stood there completely crestfallen without being able to understand how it had happened. Then came the conclusion: "She loves me and has not been playing with me." But what audacity! It is true she let her veil fall, for she was modest, and fled, alarmed at what she had done. It was original, but not bold-faced; other countries, other manners!

But for a man it was somewhat humiliating to receive the first sign of love and not to bestow it. Yet he would never have dared to run the risk of a possible box on the ears and a scornful laugh. It was well that it had happened; now he had certainty, and that was enough.

She loved him! Since he was loved, he could say to himself: "I am not so bad after all if someone can look up to me and believe good of me." This awoke his self-respect, hope, and confidence. He felt himself young again, and was ready to begin a new spring. It was true that he had only shown her his good side, but his habit of suppressing his worse nature for the occasion had brought his better nature into prominence. This was the secret of the ennobling influence of real love. He played the part of the magnanimous till it became a second nature. The fact that he discovered her beauty, and was delighted with her as a woman later on was a further guarantee that the stages of their love affair had developed themselves in orderly progression, and that he had not been merely captivated by a beautiful exterior. He had indeed guessed her defects and overlooked them, for that is the duty of love, and the chief proof of its genuineness, for without forbearance with faults there is no love. He went home and wrote the inevitable letter. It ended with the words: "Now the man lays his head in your lap as a sign that the good in you overcomes the evil in him, but do not misuse your power, for then you must expect the usual fate of tyrants."

The next morning he sent off the letter by a messenger. Ilmarinen his Finnish friend stood by the head of his bed and looked mysterious. "Well!" he said. "Are you going to try once more?"

"Yes, so it appears."

"And you dare to?"

"If it comes to the worst, I only dare to be unhappy, and one is unhappy anyhow."

"Yes, yes."

"It is a change at any rate, and this lonely life is no life."

Instead of an answer to his letter he received a telegram with a request to meet her that evening at the office of an editor who might be useful to them.

In answer to this he sent a message by telegram: "I don't come till I have received an answer to my letter."

Again came a telegram, in which she asked to be allowed to postpone her answer till the next day.

He thought the whole affair nonsensical but went to keep the appointment. She seemed as though nothing had happened; they ate their supper and discussed business. The editor was a married man, and pleasant, nor did he seem to wish his visitors to worship him.

This evening, however, the Norwegian thought her ugly. She was carelessly dressed, had ink on her fingers, and she talked so exclusively of business that she lost all her ideal aspect. He had experienced much in his life, and seen many strange people, but anyone so eccentric as this woman he had never seen. He went home with a feeling of relief, firmly resolved not to follow her to Berlin, nor to link his destiny any closer with hers. The next morning he received her letter; this strengthened him still further in his resolve to withdraw. She wrote that she was one of those women who cannot love. ("What sort of a woman is that? A mere phrase!" he thought.) He believed that he loved her but he was only in love with her love. ("Alexandre Dumas I think!") She still desired, however, to remain his friend and asked him to meet her that day.

He answered this with a farewell letter of thanks.

Then there rained on him telegrams and express messengers.

Towards evening a hotel waiter entered his room and announced that a lady in a carriage was waiting below to see him. At first he thought of declining to go down, but she might come to his room, and then the bond would be made fast. Accordingly he went down, entered the carriage, and without reflection or saying anything they gave each other a kiss, which seemed perfectly natural. There ensued a stormy conversation which was extremely like a quarrel. She asked that he should accompany her that very night on her journey, but he gave a decided refusal. If they were seen together, to-morrow the "elopement" would be in all the newspapers. That he could not bring his conscience to agree to, both on account of her parents and his own children. He also told her that he was dependent on other people's help, and that as soon as he was known as an adventurer all these resources would dry up.

"Then you don't love me!"

"What nonsense you talk, child."

He had to laugh at her. They got out of the cab and continued their contest in a little green lane which led down to the shore.

Now and then he put his arm round her neck and silenced her mouth with a kiss.

"I have seen that you are cracked, but I myself am half-mad, you see, and you won't get the better of me."

"I will jump into the sea!" she shrieked.

"Very well! I will follow, and can swim."

At last he got her to laugh. Then they entered a café in order to arrive at a final decision. Now he had the upper hand and treated her like a naughty girl, and curiously enough, as soon as he had assigned this rôle to her, she took it up and maintained it.

Did these two love each other now? Yes, certainly, for he knew how tied he was, and she had already, as appeared later on, confessed her love in a letter to her mother, adding that he was to know nothing of it, for then she would immediately be brought under the yoke of subjection.

The final decision they arrived at was that she should travel alone, and they made no promises to each other. They were to correspond and see whether they would be able to meet in the summer; when his position was more secure they would think of betrothal and marriage.

They parted, and did not see each other again for a long time.

He went immediately afterwards to look up his old friends in the café. There in his own circle he wished to find himself again, for during this month's exclusive living with a woman, he had become loosed from his own environment, lost his foothold, and built up a common life on the shaky foundation of the temperament of a young girl, whom his passion had transformed into a mature woman. Her last outbreak of anger had revealed a fury who believed that she could compel him to blind obedience. During this her face had exhibited all possible changes from the broad grin of Punch to the hissing of the cat which shows its white claws. He breathed more lightly, experienced a sensation of relief, and entered the café feeling as though he had left something oppressive behind him, something happily over and done with!

The Swede sat there, and probably the gossip regarding the Norwegian's engagement had caused him to bring his lady friend with him. She was a tall fragile-looking Swede who seemed to be emaciated by illness; she had a mournful, despairing sort of voice, a drawling accent and drooping eyes. As an artist, although obscure she was " emancipated " as the phrase is, but not free from the feminine vanity of being able to appear with a number of male hangers-on, whom she boasted of having made conquests of. Her thoughts had long turned upon the Norwegian. When they met, she found him novel and full of surprises. At the same time he brought with him the fire of his newly kindled flame. Within half an hour she had neither eyes nor ears for her old friend. When at last she snapped at him, he stood up and asked her to come with him. " You can go," she answered. And he went.

In less than an hour she had broken with her friend of many years and formed a tie with the Norwegian who an hour and a half before had kissed his fiancée at parting. He asked himself how that was possible, but took no time to reflect on it. She possessed the advantage of being able to understand him completely; he was able to speak out his thoughts after a long imprisonment; he needed only to give a hint in order to be understood. She drank in the eloquence of his words, seemed to follow the sudden leaps of his thought, and probably received answers to many questions which had long occupied her mind. But she was ugly and ill-dressed, and he sometimes felt ashamed at the thought that he might be suspected of being her admirer. Then he felt an unspeakable sympathy with her which she interpreted to mean that she had made a conquest of him.

They went out into the town and wandered from café to café, continually talking. Sometimes his conscience pricked him, sometimes he felt a repulsion to her, because she had been faithless to her friend. Faithlessness indeed was the link which united them, and they felt as if Destiny had driven them to commit the same wrong on the same evening. She had at once inquired about his engagement and he had at first given an evasive answer; but as she had continued to ask with comrade-like sympathy he had told her the whole story. But in doing so he spoke of his love, he became enthusiastic; she warmed herself at the glow and seemed to be a reflection of "the other." So the two images coincided, and the absent maiden, who should have been a barrier between them, was the one who brought them near each other.

The next day they met again, and she never seemed tired of discussing his engagement. She was in a critical mood and began to express doubts whether he would be happy. But she went carefully to work, showed indulgence, and only attempted purely objective psychological analysis. She also understood how to withdraw a severe expression at the right time in order not to frighten him away.

Now as ill-luck would have it, he received at noon a letter from his fiancée which was the answer to the stormy one he had written when they parted. In her letter she only wrote of business matters, gave good advice in a superior tone, in a word was pedantic and narrow-minded. Not a trace of the pretty young girl was to be found in the letter. This put him out of humour and aroused his disgust to such a degree that when he met his new friend, with a ruthless joy in destruction he proceeded to analyse his fiancée under the microscope. The Swede was not backward with her feminine knowledge of feminine secrets to put the worst interpretation on all the details which he narrated. He had cast his lamb to the she-wolf, who tore the prey asunder while he looked on.

At the beginning of April, that is three weeks later, the Norwegian sat in the café one afternoon with Lais, as she was called, after she had become the friend of the company in general, not of anyone in particular. He sat there with a resigned air, "prepared for everything" as usual. It had been difficult to keep his engagement alive by means of the post, and it had become still more uncertain after the news had reached her father's ears and brought him to despair. He was a Minister of State, lived at Odense, went to Court when he was in the capital, and wore twelve orders. He would rather shoot himself than be the father-in-law of a notorious nihilist. In order to put an end to the affair the old man had dictated his conditions, which were of course impossible.

The Norwegian must pay all his debts and give a guarantee that he would have a regular and sufficient income. Since a writer of plays has nothing guaranteed, but is dependent on popular favour, the wooer considered his proposal withdrawn, and regarded himself as unfettered, and indeed he was so. Moreover, thus humiliating correspondence about pecuniary matters had cooled his devotion, for love letters which were full of figures and motherly advice, practical items of information about publishers and so on, were not inspiring to read for a literary free-lance. And as the correspondence slackened, and finally ceased, he considered himself entirely free.

With her usual vanity, Lais had ascribed to herself the honour of having dissolved his engagement, although there was no reason for her doing so. Moreover, in the last few days a circumstance had happened which was fortunate for his future. Another friend of Lais had arrived from the north, and as he was one of her admirers she had such assiduous court paid to her that she did not notice how the Norwegian was slackening in his attentions.

In order to celebrate the arrival of the newcomer, the last few days had been a continual feast, and now they were in that strange condition, when the soul is, so to speak, loosed from its bearings and utters its thoughts without distinction and without regard.

Lais was possessed by the not unusual idea that she was irresistible, and liked to produce the impression that all her male friends, even those who had dropped her, were dismissed admirers. Now she wished to show her newly arrived friend how well she was provided with them and began to skirmish with the Norwegian. Since he had long cherished towards her the hate which is born of imprudently bestowed confidences, he seized the opportunity to bring about the breach without scandal, in a word to dispose of her without disgrace to either of them. Under some pretext, or perhaps with a foreboding that something was about to happen, he took his leave and left the other two together. But Lais pressed him to remain, probably to gain an opportunity of leaving him alone, when she went out with her friend. Here, however, she had made a miscalculation. Making a gesture of invitation to the new-comer, the Norwegian went out after saying the last word: "Now I leave you alone!"

When he came out on the street, he had a certain uneasy suspicion that he had left something unfinished behind him, and had something unexpected before him. He thought he heard the hissing voice of the woman he had left. She never opened her lips, which were sharply defined, like those of a snake, when she spoke, but brought the words straight out of her throat, which was always hoarse through her sitting up at night drinking and smoking. Such a voice in women he called a "porter voice" because it always reminded him of that black drink and its concomitants.

Such is friendship with women—either it ends in love or in hatred just like love!

When he came to his hotel, the waiter handed him a local telegram. "That is what brought me home," he said to himself. His experiences had made him believe in telepathy to such a degree that he was in the habit of saying when in company and there was talk of sending for some absent person: "Shall we telepath to him?"

Before he opened the telegram he believed he knew the contents, and when he had read, he felt as though he had done so before, and was not surprised. The telegram ran thus: "I am here; look me up at Doctor ——'s. Important news."

He stood still for two minutes in order to form a resolution. When the waiter came he asked him to telephone to the friendly doctor, who had a private hospital of his own and enjoyed a very good reputation. The doctor came at once and explained the situation: "Are you thinking of drawing back?" he asked.

"No, but I must collect myself, and sleep for twelve hours, for my nerves are out of control. I will send a telegram to say that I am not well. She will not believe that, but will come herself; I beg you therefore to wait for half an hour."

The telegram went off, and in half an hour steps were heard along the corridor. She entered, dressed in black and at first full of suspicion. But to be able to consult with the doctor gave her an advantage which pleased her. She said she would come next morning together with the doctor, and then she went, after secretly imprinting a kiss on the patient's hand.

"You must not play with your feelings," said the doctor who remained behind. "This woman loves you and you love her. That is as plain as a pikestaff."

The Norwegian lay alone all the evening and sought to find some guiding thread through all this chaos, but in vain. What a tangled thicket was the human soul! How could one bring it into order? It passed from hate to contempt over esteem and reverence and then back again with one bound sideways and two forwards. Good and evil, sublime and mean, uniting treachery with deathless love, kisses and blows, insulting reproaches and boundless admiration. Since he knew the human soul he had adopted it as one of his fundamental principles never to balance accounts, never to go backwards, but always forwards. When in the beginning of their acquaintance she had wished to refer to something which he had said on a previous occasion he interrupted her: "Never look back! Only go forwards! One talks a lot of nonsense on the spur of the moment. I have no views but only speak impromptu, and life would be very monotonous if one thought and said the same things every day. It should be something new! Life is only a poem, and it is much jollier to float over the marsh than to stick one's feet in it and to feel for firm ground which is not there."

This must have suited her own ideas of life, for she was immediately ready to adopt this rôle. Therefore they found each other always novel, and always full of surprises. They could not take each other too seriously, and often when one of them attacked his or her own discarded views with the other's opinions of the day before, they were obliged to laugh at their own foolishness. Thus they were never clear about each other, and in really serious moments they would exclaim simultaneously: "Who are you? What are you really?" and neither of them could answer.

As he was on the point of falling asleep, he thought, "I shall make no resolve, for I have never seen a resolve lead to anything. The course of events may guide my destiny as it has done hitherto."

The next morning she came without waiting for the doctor. She had put on a wise air, as if she understood the illness thoroughly but did not wish to descend to trifles. She took a rod out of a basket she had brought with her.

"What is that?"

"That is 'the Easter rod'; to-day is Good Friday." She set up the rod at his feet, and adorned the edge of the bed with willow-branches in bloom. Like a little housewife she bustled about the room, surveying and putting it in order. Finally she sat down in an easy chair.

"Well! What is the great news?" he asked.

"We must enter on an engagement, for the papers have announced it."

"Have they, indeed? What about the old man?"

"Father has resigned himself, because the matter cannot be altered; but he is not happy. Now won't you congratulate me?"

"You should congratulate me first, for I am the elder."

"And the less intelligent."

"I have the honour to congratulate you. And what a man you have got!"

So they chatted, and soon came to the subject of their prospects. He dictated and she wrote. Such and such plays of his accepted for the stage. . . . That would be a thousand pounds.

"Discount thirty per cent for disappointments," she said.

"Thirty! I also reckon ninety or a hundred per cent."

"Be sober! It is serious." And then they laughed.

Divine frivolity! To look down on the ugly earnestness of life as if all one had to do was to blow at it. The poet's light-hearted way of treating economy like poetry.

"How could one bear the miseries of life, if one did not treat them as unrealities? If I took it seriously, I should have to weep the whole day, and I don't want to do that."

Dinner-time came; she laid the sofa-table, fed him, and was especially sparing with the wine.

"You have drunk enough now, and you must promise never to go to the café again, especially with Thais."

"Lais," he corrected her, but coloured. "You know that then?"

"A woman of twenty-three knows everything."

Glad to avoid a troublesome confession, he promised never to visit the café again and kept his word, for that was the only penance he could offer for his sorry behaviour. Thus they were engaged. His only social intercourse consisted in her company, while she continued to go to families which she knew, to visit theatres, and so on, for this belonged to her work as a newspaper correspondent. In case of an eventual struggle for power, she had all the advantages on her side, as she moved in an environment from which she derived moral support and fresh impulses, while he was thrown back on himself and his previous observations. They lived really like playfellows, for he never read what she wrote in the newspapers, while she had read all his writings but never referred to them. There was no consciousness shown on either side that he was a mature and well-known author and she a young critic of books and plays. They met simply as man and woman, and as her future husband he had placed himself on the same level with her, not above her.

Sometimes while they were together, he felt a prisoner, isolated and in her power. If he were to break with her now he would stand alone in the world, for he had got quite out of touch with his old friends and come to dislike the life of the café. Moreover, he felt so grown together with this woman, that he thought he would pine away if parted from her. In spite of her love she could not hide the fact that she thought she had him absolutely in her power, and sometimes she let him feel it. But then he raged like a lion in a cage, went out and sought his old friends, though he noticed he did not thrive among them and his conscience pricked him for his faithlessness. She sulked for half a day, then crept up to him, fell on her knees and was pardoned.

"At bottom," he said once, "we hate each other because we love each other. We fear to lose our individualities through the assimilating force of love, and therefore we must sometimes have a breach in order to feel that I am not you, and you are not I."

She agreed, but it was no remedy against the spirit of revolt, the struggle of the ego for self-justification. She loved him as a woman loves a man, for she thought him handsome, although he was ugly. He, for his part, demanded neither respect nor admiration but only a measure of trust, and a friendly demeanour. She was generally sparkling and cheerful, playful, without being teasing, yielding and gracious.

Once when he reflected over the various types of woman he had observed in her during the beginning of their acquaintance, he could scarcely understand how she had been able to play so many different parts. The literary independent lady with Madame de Staël's open mouth and loquacious tongue had entirely disappeared; the grand, pretentious woman of the world and the *fin-de-siècle* lady with morbid paradoxes were also both obliterated. She saw how unpretentious he was and she became like him.

April came and it was high spring-time. At the same time his prospects had brightened; some of his plays had been accepted; a novel sold for a considerable sum; and one of his dramas was acted in Paris. An untrue report was spread that the engaged pair had gone off together. Her parents in Odense were disturbed and urged on the marriage.

"Will you marry now?" she asked.

"Certainly I will," was his reply.

So the matter was settled! But then came difficulties. She was a Catholic and could not marry a divorced man as long as his first wife lived. In order to circumvent this difficulty he devised the plan of being married in England. And so it was settled. Her sister came as a witness to the ceremony. She was married to a famous artist, was herself an authoress, and therefore understood how to value talent, even when unaccompanied with earthly goods.

Thus they began their wedding journey.

III

It was a May morning on an island off the English coast. He had gone with her to the extreme end of a promontory where the cliff descends sheer into the sea. He wished to ask her something privately but did not dare to; therefore they stood there silently staring into the blue emptiness, seeking an object where there was none.

They had stayed there six days without being able to marry because through carelessness the notice of his divorce had not been published till some months after he had obtained a decree. Accordingly it bore so late a date that the time allowed for challenging it had not yet elapsed. He had exchanged telegrams with the authorities; confusion and misunderstanding caused further delay, and his fiancée's sister became impatient.

"Do you trust me?" he asked her.

"Yes, I believe in your honesty, but you are an unlucky creature."

"And your sister?"

"What is she to believe? She does not know you. She only knows that your assurances that the documents were valid, were incorrect."

"She is right, but it is not my fault. What does she mean to do?"

"She returns to-morrow, and I must go with her."

"So then we shall be parted before we are married, and I return to life in hotels, restaurants, and night cafés."

"No, not that," and after a pause she added: "Let us jump into the sea."

He put his arm round her: "Have you ever seen a destiny like mine? Wherever I go, I bring unhappiness and destruction with me. Think! Your parents!"

"Don't talk so! With patience we shall also get out of this."

"Yes, in order to fall into something else."

"Come! shall I blow at it?" And she blew the cloud away. There was an outbreak of divine frivolity again and they raced home through the fortifications and over the mines.

In the evening the decisive telegram came, and the wedding was fixed for the next day. It took place at first at the registry office. While the oaths were being taken the bride fell into hysterical laughter which nearly rendered the whole ceremony abortive, since the registrar did not know what to make of a scene which resembled one in a lunatic asylum.

It was not a brilliant wedding-party which assembled in the evening in the clergyman's house. Besides the bride's sister, four strangers—pilots—were present as witnesses when they plighted their troth "before God."

. . . . . .

Fourteen days of May had passed. Both were sitting outside the comfortable little house and watching how the migratory birds rested in the garden before continuing their journey northward.

"So quiet?"

"How long?"

"Eight days more. But I had not thought that marriage was such a splendid arrangement."

"Although they call me a woman-hater," he said, "I have always loved woman, and although they call me a friend of immorality, I have always held by marriage."

"Can you imagine yourself leading a lonely life after this?"

"No, the thought chokes me."

"Do you know I am so happy that I am afraid?"

"Yes, so am I. I feel as if someone were lying and spying on us. She is called Nemesis, and follows not only guilty but also happy men."

"What are you most afraid of?"

"That we should part."

"But that depends on us, I suppose."

"Would that it did! But discord comes from without with the wind, with the dew, with too long-continued sunshine, with the rain. Try to explain which of us two was to blame for our last quarrel."

"Neither!"

"Neither of us two, then it was a third. Who is this third? In order to give it a name people call it 'misunderstanding'; but both of our understandings were completely clear, not disturbed at all."

"Don't frighten me."

"No, but be sure that the same event will happen again and that we shall blame each other as on the last occasion."

"Shall we not go and write now?" she broke in.

"I cannot write."

"Nor can I; my editor is angry because he has had no article from me for two months."

"And I have not had a single new idea for a whole year. What will be the end of it?"

The fact was that they had neutralised each other, so that there was no more reaction on either side. Their life together now consisted of a comfortable silence. The need to be near each other was so great that one could not leave the room without the other following. They tried to shut themselves in their rooms in order to work, but after a short time one would knock at the other's door.

"Do you know, all this is very fine, but I am becoming an idiot?" she complained.

"You also?"

"I can neither read, think, nor write any more, and can hardly speak."

"It is too much happiness, and we must seek some society, or we shall both become silly."

The fact was that they had both ceased to converse; they were apparently so harmonious in all questions and predilections and knew each other's opinions so well that there was no further need to exchange thoughts. The same tastes, the same habits, the same naughtinesses, the same superficial scepticism had brought them together, and now they were welded into one like two pieces of the same metal. Each had lost individuality and they were one. But the memory of independence and one's own personality was still present, and a war of liberation was impending. The sense of personal self-preservation awoke, and when each wished to resume their own share, there was a strife about the pieces.

"Why don't you write?" he asked.

"I have tried, but it is always you and about you."

"Whether it is I, or someone else, it all comes to the same thing."

"You mean I have no self?"

"You are too young to have a self."

He had better have left that unsaid, for by saying it, he woke her.

. . . . . .

One morning there came a paper containing a notice to the effect that a volume of his poems had appeared with a London publisher.

"Shall we go to London?" she suggested.

"Yes, gladly, though I don't believe these notices which I have read so often. Anyhow, as a business journey, it can be made to pay its own expenses."

The resolve was carried out. They saw the little island * disappear with the same joy with which they had before seen it rise out of the mist.

In Dover they had to stay one day at an hotel. As he returned from a walk, he found his wife sealing up six packets, all of the same shape and size.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"It is the account of your American journey, which I am sending to some papers I know in Denmark."

"But you should not cut it up into sections; you know that it forms a complete whole. Have you read it?"

"No, I have only glanced through it; but at any rate it will bring in some money."

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* Heligoland.

"No, it will not; for no one will print it piecemeal. Only in a single volume would it have any value."

She paid no attention. "Come now," she said commandingly; "we will go to the post."

She meant well, but was foolish; and although experience had taught him what a dangerous adviser she was, he let her have her way, and followed.

On the stairs, he noticed that she limped, for she had bought too tight boots with high heels, such as were then only worn by *cocottes*.

When they reached the street, she hurried on to the post, and he followed. As he noticed how the symmetry of her little figure was impaired by the many packages which she insisted on carrying, and how she limped on the boot heel which she had trodden down, he was seized with a sort of repulsion.

It was the first time that he viewed her from behind, and he thought involuntarily of the wood-nymph of legend, who in front was a charming fairy, but behind quite hollow.

The next moment he felt a remorseful horror at himself and his thoughts. In this cruel heat the little woman was carrying the heavy load, and had already written six long letters to editors all for his sake. And she limped! But her brutal way of treating his work, and cutting a manuscript to pieces without having read it; treating a literary work as a butcher does a carcass! . . .

Again he felt repulsion, and again remorse, mixed with that indescribable pain which a man feels when he sees his beloved ugly, badly dressed, pitiful, or ridiculous. People in the street looked after her, especially when the wind blew out her thin serge mantle, which resembled a morning coat; it swelled out like a balloon and spoilt her fine figure. He hurried forward to take the packets from her; but she only waved him off, and hastened on, cheerful and undismayed.

When she came out of the post office, she wanted to go and buy larger boots. He followed. Since the purchase of them would occupy half an hour, she told him to wait outside. When at last she came out, she walked quite comfortably for a time, but then discovered that the new boots also were too tight.

"What do you think of a shoemaker like that?" she said.

"But *he* did not make the boots too tight for you! There were larger ones also."

That was a dangerous commencement of the conversation, and as they sat down at a table in a café, the silence was uncomfortable. They sat opposite each other and had to look one another in the eyes; they sought to avoid doing so, but could not, and when they were obliged to look at each other, they turned away.

"You would like now to be in Copenhagen with your friends," she said. It was a good guess. But even if he could have transported himself thither for a second, he would have wished himself back again at once.

Her nervousness increased, and her eyes began to sparkle, but since she was intelligent, she understood that neither of them was to blame.

"Go for a walk," she said; "we must be away from each other for a while, and then you will see it will be better."

He quite agreed with her, and they parted without any bitterness.

As he walked along by the side of the harbour, he felt his nerves become settled and quiet. He became once more conscious of himself as a separate and independent being; he no longer gave out emanations but concentrated himself; he was once more an individual in his own skin. How well he knew these symptoms, which signified nothing, but which in spite of all attempts to explain them, persisted as a constant phenomenon.

Meanwhile, since he felt a positive satisfaction in her absence, the thought stole into his mind that perpetual freedom from her would be attended by yet greater satisfaction, and as he approached the steam-boat pier the thought passed through his mind like a flash of lightning: "If I go off now, I shall be in Copenhagen in two days."

He sat down, ordered a glass of beer, lighted a cigar, and considered.

"If I go to London," he thought, "she will get the upper hand, because she can speak the language. I shall be led about by her like a deaf and dumb man and shall have to sit like an idiot among my literary friends whom she will get under her thumb. A pleasant prospect! Being patronised by her in the Danish newspapers was already sufficiently humiliating. I incurred an obligation to her. . . "

But in the midst of his meditations he broke off, for he knew that no character could stand such close and critical analysis. He knew also that no one could endure being gazed at from behind and judged in absence. Then a feeling of loneliness came over him and a consciousness of being faithless and ungrateful. He was drawn back to her, stood up and went quickly to the hotel. When he entered in an elevated mood and not without sentimental feelings he was greeted by a laugh, long-lasting and cheerful like the song of the grasshoppers. Dressed in silk she lay there, coiled up like an Angora cat, eating sweetmeats, and smelling of perfume.

Then they laughed both together, as though they had seen something comic in the street, which had nothing to do with them.

. . . . . .

Now they were in Pimlico, between Westminster and Chelsea. They had paid one visit and that was all. Everyone was away, all the theatres were shut, and a perfectly tropical heat prevailed. One's soul felt as if it would gladly shake off its fleshly husk in order to seek for coolness up in the air. From morning to evening one felt only half alive.

The pressure of need had forced him unwillingly to set to work and write. But as he had already utilised most of his experiences, he was obliged to make use of some material which should, properly speaking, not have been employed. However, he did violence to himself, overcame his scruples, and began.

" Now I am writing," he told her triumphantly, " we are saved ! "

His wife came and saw how he had filled the first sheet with letters. After an hour she came again. He was lying on the sofa lamenting: "I can do nothing! Let us then perish!"

She left the room without saying a word, and when she had shut the door, he bolted it. Then he took out of his portmanteau a green linen bag containing a quantity of sheets of paper covered with dates. These had been often spoken of by his friends and nicknamed the "Last Judgment."

It was an historical work, in which, from a new and bold point of view, he treated the history of the world as a branch of natural science. He had planned it carefully, but perhaps it was destined never to be printed and would certainly never bring in any money.

After working for some time, he felt the usual restlessness which he experienced in the absence of his second self, and went down to seek her.

She sat reading a book which she made a lame attempt to hide, as he entered. By her strange manner he saw that some fateful element had entered into their common life.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

"Your last book," she answered in a peculiar tone.

"It has appeared then! Don't read it; you will poison yourself."

It was a ruthless description of his first marriage, written in self-defence and as a last testament, for he had intended, after completing it, to take his life. For years the manuscript had remained sealed up in the care of a relative, and he had never intended to print it. But in the last spring and under the pressure of necessity, after he had been assailed most unjustly by gossips and in the newspapers, he had sold the book to a publisher.

And now it had appeared and fallen into the hands of the very last person who should have seen it. His first impulse was to snatch the book from her, but he was restrained by the thought: "It has happened; well, let it happen!" And with perfect calm, as though he had assisted at his own inevitable execution, he left the room. At lunch, he noticed the strange transformation which had taken place in his wife. Her face wore a new expression; her looks searched his whole person, as though she were comparing him with the man described in the book. He took for granted that his sufferings there described would not arouse her pity, for a woman always takes sides with her own sex. But what he could not understand was that she seemed to recognise herself in certain of her predecessor's characteristics. Perhaps her mind was occupied by some still unsolved problems in the question which married people instinctively avoid—the woman question. Certain it was, however, that she had learnt what her husband's views were on the subject of her sex, and they were so cynically expressed that they must give her mortal offence.

She did not say a word, but he saw in her face that now all chance of peace was gone and that this woman would never rest till she had destroyed his marriage and compelled him to shorten his life. Against this he could only oppose his motto: "Be ready for everything," and resolve to bear everything as long as possible, and finally when nothing else remained, to go his own way. Then she would devour herself in solitude for want of food for her hate.

. . . . . .

The next day she had hatched her egg, which proved to contain a basilisk.

With an air which would fain have seemed innocent, but did not, she told him, that since he could not work, they must think of retrenching.

"Very well," he answered.

First of all they had to content themselves with one room. This meant that all possibility of being his own master, of withdrawing himself, and of collecting himself was precluded. For the future he would be confined with his tormentress in the same cage, have no more power over his own thoughts and inclinations, and above all, not be able to work at the "Last Judgment."

"You know you cannot work!" she remarked.

When midday came, a plate with some cold bacon and bread was set before him.

"You don't like soup," she said; "and hot food isn't nice in this heat."

Then she sat down to watch him.

"Won't you eat?" he asked.

"No, I am not hungry," she answered, and continued to watch him.

Then he stood up, took his hat, and prepared to go out.

"Are you going out?" she asked; "then I will go too, and we will keep each other company."

He went forward with long strides and she followed him. In order to vex her he chose the sunny side of the street by a long white wall, where the heat was intense, and the reflected light blinded the eyes. Then he dragged her out to Chelsea, where there was no house that could give shade.

She followed like an evil spirit.

When they came to the river, he thought for a moment of pushing her into the water, but did not. He went along the bank where lime-ships unloaded, steam-cranes puffed out coal-smoke, and chains hindered their walking. He hoped that she would fall and hurt herself, or be pushed down by a workman, and wished that a coal-heaver would embrace and kiss her—so boundless was his hate and hers.

It was in vain that he mounted over barrels and wheel-barrows and threaded his way through heaps of lime. He thought of jumping into the river and swimming to the other side, but was withheld by the thought that she perhaps could swim also.

At last he made a wide circuit like an ox persecuted by a gadfly, and went down to Westminster. There the back streets swarmed with the strangest figures, like shapes seen in a nightmare. He entered the abbey, as if to shake off a pest, but she followed, silent and unweariable.

Finally he had to return home, and when he got there, he sat down on one chair, and she seated herself opposite him.

Then he understood how a man can become a murderer, and determined to fly, as soon as he had written for money.

The night came, and he hoped now to be able to collect his thoughts, and be master of himself.

She pretended to be asleep, but he could tell by her breathing that she did not really sleep.

"Are you awake?" she asked.

He was still unwise enough to answer "Yes." Now they lay there watching which should first go to sleep. At last he did so.

In the middle of the night he awoke, listened, and heard by her breathing that she was asleep.

Then his soul stretched itself, wrapped itself up in the darkness, and enjoyed being able to think without being watched by those cold, threatening eyes.

She had not, however, really gone to sleep, but in the darkness he heard her voice as before: "Are you asleep?"

He felt the vampire which had fastened on to his soul and kept watch even over his thoughts. Why did she spy on him except that she feared the silent workings of his mind? She felt perhaps how he lay there, and worked himself gradually out of the meshes of her net. He only needed a few hours' quiet, but that he was not to have. So she denied herself sleep in order to torment him. She would not allow herself the pleasure of going to the city, or of visiting the libraries and museums, because she did not wish to leave him alone. The next day he asked her whether she wished to continue to translate his works, or whether he should have recourse again to his old translators.'

"Shall I translate *you?*" she said contemptuously. "There are better writers to be done."

"Why will you not rather translate me than your rubbishy authors?"

"Take care!" she hissed. "You over-value yourself and a terrible awakening awaits you from the dream of your imagined greatness."

She said that in a tone as if she were supported by the public opinion of all Europe. That made a certain impression on him, for an author, even when recognised, often seems nothing to himself but is entirely dependent on the opinion others cherish regarding his talents. Now he felt the bond between them snap. She hated and despised his work, which was his only means of support, and when she sought to rob him of courage and confidence, she was the enemy. And in dealing with an enemy there are only two methods—either to kill him, or not to fight him but to fly. He determined on the latter.

He had still to wait a few days till the money came, and these days were enough to develop his aversion. He had opportunities of witnessing more cold, calculating malice, mischievous joy at successful thrusts, all the feminine small-mindedness, meanness, and duplicity, but on a larger scale. Since she knew that he could not get away for want of money, she gave him to understand that he was her prisoner; but he was not, however.

The room looked like a pigsty, and the meals were so prepared as to be purposely repulsive. Dirt and disorder prevailed to such a degree that he felt himself in hell. With longing he thought of his lonely attic which had always been tidy, however careless he had been about expenses.

Two months had passed since their marriage. All smiles and even conversation had ceased; love was changed into unreasoning hate, and he began to find her ugly.

On the last day before his departure, he felt obliged to speak out in order not to explode. "You were beautiful as long as I loved you; perhaps my love made you so, not only in my opinion. Now I find you the ugliest and meanest character which I have met in my life."

She answered: "I know that I have never been so malicious towards anyone as towards you, without being able to give any reasons for it."

"I can, though," he said. "You hate me because I am a man, and your husband."

He had packed his portmanteau and she was prepared for his departure. When now the time of separation approached and she believed it would be for ever, her hatred vanished, and behold! love was there again!

Her tenderness and care for him knew no bounds. They spoke of the future as though they would soon meet again. She gave him good advice in a motherly way, but resignedly, as if in face of an unalterable destiny which demanded their temporary separation. As they drove to the station in an open carriage, she kissed him repeatedly in broad daylight in the main streets. The passers-by laughed, but when the police began to look attentively at the caressing pair, he felt the need of caution.

"Take care," he said, "in this country we might be imprisoned for making love openly."

"What do I care for that?" she answered. "I love you so much."

He thought her again sublime in her all-defying tenderness, and they planned to meet again in a week. His intention was to go to his colleague Ilmarinen in the Island of Rügen. The latter would help him to order his affairs; then he would rent a house and they would meet again in a fortnight at latest.

"You see now, one cannot trust in the permanence of this hatred."

"No, one must trust love."

"It looks as if that had conquered."

Their parting at the station was heart-rending, and, as he sat alone in the railway carriage, he felt the pain of longing for her. He did not find the sense of freedom and happiness of which he had dreamt. All the recollections of her malice seemed to have been obliterated.

IV

He went from London to Hamburg in the hope of finding acquaintances on his arrival who would help him on to Rügen. But he found the place as though under a spell of enchantment; everyone had gone to the country or somewhere else. He had to take a room in an hotel and telegraph first to Ilmarinen in Rügen, but the latter answered that he had no money. Then he telegraphed to Copenhagen and Christiania and received similar answers.

He felt now as though he had been enticed into a trap and overpowered. Since there had been an outbreak of cholera the previous year in Hamburg, they expected another when the heat returned, and that was the case just now. Therefore, if he did not get away soon, he had to expect, not death, to which he felt indifferent, but the quarantine.

The days passed slowly with terrible monotony, for he had no one to talk to, and with the threatened cholera outbreak hanging over his head. Helpless and in a perpetual rage against some invisible foe who seemed to have a grudge against him, he felt paralysed. He dared not move a finger in order to alter his destiny, for he feared failure and renewed disappointment of his hopes.

In order to pass the time he studied historical tables and wrote dates from morning to evening. But the days were still terribly long, and after four days he conceived a fixed idea that he would never get away from this infernal town where nothing but buying and selling went on. This impression became so strong that he determined to end his life in his uncanny bedroom. He unpacked his things and put out the photographs of his children and other relatives on the writing-table.

Loneliness and torment made the time seem double its real length. He began to be under the illusion that he was a native of Hamburg; he forgot for a while his past and the fact that he was married or had lived anywhere else than here. He regarded himself as a prisoner with the weird feeling that he did not know what crime he had committed, who had condemned him, or who was his jailer. But the black spectre of cholera haunted invisibly the dirty water of the canals and watched for him. Three times a day he asked the waiter about the cholera and always received the same answer: "They are not sure yet."

Then at last came a letter from his wife. She cried aloud from longing, fear, and unrest, and wished to know where he was. He answered in the same tone and felt wild with rage at the destiny which separated them.

On the morning of the fifth day he discovered in a newspaper that his Danish friend lived only half an hour's journey by rail from Hamburg.

If he had known that before, he would not have been obliged to undergo all these sufferings. Now, since he could not pay the hotel bill, he resolved to depart at once and not to return. His friend would give him money which he would send to the hotel, and he would have his things sent after him. He took his seat in the railway carriage with the feelings of a liberated prisoner, cast a pitying look on Hamburg and forgave the injuries it had done him, but vowed never to honour it with another visit, unless compelled.

His half-hour's journey put him in a good humour, and his mouth watered at the prospect of being able to give expression to all his vexation and perhaps to make light of his martyrdom, and give it a comic aspect. His divine frivolity returned, and he thought that he must be after all a lucky fellow to find one of his friends so unexpectedly. He stopped before the comfortable little house; the landlord stood in the doorway; he greeted him and asked if Mr —— were at home.

"No; he went off this morning."

"Where?"

"To Denmark."

During the three hours which he had to wait for the train he had time to get over the blow. When he took his seat again in the train, he thought: "There is something wrong here; it is not the natural logic of events. It is certainly something else."

Then the spires of Hamburg reappeared and his hatred to the place awoke again, and rose to an incredible height when he saw a coffin at the station. "Now the cholera is here," he thought, "and I shall be in quarantine for fourteen days!"

But it was not the cholera, which was something to be thankful for. He did not feel so, however, for he felt sure it would break out on the same day that he received the money. And he calculated that he would never get away from Hamburg in this way. The money would delay so long till the hotel bill, which grew in geometrical progression, swallowed up the whole amount, and nothing would be left for his travelling expenses. In this way there would be a sort of perpetual movement which might last till the end of the world.

That his calculations were about correct was proved two days later when the money really came. He paid the bill, left the hotel in a cab, and drove to the station; then a hotel servant who had followed him expected a tip, and had, besides, a little additional bill, probably falsified, as usual. When he came to the booking-office and inquired the price of the ticket, he was two marks short. Accordingly he returned to the hotel.

It is not necessary to linger over details in order to give the reader a lively idea of what he suffered. In short, his silence cure still lasted some days; then he got away, and the cholera had not yet broken out.

. . . . . .

His object in going to Rügen was partly to seek masculine society in order to get rid of the feminine atmosphere which had enveloped him, and partly to settle matters with Ilmarinen; but his chief purpose was probably to talk himself out. That was precisely why, he thought, destiny or whatever it was had relegated him to absolute silence in Hamburg, for "destiny" always sought out his secret wishes in order to frustrate them.

When at last he reached Rügen, hoping to have a good talk for half a night, he found Ilmarinen altered, chilly in demeanour and embarrassed. The latter had heard that his friend had married a lady from a rich family, as indeed was the fact, and therefore could not understand this sudden come down. When the new-comer asked whether they could have supper together, the Finn excused himself by saying that he had been invited to a birthday feast.

"I live, you know," he said, "with Lais's oldest friend, the Swede, who was in love with her, and who came last."

"Is *he* here?"

"Yes, he lives here, since Lais engaged herself to the Russian who left his wife and children."

"He hates me then also?"

"Yes, to speak the truth, your presence will certainly annoy him."

So he remained alone the first evening. Alone after a long double loneliness with his wife and with himself!

He felt as though he were under some curse, to be so treated by this insignificant, uncultivated Ilmarinen whom he had lifted up from nothingness, introduced to his own circle, fed and lodged, because he executed business matters for him with the theatres and publishers. This employment was partly an honour for the young unknown author, and partly an advantage, for it helped him to find openings for his own work. Now the pupil abandoned the teacher, because he thought there was nothing more to be gained from him, and because he considered he could now help himself.

The days which followed were now so dreadful, that again the thought occurred to him that this could not be natural, but that a black hand was guiding his destiny.

Since there was only one restaurant in this third-class watering-place, he had to sit at the same table with his countryman, who attributed to him the loss of Lais, and with Ilmarinen, who assumed a superior tone, because he regarded him as lost. Then the food resembled hog's flesh from which all the goodness had been cooked out. One rose hungry from table, and was hungry the whole day. Everything was adulterated, even the beer. As regards the meat, the restaurant keeper's family first cooked all the goodness out of it for themselves; the customers only got the sinews and bones, and were fed, in fact, just like dogs. Bitter looks, which his unfortunate fellow-countryman could not quite suppress, did not increase the imaginary pleasures of the table.

He spent a week in Rügen without hearing anything from his wife in London. At first he had found life on the island tolerable in contrast to that in the Hamburg hotel; but when he woke one day and reflected on his situation, it seemed to him simply hellish. He had hired an attic room and the sun beat fiercely on the iron plates of the roof, which was only a foot above his head. Sixteen years previously he had, as a young bachelor, left his garret at the top of five flights of stairs, in order to enter a house as a married man. Since that time it had been one of his nightmares to find himself crawling up the five flights of stairs to his old garret, where all the wretchedness and untidiness of a bachelor's room awaited him. Now he was again in an attic and a bachelor, although married. That was like a punishment after receiving warnings. But what crime he had committed he could not say.

Moreover, the whole surrounding soil consisted of light, loose sand, which had been so heated by the suns of midsummer that it did not become cool at night. It made one think at first of the hot sand-girdles which peasants use to cure inflammation of the lungs. Later on, after searching in his memory, he thought of the scene in Dante's Inferno where the blasphemers lie stretched out on hot sand. But as he did not think he believed in any good God, it seemed to him that blasphemies might be left unpunished.

After walking about for a week in the deep sand, it seemed to him really a hellish torture to have to take half a step backward for every one forward, and to be obliged to lift the foot six inches high in walking. Worst of all was the feeling of sinking through the earth like the girl in the fairy story who trod on bread. Never to find a firm foothold, nor to be able to run a race with one's thoughts, but to drag oneself about like an old man—that was hell. Besides this, there was a heat in the air which never abated. His attic was burning hot by day, and when he lay in bed at night with nothing on, he was scorched by the iron plates of the roof. The nearness of the sea would naturally have helped to relieve the heat, but that possibility had been carefully guarded against, like everything else. From his boyhood he had been accustomed to cast himself head foremost into the water because he did not like creeping into it. In connection with this also, he was persecuted by a frequently recurring nightmare, i.e. he used to dream that he was overheated and must plunge into the sea. The sea was there but was so shallow that he could not plunge into it, and when he did crawl into it, it was still so shallow that he could not duck his head. That was precisely the case here. "Have I come here for the fulfilment of all my bad dreams?" he asked himself.

And with reason. Ilmarinen grew more inquisitive every day; he asked when the Norwegian's wife was coming, and when a fortnight had passed, believed that she had quite abandoned him. This, naturally, pleased Lais's friend, and nothing was wanting to complete the Norwegian's hell. For there was something very humiliating in his position as a discarded husband. His correspondence with England had assumed such an ominous character that he did not know himself whether he was still married or separated. In one of his wife's letters, she dwelt on her inextinguishable love, the pain of separation, and the martyrdom of longing. They were, she said, Hero and Leander on opposite sides of the sea, and if she could swim, she would fly to her Leander, even at the risk of being washed up on his island a corpse. In her next letter she announced that she intended opening a theatre in London, and was trying to raise sufficient capital. At the same time she could not find enough capital to buy a steamer-ticket. A third letter contained the news that she was ill, and was full of complaints that the husband had left his sick wife in a foreign land. A fourth letter said that she was in a convent kept by English ladies, where she had been educated, and where she found again her youth and innocence; in it she also denounced the wickedness of the world and the hell of marriage.

It was impossible to give reasonable answers to these letters, for they poured on him like hail and crossed his own. If he wrote a gentle reply he received a scolding letter in answer to a previous sharp one of his, and vice versa. Their misunderstandings arrived at such a pitch that they bordered on lunacy, and when he ceased to write, she began to send telegrams.

This imbroglio lasted for a month, and during that time he looked back with longing to the hours he had spent in Hamburg; they seemed to him like memories of an indescribably happy time when compared with this.

At last he was cut down from the gallows. A letter came from his sister-in-law inviting him to his father-in-law's villa at Odense. His wife had also been invited; and it was arranged that they should meet again there.

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Prepared for everything, even the worst, he entered on this new stage of running the gauntlet. The most curious of all his changes awaited him. After having been a husband and father he was to become a child again, be incorporated into a family, and find another father and mother many years after losing his own. The situation was rendered more confused by the fact that his father and mother-in-law had lived separate for seven years, and now wished to come together again on the occasion of their daughter's marriage.

He had thus become a bond of union between them, and since the daughter had also been at variance with her father, the family meeting promised to take the shape of a manifold reconciliation.

But his own past was not exactly associated with family reconciliations, and since he himself had not a clean record the prospective idyll by the Areskov Lake began to loom before him like a cave of snakes. How was he to explain this strange parting from his bride after only eight weeks of marriage? To allege pecuniary embarrassment would be the worst of all excuses, because a son-in-law with money difficulties would be regarded as an impostor or a legacy-hunter.

As he approached the meeting-place, he became nervous, but at the last hour he saved his courage, as usual, by reverting to the standpoint of the author : " If I get no honour thereby, I will at any rate get material for a chapter in my novel."

He also regarded what happened to him from another point of view—that of the innocent martyr. " I will see how far Destiny can go in its meanness, and how much I can bear." When the train stopped at the pretty little branch-line station, he looked out, naturally enough, for faces which sought his own. A young lady leading a delicate-looking child by the hand approached, asked his name, and introduced herself as his father-in-law's French governess. She had been sent, she said, to meet him.

A pretty white village whose houses had high, tent-like roofs and green shutters lay in a valley surrounded by small hills, and enclosing a beautiful lake, on the bank of which, outside the village, stood his father-in-law's house. On the road under the lime-trees a bare-headed, white-haired lady met him, embraced him and bade him welcome. It was his wife's mother. He was immediately conscious what a strange transmission of feelings such a simple transaction as marriage had seemed to him, might bring about. She was his mother and he was her son.

"I have known you long before you saw my daughter," said the old lady, with the quavering voice of a religious fanatic. "And it is as though I had expected you. There is much evil in your writings, but your immorality is childish, your views of women are correct, and your godlessness is not your fault for He did not wish to make your acquaintance, but now you will soon see Him come. You have married a child of the world, but you will not long remain with her when you see how she pulls you down into the trivialities of life. When you find yourself alone, you will re-discover the first vocation of your youth."

This she said in the solemn and unembarrassed manner of a sibyl, as though someone else spoke through her and therefore she did not fear to have said too much.

When the conversation returned to mundane things, he asked after his father-in-law, whose absence surprised him. She answered that he was not here, but would come to-morrow. His sister-in-law now appeared but she was chilly, gloomy and conventional in demeanour. He had thought her his friend and had hoped to find a support in her presence, but perceived now that that hope was vain, especially as she was going to leave before her father came. Nothing more was said about his own wife, and no one knew whether she was coming or not.

Had he been enticed into a trap? he asked himself, and was a court martial about to be held here? Had his wife written complaints against him from England? How was he to interpret the situation? A mother-in-law who almost advised him to be divorced, and spoke ill of her child—that was something very original!

Meanwhile he was conducted into the villa. It was a handsome stone building of two stories, with many large rooms filled with ancient furniture, tapestries, and ornaments. And this house, which could easily contain two large families, was occupied for only six weeks in the year by the owner during his holidays; the rest of the time it stood empty. This suggested wealth, and gave the son-in-law the impression that here, at any rate, one need not discuss poverty—its causes and its cure.

The day passed in conversation with his mother-in-law, who was unwearied in showing him attention and kindness. She was inclined on every occasion to lead the conversation to high subjects; as a religious mystic she was disposed to see the guiding hand of Providence everywhere. That led her to look at things in general from a tolerant point of view, since she regards people's actions as predestined.

In order to make himself agreeable in the most usual way he placed himself at her point of view and searched in his past for some premonitions of coming events.

"Yes," answered the old lady, "I said already that I had expected you; one of those wild Northmen was to come and take my daughter. But as you can guess, my husband was not delighted at the prospect; he has a very violent temper but is good at heart. You will have a hard tussle with him at first, but it will soon be over, if only you do not answer him. It is certainly fortunate that your wife has not come, for he has a bone to pick with her also."

"Also?"

"I don't mean anything bad; don't misunderstand me. It will be all right when his angry fit is over."

"He will be angry then, anyhow, but I don't understand why. I have acted in good faith, but every man may sometimes fairly plead unmerited misfortune."

"Oh, it will be all right!"

At last the evening ended and he went up to his room. It had windows on three sides; there were no outer blinds and the curtains could not be drawn together. He felt himself under observation, like a patient in quarantine.

When he lay in bed he had his father-in-law's bust to contemplate; the face did not look friendly but quite the reverse, and being lit from below, it assumed all manner of unpleasing expressions.

"And to-morrow I am to be lectured by this stranger who I have never seen; scolded like a schoolboy because I have had misfortunes. Well, I must put up with it, as with everything else."

The next morning he woke up with a distinct impression that he found himself in a pit of snakes, into which Satan had enticed him. Therefore it was impossible to flee, so he went out to botanise and survey the landscape. He screwed himself up into a frivolous, poetic mood and thought what a thrilling situation it was; a dramatic scene which no one had hitherto passed through. "It is my own," he said to himself, "even though it should scorch my skin."

Lunch-time came; it was not exactly cheerful at table and his father-in-law's empty place seemed to threaten him. After lunch he went up to his room to quiet his nerves and immediately afterwards the Councillor's arrival was announced.

The Norwegian went down smiling, while a chill ran through him at intervals. In the veranda stood a man who looked about forty, dressed like a young man, with laughing and youthful eyes. What the Norwegian's own demeanour was, he himself could not see, but it must have made a favourable impression, for his new relative greeted him respectfully, apologised for the lateness of his arrival, said kind things about his books, and asked him to sit down.

However, he always addressed him with "you" instead of the more intimate "thou." Then he talked of politics; he had just come from Fredensborg. He spoke at length of this and that person, apparently with the object of observing his son-in-law, who sat mute and attentive. Then he turned to his wife, asked if she had anything to entertain their guest with, and finally came back to him, asking if he wished for anything. Without hesitating he stood up, went near his father-in-law and said: "I have only one wish, that my wife's father should call me 'thou.'" *

There was a sudden gleam in the other's eyes, he opened his arms and now the doubter felt the same as he had when meeting his mother-in-law. The invisible family-tie had been knit; he was genuinely moved, and stood there transformed into a child.

"You are a good fellow," said his father-in-law, "I have looked into your eyes." Then he kissed him on both cheeks. "But," he continued, "you have got Maria, and you know what you have got, as I hear. Be good enough never to come and complain to me. If you cannot tame her, you must let yourself be drawn along by her. You have had your way; much good may it do you!"

Then they drank coffee and talked like relatives and old acquaintances. Then the Councillor went to change his clothes in order to go fishing. He returned in a summer suit of white cashmere which made him look still younger than before. The trousers had certainly belonged to his Court uniform, and traces of gold thread were still visible upon them, but that made

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* Intimate friends thus address each other in Swedish.

an impression on the Bohemian. Moreover, his father-in-law offered him cigars which he had been presented with by princes.

The Councillor had dined at Court and was now going fishing with the anarchist. The latter felt his conscience slightly uneasy as he had not long previously admired the cleverness of some anarchists in forcing open money-safes. It was strange! But the Councillor spoke sympathetically of modern movements and of Scandinavian literature in general. He was also thoroughly acquainted with the terrible activity of his son-in-law, so that the latter had no need to feel embarrassed. He especially approved of his views on the woman question and expressed his opinion thus, "You have written all that I wished to write."

He was perhaps not quite serious, but he said it at any rate.

Then they reached the stream.

"Have you ever fished for perch?" asked his father-in-law.

"No," he replied.

"Then you had better help me."

The help consisted in placing the fish in a basket and clearing the hook without injuring the artificial fly.

Since everything requires practice, the son-in-law showed himself somewhat clumsy and got scolded. But he had become so accustomed to his new position that he found it quite natural, just as natural as when he used to go fishing formerly with his children.

At sunset the sport ceased, and the son-in-law had the honour of carrying the fishing-rods, basket, and fish home.

The evening was cheerful, and the Councillor sent a telegram to London with travelling expenses, telling the young wife to come at once.

"That is for your sake," he said to his son-in-law. In other words she had not been sent for before, and he had therefore been enticed, as one captures singing-birds.

"I have got well over it," he said to his mother-in-law as he bade her good night.

"The worst is over, but it is not finished yet."

"Do you think we shall both get a whipping?"

It was not the end yet by a long way. The next morning he received a letter from London in which she said farewell to him for ever (Lord Byron!) because in the choice between her and her parents, he had preferred the latter. Since there was no choice in question, this was a piece of nonsense which concealed something. Another letter, addressed to her mother, was to the same effect but expressed more violently and concluded by wishing her "good luck." Her mother explained it thus. "She is jealous, fears that you tell tales against her and find support here; she is so self-willed that she cannot bear even her parents over her. If you become good friends with her father and mother, she feels herself in a child's position with regard to you also!"

This was possible but not quite natural, for she ought to have rejoiced that he had made a conquest of her parents, and thus brought about a reconciliation between her and them.

Her father became angry and serious; he telegraphed an ultimatum and demanded an answer. Now the sky was clouded and there were no more smiles. The Norwegian feared a collision if he remained here, and telegraphed to his wife: "I am going to Copenhagen; if you do not come, I will seek for a divorce." But he had to wait for an answer, and therefore he remained. That night he could not sleep, for the situation was grotesque enough to drive one to despair. Suppose she agreed to a divorce, how could the family-tie which had just been formed be broken in a moment? What would he be then, who had just entered into the family and received their confidence? What would the old people think? Such a hasty breach could not take place without some reason.

The next morning a telegram came from his young wife who was in Holland. Since everything was fated to go crazily this telegram was so badly worded that it might mean "I am coming to you," or "I am going to Copenhagen to meet you there."

This telegram became a bone of contention, and for three whole days the old pair and their son-in-law disputed over its interpretation. But the young wife did not come. They listened to the whistles of the steamboats, went down to meet the trains, came back and discussed the telegram again. They had no more quiet, and could not carry on a conversation without turning their heads and listening.

The next day the father's patience was exhausted, for a collateral circumstance came in view, of great importance in his eyes—the unavoidable scandal. The whole village knew that the son-in-law was there, but that his wife had been lost and was sought for by telegram. Her father therefore shut himself up all day, and when he emerged began a ruthless discussion of the economic problem.

"Have you a sure income?" he asked.

"As sure as authors generally have," was the answer.

"Very well, then you must do like others, and write for the papers."

"No paper will print my articles."

"Then write them so that they can be printed."

That was more than a sceptic and quietist ought to have borne, but he bore it and kept silence, firmly resolved rather to take a guitar on his arm and go about as a wretched street-singer rather than sell his soul.

The old man had himself been a novelist and poet in his youth, but had been obliged to give up the struggle in order to provide for his family. He, therefore, had the right to say: "Do as I have had to do." But on the other side he knew by experience how hard such a sacrifice is. He immediately felt sympathy with his son-in-law and spoke friendly, encouraging words. The next moment, however, his justified suspicions awoke, and the memory of the sacrifice he had once made made him bitter; he felt he must trample on an unfortunate who had fallen under his feet. When he saw how the other kept silent and took everything quietly, an evil spirit probably whispered to him that this man could only bear everything so patiently because he hoped some day to be heir in this house. Then he spoke of King Lear and his ungrateful daughters who left the old man alone, waited for his death, and robbed him of honour. So the day passed, and when the son-in-law withdrew, he was sent for to be whipped again. Since he could put himself in other's places, and understood how to suffer with them, he made no attempt to defend himself. He could easily imagine himself old and set aside, despised and neglected by his children. "You are right," he said, "but still I feel myself innocent."

On the evening of the third day after the dispatch of the London telegram his mother-in-law came to him. "You must go early to-morrow morning," she said, "for he cannot bear to see you any more!"

"Very well, I will go."

"And if Maria comes now, she will not be received."

"Have you ever seen a man in such a position as mine?"

"No; my husband grants that too; it makes him suffer to see such a worthy man as you in such a position; he suffers on your account, and he does not want to suffer. You know my thoughts about it; it is no one's fault and not the fault of circumstances; but you are fighting against another who pursues and pursues you till you are so weary that you will be compelled to seek rest in the only place where rest is to be found. In me you will always have a friend, even if you are divorced from my daughter, and I shall follow the course of your destiny with my good wishes and my prayers."

When alone in his room, he felt a certain relief to think that to-morrow there would be an end of this wretchedness which was among the worst things he had experienced. In order to think of something else, he took up a paper which proved to be the official Court news. His eye flew over the first page down to the feuilleton, where a literary essay attracted his attention. He read it, thinking that his father-in-law had written it. At the first glance the article showed great familiarity with literature, but it contained over-confident judgments and was written in too artificial a style. Moreover, it surprised him by displaying hostility to all modern literature (including Scandinavian), while German literature was pointed to with special emphasis as that which set the tone to, and stood highest in the civilised world. Germany always at the head!

When he reached the end of the article, he saw that it was signed by his wife! Now he had promised her never to read her articles and he had kept this promise in order to avoid literary discussions in his married life. The only reason that her written sentiments were different from those which she expressed in daily conversation must be that she had to write so "in order to be printed." What a double life this woman must lead, appearing in Radical circles as an anarchist, and in the Court paper as an old-fashioned Conservative! How one could so change about he did not understand, and he was too tired to try to understand it. But that explained why she could not understand his being without occupation while there were plenty of pens and paper.

This worldly wisdom, this old-fashioned style seemed to suggest a bald head and spectacles rather than a young, beautiful, laughing girl who could lie on a sofa and eat sweetmeats like an odalisque.

"To think that people should be so complicated!" he said to himself. "It is interesting at any rate! I shall remember it next time!" And he fell asleep, thinking himself considerably wiser after these experiences.

At seven o'clock he got up, called by a man who was to take his things to the station. As his mother-in-law had told him the train did not start till nearly eight, he made no hurry, but dressed quietly and went down into the garden where he met her. They were standing and talking of what lay before him when a rough, thundering voice was heard from a window of the first story. It was his father-in-law.

"Haven't you gone yet?"

"No; the train doesn't go till quarter to eight!"

"What idiot told you that?"

That he could not say, as it was his mother-in-law.

"Well, hurry on to the station and see when the next train goes."

As the Norwegian hesitated, there came a sharp "Now!" like the crack of a whip over a horse. It was quite clear to him what he had to do now; he pressed his mother-in-law's hand and went. His firm steps must have shown that they were the opposite to those leading to the lion's cave,* going out and away but never returning, for he heard immediately the old man's voice in a caressing, lamenting tone: "Axel!"

It felt like a stab in the departer's breast, but he had begun to move, and went on without looking round.

He went down to the station, looked ostensibly at the railway guide, asked about the next train without listening to the answer, saw by the position of the sun which direction was north-east, and struck into the nearest highway. He did this all so quietly, as though he had long considered the plan. Soon he found himself out in the country, alone without a home, without baggage, without an overcoat, and nothing but a walking-stick in his hand. He felt angry with no one; his father-in-law was right, and his last call sounded like an appeal for forgiveness for his bad temper. Yes, he only felt guilty with regard to this man, on whom he had brought shame and sorrow. But in himself he felt innocent, for he had only acted according to his obligations and possibilities.

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* *Vide* Horace.

Meanwhile he was free and had left the worst hell behind him; the sun shone, the landscape lay green and open, he had the whole world before him. He shook off the child's clothes which he had worn for eight days, felt himself a man again, and marched on. His plan was to reach a certain place on foot; there to take a steamer, to telegraph for his baggage and so to travel to Copenhagen.

"The affair is really ludicrous," he said to himself; "if it were not tragic for the old people. It looks bad, but I have survived worse things. I am a tramp! Very good! Then all claims to honour and respect have ceased. It is soothing at all events to have nothing more to lose. Hurrah!"

He marched into the next village like an old soldier and ordered wine and tobacco. He felt hilarious, and chatted with the innkeeper. Then he went on again. But at intervals he became sentimental; thought of his mother-in-law's words about the wild chase; had to admit that there was something uncanny about it, for he had never yet experienced such a misfortune; and if other people noticed it, it could not be mere imagination. But that was nothing strange, for he had had bad luck ever since he was a child. But fancy placing a man in such a position! He would not even have treated an enemy with such hellish cruelty.

Meanwhile he reached Odense, came to Korsör and soon afterwards to Copenhagen. It was evening and he sent a messenger to the family where his wife generally stayed. Since she had not come to the Arreskov Lake, she must be in Copenhagen. On the visiting-card which he sent he only wrote: "A somewhat strange question: where is my wife?"

The man who has not waited for an hour and a half on a pavement does not know how long this time can be. But this interval of waiting was abridged by the hope that after a silence-cure of eight days in Hamburg, five weeks of simple imprisonment at Rügen, and a week of the nethermost hell at Fünen, he would see his wife again. After an hour and a half the messenger returned with another visiting-card on which was written: "She left this morning for Fünen in order to meet you."

A miss again! "I begin to find this monotonous even when regarded as a plot," he said to himself.

If one had used it for the plan of a novel, the reader would throw the book away and exclaim: "No! that is too thick! And as a farce it isn't cheerful enough!"

Nevertheless, it was a fact! The next minute he thought: "My poor, unfortunate wife is going straight into the lion's den. Now she will get blows." For her father's anger was now unbounded, and his mother-in-law had said during the last days of his stay: "If she comes now, he will beat her." Therefore he telegraphed to the old lady to say that his wife was coming, and asked indulgence for her.

It would take four days for her to return. In order not to remain in Copenhagen where his wedding journey had been reported in the papers, he stayed in a village outside the town where an old friend of his lived with his family.

In the boarding-house where he stayed the same hog's-wash regime prevailed as in Rügen. In two days he lost as much strength as though he had had an attack of typhus. One chewed till one's jaws were weary, went hungry to table, and rose again tired and hungry.

His friend was not the same as before. Rendered melancholy by disappointments he seemed to find this a favourable opportunity to display a visible satisfaction at seeing the well-known author in such a sorry plight. His sympathy took the heartiest, and at the same time the most insulting forms. When the Norwegian related his adventures on the wedding journey, his hearer stared at him in such a way that he made a hasty end of his narrative in order not to be stigmatised as a liar.

The village was on marshy ground, and overshadowed by very old trees; one became melancholy there without knowing why. When he walked down one of the streets of the village he was astonished to see people at the windows regarding him furtively with wild, distracted looks, and immediately afterwards shyly hiding themselves behind the curtains. This disquieted him and he wondered whether a false report had been spread that he was mad. When he asked his friend about it, the latter answered: "Don't you know where you are?"

The question sounded strangely, and might mean: " Are you so confused that you have lost consciousness? "

" I am in X——" he answered, in order not to betray his suspicion.

" And don't you know what X—— is? "

" No! "

" It is simply a lunatic asylum; the inhabitants make a living by taking care of mad people." And he laughed.

The Norwegian inquired no further, but he asked himself: " Have they enticed me into a trap in order to watch me? "

He had grounds for such a suspicion, for such an occurrence had already happened in his life.

His whole existence now became a single effort to show himself so ordinary in his way of thinking and normal in his behaviour, that nothing " unusual " might be noticed in him. He did not dare to give vent to an original thought or to utter a parodox, and whenever the temptation came to narrate something of his wedding journey he pinched his knee.

This continual fear of being watched depressed him so much that he saw watching eyes everywhere, and thought he noticed traps laid for him in questions where there were none. Sensitive as he was, he believed that the whole village exhaled the contagious atmosphere of the lunatics; he became depressed and feared to go mad himself. But he did not attempt to go away, partly because he feared being arrested at the station, and partly because he had told his wife to meet him at this village.

He had received letters from Arreskov, in which his mother-in-law informed him what disquiet and anxiety his disappearance had caused them. His father-in-law, who well knew what he would have done in the unfortunate man's place, had immediately foreboded his suicide and wept aloud. They had searched for him by the banks of the lake and in the wood. . . . He stopped reading the letter and felt his conscience prick him. The good old man had wept! How terrible his lot must be, when the sight of it had that effect on others! The letter went on to say that Maria had arrived, and that they would soon meet again, if he only kept quiet, for she loved him. This was a ray of light and it gave him strength to endure this hell, where everyone looked askance at his neighbour to see whether he were in his senses.

But the two last days brought new tortures. The Swede whom he had met in the Copenhagen café had accepted an invitation to come to dinner. The Norwegian went gladly to the station to meet his best friend, who understood him better than anyone else, and who, though poor himself, had tried to make interest for him with rich people, and to procure the help for him which he himself could not obtain. But now he met a stranger who looked at him coldly and treated him as a stranger. There was no smile of recognition on his part, no inquiry after the Norwegian's health and especially no allusion to the past.

After dinner he took the host aside and asked: "Is the Swede angry with me?"

"Angry? No! But you understand he has now married Lais."

"Married?"

"Yes, and therefore he does not like to be reminded that she was your friend."

"I understand that, but it is not my fault that I was her friend before she knew that the Swede was in existence."

"No, certainly not; but you have gossiped about her."

"I only said what everyone else said, since it was no secret. She herself so boasted of her conquests that they were bound to become public."

"Yes, but the fact is as I say."

The Swede remained in the hotel, and therefore the Norwegian was relegated to solitude.

In order to while away the time he made use of the flora of the neighbourhood in order to study the biology of plants. For this purpose he carried about with him on his walks a morphia syringe, intending to see whether the plants were sensitive to this nerve poison. He wished to prove by experiment that they possess a sensitive nervous system.

One afternoon he sat drinking a glass of wine at a garden restaurant on the outskirts of the village. Over his table hung the branches of an apple-tree, laden with small red apples. These were suitable for his purpose. Accordingly, he stood on his chair, made an insertion with the morphia syringe in the twig which bore the apple, but pressed too hard, so that it fell. At that instant he heard a cry and halloo from the wooded slope behind him, and saw an angry man, followed by his wife and child, come rushing towards him with uplifted stick. "There! I have him at last!" he cried.

Him! He was mistaken for an apple stealer for whom they had been watching.

The Norwegian summoned all his Buddhistic philosophy to his aid, got down from the chair, and sat expecting to be led off by gendarmes as he had been caught in the act. It was impossible to explain his conduct, for none of the authorities could approve such an eccentric act as the inoculation of an apple-tree with morphia.

Meanwhile a minute passed while the angry man was running along by a fence and entering the enclosure. Like one condemned to death, the Norwegian sat there awaiting a blow from the stick as an earnest of what was to follow. He was firmly resolved to die like a warrior, and did not trouble to devise useless explanations, but only thought: "This is the most devilish experience I have had in my whole terrible life."

Sixty seconds are a long time but they pass at last!

Whether it was the Norwegian's carefully groomed exterior and expensive suit, the wine and the best kind of cigarettes, or something quite different which had a mollifying effect, the angry man, who had certainly not had such a stylish customer before, bared his head, and only asked whether the gentleman had been attended to. The Norwegian, answering politely, noticed how the restaurant keeper stared at the morphia syringe, the powder box and the glass of water.

With the free-and-easy tone of a man of the world, the Norwegian explained the embarrassing situation: "I am a botanist, and was just about to make an experiment when you surprised me in a very suspicious position."

"Pray, doctor, do as though you were in your own house, and be quite at your ease," was the reply.

After exchanging some remarks about the weather, the restaurant keeper went indoors; he muttered something to the waitress which the Norwegian thought he overheard. It caused him to take his departure, but in a leisurely way. "He thought I was one of the lunatics," he said to himself. "That was my deliverance. I can't come here again, however."

Several hours passed, but the impression of the sixty seconds of humiliation and the lifted stick still remained. "That is not mischance; that is something else," was his conclusion, as usual.

The next morning he took his walk and meditated on his destiny. "Why haven't you shot yourself?" Let him say who can. One view was that, finally, all difficulties are disentangled and experience shows that the end is good. This used to be called "hope," and by means of it one warped one's ship half an ell farther, as with a kedge anchor. Others maintained that it was curiosity which supported people. They wanted to see the sequel, just as when one reads a novel, or sees a play.

The Norwegian, for his part, had never found an aim in life. Religion certainly said that one should be improved here below, but he had only seen himself forced into situations from which he emerged worse than before. One certainly became a little more tolerant towards one's brother-men, but this tolerance strongly resembled moral laxity. Those who smile indulgently at others' crimes are not far from being criminals themselves. When in conversation it was alleged that one should love one's fellowmen, he used to deliver himself of his final sentiment as follows: "I neither love them nor hate them; I put up with them as they put up with me."

The fact that he was never entirely crushed by a sorrow sprang from his having an indistinct suspicion that life had no complete reality, but was a dream stage, and that our actions, even the worst of them, were carried out under the influence of some strong suggestive power other than ourselves. He therefore felt himself to a certain extent irresponsible. He did not deny his badness, but knew also that in his innermost being there was an upward, striving spirit which suffered from the humiliation of being confined in a human body. It was this inner personality which possessed the sensitive conscience, which could sometimes, to his alarm, press forward and become sentimental, weeping over his or her wretchedness—which of the two, it was hard to say. Then his second self laughed at the foolishness of the first, and this "divine frivolity," as he called it, served him better than morbid brooding.

When he came home from his work, he found his door shut. Full of foreboding, he knocked and uttered his own name. When the door opened, his young, wild wife fell on his neck. It seemed to him quite natural and simple, as though he had left her two minutes before. She spoke not a word of reproach, inquiry, or explanation, but only this: "Have you much money or little?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I have much, and want a good dinner in Copenhagen."

In this they were agreed, and such was their reunion. And why not? Two months of torture were forgotten and obliterated as though they had never been; the disgrace of a separation about which people had perhaps already gossiped, had vanished.

"If anyone asked me," he said, "about what we had quarrelled I would not be able to remember."

"Nor I, either. But, therefore, we will never,

never part again. We must not separate for half a day, or everything goes crazy."

This was certainly the wisest plan, he thought, and so did she. And yet one recollection came into his mind of Dover and another of London, when they were not apart for a moment, and just for that very reason everything went quite crazy. But they must not be too particular.

"And how is the old father?" he asked.

"Ah, he was so fond of you that I became jealous."

"I have noticed that. How did he receive you?"

"Well, I won't talk about that. But it was for your sake, so I forgave him." Even at *that* she could smile, as indeed she could at everything.

Well then, we will feast to-day, and work to-morrow.

VI

The autumn brought what the spring had promised, but not fulfilled. They lived in a good boarding-house, high up certainly, but with a view over the sea. Each of them kept up a slight intercourse with former friends so that they were not always *tete-à-tete.* The sun shone, money came in, and life was easy. This lasted for two unforgettable months without a cloud. There was boundless confidence on both sides, without a trace of jealousy. On one occasion, when she had tried mischievously to arouse his, he had said to her: "Don't play with madness! Be sure that with such play you only arouse my abhorrence and my hatred at the same time, when you introduce into my mental pictures of you the image of another man."

But she herself was jealous, even of his male friends, and drove Ilmarinen away. There were ladies at the table d'hôte, and each time that he addressed one of them, she became so indisposed that she had to get up and go. There was no occasion to mistrust his faithfulness to her, but her imperiousness was so boundless, that she could not endure his imparting his thoughts to another, man or woman. When she conducted some business transactions for him with publishers she exceeded her authority and acted rather as his guardian than as his helper. He had to warn her: "Remember what I said! If you misuse the power I have given you, I will overthrow you like a tyrant." He did not doubt her goodwill but her want of insight and exaggerated ideas of his capacities caused him inconvenience, and even loss of money. When he took away from her the authority to act for him, she behaved like a naughty child, brought everything into confusion and threw it away as worthless. Accordingly, the way was prepared for the inevitable result.

One Sunday morning they had a disagreement on an important subject, and at last he had shut the door between their two rooms. Then he went out. On his return, he found a letter from his wife saying she had gone to a family which they knew in the country, and would be back in the evening. In order to let her feel what solitude is like he made an engagement for the evening with some friends. The evening came. He went out, but about ten o'clock, thinking it cruel to remain longer, he returned home. When he tried to open his door, he found it shut from within.

"Aha!" he thought. "This is her plan to make me listen to a curtain-lecture in her room." He rang for the servant. "Is my wife at home?"

"No, she came home at nine, but went out again, in order to meet you, sir."

"Very well, open the door of my wife's room." That was done, but the door of his room remained locked, as he had locked it himself in the morning. Then he made his decision, closed the outer door of the flat, and took possession of his wife's room. After an hour she came and knocked. Her husband answered through the closed door: "You can take my room; I hope you can open it."

When she found she could not she began to form suspicions and thought he had shut himself in with someone. She naturally would not endure the scandal but sent for the police, on the pretext that a thief had been there, and perhaps was still in the room. The police came; the Norwegian dressed himself and admitted them, and they broke open the door between the two rooms. At the same time the door leading to the corridor was opened. A servantmaid said she thought she had heard steps inside the room. Before the open window stood a chair so placed as though someone had stood on it in order to climb on the roof. A thief then (or a woman) had clambered on the roof. The police went on it with lanterns, and some of the inmates of the boarding-house followed. A shadow moved by a chimney. A cry rose: "There he is!" The police declared that they could not climb the steep slate roof, and advised them to send for the fire brigade. "But that costs fifty crowns," objected the Norwegian. His wife signed a requisition for it, but her husband tore it in two. Meanwhile a crowd had collected in the street; the neighbouring roofs were also full of spectators. A cry was raised: "There he is!" They had seized a fellow who had joined the searchers with the good intention of catching the thief. A maid recollected that in the afternoon a traveller had arrived and was sleeping in a neighbouring attic from which he could have easily got into the room. The police made their way into the attic, searched through his papers and found nothing. All the attics were ransacked without result, and at midnight the police departed.

Then the young wife wished to begin with a whole series of explanations, but her husband was tired of the whole nonsense and could explain nothing. Therefore, since nothing more was to be done, he carried his wife into her room and shut the door between them for the second time that day!

This demoniacal adventure was never cleared up. The Norwegian did not believe there had been a thief, for nothing was missing from the rooms; he thought that his young wife, who had seen many plays, had stuck something in the lock, and that then devils had continued the performance of the comedy. He did not try to elicit what his wife thought, for then he would have been entangled in a web of necessary lies. He therefore made a stroke of erasure through the whole affair. The next morning they were again good friends, but not quite so good as before.

How disunion between a married pair arises has not yet been explained. They love one another, only flourish in each other's society, have not different opinions, and suffer when they are separated; their whole united self-interest enjoins them to keep the peace, because it is they especially who suffer when it is not kept. Nevertheless, a little cloud arises, one knows not whence; all merits are transformed into faults, beauty becomes ugliness and they confront each other like two hissing snakes; they wish each other miles away, although they know that if they are separated for a moment there begins the pain of longing, which is greater than any other pain in life.

Here physiology and psychology are nonplussed. Swedenborg in his "Conjugal Love" is the only one who has even approached the solution of the problem, and he has seen that for that purpose higher factors must be taken into consideration than come into the mental purview of most people.

This is why a married pair who love each other are obliged again and again to wonder why they hate one another, i.e. why they flee one another although they seek one another. Married people who are slightly acquainted with Ganot's "Physics" may note the resemblance of this phenomenon to that of the electricised elder-pith balls, but this will not make them either wiser or happier. Love indeed presents all the symptoms of lunacy, hallucination, or seeing beauty where none exists; profoundest melancholy, varying with extreme hilarity without any transition stage; unreasonable hate; distortions of each other's real opinions (so-called "misunderstandings"); persecution mania, when one believes the other is setting spies and laying snares; sometimes indeed attempts on each other's life, especially with poison. All this has reasons which lie below the surface. The question arises, whether through a married pair's living together, the evil thoughts of one, while still unripened, are not quite clearly apprehended and interpreted by the other, as though they had already entered into consciousness, with the express purpose of being carried into action. Nothing annoys a man more than to have his secret thoughts read, and that only a married pair can do to each other. They cannot conceal their dark secrets; one anticipates the other's intentions, and therefore they easily form the idea that they spy on each other, as indeed they actually do. Therefore they fear no one's look so much as each other's, and are so defenceless against one another. Each is accompanied by a judge who condemns the evil desire while yet in the germ, although no one is answerable for his thoughts to the civic law.

Accordingly, in marrying, one enters into a relation which stands a grade higher than ordinary life, makes severer demands, more exacting claims, and operates with more finely developed spiritual resources. Therefore the Christian Church made marriage a sacrament, and regarded it rather as a purgatory than a pleasure. Swedenborg in his explanation of it, also inclines this way.

A married pair are ostensibly one, but cannot be really so. As a punishment they are condemned to feel thorns when they wish to gather roses. According to the proverb: "Omnia vincit amor" the power of love is so boundless, that if it were allowed uncontrolled sway, the order of the universe would be endangered. It is a crime to be happy, and therefore happiness must be chastised.

Our frivolous friends must have felt something of this, for when they had had a tiff, they reconciled themselves without explanations and without alleging reasons, as though it was not they who were to blame for the discord but a third unknown person who had brought about all the confusion.

They did so on this occasion also, but the peace did not last long. Some days afterwards an indisputable fact was apparent, which in ordinary marriages is accepted with mixed feelings, but in this one met with decided disapproval. The wife was beside herself: "Now you have ruined my career; I shall sink down to the level of a nurse and how shall we support ourselves?"

There awoke in her a personal grudge against her husband which degenerated into hatred. She was an example of the "independent" woman who protests against the supposed injustice of Nature in assigning all the discomfort to her. She forgets that this brief period of pain is followed by an extreme and long-lasting joy which is quite unknown to men.

Here reasonable considerations were naturally of no avail, and when there were no more smiles, the situation became serious. The scenes between them assumed a tragic character, and just at this crisis an action was brought against him for his last-published book, which was confiscated at the same time. Autumn passed, and one felt that the sun had gone. The cheerful top-floor room changed into a never-tidied sick-room—became narrow, Her hatred increased continually; she could not go into society, nor to theatres, and hardly on the street. What most annoyed her was the fact that the doctor who had been summoned to declare that she had a dangerous disease, hitherto unknown, only smiled, saying that all the symptoms were normal, and ordered soda-water. Instead of an intelligent friend, the Norwegian found a malicious, spoilt, unreasonable child at his side, and longed to be out of all this wretchedness. All conversation ceased, and they only carried on communications by writing. But there is a kind of malice bordering on the disgraceful and infamous, which is hard to define but easy to recognise. That is the original sin in human nature, the positive wish to injure without cause, and without being justified in taking vengeance or exacting retribution. This kind of malice is hardly forgivable.

One day he received a scrap of paper on which something was written which prevented him going to her room again. Then came her ultimatum; she resolved to go to her relations the next day.

"I wish you a happy journey," he answered. In the dusk of the early morning a white form stood by his bedside stretching out its arms pleadingly for forgiveness. He did not move but let it stand there. Then she fell to the ground, and he let her lie, like an overthrown statue.

Whence the soft-hearted man, who was always ready to forgive, derived this firmness, this inhuman hardness, he could not understand, but it seemed to him to be imposed on him from without like a duty, or a fiery ordeal which he must go through. He went to sleep again. Then he awoke and dressed. He entered the empty room and was conscious of the void. Everything was irrevocably at an end!

A severe agitation was needed to bring his ego uppermost, and he resolved to drain a draught which was unsurpassed for bitterness. He went back to his native land, from which he had been banished.

When he got on the steamer for Christiania, he wrote a farewell letter to the captain, went on deck with his revolver, and thought of finding his grave in the Kattegat. Why did he not carry out this intention? Let him say who can! At last he found himself in a small provincial hotel. But why had it to be precisely the one in which Lais's friends and relations lived and dominated the social circle in which he must move? He could only regard that as a mean stroke on the part of Destiny, for on this occasion he was not to blame at all.

Meanwhile he sat as on an ant-heap in an alien and hostile environment. For three days long he asked himself: "What have I got to do here?" And he answered: "What indeed have you to do anywhere?" So he remained. For three days he asked himself: "What have you to do in life?" and questioned of the where, whence and whither. As an answer, the revolver lay on the table.

Hamburg, London, and Rügen began to shine like pleasant memories in comparison with this place of exile. It was so dreadful that he was astonished at the inventiveness of Destiny in devising new tortures which ever increased in severity. His room in the hotel was a suicide's room, i.e. a combination of discomfort and uncanniness. He was again haunted by the old idea he used to have: "I shall not get alive out of this room; here I must end my days." His capacity for hoping was exhausted. He seemed to be dropping downwards towards the empty void which began to close round him like the last darkness.

On the fourth day he received a letter from his sister-in-law in which she told him that his little wife was going on well. At the same time she proposed that he and his wife should spend the winter in a little town in Alster, so that her relations could now and then visit his wife who, in her present condition, needed help and advice.

It was, then, not at an end! And these pains of death had been endured in vain; he had not needed them in order to be taught to miss his wife. It was not over yet, and he began to live again.

As a proof that he had completely come to the end of himself it may be mentioned that the papers in those days contained a notice of his death. He wrote to contradict this in a vein of gloomy irony. He was tormented for three days more by having to run about to collect the journey money.

When the train at last stopped at the little station, he saw first of all his wife's pale face. It looked certainly somewhat exhausted by suffering, but beamed at the same time with some of that glorifying radiance which motherhood bestows. When her eyes discovered him, her face lit up.

"She loves me," he said to himself. And he began to live again literally not figuratively.

"Are you well?" he asked almost shyly.

"Yes I am," she whispered, burying like a child her face in his great cloak and kissing the edge of it.

"What are you doing? What are you doing?"

And she hid her face in his mantle in order not to show the emotion, of which she was always ashamed.

They had engaged two very inferior rooms; one was dark and the other uncomfortable, looking out on a factory. His wife worked in the kitchen and resigned herself to her fate, for her maternal feelings were aroused, though not yet completely. He suffered when he saw her toiling the whole day at the kitchen-range and in the scullery, and sometimes felt a twinge of conscience.

When he wished to help her to carry something heavy, she refused to be helped, for she insisted strongly that he should not be seen engaged in any feminine occupation, nor would she allow him to wait on her or to do her any small service. All storms were over now; a quiet stillness prevailed; the days passed one after the other in unvaried monotony. They lived alone together and had no social intercourse nor distractions.

But poverty came. The trial about his book had frightened the publishers and theatres. But the worst of all was that he could not write.

And what he could write, he did not wish to, for the plot of the story affected a family to whom he owed a debt of gratitude. Now when he would soon have two families to provide for, he trembled before the future with its increased duties, for a growing dislike to exercise his calling as an author had finally culminated in disgust.

What an occupation—to flay his fellow-creatures and offer their skins for sale. Like a hunter who, when pressed hard by hunger, cuts off his dog's tail, eats the flesh, and gives the bone—its own bone—to the dog. What an occupation to spy out people's secrets, expose the birth-marks of his best friend, dissect his wife like a rabbit for vivisection, and act like a Croat, cutting down, violating, burning, and selling. Fie!

In despair he sat down and wrote from his notes a survey of the most important epochs of the world's history. He hoped, or in his need imagined that he might in this way strike out a new path for himself as an historian, which had been the dream of his youth, before he became an author.

His wife knew what he was writing and that it would bring in no money, but controlled herself; perhaps his ardent conviction had persuaded her that there was something in it. She did not complain, but on the contrary cheered him up and offered to translate the work into English.

A month passed, quiet, peaceful but melancholy. They felt that they were not enough for each other in this absolute loneliness. They lamented it but sought for no society. He, with wider experience than hers, hoped that the child on its arrival would be satisfying company for them both.

Meanwhile poverty approached nearer. None of his plays were performed or sold, and not one of the hopes of spring had been realised. His children by his first marriage clamoured for money, and food began to be scarce in the house. Then came deliverance in the form of an invitation to spend the winter with his wife's grandparents.

One evening in December they alighted at a little station in Jutland, and drove through woods and wild heath. Everything was new and strange. In this house he was now to live as a grandchild, just as during the past summer in her father's house he had been for eight days a child.

They reached the ferry in the twilight. The drifting of the ice had begun, but the water had also sunk so low that a sand-bank lay in the middle of the stream, and there a new boat waited for them. From thence a large, white, three-storied house was visible; it looked unfriendly, almost weird, with its projecting wings and high, illuminated windows.

They reached the land and found themselves immediately in the ghostly castle. They were conducted up whitewashed stairs over which hung dark oil-paintings in black frames. Then he found himself in a warm, well-lighted room, among her relatives, of whom he only knew his mother-in-law.

With his incredible pliability, he immediately adapted himself to his position, and behaved like the young relation who under all circumstances must show reverence to his elders.

Here in the house his right of self-determination ceased; he must conform to other people's views, wills, and habits. In order to spare himself unpleasantness, he had resolved beforehand to have no more likes and dislikes of his own, but to accept all that was offered to him, however strange or repulsive it might appear.

The old grandfather was a notary and barrister who had retired with considerable wealth, and only managed his estate as far as was necessary for domestic purposes and for his own amusement. Most of his property consisted of hunting-ground and was in that state of neglect which a townsman finds picturesque. He and his wife were both over seventy, and seemed only to be waiting for their end with the cheerful resignation of good-natured, orthodox Catholics who are free from care. They had already built for themselves a mausoleum in the garden where their bodies were to repose, and they were accustomed to show it as other people show a summer-house. It was a little whitewashed chapel, with flowers planted round it, which they used to tend as though they already stood there in memory of them.

In the house there was a superfluity of good things. After having been half-starved in Alster here they found it difficult to avoid gluttony, without vexing their host. Pheasants, hare, venison were regular standing dishes which at last became a weariness. "This is our punishment," he said, "because we complained of the manna; now we are stuffed with quails like the murmuring Israelites so that it comes out at our throats."

A stillness like that of old age supervened; there was no need of care or anxiety in this house where there were as many servants as members of the family. It was easy to live with the old people, who had outgrown special interests, views and passions, and the young pair, who had their own rooms apart, only needed to appear at meal-times.

The young wife was now altogether a mother, talked of and with the unborn child as though she knew it well; she was mild and womanly, humble and even thankful towards her husband, whose affections remained unaltered though her shape was disfigured and her beauty faded.

"How beautiful life is!" she said.

"Yes it is; but how long will it last?"

"Hush!"

"I will be silent! But you know that happiness is punished."

No one asked what he was working at; on the contrary all that he heard was: "You should do nothing but take a thorough rest after your wild rushing about."

Accordingly he sent for some books which had been given him some years previously by a rich man and which he had been obliged to send back home. Then he began a series of systematic investigations, studied and made notes. He felt a new life and fresh interests awaken; and when he now found his former hypothesis and calculations verified by synthesis and analysis he became certain that he was working by a sure method, and in the right way. This gave him such confidence that he felt justified in pursuing his investigations, but because he could not explain their significance to the uninitiated, his position became somewhat insecure. People had to take him on good faith; they did that so long as peace prevailed, but at the first sign of antipathy he would be helplessly exposed to the ridicule or contemptuous pity of the bystanders.

The grandfather was a cultivated man, and therefore curious to know what was going on in the young pair's rooms. When he inquired, he received evasive answers, but since he had been a magistrate and barrister, he required definiteness. When he heard what the Norwegian's investigations were concerned with, he confuted them with the authority of the text books. In order to put an end to fruitless strife, his young relative let him believe he was right. But the old man tried to provoke him into contradiction, assumed a superior air and became intrusive. He was allowed to be so for the present.

"Nothing for nothing!" thought the Norwegian. His wife thanked him for his yieldingness and admired his self-control. But discord was fated to come, and it came.

The lawsuit in Copenhagen about his book extended its operations here also, and one day a court officer came to summon him to appear as defendant in the court of the nearest town. Since he had from the beginning challenged the jurisdiction of the Copenhagen court, because as a Norwegian writer he was not responsible to a Danish court, on account of a translation; and since he regarded the whole proceedings as illegal, which indeed they were, he refused to appear. The old man on the other hand insisted that he should do so, especially, perhaps, because he did not like to see gendarmes coming to his house.

To put an end to the matter, the Norwegian really resolved one morning to go and present his challenge personally in court.

He therefore went at eight o'clock and followed the beautiful walk along the river. But about half-way he met the postman and received, by paying cash on its delivery, a long-expected book. This book was extremely expensive, and since he had no money, he had been obliged to devise a plan in order to secure it. After thinking about it for a month, he remembered that he had some valuables stowed away in a box in an attic in Norway. He therefore wrote to a friend and asked him to sell the things for a price equivalent to the purchase of the expensive book, to change the money into notes and to send them in an unregistered letter so that no one might know of it. He did this because he felt he was stealing from his wife and family, but it had to be done, as he wished to solve an important problem. As he now held the long-desired means for doing so in his hand, he felt a lightning flash in his soul, and turned home without thinking.

"Now, I will finish the business," he said to himself; "the gendarmes can come afterwards."

As he entered the courtyard the old man stood there, cutting up a deer which he had shot. The Norwegian sought to slip past him unperceived, but did not succeed.

"Have you already been to the judge?" asked the old man sceptically.

"No," answered the Norwegian curtly, and hurried through the house-door. He ran up the stairs to his room and bolted the door. Then he sat down to study. After half an hour he said to himself: "Is the greatest problem of modern times solved?" There was a knock at the door, and then another hard and decided. He was obliged to open it in order to get quiet.

"Why don't you go to the judge?" asked the old man.

"That's nothing to do with you," he answered and slammed the door to with a sound like a shot.

But now there was no more peace for him! He felt that a crisis had come in his destiny, and he heard voices below. His hand trembled, he felt as though paralysed and closed the book which contained what he sought. At the same moment he lost confidence and dared not face what seemed a contradictory proof of his theory.

After some minutes his mother-in-law came. She was not angry, but found it unpleasant to have to tell him that he and his wife must leave the house at once, before dinner. They could have her little one-storied cottage at the bottom of the garden and have their meals sent from the house. His little wife appeared and danced with joy at the thought that they would have a little house of their own, especially with a garden and park round it.

The change took place, and now in this cottage began the two happiest months in the life of the married pair. Their cottage of grey stone, with little iron-barred windows framed in sandstone, was quite idyllic. It was built in convent style and covered with vine-creepers. The walls of the rooms were painted white, without any hangings, and the low ceilings were supported by thick beams black with age.

He had a little room constructed like a real monk's cell, narrow and long with a single small window at the end. The walls were so thick that flower-pots could stand outside in front of the window, as well as inside on the window-ledge. The furniture was old-fashioned and suited its surroundings. Here he arranged his library, and never had he felt so comfortable before.

But now they had to prepare for the coming of the child. Husband and wife painted the window-sills and doors. Roses and clematis were planted before the cottage. The garden was dug up and sown. In order to fill up the blank spaces of the great white walls, he painted pictures on them. When all was ready they sat down and admired the work of their hands. "It is splendid," they said; "and now we can receive the child. Think how pleased it will be, to see so many pictures the first day!"

They waited and hoped; during the long spring evenings they only talked of him or her, guessed which it would be, discussed what name it should have, and speculated on its future. His wife's thoughts for the most part were occupied in wondering whether it would be fair and resemble his boy, whom she loved. She and her family were especially fond of fair people, whether because they resembled light, while the dusky-complexioned reminded one of darkness, would be difficult to say. They believed everything good of fair people and spoke ill of the Jews, although the little wife's grandmother on the paternal side was a Jewess; among her maternal relations who sprang from Schleswig-Holstein peasantry the word "Jew" was used as a term of reproach. The Norwegian's father-in-law was an anti-Semite but when he joked at the paradox involved in this, his wife said: "You must not joke at it; we will do that ourselves."

At last one day in May as the sun rose, the coming of the unknown traveller was heralded, and after twelve terrible hours it proved to be a girl who at any rate was not dark-haired.

This ought to have completed the idyll, but it seemed, on the contrary, to put an end to it. The little one did not seem to thrive in this vale of tears, but cried day and night. Nurses were engaged and nurses were dismissed. Five women filled the house and each had different views as to the rearing of the child. The father went about like a criminal and was always in the way. His wife thought that he did not love the child and this vexed her so much as to make her suffer. At the same time she herself was completely transformed into a mother to the exclusion of everything else. She had the child in her own bed, and could spend the greater part of the night sitting on a chair absorbed in contemplation of its beauty as it slept. Her husband had also to come sometimes and join in her admiration, but he thought the mother most beautiful in those moments when she forgot herself and gazed ecstatically at her child with a happy smile.

But a storm approached from without. The people of the neighbourhood were superstitious, and the child's continual crying had given rise to gossip. They began to ask whether it had been baptised.

According to law the child should be baptised in the father's religion, but since both he and the mother were indifferent in the matter, the baptism was postponed as something of no importance, especially as there was no Catholic priest in the neighbourhood.

The child's crying was really not normal, and as the popular opinion of the neighbourhood began to find expression, the grandmother came and asked them to have it baptised. "People are murmuring," she said; "and they have already threatened to stone your cottage."

The young unbelievers did not credit this, but smiled. The murmurings, however, increased; it was alleged that a peasant woman had seen the devil in the garden, and that the foreign gentleman was an atheist. There was some foundation for this report, for people who met the two heretics on the roads turned away. At last there came an ultimatum from the old man. "The child must receive Catholic baptism within twenty-four hours or the family will be deported across the Belt."

The Norwegian answered: "We Protestants are very tolerant in our belief, but if it is made a financial matter, we can be as fanatical as some Catholics." The position was serious, for the young pair had not a penny for travelling expenses. His letter was answered with a simple "Then go!"

The Norwegian replied: "To be a martyr for a faith which one does not possess is somewhat fantastic, and I did not expect that we should play the Thirty Years War over again down here. But look out! The Norwegian will come and take his daughter off with his baggage, for he is a Norwegian subject."

The grandees in the large house began to take a milder tone, but consulted and devised a stratagem. The child was announced to be ill and became worse every day. At last the grandmother came with her retinue and told the father that the child could live no longer, but he did not believe it. On his return from a long walk in the woods the same day he was met by his wife with the news that the child had received discretionary baptism at the hands of the midwife in the presence of the doctor.

"Into which faith has the child been baptised?" asked the father.

"The Protestant, of course."

"But I don't see how a Catholic midwife can give Protestant baptism." But as he saw that his wife was privy to the plot, he said no more. The next day the child was well, and there was no more talk of expelling the family. The grandees had conquered. Jesuits!

The child, which had been expected to unite the pair more closely to each other, seemed to have come to separate them. The mother thought the father cold towards the little one. "You don't love your child," she said.

"Yes I do, but as a father," he replied. "You should love her as a mother. That is the difference."

The fact was that he feared to attach himself too closely to the newly born, for he felt that a separation from the mother was in the air, and to be tied to her by means of the child he felt to be a fetter.

She on her side did not know exactly how she wished to have it. If he loved the child, it might happen that he would take it from her when he went away; if he did not love it, he would simply go by himself. For that he would go she felt sure. He had had a dramatic success at Paris in the spring, and another play of his was announced for the autumn. He therefore wished to go there, and so did she, but the child hindered her movements, and if he went alone to Paris, she felt she would never see him again. Many letters with French postmarks came for him now, and these roused her curiosity, for he burnt them at once. This last circumstance, which was quite contrary to his habit, aroused her suspicion and hatred.

"You are preparing for a journey?" she said one evening.

"Yes, naturally," he answered. "I cannot live in this uncertainty; I might be put out on the high road at any time."

"You think of deserting us?"

"I must leave you in order to do my business in Paris. A business journey is not desertion."

"Yes, then you can go," she said, betraying herself.

"I shall go as soon as I get the money for which I am waiting."

Now the Fury in her reappeared. First of all he had to move up into an attic, and although she and the child had the use of two rooms, she deliberately spoilt the remaining third room which was the dining-room and contained specially good furniture. She tore down the curtains, took away the pictures, choked up the room with child's clothes and milk bottles with the sole purpose of showing him who was master in the house. The rooms looked now as though demons had dwelt in them; crockery, kitchen utensils, and children's clothes were strewn on the beds and sofas.

She dished up bad meals and the food was often burnt. One day she set before him a plate of bones which the dogs seemed to have gnawed, and a water bottle. This last was an expression of the greatest contempt, for the cellars were full of beer, and no servant ever engaged himself without stipulating that he should have beer at meals. Accordingly he was reckoned beneath the men and maidservants. But he kept patient and silent, for he knew that the journey money would arrive. This, however, did not prevent his disgust rising to an equal height with her hatred.

He lived now in dirt, destitution, and wretchedness; heard nothing but scolding and shrieking between his wife and the nurse, his wife and the maidservant, his wife and her mother, while the child cried continually. He had an attack of fever and inflammation of the throat, and lay on his bed in the attic. She did not believe that he was ill and let him lie there. On the third day he sent for the doctor, for he could not even drink water. Then his Fury appeared in the doorway. "Have you sent for the doctor?" she asked. "Do you know what that costs?"

"Anyhow it will be cheaper than a funeral, and it *may* be diphtheria, which is dangerous for the child."

"Do you think of the child?"

"Yes, a little."

If she could now have dropped him into the sea, she would have done it. But she treated him as though he had the plague. The child, her child, was in danger!

"I have experienced much," he said in a whisper, "but never have I seen such intense malice in anyone." And he wept, perhaps for the first time in twenty years; wept over her unworthiness, and perhaps also over his fate and his humiliation. When he regarded his position objectively it seemed monstrous that he, a distinguished man in his own line, should, without fault of his own, lead such a wretched life that even the maidservant pitied him. Since he had entered his relative's house, his behaviour had been unimpeachable. He did not even drink, if only for the reason that there was nothing to drink. Since his arrival, his plays had met with success, but instead of making him more respected, as success generally does in the case of ordinary mortals, it only tended to deepen hatred and studied contempt. The fact that he had accepted hospitality from very rich relatives was not bound to weigh heavily on his mind, for he was now legal heir to half the property. But as hate now raged, he was told what his expenses were, and mention was made of payment.

Again the idea he had formerly had recurred to him, that there was something more than natural in all this, and that an unseen hand was controlling his destiny. The inexplicable non-arrival of the journey money seemed especially designed to prolong his sufferings. When other letters, which he looked for, did not come, he began to suspect that his wife had a finger in the matter. He began to watch the mail-bag which the postman brought, and to write to the post office; naturally, the only result was further ignominy.

Without having any definite belief, he found himself in a kind of religious crisis. He felt how he sank in this environment where everything hinged on the material and only the animal side of things was prominent—food and excrement, nurses regarded as milch cows, cooks and decaying vegetables; then endless discussions and the display of physical necessities which are usually concealed. At the same time excessively heavy rain had flooded a corridor and two rooms; the water could not be drained off but stagnated and stank. The garden went to ruin as no one looked after it.

Then he longed that he could get far away, somewhere where there was light and purity, peace, love, and reconciliation. He dreamed again his old dream of a convent within whose walls he might be sheltered from the world's temptations and filth, where he might forget and be forgotten. But he lacked faith and the capacity for obedience.

Literature at that period had been long haunted by this idea of a convent. In Berlin the suggestion had been made to found a convent without a creed for the "intellectuals." These at a time when industrial and economical questions took the first place, were uncomfortable in the dense atmosphere of a materialism which they themselves had been seduced into preaching. He now wrote to a rich friend of his in Paris regarding the founding of such a convent; drew up a plan for the building, laid down rules, and went into details regarding the cœnobitic life and tasks of the convent brothers. This was in August, 1894. The object proposed was the education of man to superman through asceticism, meditation, and the practice of science, literature, and art. Religion was not mentioned, for one did not know what the religion of the future would be, or whether it would possess one at all.

His wife noticed that he was becoming separated from her, but she believed that he was thinking of Paris with its vanities and distractions, its theatres and cafés, gallant adventures and thirst for gold. His possible plans excited her fear and envy. As regards his historical studies, her supercilious smiling had ceased after he had received words of encouragement from a great German and a famous French authority, and naturally had been obliged to show their letters in order to protect himself. Since she could no longer criticise his ideas she carried the strife on to another ground and began to plague him with insidious questions as to how much he earned by his historical studies.

When his wife was angry she went to the old people and narrated all the small and great secrets which a married pair have between themselves; she also repeated what he in moments of irritation had said about them. She was sorry afterwards, but then it was too late. The spirit of discord was aroused, and the storm could no longer be allayed.

When he happened to have money and offered to contribute towards domestic expenses, they were annoyed at his want of tact in wishing to pay rich relatives for inviting him; when he had no money then they uttered jeremiads over the dearness of everything and sent him the doctor's bill. In a word, nothing could be done with such uncontrolled and incorrigible people.

He often thought of going on foot and seeking some fellow-countrymen with whose help he might proceed farther. But every time he made the attempt he turned back, as though he had been enchanted and spellbound, to the little stream where the cottage stood. He had spent some happy days there, and the memory of these held him fast. Moreover, he was thankful for the past and felt love to the child, though he dared not show it, for then the little one would have become a lime-twig to fetter his wings.

One day he had taken a longer walk than

usual among the picturesque flooded meadows where the deer sported; the pheasants shot out of the bushes like rockets, their feathers shining with a metallic gleam; the storks fished in the marsh and the loriots piped in the poplars. Here he felt well, for it was a lonely landscape where no one ventured to build a house for fear of the great floods.

For three-quarters of a year he had come here alone every morning. He did not even let his wife accompany him, for he wished to have this landscape for himself, to see it exclusively with his eyes, and to hear no one else's voice there. If he ever saw this horizon again, he did not wish to be reminded of anyone else.

Here, accordingly, he was accustomed to find himself again himself and no one else. Here he obtained his great thoughts and here he held his devotions. The incomprehensible events of the last weeks and his deep suffering had caused him to change the word " destiny " for " Providence," meaning thereby that a conscious personal Being guided his course. In order to have a name, he now called himself a Providentialist—in other words he believed in God without being able to define more distinctly what he meant by that belief.

To-day he felt a pang of melancholy shoot through him as though he were saying farewell to these meadows and thickets. Something was impending which he foreboded and feared.

On coming home, he found the house empty; his wife and child were gone. When he at last discovered the maidservant and asked where his wife was, she answered impertinently: "She has gone away."

"Where?"

"To Odense."

He did not know whether he believed it or not. But he found a great charm in the silence and emptiness. He breathed unpoisoned air, enjoyed the solitude, and went to his work with the imperturbable calm of a Buddha. His travelling-bag was already packed, and the journey money might come any day.

The afternoon passed. As he looked out of the window, he noticed an unusual stillness round the great house; none of the family were to be seen. But a maidservant was going to and fro between the cottage and the house as though she were giving information. Once she asked if he wished for anything. "I wish for nothing," he answered. And that was the truth, for his last wish to get out of all this misery had been fulfilled without his having taken a step towards it. He ate his supper alone and enjoyed it; then remained sitting at the table and smoked. His mind accepted this fortunate equipoise of the scales, ready to sink on whichever side it pleased. He guarded himself from forming any wish, fearing lest his wish might be crossed.

But he expected something. "If I know women rightly," he said to himself, "she will not be able to sleep to-night without sending a messenger to see whether the victim is suffering according to her calculations."

And sure enough his mother-in-law came. "Good evening," she said; "are you sitting here alone, my son?"

With the stoicism of an Indian before the fire which is to roast him, he answered: "Yes, I am sitting alone."

"And what are you thinking of doing now?"

"Of going, naturally."

"You seem to take this matter very quietly."

"Why not?"

"Maria intends to seek for a separation."

"I can imagine it."

"Then you don't love her."

"You wish that I should love her in order that I may suffer more."

"Can you suffer—you?"

"You would be glad if I could."

"When are you thinking of going?"

"When I get the journey money."

"You have said that so often."

"You don't want to put me out on the high road to-night?"

"Grandmother is much excited."

"Then she should read her evening prayers attentively."

"One doesn't get far with you."

"No, why should I allow it?"

"Good night." Then she went.

He slept well and deeply as if after an event which he had long expected.

The next morning he woke up with the distinct idea: "She has not gone; she is keeping somewhere in the neighbourhood."

When he went out, he saw the maid getting into the ferry-boat with some of the child's things.

"Ha, ha," then he understood. She was waiting on the other side of the stream. The maid came back soon, after he had watched her manœuvres on the other side through his opera-glass. "If I only keep quiet now," he thought, "the imperialists are routed."

His mother-in-law came and looked uneasy but yielding. "Well, now you are alone my son and will never see her any more."

"Is she then so far away?"

"Yes."

He laughed and looked over the water.

"Well," said the old woman, "since you know it, go after her."

"No, I won't do that."

"But she won't come first."

"First or last, it is all the same to me."

The boat went to and fro with messages the whole day.

In the afternoon his mother-in-law came again. "You must take the first step," she said. "Maria is desperate and will be ill if you don't write to her and ask her to come again."

"How do you know that I want to have her again? A wife who remains a night out of her house has forfeited her conjugal rights and injured her husband's honour."

This was an expected parry, and his mother-in-law beat a sudden retreat. She crossed over in the ferry-boat and remained there till evening.

He was sitting in his room and writing when his wife entered with an air as though she were sorry for his trouble and came in response to his pressing call. He could have laid her prostrate but did not do so, being magnanimous towards the conquered. When he had his wife and child back in the house he found it just as good as when they were away, perhaps even a little better.

In the evening the journey money came. His position was now altered, and he had the keys to the dungeon in his hand. At the same moment his wife saw the matter from another point of view. "Do you know," she said, "this life is killing me; I have not read a single book since the child came, and I have not written an article for a year. I will go with you to Paris."

"Let me go in front," he said, "and spy out the land."

"Then I shall never get away."

He persuaded her to remain, without having formed any distinct purpose of leaving her; he only longed to feel himself free for a time at any rate.

But she was now ready to leave her child, "the most important person of all," as she called it, in order to come out into the world and play a part there. She knew well that he was not going to seek an uncertain fortune but to reap the fruits of a success which he had already gained. The ambitious and independent woman again came into view, perhaps also the envious rival, for she had moments in which she regarded herself as an author, superior to him. That was when her friends in a letter had called her a "genius"; this letter she left lying about that it might be read.

Fortunately it was not possible for her to travel just now, because her parents held her back; she had to content herself with the fact that he, who might be considered as expelled, was leaving her. She became mild, emotional, and sensitive, so that the parting was really painful.

So he went out into the world again. As the steamer in the beautiful autumn evening worked its way up the river, he saw again the cottage, whose windows were lit up. All the evil and ugliness he had seen there was now obliterated; he hardly felt a fleeting joy at having escaped this prison in which he had suffered so terribly. Only feelings of gratitude and melancholy possessed him. For a moment the bond which united him to wife and child drew him so strongly that he wanted to throw himself into the water. But the steamer paddles made some powerful forward strokes, the bond stretched itself, stretched itself, and broke!

"That was an infernal story," exclaimed the postmaster when the reading was over. "What can one say about it, except what you yourself have said in it? But do you think, generally speaking, that marriage will continue to exist?"

" Although I regard wife, child and home as desirable objects," answered the doctor, " I do not think lifelong marriages will be long possible, for in our days the individual—man or woman—is too egotistic and desirous of independence. You see yourself the direction which social evolution is taking. We hear of nothing but discontent and divorce. I grant that conjugal life demands consideration and yieldingness, but to live suppressing one's innermost wishes in an atmosphere of contradiction and contrariety, can only end in producing Furies. You have been married? "

The question came somewhat suddenly and the answer was only given with hesitation: " Yes, I have been married but am not a widower."

" Divorced then? "

" Yes! and you? "

" Divorced."

" If anyone asked us why, neither you nor I could give a reason."

" A reason—no. I only know that if we had continued to live together, I should have ended as a homicide, and she as a murderess. Isn't that enough? "

" Quite enough."

And they took their supper.

HERR BENGT'S WIFE

HERR BENGT'S WIFE

"WHAT is love? Desire, of course," the young Count answered his old preceptor, as they both sat below in the cabin and beguiled the time by talking while waiting off Elfsnabben for a favourable wind for their journey to the University of Prague.

"No, young sir," answered Magister Franciscus Olai. "Love is something quite different and something more, which neither high theology nor deep philosophy have been able to express. Our over-wise time believes too little, but that is because our fathers believed too much. I was present at the beginning of this period, young sir; I helped to pull down old venerable buildings, ancient, decayed temples of pride and selfishness; I tore pages out of the holy books and pictures from the walls of the churches; I was present, young sir, and helped to shut up the convents, and to announce the abolition of the old faith, but, sir, there are things which all-powerful Nature herself has founded, and which we had better not attempt to pull down. I wish to speak now of Amor or Love, whose fire burns unquenchably when it is rightly bestowed, but when wrongly, can soon be quenched, or even turn to hate when things go quite wrong."

"When then is it rightly bestowed? It cannot be so very often," answered the Count, settling himself more comfortably on the couch.

"Often or not, love is like a flash from heaven when it comes, and then it surpasses all our will and all our understanding, but it is different with different people, whether it lasts or not. For in this respect men are born with different dispositions and characters, like birds or other creatures. Some are like the wood grouse and black cock who must have a whole seraglio like the grand Turk; why it is so we know not, but it is so, and that is their nature. Others are like the small birds which take a mate for each year and then change. Others again are amiable like doves and build their nests together for life, and when one of them dies, the other no longer desires to live."

"Have you seen any human beings corresponding to doves?" asked the Count doubtfully.

"I have seen many, dear sir. I have seen wood cocks who have paired with doves, and the doves have been very unhappy; I have seen male doves who have wedded a cuckoo, and the cuckoo is the worst of all birds, for it likes the pleasure of love, but not the trouble of children, and therefore turns its children out of the nest; but I have also seen wedded doves, sir."

"Who never pecked each other?"

"Yes, I have seen them peck when the nest was narrow, and there was trouble about food, but still they were good friends, and that is love. There is also a sea-bird called 'svärt,' sir, which always flies in pairs. If you shoot one, the other descends and lets itself be shot too, and therefore the 'svärt' is called the stupidest of all birds."

"That is in the pairing time, venerable preceptor."

"No, young sir, they keep together the whole year round and their pairing time is in spring. In the winter when they have no young ones with them, but are alone, they eat together, hunt together, and sleep together. That is not desire, but love, and if this charming feeling can exist among soulless creatures, why can it not among men?"

"Yes, I have heard of its being found among men, but that it departs after marriage."

"That is mere sensual pleasure, which partly goes, but then love comes."

"That is only friendship when there is any."

"Quite right, noble sir, but friendship between those of opposite sex is just love. But there are so many things and so many sides to everything. If you like, I will relate a story which I have seen myself, and from which you may learn something or other. It happened in my youth, forty years ago, but I remember every detail as though it happened yesterday. Shall I relate it?"

"Certainly, preceptor. Time goes slowly when one waits for a favourable wind. But bring a light and wine before you begin, for I think your story will not keep one awake."

"Very likely not you, sir, but it has kept me awake many nights," answered Franciscus, and went to fetch what was required. When he had returned and they sat down again on their berths, he began as follows:

"This is the story of Herr Bengt's wife. She was born of noble parentage at the beginning of this century. She was strictly brought up, and, when her parents died, her guardian placed her in a convent. There she distinguished herself by her intense religious zeal; she scourged herself on Fridays and fasted on all the greater saint's days. When she reached the age of puberty, her condition became more serious, and she actually attempted to starve herself to death, believing it consistent with the duty of a Christian to kill the flesh and to live with God in Christ. Then two circumstances contributed to bring about a crisis in her life. Her guardian fled the country after having squandered her property, and the convent authorities changed their behaviour towards her, for it was a worldly institution which did not at all open its gates for the poor and wretched. When she saw that, she began to be assailed by doubts. Doubt was the disease of that time and she had a strong attack of it. Her fellow-nuns believed nothing and her superiors not much.

"One day she was sent from the convent to visit a sick person. On the way, a beautiful lonely forest path, she met a Knight, young, strong, and handsome. She stood and stared at him as though he had been a vision; he was the first man she had seen for five years, and the first man she had seen since she was a woman. He stopped his horse for a moment, greeted her, and rode on. After that day she was tired of the convent, and life enticed her. Life with its beauty and attraction drew her away from Christ; she had attacks of temptation and outbreaks, and had to spend most of her time in the punishment cell. One day she received a letter smuggled in by the gardener. It was from the Knight. He lived on the other side of the lake and she could see his castle from the window of the cell. The correspondence continued. Faint rumours began to be circulated that a great change in ecclesiastical affairs was about to take place and that even the convents were about to be abolished and the nuns released from their vows.

"Then hope awoke in her, but at the same time that she learnt that one could be released from vows, she lost faith in the sanctity of the vow itself, and at one stroke all restraint gave way. She believed now rather in the everlasting rights of her instincts in the face of all social and eccesiastical laws!

"At last she was betrayed by a false friend, and the discovery of the correspondence led to her being condemned to corporal punishment. But Fate had ordered otherwise, and on the day that the punishment was to be carried out a messenger came from the King and estates of the realm with the command that the convent was to be closed. The messenger was no other than the Knight. He opened for her the doors of the convent in order to offer her freedom and his hand. That closed the first part of her career."

"The first?" remarked the Count, as he lifted the jar of Rhine wine. "Isn't the story over? They were married."

"No, sir. That is how stories usually end, but the real beginning is just there. And I remember the day after the marriage. I had married them and was her domestic chaplain. The breakfast-table was laid and she came out of her room, beaming as though the whole earth danced on her account, and the sun was only set in the sky to give them light. He was full of courage and felt capable of bearing the whole world on his shoulders. All his thoughts were intent on making life as kind and beautiful for her as he could; and she was so happy that she could neither eat nor drink; she wished only to forget the existence of the sinful earth. Well! she had her fancies, springing from the old time when heaven was all, and earth was nothing; he was a child of the new age who knew that one must live on earth in order to be able to enter heaven afterwards."

"And so things came to a crisis?" interrupted the Count.

"They came to a crisis, as you say. I remember how he ate at the breakfast-table like a hungry man, and she only sat and watched him; but when she talked of birds' songs he talked of roast veal. Then he noticed how she had thrown her clothes the evening before on a chair in the dining-room, and reminded her that one must be orderly in a house."

"Then of course there was hell in the house."

"No, it was not so dangerous as that. But it brought a cloud over her sun, and she felt that a breach was opened between them. Still she shut her eyes in order not to see it, as one does when near a precipice. Then the sky clouded over again. He had secret, melancholy thoughts for his harvest-sheaves were on the field, and he knew that his income depended on them. He wished to take her out to see them, but she begged him to stay at home and not to talk of earth on that day."

"Earth! What an idiot!"

"Yes, yes! She was brought up like that; it was the fault of the convent which had taught her to despise God's creation. So her husband remained with her, and proposed that they should go hunting; she accepted the proposal with joy."

"A proposal to kill! That was nice!"

"Yes, according to the views of the period, sir; every period has its own views. But the sky clouded over once more, for this day was not a lucky one for the young Knight. The King's bailiff called and desired a special interview with him. The interview was granted and the Knight was informed that he would lose his rank as a noble if he did not supply the quota of arms due from him as the King's vassal, which he had neglected to do for five years. The Knight had no means of meeting this demand but the bailiff offered to procure him an advance in money in exchange for a mortgage on his estate. So the matter was arranged. But then the question arose how far he should take his wife into his confidence with regard to this matter. He summoned me in order to hear my advice. I thought it was a pity that the young wife should be torn so suddenly out of her dreams of happiness and joy, and I was short-sighted enough to advise that she should not be told the real state of affairs till the first year was over."

"In that you were right! Why should women mix in business? It would only lead to trouble and confusion and their poor husbands would never have peace."

"No, sir, I was wrong, for in a true marriage husband and wife should have full confidence in each other and be one. And what was the result in this case? During the year they grew apart from one another. She lived in her rose-garden and he in the fields; he had secrets concealed from her and worked desperately without having her as his adviser; he lived his own life apart and she, hers. When they met, he had to pretend to be cheerful, and so their whole life became false. Finally he became tired and withdrew into himself and so did she."

"And so it was all over with their love."

"No, sir; it might have been so, but true love goes through worse fires than these. They loved each other still and that was destined to be proved by the tests which they were to pass through.

"Her child came, and with it commenced a new stage of their life journey. She needed her husband less now for her time was occupied by looking after the child, and her husband felt freer, for so many claims were not made on his tenderness as before. She threw herself heart and soul into the new occupations which absorbed her; she watched through the nights and toiled through the days and would never give up the child to a nurse The contact with reality and the little affairs of life seemed at first to have an intoxicating effect upon her empty soul and she began to find a certain satisfaction in talking with her husband about his fields and their cultivation. But this could not last long. Education lies behind us like the seeds of weeds which may remain in the ground for a year or two, but which only need proper cultivation in order to spring up again. One day she looked in the glass and found that she had become pale, thin, and ugly. She saw that the bloom of her youth was past, and her charms decayed. Then the woman awoke in her or rather one side of the mysterious being which is called a woman: and then came the longing to be beautiful, to please, to feel herself ruling through her beauty. She was now no longer so eagerly occupied with the child as before, and she began to spend more care on her own person. Her husband saw this change with joy, for strange to say although he had at first been glad to observe her desperate zeal about the child and the house, yet when he saw his heart's queen dressed negligently, and marked how pale and wretched she looked, it cut him to the heart. He wished to have back again the charming fairy who had waited with longing at the window for his return home, and at whose feet he wished to worship. So strange is man's heart, and so much leaven does it still retain from the old times of chivalry when woman was regarded as a Madonna.

"But now came something else. During the first period of her confinement he had become a little tired and careless in his habits; he came and went with his hat on, ate his meals at a corner of the table, and took no pains about his dress. And when his wife began to return to the ways of everyday life he forgot to follow her, and to alter his habits. His wife, who was still somewhat sickly, thought she saw in the relaxing of these courtesies a want of love, and an unfortunate chance afforded her an apparent proof that he was tired of her.

"It was an unlucky day! The year was approaching its end when the chief payments would be made. The harvest promised to be bountiful but its overplus could not cover everything. The Knight had to find other means of raising money, and he found them. He ordered some fine timber-trees round the courtyard to be cut down, but in so doing, they came too near the house, so that his wife's favourite lime-tree was also cut down. The Knight did not know that she had a special liking for it, and the act was quite unintentional. His wife had been ill for a week or two, and when she came into the dining-room she saw that the lime-tree had disappeared; she at once believed that it had been cut down to annoy her. She also noticed that her rose-bushes had withered, for no one had had time to think of such trifles amid all the bustle of bringing in the harvest. This seemed to her another act of unkindness and she sent all the available horses and oxen to fetch water.

"Now there intervened a new circumstance to hasten the coming misfortune. The bailiff had come to the castle to wait for the bringing in of the harvest, and had an interview with the Knight's wife just after she had made the two above-mentioned discoveries. They found that they had known each other as children, and a confidential chat followed, which afforded her some amusement. She liked her visitor's rustic but courteous manners, and the comparison she made between his politeness and her husband's boorishness, was not to the advantage of the latter. She forgot that her husband could be as polite as the bailiff when paying a formal visit, and that the bailiff could be as brusque as he in everyday business.

Thus everything was in train for what should happen when her husband came home. The bailiff had gone and left her alone with her thoughts. When her husband came in, he was cheerful, being pleased to see his wife up again, and because the continued dry weather was good for the harvest, which was all now ready cut and could be brought in in a single day. But his wife, depressed by her thoughts, felt annoyed by his cheerfulness, and now the shots went off, one after the other. She asked about her lime-tree, and he said he had cut it down because he required timber; she then asked why he must cut down 'just' the lime-tree which shaded her window; he answered that he had not cut down just that one, but all of them together.

"Then she began about the rose-bushes. He replied that he had never promised to water them. She, having no answer to this, discovered that he was wearing greased boots, and immediately remarked upon it. He acknowledged his inadvertence and was about to repair it on the spot by drawing them off, but she became furious at such an act of discourtesy. Hard words passed between them and she declared that he loved her no more. Then the Knight answered somewhat in this way: 'I don't love you, you say, because I work for you and don't sit and gossip by your embroidery frame; I don't love you because I am hungry through neglecting food; I don't love you because I don't change my boots when I come for a minute into the room. I don't love you, you say! Oh, if you only knew how much I loved you!'

"'To this his wife replied: 'before we married you loved me and at the same time gossiped by my embroidery frame, took off your boots when you came in, and showed me politeness. What has happened then, to make you change your behaviour?'

"'Her husband answered: 'We are married now.' His wife thought he meant that marriage had given him a proprietary right over her, and that he wished to show this by his free-and-easy demeanour, but this last was simply due to his unshakeable trust in her vow to love him through joy and sorrow, and in her forbearance, if, in order to avoid loss of time, he dropped a number of little empty ceremonies. He was on the point of telling her that it was in order to stave off ruin that he worked in the fields, thought only of crops, tramped in the mud, and brought dirt into the house, but he kept silence, for he thought that in her weak state, she could not bear the shock, and he knew that in twenty-four hours all danger would be passed and the house would be saved. He asked her to forgive him, and they forgave one another, and spoke gently together again. But then came a shock! The steward rushed in and announced that a storm was approaching. The Knight's wife was glad that the roses would get rain, but he was not. It seemed to him like the finger of God, and he told his wife everything but bade her at the same time be of good courage. He then gave orders that all the oxen should be yoked and the harvest brought in at once. He was told that they had been sent to fetch water. Who had sent them? 'I did,' answered his wife. 'I wanted water for my flowers, which you allowed to be dried up, while I was ill.'

"'Aren't you ashamed to say you did?' asked the Knight.

"She answered: 'You plume yourself on having deceived me for a whole year. I have no need to be ashamed of telling the truth, since I have committed no fault, but only met with a misfortune.' Then he became furious, went to her with upraised hand, and struck her."

"And served her devilish right!" said the Count.

"Fie! Fie! young sir! To strike a weak woman!"

"Why should one not strike a woman, when one strikes children?"

"Because woman is weaker, sir."

"Another reason! One cannot get at the stronger, and one must not strike the weaker: Whom shall one strike then?"

"One should not strike at all, my friend, Fie! Fie! What sentiments you utter, and you wish to be a soldier!"

"Yes! What happens in war? The stronger strikes and the weaker is struck. Isn't that logic?"

"It may be logic, but it is not morality. But do you want to hear the continuation?"

"Wasn't it over then, with their love at any rate?"

"No, sir! not by a long way! Love does not depart so easily. Well! she believed now just as you do, that it was all over with love, and she asked the bailiff, who came in just then, to make an appeal for separation in her name to the King."

"And she wanted to leave her child?"

"No, she thought she could take it with her. Her pride was wounded to the quick, and she felt crushed under the ruins of her beautiful castle in the air."

"And her husband?"

"He was pulverised! His dream of wedded love was over, and he was ruined besides, for the rainstorm had carried away and destroyed the whole of his harvest. And when he saw that it was she whom he loved who was the cause of his misfortune he felt resentment in his heart against her, but he loved her still, when his anger had been allayed."

"Still?"

"Yes, sir, for love does not ask why. It only knows that it is so. The Knight was ruined, and left his house to look after itself while he rode about in the woods and fields. His wife, on the contrary, awoke to a life of energy and diligence and took in hand the whole management of the house; necessity made the little, tender being who never had worked, strong; she sewed clothes for herself and the children; she made payments and looked after the servants, and this last was not the easiest, for the latter had grown accustomed to regard the little spoilt lady as only a guest, but she took hold of affairs with an energetic hand and kept them in order. When money was insufficient she pawned her jewels, and by that means paid wages and cleared off debts. One day when the Knight awoke to reflection and came home anxiously to look after the condition of affairs which he regarded as hopeless, he found everything in proper order. When he made inquiries, he was told that his wife had saved everything. Then remorse and shame awoke in him and he went to ask her on his knees to forgive him for not having understood and valued her. She forgave him and declared that she had not formerly deserved to be more highly valued, since she did not then possess the qualities which she afterwards acquired. They were reconciled as friends, but she declared that her love was dead, and that she did not intend to be his wife for the future.

"Their conversation was interrupted by the bailiff, who during this time had lived in the house and helped the wife by his advice and service. Her husband felt himself put aside and his place occupied by another; jealousy raged in him, and he forbade his wife to receive a stranger in her rooms. His wife thereupon declared that she would visit the bailiff in his rooms but her husband reminded her that he had rights over her person, since she was still his wife according to the law. But she had that day received by post the decree of separation and told him that she was free and could go where she liked. Then when he saw that it was all over, he collapsed and begged her on his knees to remain. When she saw the proud Knight crawling on the ground like a slave she lost the last remnants of respect for him, and when she remembered how once in her weakness and misery, she had looked up to him as the one who could carry her in his arms over thorns and stones, she wished to fly from this spectacle. Being no more able to find in him, what he had once been to her, she simply went away."

"Well now," interrupted the Count, who began to be bored, "it really was over."

"No, no, young sir, it only looked so, but was not. But here I must make a confession. I saw everything with my own eyes, sir, for I was her friend and honoured her in my heart. How foolish I was, I will also confess. We of the old school, who were brought up at the end of the age of chivalry, had learnt to see in woman a creature above the ordinary level of humanity; we revered the outward part, and that which was beautiful and useless; in our ideas that which pleased the eye took the first place. You can well imagine that I, though a seeker of the truth, was so misled by these old ideas, that I thought she was sinking just when she showed the greatest energy and courage. Yes, on the very day that the decree of separation came, I had a conversation with her which I can remember as clearly as though I had written it down. I said: 'If you knew how idolatrously high you once stood in my sight. And I saw the angel let her white wings fall, I saw the fairy lose her golden shoe. I saw you the morning after the marriage when you rode on your white horse through the wood, it carried you so lightly over the damp grass and lifted you so high over the mud of the marsh without a spot coming on your silver-bright clothing. For a moment I thought as I stood behind a tree; "Suppose she fell!" and my thought turned into a vision. I saw you sink in the mire; the black water spirited over you; your yellow hair lay like sunshine over the white blossoms of the bog of myrtle; you sank and sank till I only saw your little hand; then I heard a falcon scream up in the air and mount up on its wings till it was lost in the clouds.' But then she answered me so well. 'You said once long ago that reality with all its dirt and sordidness was given us by God, and that we should not curse it, but take it as it is. Very well! But now you hint that I have sunk because I am on the way to reconcile myself with this life; I have changed the garment of the rich for that of the poor, since I am poor; I lost my youth when I obeyed the law of nature and became a mother; the beauty of my hands is spoilt by sewing, my eyes are dim with care, the burden of life presses me to the earth but my soul mounts—mounts like the falcon towards the sky and freedom, while my earthly body sinks in the mud amid evil-smelling weeds.'

"Then I asked if she really believed she could keep the soul above while the body sank, and she answered 'No!' This was because she, like myself, had the delusion that something sank.

The body, however, did not sink through work; on the contrary, it was hardened and strengthened; it improved and mounted but did not sink. However, we were both so foolish that we both imagined it did, having been indoctrinated with this view from our youth upwards. We considered white hands, though they might be weak and sickly as more beautiful than those which were hardened and embrowned by toil. So perverse were people's ideas in my youth, sir, and so they are still, here and there. But in my perversity I went farther and advised her to commit a crime 'Loose the falcon and let it mount, I said.'

"'I have already thought of that,' she answered, understanding my thought, 'but the chain is strong.'

"'I have the key to it,' I replied.

"She asked me to give it her, and received from me a bottle of poison.

"Now I return to the story where I left it off. It was where she had left her husband's room to seek the bailiff in the upper story. When she came there she had to wait, for the bailiff had visitors. She also received a lesson, for none of her married friends would greet her, because she had dissolved her marriage. One of these friends had been unfaithful to her husband and had a lover but she thought herself too good to take Frau Margit's hand. What is one to say to that? At that time it was considered one of the greatest crimes to dissolve a marriage, but now, thank Heaven! our ideas have changed. She came, as I have said, to the bailiff to ask his advice as she had done all the time when difficulties arose.

"Did she love him? Probably not; but the heart is never so likely to deceive itself as in such cases. She imagined that she did, because she thought she had lost her husband and by birth and upbringing she was not adapted to stand alone.

"But the bailiff was another sort of man. He was like one of those birds with a seraglio which I spoke of, and if he had not been so cowardly, he would have already enticed the Knight's wife. But he did not do it, for he saw that this fruit would drop when it was ripe enough. Therefore he waited. But he had another characteristic; he was as vain as a cock in a hen-house, and thought that he was a terrible fellow whom no woman could resist. So when he overheard Frau Margit say that she intended visiting him in his room, he believed that the time had come, and made elaborate preparations to receive her. She came quite unsuspiciously, for she trusted his friendship and devotion to her interests. She wished to speak of the serious prospect which lay before her; he spoke of his love and she did not wish to listen. She was legally free but still felt herself bound. The might of memory held her and perhaps the old love had a word to say in the matter. The bailiff became bolder and begged for her love on his knees. Then she despised him. His vanity was wounded, he forgot himself, threw the mask aside, and wished to use force. I came accidentally there and was able to give him the *coup de grâce* by telling Frau Margit that he was engaged to be married. There was nothing left for him but to withdraw.

"But she had already, when her last hope collapsed and her last dream vanished, used the key to open the gate of eternity; I who knew that the poison required an hour to produce its effect, used the opportunity to speak to her, as one speaks to the dying. Ah! certainly the love of mortals for this wretched life is great, and at such moments the human soul is turned upside down; what lies at the bottom comes uppermost, old memories revive; old beliefs, however absurd and however rightly they may have been rejected, arise again, and I woke up in her the old ideas of duty, foolish perhaps, but necessary now. I brought her so far that she wished to live and commence again a life of renunciation and reflection in the convent. But since the convent no longer existed I persuaded her to be willing to exchange it for the imprisonment of home, where there is plenty of opportunity for penance in mutual self-denial, for devotion in the fulfilment of duties and in obedience. She fought against her pride and regretted her surrender, she raged against life, which had deceived her, and against men who had lied and said that life was a pleasure-garden. In this matter I agreed with her, for the unhappiness in most marriages arises from the fact that people persuade the married pair that they will find absolute happiness in marriage, whereas happiness is not to be found in life at all.

" She was frantic, but an accident came to my aid. Her child, whose room was underneath us, began to cry. She was shaken to her depths, and said that she was willing to live for her child's sake, in order to teach it that life is not what people describe it to be. She did not wish to leave it to the same fate which she had escaped. She did not speak of her husband; whether she thought of him or not, I cannot say. I who had given her the poison, knew where the antidote was; but as I still wished to keep her in fear, I gave her less hope than I myself possessed.

"I went away, and when I returned, I found her in her husband's arms. He had found her on the stairs, where she had fallen down in a swoon. All was forgiven and all was forgotten. You think that strange? But have you not forgiven your mother although she chastised you, and does not your mother love you, although you have deceived her, and caused her grief and anxiety. This last agitation had convulsed her soul so that the old love lay uppermost like a clear pearl, which has been fished up from the miry bottom of the sea where it lay hidden in a dirty mollusc. But she still struggled with her pride and said she would not love him, although she did love him. I never forget his answer, which contains the whole riddle, 'You did not wish to love me, Margit,' he said, 'for your pride forbade it, but you love me still. You love me, although I raised my hand against you, and although I was shamefully cowardly when the trouble came. I wished to hate you when you left me; I wished to kill you, because you were willing to sacrifice your child, and still I love you. Do you not now believe in the power of love over our evil wills?'

"So he said; and I say now like the fabulist:

this fable teaches that love is a great power which passes all understanding and against which our wills can do nothing. Love bears all things, gives up all things, and of faith, hope, and love, sir, love is the greatest."

"Well, how did they go on afterwards?" asked the Count.

"I was no longer with them."

"They probably continued to quarrel."

"I know that they have disagreements sometimes, for these must happen when there are different opinions, but I know also that neither wishes to domineer over the other. They go their way, making less demands on life than before and therefore they are as happy as one can be when one takes life as it is. That was what the old period with its claim of being able to make a heaven on earth could not do, but what the new period has learnt.

THE END

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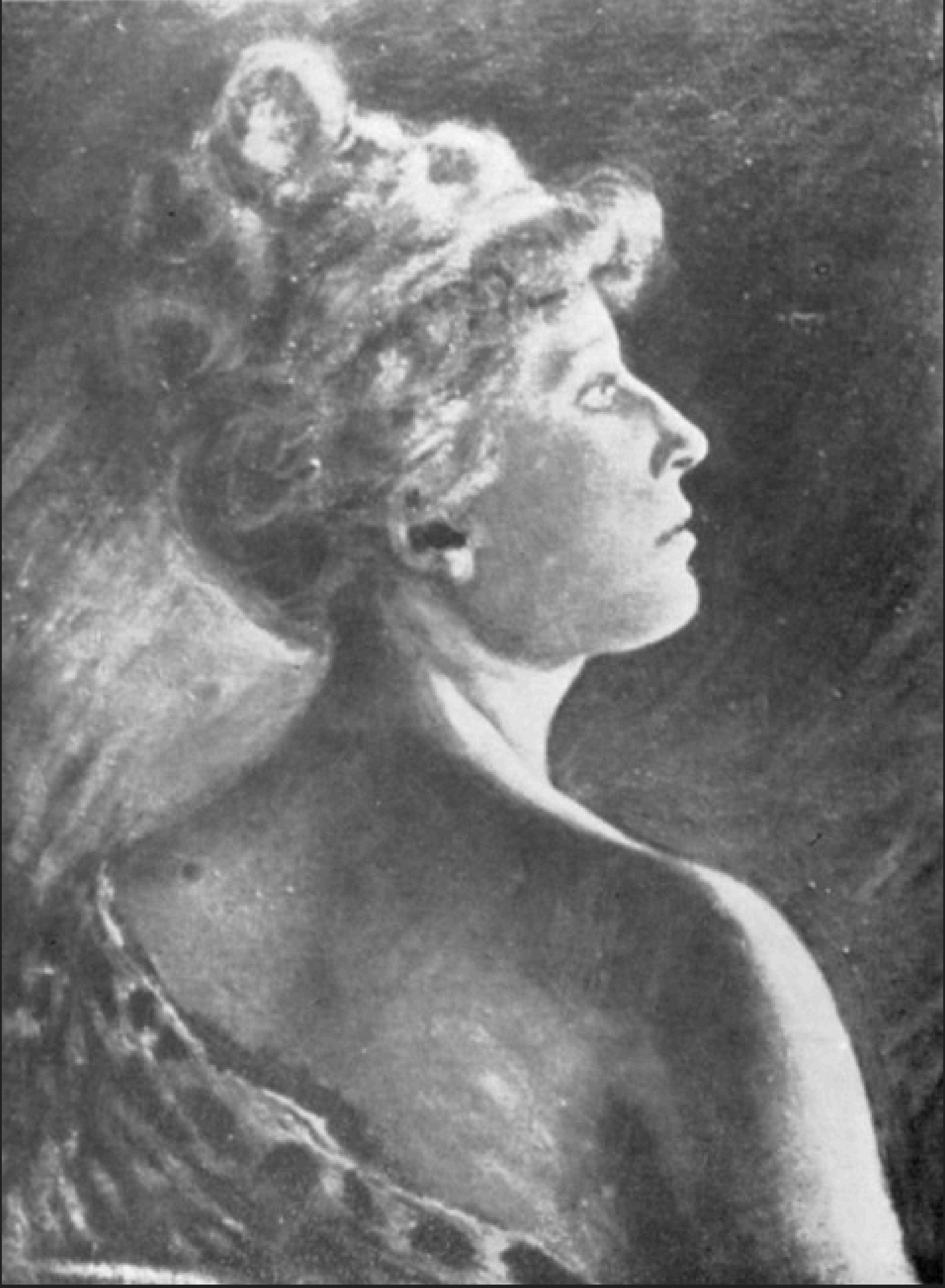

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MARIE SALTUS

EDGAR SALTUS
in the Year 1890

Edgar Saltus:the Man

ByMarie Saltus

... "even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

1925
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CHICAGO

To the Ego using the personality,
EDGAR SALTUS

Peace and Progress.

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FOREWORD

Without the explanation of reincarnation, the riddle of Edgar Saltus would rival that of the Sphinx. Super-developed in some things, correspondingly deficient in others, he presented an exterior having the defects of his finest qualities, suffused with complexes and contradictions.

Amusements and interests looked upon as pleasurable by the many, bored him in the extreme. With likes and dislikes shared and understood by few, he lived in a world of his own. This world was inhabited by creatures of the imagination—delightful beings—too delightful to be real, who, having the merit of being extinguishable at will, never remained to bore him.

To write a proper biography one should have perspective. It is lacking here. That in itself makes the writing difficult. Many of those associated[Pg xii]with Mr. Saltus' life are incarnate, and not all of them are willing to be dragged into the limelight of publicity by the point of the pen.

Where it will not offend, names are given. Where the possibility of annoyance suggests itself, initials only are used. It circumscribes one more than a little.

A brief hundred years should elapse between the passing of an interesting personality and the putting into print of his life. It would follow here, but for the fact that so many mythical and malicious tales have been circulated about Edgar Saltus since his death that the necessity for giving the facts, good, bad, and indifferent, and putting an end to the weird, wild, and fantastic stories seems urgent.

From an article published in The Bookman one would believe the astonishing fact that Mr. Saltus made a practice of sitting "on a sort of baldachined throne dispersing cigarettes ten inches long and reading Chinese poetry." From the same source it was stated that he had a "salon, and was attended by some lady of his choice—not necessarily the same." As a final kick it was stated that he dyed his moustache.[Pg xiii]

Every newspaper in the country reprinted the article. What they did not reprint was a letter from me (in The Bookman also) denying the fabrications and giving the truth.

In a foreword of appreciation to a bibliography of Mr. Saltus' books, I was fortunately able to blue pencil the following, before it saw the darkness of print: "Edgar Saltus, neglected and alone, died in an obscure lodging-house in the East Side of New York." The author is a delightful man writing out of the fulness of his admiration. He put in only what he had been told.

Every day brings in new and wilder tales than the preceding one. They are so fantastic they would be amusing, were they not tragic.

If the public is sufficiently interested to pass along and embellish these grotesque stories, will they not be equally interested to know the truth?

When the writing of this biography was first attempted, an effort was made to give the life of Edgar Saltus without using the uninteresting "I" and "me." The effort failed. So[Pg xiv]much of his life had been silhouetted against my own for over twenty years, that any attempt to remove the background injured the picture, and it was reluctantly put back there.

In giving many of the high lights and incidents of Mr. Saltus' later life, the desire has been to speak only of those in which he was the dominating figure. Many amusing events in which he was somewhat subsidiary, have been in consequence omitted.

With the desire to keep my personality in the background as much as possible, it is brought forward only when needed to throw some incident or characteristic of Mr. Saltus into relief.

It is a painful process to tear the veil from one's life and write fully and freely—almost brutally at times, with the heart's blood. Less would be useless. One must tell all or nothing.

A few years ago we had skeletons. Every respectable family had one—sometimes two. They were locked in cupboards, or carefully put away in bureau drawers with lavender and old laces. When spoken of, it was in whispers[Pg xv]and with profound respect. All that has changed. With the new psychology nothing is hidden. Everything must be aired in the light. One may be behind anything but the times. That is fatal.

That Edgar Saltus was unable to hit it off with two charming and cultured wives does not reflect on either of them. On the contrary. No normal woman could live with him for a week without friction. By normal, I refer to the woman who as a rule does the things that are expected of her, leaves undone those she is not expected to do, and has plenty of health in her.

The very fact that a woman was in the main like others, irritated Mr. Saltus. It was enough for any one to say to him, "It is considered the proper thing to do this or that," to send him into a rage. No act was too erratic or too independent to please him, provided it revealed and developed the individuality of the doer.

As he looked upon sports of all kinds as outlets for primitive egos, amusements also, unless draped with interesting psychological problems,[Pg xvi]and gatherings of humans as an abomination and a stench to his nostrils, most women, in spite of the charm of his manner and the brilliance of his mind, would find little in common with him.

A boy at heart, adoring tricks, games and fairy stories, he did not want to be recalled to the things of earth. Impractical as he was, he could not endure practical people, accepting the blunders and forgetfulness of one even less so than himself with patience and grace. If five minutes before the dinner hour I would rush home and say:

"Too sorry dear, but I forgot to order anything for dinner. There is nothing in the house" (it happened more than once, but his reply was always the same)—

"Never mind, little puss. Thank God your mind is in the clouds—not in the kitchen. Let's go around the corner."

"Around the corner" meant to a tiny place called the Cozy frequented by Columbia students. Fortunately it was only a few yards from our home.[Pg xvii]

What he could not forgive was stupidity, and the desire to please Mrs. Smith and Mr. Jones and wonder what the neighbors would or would not think about things. This, however, he was never called upon to endure.

Only a person fundamentally the same and sharing his peculiar dislikes could have had a chance of success. A woman less temperamental and high-strung than himself would yield anything for peace. Yielding to Mr. Saltus was fatal. A mental ascendency on his part, no matter what the circumstances, and the beginning of the end was in sight.

There is a rather pathetic side to his biography. During the writing of it, Mr. Saltus seems to have been at my elbow all the time, a highly amused and almost disinterested critic. The writing of a biography had been a joke between us.

Asked by him once if I felt I had been in any way the gainer for my experiences of life with him, and what I would do in the future to keep my mind occupied if he passed on, I answered:[Pg xviii]

"Enormously the gainer. I could start a home."

"Would you make it into a training house for husbands—or turn it into a zoo?" he inquired.

"Neither. 'The Saltus Shelter for Scoundrels' would be the result. A sign in the window would inform the world that the superintendent, Marie Saltus, was a post-graduate on scoundrels." (It was a sobriquet Mr. Saltus was fond of applying to himself.) "It will be a wonderful home. Here is the first rule. 'Do all the things you ought not to do. Leave undone all the things you should do. All the comforts of home assured.'"

Mr. Saltus laughed, and added:

"Never pick up anything. Drop cigars and cigarettes on the floor. It will improve the carpets. Find fault with everything. Swear and make a row whenever you can."

To that I added that the waiting-list would be so long that the old scoundrels would be fighting among themselves to get in. The idea amused Mr. Saltus very much. Every day or[Pg xix]two he would come up with a new suggestion.

"See here, Mowgy, I have another rule for the old scoundrels. Having served such an apprenticeship with me," he said, "you will have the home overflowing in a week. Draw the line. Take no one under seventy-five and have tea with them only on Sundays in August."

The Saltus Shelter for Scoundrels became a pet theme. A diet was drawn up for the inmates by Mr. Saltus, and a course of reading outlined. The by-laws grew and were embellished.

This was during the last winter of his life, when failing health kept him indoors much of the time. To take him out of himself, it became necessary to supply food for the imagination.

"Suppose you became ill and you had to leave the old scoundrels to their fate? What then?" he inquired one day.

"That is provided for. If the Saltus Shelter is shattered, I will sit down and write your biography."

"That will fall flatter. No one will read it," he said.[Pg xx]

"Yes, they will. I will call it. 'The Annals of Ananias.' It will be your punishment for having written 'Madame Sapphira,' and people will fall over themselves to read it, for I will tell the worst."

He took notice of that.

"Wow! Wow! Will you tell about the time I got a piece of chocolate when I thought I was securing an opera glass, and how I threw it away, hitting a bald man on the head?"

"Of course. Didn't I say the worst?"

"Surely you won't mention the time I kicked the dog and smashed up the cut-glass?"

"Yes, I will, and how you played the hose on poor Jean, and all the other demoniacal things you have done."

At that he would say, "Wow—Wow," again, but the idea amused him, and scarcely a day passed without inquiries about the biography.

"You won't tell the worst really, will you, Mowgy? You will not mention the time I got squiffy, or the time I pretended I was a crazy man and miawed in the trolley car?"[Pg xxi]

"When I say everything, I mean everything."

"Then you must tell about the time in Paris when you tried to murder me, and when, mistaking a strange man for me, you wrote him such a villainous letter."

"Concerning these you are safe. There is too much about myself in those incidents to interest people. Like Cæsar, the good will be interred with your bones."

"No one will believe there could have been such a demon. They will say the remarkable thing about it is that you have survived."

We joked about it a great deal during the winter, Mr. Saltus suggesting incidents to be included or omitted.

When after his death one publisher after another urged me to give them a biography, I did not know whether to laugh or to weep.

Could I? The words we had said repeated themselves. His wistful spirit seemed to stand at my side—laughing. He could take a joke on himself so well.

During the writing of it he has seemed to[Pg xxii]be beside me—amused, but caring less, if anything, what any one might say or think about it. It was all trivial.

When engaged in writing a book it was Mr. Saltus' custom to sharpen dozens of pencils and have them at hand. Writing rapidly, he would discard one after another as they became dull, till the last was reached. These he sharpened again, and started in to repeat the process. After his death I collected a box full and kept them. It is with the same pencils that these words are being written. They have come straight from his hand to mine. His emanations seem to have permeated them.

It has not been an easy task, but it is truthful. The worst, as well as the best, has been given. His friends will find that the eager and aspiring spirit they admired was even bigger than they knew.

To the verdict of any human he was—and still must be—indifferent. It did not touch him in the flesh. It cannot reach him in the spirit. To him at the last one thing alone mattered, through the sum total of his life's experiences—the ability to know himself, and knowing[Pg xxiii]that self to co-operate with his evolution. To turn from the illusory to the illimitable, seeking only the way; that was what mattered.

Realizing at the last that all the wisdom of the world could be epitomized in a single sentence, he found strength in that. "He attaineth peace into whom all desires flow as rivers into an ocean, which, being full, remaineth unaffected by any."

[Pg 3]

EDGAR SALTUS, THE MAN

CHAPTER I

From the very beginning Edgar Saltus was none of the things that he appeared to be and a hundred that no one ever suspected. Having a nature with a curious complex of the super-feminine, Edgar Saltus took unto himself a prerogative usually assigned to it, and, snipping off a few years, gave the date of his birth to "Who's Who," as 1868.

Late in life, when confronted with the family Bible in which the date had been correctly set down, and with a photograph of himself as a baby on which his mother had proudly recorded the same, he admitted, reluctantly it must be confessed, that he had juggled things a bit. In those days births were not recorded as they now are.

His irritation at the detection being construed[Pg 4]as shame over his act, he laughed. The annoyance was at himself for omitting, when he had the chance, to knock off a few more objectionable years. The glorious gift of seeming as young as he looked had been offered by fate, and lost.

As a matter of fact Edgar Saltus was born in New York City, some time during the night of October 8, 1855.

When, later in life, he became interested in occultism, and the possibility of having an astrological chart was suggested, there was no one living who could tell him the exact hour. Trivial as it may seem, he would have given much to ascertain it. The Libra qualities assigned to those born in October were all his. This fact made him keen to know how they would be modified or increased by that of the sign rising at the hour of his birth.

It delighted him to brush aside many annoying happenings with the remark that all Libra people were volatile, evanescent, and often irritable; were born so, and could not escape their[Pg 5]limitations. Upon these occasions he would end up with the statement that however objectionable the sign, it was less so than that of Scorpio rising with the Sun in Taurus (which was mine). That, he declared, only a philosopher could understand and hit it off with. He had a splendid ally in the stars.

Edgar Saltus had the good fortune, or the bad luck, as one looks at it, to be born the son of a brilliant father. Francis Henry Saltus not only brought into being the first rifled steel cannon ever made, but perfected a number of other inventions as well. For this he was decorated by almost all the crowned heads of Europe. Queen Victoria knighted him and presented his wife with a marvelous Indian shawl. He was given the Legion of Honour of France, the Order of Isabella the Catholic, of Spain—the Order of Gustavus Vasa of Sweden, and the Order of Christ of Portugal. For having chartered a ship, loading it with provisions and sending it to the starving people of the Canary Islands during a famine, he was[Pg 6]given the inheritable title of Marquise de Casa Besa by the King of Portugal as well. The title, however, he never used.

From Solomon Saltus back to the time of the Emperor Tiberius, the men of the Saltus family appear to have left a mark either of gore or glory upon their generation. Francis Henry Saltus did not purpose to do less. An omnivorous reader, a student and a philosopher, with some queer twists to his curious mentality, he passed on the lot—twists included—not only to his son by a former wife, Francis Saltus Saltus, named after himself, but to the little Edgar as well.

Concerning Francis Saltus Saltus, volumes might be written. A genius, and ambidextrous, he could write sonnets with one hand and compose operas with the other. Without instruction he could improvise on any musical instrument and learn any language with equal facility.

He did all this as a bird sings, joyously, and with so little effort that one was appalled at his genius. A clearer case of subconscious memory never existed. He learned nothing, but he remembered everything. To know where he had acquired it and how would be interesting.

FRANCIS HENRY SALTUS
Father of Edgar Saltus

His ability was supernormal, yet anything once written (he never made a revised copy) was tossed aside—fait accompli. A new thought or a fleeting melody called him elsewhere.

What he lacked was the concentration, the patience, the sustained interest in his creation, to go over his work, rearrange, polish and put it into shape to live. Details were deadly. What he had written—he had written. With an indifference proportionate to his genius, he yawned—and lighted a cigarette.

That lack was tragic. It meant a niche in the gallery of "might have beens" instead of the high place in the Hall of Fame, where he really belonged, and where, had he but condescended to care, he could have flamed as a volcano in active eruption.

Frank was in his sixth year when little Edgar made his début. These four, Francis Senior and[Pg 8]Junior, with Edgar and his mother, constituted the family.

A descendant of a line of illustrious Dutch admirals, Eliza Evertson, after two rather unhappy love affairs, married Francis Saltus. She had passed her first youth. Brave she must have been, to risk her happiness with a brilliantly eccentric husband, and take upon herself the upbringing of his even more erratic son.

Until Edgar was seven the experiment was fairly successful. Eliza Saltus, witty, quick at repartee, and interestingly sarcastic, took her place in the "family party" which constituted the social set in those days. New York was a small place. Everybody who was anybody, knew everybody else.

Tall, fair, and distinguished looking, wearing his honors and decorations as lightly as a boutonniere, Francis Saltus was a splendid foil for the brunette beauty and vivacious spirits of his wife. During these early years together they traveled a great deal, and the problem of peace did not present itself. Eliza Evertson was a person[Pg 9]not easily submerged. In a large home in West Seventeenth Street, none too cheerful at best, filled with massive Italian furniture of carved olive wood, these four struggled for a time to keep together and form a family.

Of those early years Mr. Saltus always told with sadness—how his mother fought against the influence of Frank, who, even at pre-adolescence, evinced many of the peculiarities and angles which developed rapidly with the years.

Resentful over the father's preference for his first-born, the little Edgar became the idol of his mother's heart, giving to her his deepest affection in return. Francis Saltus' pride in the elder son outweighing every other sentiment, he could see no fault in him, in spite of his habit of getting up when he pleased, eating at odd times, composing on the piano at two a. m., or bringing all kinds of queer people to the house at any hour of the day or night.

Whether or not the stepmother exercised the tact which would have oiled the machinery of things, one cannot know. Good mothers[Pg 10]are seldom philosophers. The fact that Frank was over-indulged and given plenty of money by an adoring father, who scarcely noticed her own small son, must have hurt her independence and pride. That she could see only his faults, and nothing of his genius, cemented the bond between the father and Frank as nothing else could have done. Blond, handsome, debonair, Frank Saltus charmed as he breathed. Only his stepmother was impervious to his fascinations.

The little Edgar combined the Greek features of his father and half-brother with the dark eyes and olive coloring of his mother. High-strung, timid, and so nervous that a slight hesitancy marred his speech at times, the child lived in fear of offending his father by a refusal to repeat his mother's warnings against Frank, and the fear of enraging his mother by his unwillingness to repeat his father's comments.

EDGAR SALTUS

At Two Years of Age, sitting on the Lap of His Mother

ELIZA EVERTSON SALTUS
[Pg 11]

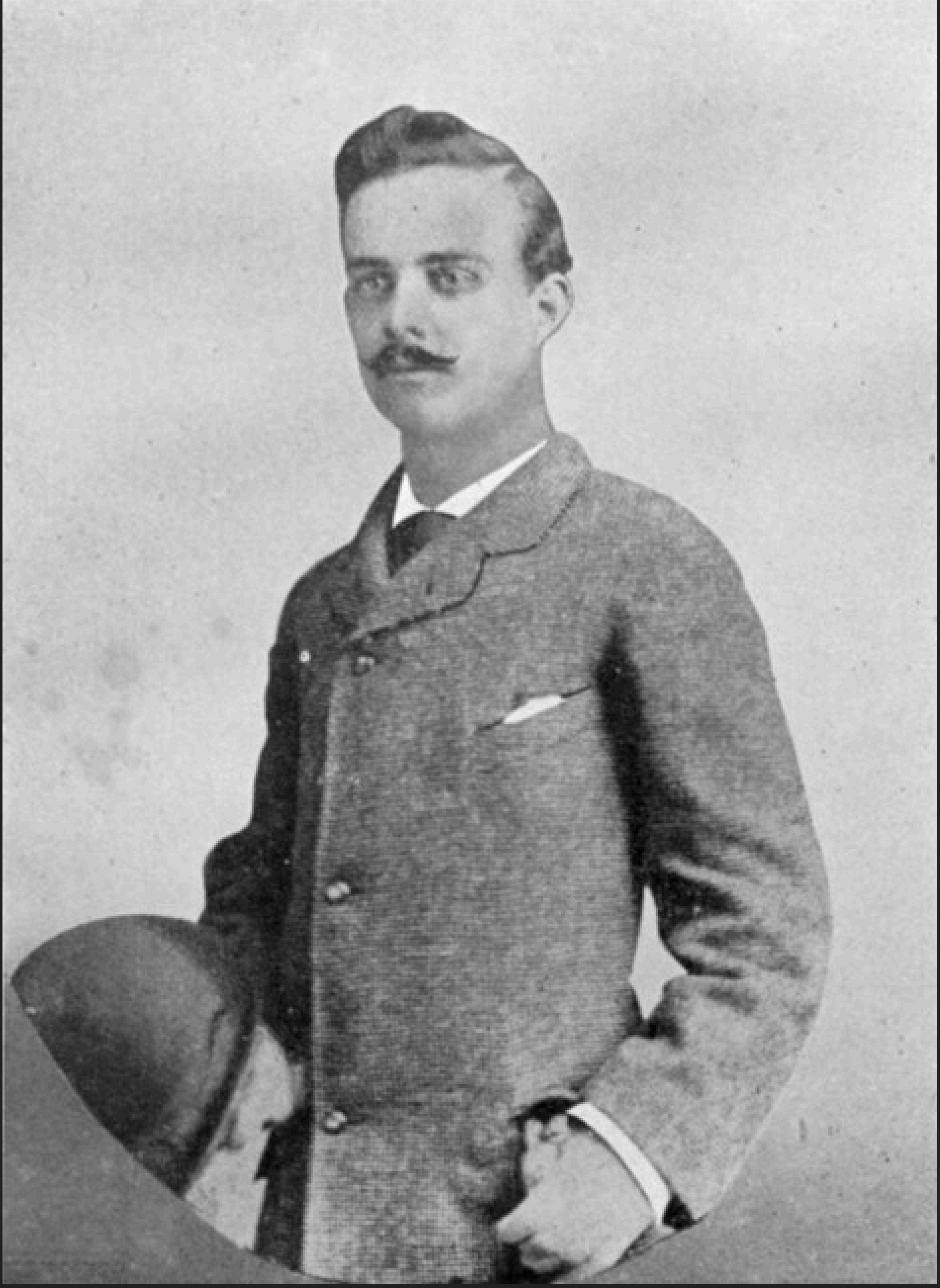
The battle-ground of a ceaseless conflict between his parents, the boy developed a quality negative in one sense, dangerous in another. He was afraid to repeat anything of a disagreeable nature or admit an unpleasant truth. Forced to the wall he avoided truth,—made a jest of it if he could, or, as a last resource, denied it pointblank. It is the fear of danger and discord and the hanging back from it that injures. On the firing-line death may be in waiting, but fear has fled.

To get the right slant on Edgar Saltus' life as a whole, this early training—or lack of it—must be taken into consideration. This almost physical disability to tell the truth, if that truth were disagreeable, was equaled by his inability to bear pain. At any excess of it he fainted. It followed him throughout life. Rarely did he get into a dentist's chair without fainting.

With so many charming and endearing qualities, an understanding needing no words, a tenderness greater by far than that possessed by most women, one can but speculate as to what a rare and radiant being he would have been minus the handicap concerning truth, which, with all its ramifications, penetrated and[Pg 12]disintegrated much of his life and the lives closest to him.

Unable to make a go of it as a family, divorce in those days being looked upon as disgraceful, Francis Saltus took his first-born abroad, while Edgar was sent to St. Paul's School at Concord, New Hampshire. Never again did they attempt to live as a family. During vacations young Edgar went to his mother. An occasional call on his father was all that was required of him.

According to his own account he was always at the foot of his class and not popular. Uninterested in sports, abhorring all forms of "get together" societies, living very much in a world of his own imagining, he was as inconspicuous as he was unhappy. Slightly undersized, slim, straight, and well-proportioned, with his clear-cut features, dark oriental eyes, and olive skin, he looked and felt out of place in a western world,—as perhaps he was.



EDGAR SALTUS
Sixteen Years of Age
[Pg 13]

Girls took to him on sight, wrote to him, sent him locks of their hair, and suggested meeting him. His first flirtation was with a girl from New Haven. That her name was Nellie was all he remembered of the episode.

During the summer vacations he had a succession of flirtations. A dip into them would be like turning a page of "Who Was Who" a generation ago. One irate father, thinking he had called too often upon his young daughter, put it to him straight.

"Young man, you have made yourself very much at home in this house. What are your intentions?"

"To leave," he replied quickly, as he made for the door.

Another occasion was more complicated. This time it was the girl herself, a girl he had vowed to work and wait for forever if necessary. Suggesting that they omit the waiting and do the working upon their respective parents, the girl persuaded him to elope, very much against his will. It was the last thing he wanted. To love and run was far more to his fancy. Letting drop the fact of what they contemplated[Pg 14]where it would percolate quickly, he drove off with the bride-to-be in a dog-cart.

During this drive his wits got to working. At one parsonage after another they stopped, young Edgar getting out and inquiring at the door, only to drive on again. After an hour or so the girl's father overtook them. The elopement was off; the would-be bride in tears. Instead of inquiring for a clergyman to marry them, he had very politely inquired the way to the next village.

A danger escaped is always a ready theme for conversation, and it amused him more than a little to tell of this episode with the comment:

"No woman could drag me to the altar, I could slide like water through a crack and vanish."

So he could. A more ingenious man at evading anything he disliked never existed. While agreeing with every appearance of delight, he was concocting a clever escape. He always managed to slip through, as he said.

Of his father and brother he saw but little[Pg 15]during these years. The latter had to his credit a volume of verse, "Honey and Gall," and half a dozen operas, one of which he had conducted himself.

On the table near my hand is a copy of "Honey and Gall," an original, bound in green. On the fly-leaf in Frank's characteristic hand is written:

EDGAR E. SALTUS

With the love and good wishes of his most affectionate brother,

F. S. SALTUS.

No resentment there. A spirit of love, tolerance, and interest is exhaled. In the book are many marginal notes in the same handwriting. Changes, interpolations, and corrections emphasise the beauty of the lines. The pity of it is that they were put there too late, but the soul of the author stares one in the face. Between the pages pressed flowers rest, souvenirs of shadow or sunshine. During the years the paper has not only become discolored but has reproduced the outline of the blossoms. The[Pg 16]book is like a living thing, so close does it bring the author. Emanations of his personality rise from the pages like perfume, compelling the sympathy and understanding he needed so uniquely.

One poem especially—"Pantheism"—tears the veil from his Greek features, revealing an Oriental in masquerade. Neither pagan nor Christian in the accepted sense, the musk-scented mysticism of eastern philosophy rises from it like incense. Out of place in the conventional environment of New York,—subconscious memory rising to the surface of his waking consciousness, he writes of other lives and loves, and anterior experiences,—putting his deepest and most profound beliefs into words. No other poem in the book strikes the same chord, or has as many marginal notes by the author.

Too handsome, too much sought after by women, too well supplied with money to have an incentive to work, he sank into something of a psychic stupor. He knew nothing of the[Pg 17]feminine as revealed by mother, sister or wife. To him, alone and misunderstood, Silence offered her arm. Silence is a dynamic force but it offers peace. One can but hope that he was given his full share.

Brilliant, handsome, with a manner irresistible to women, Frank Saltus was reaching the high noon of his life. So facile was his pen, so limitless the scope of his erratic genius, that young Edgar sank into the shadow of him. Tragically pathetic is the fact, that, despite the superabundance of his gifts, he failed to bring any one of them to the perfection that could have made him immortal. There may have been philosophy even in this.

Among the other poems in the volume is one to his most intimate friend,—Edgar Fawcett. This friendship not only lasted his lifetime, but was stretched to include the younger Edgar, whose close association with the poet continued until the latter's death.

In spite of their real admiration and regard for Fawcett, both Edgar and Frank Saltus[Pg 18]enjoyed teasing and tormenting him enormously. His vulnerable places were so much exposed. Though timid with women, nevertheless he fancied they were in love with him. With inimitable skill, Frank Saltus composed letters purporting to come from passionate young heiresses who were in love with him. One especially wrote frequently and at length. Fawcett not only answered them, but, rushing to his rooms, read them aloud to Frank. More letters followed.

"What am I to do," he asked, "when women persecute me like this? Even you have not received such letters as mine."

The brothers agreed with him. While pretending to be annoyed by them Fawcett was really living in rapture. Nothing like it had brushed against his life before. As fast as the letters were sent out, did Fawcett come in to read them to their creator. It began to pall. One could not keep on writing them indefinitely. Something had to be done. The heiress who could not live without him threw out[Pg 19]vague hints of suicide. Hectic and harrowed, Fawcett came to Frank's rooms and burst into tears. After that the letters ceased. Fawcett could not be comforted. Some helpless and beautiful being had died for love of him. This incident became the episode of his life, and he passed over without knowing the truth.

According to Mr. Saltus, there was something charming and childlike about Edgar Fawcett. A rejected manuscript sent him into hysterics. He kept an account book, alphabetically arranged. If you offended him, a black mark went against your name. If you pleased him, a mark of merit was substituted.

From an old note-book of Mr. Saltus is copied the following: "Edgar Fawcett has to pay higher wages to his valet than anyone else, because he reads his poems to him." In another place is written: "Idleness is necessary to the artist. It is the quality in which he shines the best. Be idle, Fawcett. Let others toil. Be idle and give us a rest."[Pg 20]

None the less the brothers had an affectionate admiration for him. Edgar Saltus dedicated "Love and Lore"

To

Edgar Fawcett.

Perfect poet, ... perfect friend.

[Pg 21]
CHAPTER II

His school days in the States over, Edgar Saltus went abroad with his mother for an indefinite time. Europe became their headquarters during what must have been the most constructively interesting part of his early life. Heidelberg, Munich, the Sorbonne, and an elderly professor supplementing certain studies did their best for him. At an age when the world seemed his for the taking, with brilliant mind, unusual physical attractiveness, the ability to charm without effort, and sufficient means, his path was if anything too rosy.

The pampered only child of an adoring mother, he had only to express a wish to have it gratified. He became selfish and self-centered as the result. His motto was "Carpe diem," and he carefully contrived to live down to it.

During a summer in Switzerland without his mother Mr. Saltus met a charming young girl[Pg 22]of semi-royal birth, whom we will call Marie C——, and eloped with her. Her furious family followed, overtaking them in Venice. As she was unable, because of her exalted station, to be married by a priest without credentials and permission, the ceremony had been omitted for the moment. That complicated matters. Marie was whisked off to a convent, where, the year following, she died. As usual the woman paid. Meanwhile, a young and charming Venetian countess did her best to console the explorer in hearts.

On the heels of this episode came his mother. Funds were stopped, and to the chagrin of the countess who had braved disgrace, her charmer was taken back to Heidelberg.

With an insight and interest almost paternal, the old professor who had tutored him at times gave Mr. Saltus a lesson he never forgot. Realizing as he must have that the youth had a quality of fascination seldom encountered, a quality likely to lead to his early ruin if not circumscribed, he assigned himself the job. Taking[Pg 23]him to an exhibit where wax figures representing parts of the human body in different stages of disease were set up for a clinic, he let it do its work.

Illness, ugliness, unsightliness of any kind, had a horror for Mr. Saltus. It was an intrinsic part of his inner essence. That exhibit nearly did for him. It made him ill for a week,—the most profitable illness he ever had in his life. Never in his wildest and least responsible moments did he have an affair with any woman other than of his own class.

A student of the classics, with Flaubert sitting on the lotus leaf of perfection before his eyes, it soon became the desire of his heart to meet some of the great ones of letters. Even then the young Edgar was trying his hand at it.

Through the friendship of Stuart Merrill, a young American poet living in Paris, he had the supreme bliss of being presented to Victor Hugo. The anticipation of it alone made him tremble. It was to him like meeting the Dalai Lama in person. Reverently he approached the[Pg 24]great one repeating, as he did so, the Byzantine formula, "May I speak and live?"

The magnificent one condescended to permit it. From a great chair which resembled a shrine and in which he looked like an old idol, he deigned to speak to his admirer. Mr. Saltus left his presence with winged feet.

The author of "Poèmes Antiques," Leconte de Lisle, was another to whom the youthful aspirant was on his knees. Through Stuart Merrill again he was admitted to Olympus.

"You are a church. You have your worshipers," he told the poet. Leconte de Lisle listened, or pretended to listen, with indifference. That attitude of his appealed as much to Mr. Saltus as his poems. It was the way genius should act, he reflected.

Another meteor crossing his orbit was Verlaine. It was at the Café François Premier that they met. Shabby, dirty, and a little drunk, he talked delightfully as only poets and madmen can. He talked of his "prisons" and of his "charity hospitals," quite unaffectedly and as[Pg 25]a landed proprietor speaks of his estates. One of these Edgar Saltus visited. It was an enclosure at the back of a shop in a blind alley, where he had a cot that stood not on the floor, for there was no floor, but on the earth.

Of Oscar Wilde and Owen Meredith, he had at that time only a peep in passing. His particular chums were the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Francis Hope. Among the interesting personalities with whom he became friends was the Baron Harden Hickey. In what way he became a Baron was never elucidated to Mr. Saltus' satisfaction. Poet, scholar, and crack duelist, his sword was as mighty as his pen. At my hand is a book of his called "Euthanasia," and inscribed in his writing are the words:

To

Edgar Saltus...........................the unique,

From his extravagant admirer

H. H.

Harden Hickey had ambitions. One of them was to found a monarchy at Trinidad and rule there. He was nothing if not original. The[Pg 26]post of Poet Laureate he offered to Edgar Saltus. Owing to the intervention of the Powers, the project failed. Harden Hickey killed himself. Such friends in any event were not commonplace.

Deciding at last that he must have some kind of an occupation, his mother having on his account drawn liberally from her principal, Mr. Saltus decided to return to the United States. Once there he entered Columbia Law School. Terse, clear, and versatile with his pen, the law seemed more or less to beckon. Plead he could not; owing to his acute nervousness and his slight hesitancy of speech that was out of the question. The uninteresting but necessary technical side of the law could alone be his. In some climates and altitudes Mr. Saltus' speech became almost a stammer. In others it vanished. Never was it unpleasant, and many thought it rather fascinating. People affected him in this way. Most of them got on his nerves, and the peculiar hesitancy followed, while with those to whom he was accustomed,[Pg 27]he could talk for hours without a trace of it. Even as a youth his disinclination to meet people, his horror of crowds, and his desire to be alone a great deal were becoming marked characteristics. So also was the quality he had developed as a child, the increasing inability to face a disagreeable issue.

During his life in Germany, Schopenhauer had been his daily food. From his angle religions were superstitions for the ignorant and credulous. They offered nothing. With Schopenhauer came Spinoza. Between them the Columbia student became saturated like a sponge.

At intervals Mr. Saltus had tried his hand at verse as well as prose. A sonnet written in Venice and published afterward under the title of "History" was among his first. Timidly, almost apologetically, he took it to his brother Frank.

"Splendid! Better than anything I ever did," was the unexpected praise. "I write more easily, but it is too much fag for me to polish[Pg 28]my work. You are slower, but you scintillate. Go in for letters. It is your place in the scheme of things."

Thus encouraged, and by the brother who was the flame of the family, Edgar Saltus took up his pencil in earnest. Fundamentally, both Edgar and Frank Saltus were alike. They seemed to be oriental souls functioning for a life in occidental bodies, and the clothes pinched. Neither could endure routine, nor could they tolerate the prescribed and circumscribed existence of the western world. It was difficult to internalize in an environment both objective and external. They were subtle, indolent, exotic, living in worlds of their own, as far removed from those with whom they brushed elbows as is the fourth dimension.

Frank let himself go the way of least resistance, without effort or desire to fit in with his environment. Having traveled everywhere, and exhausted to its limit every emotion and experience, bored to tears with the world outside of his imagination and finally even with[Pg 29]that within, he stimulated what remained with alcohol and drugs. As the mood took him he composed, tossing off sonnets and serenades like champagne, carelessly and without effort, a Titan with the indifference of a pigmy. What he might have been, had he forced his furtive and fertile fancy to grapple with the tedium of sandpaper and polish, only an extension of consciousness could reveal.

Writing of him in those days James Huneker said:

"He had the look of a Greek god gone to ruin. He was fond of absinthe and I never saw him without a cigarette in his mouth. He carved sonnets out of solid wood and compiled epigrams for Town Topics as a pastime. He composed feuilletons that would have made the fortune of a boulevardier. He was a ruin, but he was a gentleman. Edgar Saltus was handsome in a different way, dark, petit maitre."

Of Frank Saltus' multiple love affairs one alone cut deep enough to leave an imprint.[Pg 30]Under the title "To Marie B—," he wrote one of his best poems.

Curiously enough, the name Marie had been that of Edgar's first and unfortunate love. So convinced was he that no one with that name could survive close association with a Saltus, that from the first hour of our acquaintance he refused to call me by it, using a contraction I had lisped as an infant in trying to pronounce Marie, Mowgy. It was the last word he spoke on earth.

The son of a brilliant father and brother of a genius, Edgar Saltus was made conscious of his supposed inferiority by the world at large. To his mother, in spite of her indulgent idolatry of him, must be given the credit that he, too, did not sink into an apathy and dream his life away. The worst side of his brother's character was held always before him, as well as his inability to earn anything with all his talents, and the fact that he, Edgar, was an Evertson as well as a Saltus was used effectively. As far as she could she fought the soft, sensual[Pg 31]streak in his nature, the oriental under its mask. Too late to grapple with his fixed habit of avoiding the ugly, unpleasant, and the irksome, she hammered in the lesson of dissipated talents and a wasted life. So well was this done that Edgar Saltus, to use his own words, "By the grace of God and absent-minded professors," managed to take his degree as a Doctor of Law.

With that in one pocket and a sonnet in the other, he cut loose to have a little fling before starting in for a career at the bar. That career never materialized.

With a mother always a part of the upper ten, he was soon submerged by balls, receptions, and festivities. His ability to fraternize being limited and superficial and the necessity for a great deal of solitude fundamental, it was not long before the desire to express himself with his pen reasserted itself, and a number of sonnets was the result. Few knew anything of the hours he put in pruning, polishing, and sandpapering them. Albert Edwin Shroeder,[Pg 32]a friend reaching back to the Heidelberg days, knew the most, but even with him Edgar Saltus was reticent about his work. It may be mentioned in passing that Shroeder was an intimate friend of Frank Saltus, as well. His admiration for the brothers expressed itself in many ways. Among Mr. Saltus' effects are letters from him and some books. On the fly-leaf of one is written, "To the Master from his servant A. Shroeder." On another, "To the unique, from one who admires him uniquely." This friendship lasted until Mr. Shroeder's death.

Other intimate friends were Clarence and Walter Andrews. Of his escapades with them Mr. Saltus was never weary of telling, the tendrils of their friendship being long and strong. Of those who knew him in these halcyon days Walter Andrews alone survives. Sitting at my side, as he very graciously offered to do, he drove with Mr. Saltus' only child, his daughter, Mrs. J. Theus Munds, and myself, to Sleepy[Pg 33]Hollow Cemetery and saw the ashes of his oldest friend returned to the earth.

Not fitted by nature for the cut and dried, the literal and the precise, longing more and more to express himself in writing, he let the law linger. Having already several stories to his credit, the possibility of making letters his profession appealed strongly to Mr. Saltus. Money in itself meant nothing to him. It went through his hands as through a sieve. To be free from rules and routine, free to express himself, that alone mattered, and that, despite the inroads made into their capital, he could do.

Law books were consigned to the trash baskets. Paper and pencils took their place, and it was not long before the results took on a golden hue.

At that epoch, his star rising to the ascendent and Fame flitting before him as a will-o'-the-wisp urging him on, he met one of New York's most beautiful young matrons—Mme. C——. An American herself of old Knickerbocker[Pg 34]stock, married to a nobleman, she represented youth, beauty, charm, and position, added to which she had a brilliant mind.

A serious love affair resulted. Vainly did Mrs. Saltus urge her son to marry and settle down. Vainly did the family of Mme. C——warn her of possible perils ahead. So handsome in those days that the papers referred to him as the "Pocket Apollo," so popular that girls fought for his favor, Mr. Saltus had a triumphal sail through a social sea as heady as champagne.

From his own account and a diary of Mme. C——'s found after his death, the affair must have cut deep. Quoting from it one reads:

"Edgar called to-day. There is no one like him in the world. He is the unique. I adore him to madness."

Again one reads:

"Edgar is the center of my being. Never can I cease to love him. That is certain. But should he ever cease to love me—? It is unthinkable. I cannot contemplate it—and live."[Pg 35]

Once again:

"They tell me that this cannot go on. I have children. Oh, my God! Can I tear him out of my heart—and live?"

There is no doubt whatever but that the devotion was very sincere on both sides. It ended, nevertheless, owing no doubt to the fine qualities of Mme. C——, who, putting the happiness of others before her own, went abroad and lost herself there for a time.

Proud, arrogant, accustomed to having his own way at any cost, selfish and self-centered as the result of his indulgent childhood, during which he had never exercised the least self-control, it was a new experience to Edgar Saltus. Taking what he wanted when he wanted it and because he wanted it, without the least thought of others, save perhaps his mother, he had built up on his weaknesses, in ignorance of, and not recognizing, his strength. The affair of Mme. C—— hurt.

Little wonder it was that when a pretty and petite blonde girl swam into the maelstrom of[Pg 36]his environment, he made a grab for her. Pert and piquant, her face upturned in the waltz, he whispered the lines beginning: "Helen, thy beauty is to me" ... following it up as only he could. In addition to her own attractiveness, Helen Read had a father who was a partner of J. Pierpont Morgan. She was no small catch, and there were many out with fishing tackle and bait.

On the surface it looked like an ideal match. All the gifts of the gods were divided between them. Besides, every one approved of it. That in itself should have warned them of disaster.

The year 1883 turned a new page, Edgar Saltus breaking into matrimony and into print almost simultaneously. Houghton, Mifflin and Company having agreed to bring out his translation of

Balzac, the horizon opened like a fan. The microbe of ink having entered into his blood, he conceived the idea of putting Schopenhauer and Spinoza before the public in condensed and epigrammatic form. To their philosophy he determined to add his own. "The[Pg 37]Philosophy of Disenchantment" and "The Anatomy of Negation" began brewing in the caldron of his mind.

A note-book in which is condensed material for writing these books is perhaps the most interesting bit of intimate work Mr. Saltus left behind him, revealing as it does an Edgar Saltus unknown and unsuspected by the world. In it is no man giving out savories and soufflés with both hands, taking the world as a jest, a game, and an amusement. It reveals the serious and sober student, hiding behind a mask of smiles, subtleties, and cynicism; the soul of a seeker, a soul very like that of his brother Frank. So out of tune was it with its environment, so little understood, and so little expecting to be, that wrapping itself in a mantle of impenetrability and adjusting its mask, no one knew what existed behind it.

The note-book itself is most characteristic of Mr. Saltus. In it are sonnets many of which have been published,—notes for his work,—drafts of letters he expected to write,—quotations[Pg 38]from various sources and epigrams of his own and others jumbled together. Some of these are written with his almost copper-plate precision, and the rest jotted down late at night, perhaps after he had dined and wined well. These are mere scratches, which only one familiar with his hand could decipher.

Youth flames from a leaf on which he has written:

Edgar Saltus.

A.M., Ph. D., K.S.K., etc., etc., etc.

The pomposity of this amused him very much during his later years. The following quotations reveal what has been referred to as his oriental soul floundering in the dark, seeking expression in a language new to his tongue. Taken at random a few of the quotations are as follows:

"There are verses in the Vedas which when repeated are said to charm the birds and beasts."

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought."[Pg 39]

"Having pervaded the Universe with a fragment of Myself,—I remain."

"Near to renunciation,—very near,—dwelleth eternal peace."

As material for a book on agnosticism it is amusing,—his agnosticism being in reality only his inability to accept creed-bound faiths. The quotations are proof, however, that germinal somewhere was an aspiration for the verities of things. Unable to find them, the ego drew in upon itself, closing the door. Behind that door however it was watching and waiting with a wistful yearning. Years later, after reading one stanza from the Book of Dzyan, it flung open the door and emerged, to bathe in the sunlight it had been seeking so long.

At the bottom of the page of quotations from the Gitâ is a footnote: "True perhaps but utterly unintelligible to the rabble."

It was not long after his marriage that turning a corner he saw Fame flitting ahead of him, smiling over her shoulder. The newspapers began to quote his witticisms, as for example:[Pg 40]

Hostess—"Mr. Saltus, what character in fiction do you admire most?"

Saltus—"God."

His books, considered outrageous to a degree, began to sell like hot cakes. To quote again from a newspaper clipping of that day:

Depraved Customer—"Do you sell the books of Edgar Saltus?"

Virtuous Bookseller—"Sir, I keep Guy de Maupassant's, The Heptameron, and Zola's, but Saltus—never."

Edgar Saltus was made.

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CHAPTER III

To go back a little. It was shortly after his marriage to Helen Read that the conventional trip to Europe followed. Added to the selfishness which the circumstances of his life had fostered abundantly, Edgar Saltus had a number of odd and well developed twists. Illness in any form was abhorrent to him, contact with it unthinkable, and even to hear about it objectionable. When his young wife suffered from neuralgia—a thing which not infrequently happened—he put on his hat and walked out. The idea of schooling himself to bear anything he disliked was as foreign as Choctaw.

High-tempered, moody, impatient to a degree seldom encountered, and with the preconceived idea that he was entirely right in everything, he set sail on the matrimonial sea. Two episodes will make clear why the shoals[Pg 42]were encountered so soon. Realizing then how oblique had been his angle, the story of his life must be thrown forward, as they say in filmdom, to 1912 and then back again to the earlier episode.

We were traveling in awagon-litfrom Germany to Paris. After he had tucked me in for the night I noticed that Mr. Saltus had removed only his coat and his shoes, and was going to bed practically clothed. That alone made me take notice. We had not been married long at the time, but I was acquainted with his habits. Better than any human I ever knew, he loved to been negligée. He could slide out of his clothes and into a dressing-gown like an eel.

This extraordinary behavior was further emphasized when, in spite of his hatred of speaking to people, servants especially, I heard him whispering at the door to the guard. At such radical conduct, I asked what it was all about. His reluctance to answer made me even more insistent. With his cleverness at evasions[Pg 43]and his agility at inventing explanations off the bat, he put me aside with the suggestion that he had asked for more covering. Knowing his ways and his wiles backward and forward, I laughed. Explain he must. Then he said that we would be crossing the frontier in the early hours of the morning, and, as it would be necessary for him to get out and open our luggage for inspection, he had remained dressed. Realizing that it was difficult for me to sleep under any conditions, and fearful lest I be annoyed by it, he had told the man not to knock, but to come in quietly and touch him instead. It was consideration for me, nothing else.

The explanation apparently covered everything. Drawing up his blankets he said, "Good-night."

Instead, however, of the usual deep breathing to follow, presently I heard him laughing, laughing heartily, and trying to suppress it. When questioned he could only say:

"If Helen could see me now! Good Lord!"[Pg 44]

When he had repeated it three or four times, I sat up and told him he could tell the worst. This is what he said:

"When Helen and I were traveling this same route and we realized that the frontier meant getting up in the night and the horrors of the customs, I suggested that she be a sport, and toss up a coin to see which of us should take on the job."

"Horrors!" I interjected. "How could you even think of such a thing?"

"How could I? There you have it. How could I? I did, all the same. We were both young and healthy. I didn't see why my sex should be penalized. We threw, and it fell to her."

Another "Horrors" came from the opposite bed. "But of course you did not let her when it came to the scratch? You remembered that you were supposed to take care of her?"

"What I remember only too well is that I did let her do it. She spoke French beautifully and she did it quite uncomplainingly. What a[Pg 45]brute I was! I cannot believe that I was ever that sort of being."

"Suppose we toss up now?" I suggested.

Mr. Saltus laughed. "You! Why, little Puss, I would sit up all night with joy, rather than have you wakened. You go out and attend to the customs!" He laughed again. "If Helen could see me now! What a hell of a life I must have led her!"

The other episode occurred during the last years of his life, when we were living in the apartments where Mr. Saltus died. His bed-room and study were at the end of a long hall, removed from the noise of the front door, the elevator, and the telephone, where he could work in quiet.

Uninterrupted quiet was a vital essential to him. Distractions of any kind, no matter how well meant or accidental, sent him into hysterics and ended his work for the day, and he begged me never to speak to him unless the house was on fire. Sometimes through carelessness I did interrupt him as he went from[Pg 46]his study to his bed-room, asking him a question or telling him of something which had occurred, but when working in his study he was left in peace.

One morning, however (it was while he was writing on "The Imperial Orgy"), something happened which at the moment seemed so vital, that, impulsively and without realizing what the effect would be, I burst into his study without warning and started to tell him.

The effect on him was of such a nature that the errand was forgotten. With a yell like that of a maniac, Mr. Saltus grabbed his hair, pulling it out where it would give way. Still screaming, he batted his head against the walls and the furniture; and finally giving way utterly, he got down and hit his head on the floor.

None of it was directed against me—the offender, yet no woman could have been blamed for running out of the house. Ten minutes later, when he had been put to bed like a small boy, given a warm drink, and had an electric pad applied to his solar plexus, his[Pg 47]one request was that I sit beside him and read extracts from the "Gitâ."

His action was pitiful, tragic.

"Poor child! No one but yourself could understand and put up with such a demon," he said. "I should be taken to the lethal chamber and put out of the way. And yet I could not help it."

The realization that he, an old man then, a student of Theosophy, the first precept of which is self-restraint, could have given way as he had, hurt him cruelly. Understanding and sympathy brought him to himself rapidly. Otherwise he would have been ill.

Mr. Saltus was an unconscious psychic. With those he loved he needed no explanation of anything. He understood even to the extent of answering one's unspoken thoughts many times. So psychic was he, that his disinclination to be in crowds or meet many people came from the fact that they devitalized him, leaving him limp as a rag. When writing a book, as he himself often expressed it, he[Pg 48]was in a state of "high hallucinatory fever," giving out of his ectoplasm very much as a materializing medium gives it out in a séance, to build up a temporary body for the spirit.

It is a well-known scientific fact that any interruption during the process of materialization causes repercussion on the body of the medium, the velocity being such that illness, if not insanity, may result.

While creating a book, Mr. Saltus was in very much the same condition, the finer forces of his etheric body being semi-detached from the physical. He could not help it any more than he could help the color of his eyes. Lacking discipline and self-control from his youth, he could not, after his formative years, coordinate his forces so as to grapple with this limitation effectively.

During an interval of reading the "Gitâ" on this occasion he told me the following:

"In the early days when I was first married to Helen Read, I was writing on a novel. She had no idea how interruptions affected me—nor[Pg 49]did I realize myself how acute anything of the kind could become. I was in the middle of an intricate plot. Helen, who out of the kindness of her heart was bringing me a present, opened the door of my study and came in more quietly than you did. Before she could open her mouth to say a word, I began to scream and pull at my hair. Rushing to an open window I tore the manuscript, on which I had been working so long, into fragments and threw them into the street. Whether she thought I had gone suddenly insane and intended to kill her, she did not stop to say. When I looked around she had fled."

For a girl reared in an atmosphere of conventional respectability, as they were in those days, it must have been an insight into bedlam. Once again he made the remark:

"If Helen could see me now, I would seem natural to her. My next life is apt to be a busy one, paying my debts to her and to others."

In view of all this, and of the flirtations he kept up on every side, she must have had a[Pg 50]tolerance and a patience seldom encountered.

After Balzac and "The Philosophy of Disenchantment" and "The Anatomy of Negation" were off the press, novel after novel fell from his pen, and the newspaper articles quoted previously were appearing. In "A Transaction in Hearts" Mr. Saltus put some of his own experiences, but so changed that the public could not connect him with the plot. His literary bark was launched and under full sail. He could touch the garment of Fame, and the texture was soft and satisfying.

One of his novels was dedicated to E—R, his mother-in-law Emmaline Read. Another to V. A. B. was to his friend Valentine (or Vally) Blacque. E—W was to Miss Edith son, who later in life became the wife of Mr. Francis H. Wellman, a genius in his own field. Shroeder and Lorillard Ronalds were remembered as well.

During a summer abroad Mr. Saltus conceived the idea of writing "Mary Magdalen." The circumstances connected with it are interesting.[Pg 51]He was dining in the rooms of Lord Francis Hope one evening. Oscar Wilde was another guest. After their liqueurs and cigars the latter sauntered about, looking at some of the pictures he fancied. One representing Salome intrigued him more than a little. Beckoning to Mr. Saltus, he said:

"This picture calls me. I am going to write a classic—a play—'Salome.' It will be my masterpiece."

Near it was a small picture of the Magdalen.

"Do so," said Mr. Saltus, "and I will write a book—'Mary Magdalen.' We will pursue the wantons together."

Acting on the impulse, Mr. Saltus took rooms in Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, where, within walking distance of the British Museum, he could study his background for the story.

Mornings spent in research, afternoons in writing, with a bite of dinner at Pagani's in Great Portland Street, made up his days. There were interruptions, to be sure. One of[Pg 52]them was a girl named Maudie, who lived somewhere in Peckham. She joined him now and again at dinner. Asked to describe her, he said he had forgotten even her last name, but remembered that he had written of her, "She had the disposition of a sun-dial." This may have assisted to keep him in a good humor.

Many years later Mr. Saltus took me to see the rooms he had occupied during this time, with their queer old open fireplace, great four-poster bed, canopied on all sides, and the old desk at which he had spent so many happy hours. Working hours were happy hours to him, always. He had a sentiment for the place, and once when I was in London alone I stopped there, taking his old rooms for a time, and visiting the landmarks associated with that part of his life. That I should do this touched him profoundly.

During the writing of "Mary Magdalen" he met many interesting people. Among them was Owen Meredith, then British Ambassador to France. In connection with him a rather[Pg 53]amusing incident occurred. Dining one evening at the home of Lady B——, Mr. Saltus was vis-a-vis with Owen Meredith. In the course of the dinner the hostess gave the poet a novel, and asked him to translate an epigram on the fly-leaf which was written in Greek.

Looking at it he said:

"My eyes are not what they once were. Give it to our young friend here," meaning Mr. Saltus.

The passage that had stumped him stumped Mr. Saltus as well, but he refused to be caught. Glancing at it, he exclaimed:

"It is not fit to be translated in Lady B——'s presence."

At that both the rogues laughed.

In a monograph called "Parnassians Personally Encountered," Mr. Saltus tells of this episode, as also of his meeting with other celebrities of the day. Of Oscar Wilde he saw a great deal. The rapid-firing battery of his wit, his epigrams, which gushing up as a geyser confused and astounded the crowd, enchanted[Pg 54]him. At the then popular Café Royal in Regent Street, Wilde and himself, with a few congenial men, spent many an evening.

There was much in the mental companionship of Mr. Saltus and Wilde which sharpened and stimulated each, making their conversation a battle-ground of aphorisms and epigrams. According to Mr. Saltus, in spite of his abnormal life, Wilde's conversation, barring its brilliancy, was as respectable and conventional as that of a greengrocer. Neglecting to laugh at a doubtful joke tossed off by one of his admirers, he was asked somewhat sarcastically if he were shocked.

"I have lost the ability to be shocked, but not the ability to be bored," was the reply.

Vulgarity sickened him. Vice had to be perfumed, pagan, and private to intrigue him. His conversation was immaculate. Many incidents concerning Wilde are given in Mr. Saltus' monograph, "Oscar Wilde—An Idler's Impressions." They give a new slant on his[Pg 55]many-sided personality. One episode is especially illuminating.

With Mr. Saltus, Wilde was driving to his home in Chelsea on a bleak and bitter night. Upon alighting a man came up to them. He wore a short jacket which he opened. From neck to waist he was bare. At the sight Mr. Saltus gave him a gold piece, but Wilde, with entire simplicity, took off his own coat and put it about the man. It was a lesson Mr. Saltus never forgot.

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CHAPTER IV

The next vital experience in Mr. Saltus' life was his divorce from Helen Read. Hopelessly unsuited to be the husband of any woman who expected to find a normal, conventional and altogether rational being, his marriage with her was doomed to failure from the first.

From his rooms on Fifth Avenue, at a large Italian table of carved olive wood (the same table on which I am writing these lines), he turned out novels like flapjacks, entertaining his acquaintances in the intervals.

Among the friends of the first Mrs. Saltus was a girl belonging to one of the oldest and best families in the country. Spanish in colouring, high bred in features, a champion at sports and a belle at the balls, she was sufficiently attractive to arrest the attention of a connoisseur. Owing to her friendship with his wife, she saw a great deal of Mr. Saltus also. Their[Pg 57]acquaintance, however, had begun many years before, when as a youth in Germany he had met the girl and her family. Too young at that time to think of marriage they had been semi-sweethearts.

It was only to be expected, then, that his side of the story was put forward with all the cleverness of a master of his craft, and what man, no matter how much in the wrong, does not consider himself much abused? In this case, he gained not only a sympathetic listener, but an ally.

Tea in his rooms perhaps,—a luncheon in some quiet and secluded restaurant to talk it over, and tongues began to wag. That wagging was more easily started than stopped. It gained momentum. Before it reached its height, Mrs. Saltus brought an action for divorce, naming her one-time friend as one of the co-respondents. Willing to agree to the divorce, provided the name of the girl was omitted, Mr. Saltus struck the first opposition of his life. Bitter over her friend's "taking ways",—forgetting[Pg 58]perhaps that even in court circles the American habit of souvenir hunting had become the fashion,—she may have thought a husband superior to a bit of stone from an historic ruin, or a piece of silver from a sanctuary. Possibly in those days they were.

Many years later, when asked by Mr. Saltus as a joke, what I would do, in case some woman lured him from our fireside, I read him the account of a Denver woman, who, hearing that her husband was about to elope with his typist, appeared at the office. She was on the lookout for bargains. Facing the offenders she agreed to let them go in peace with her blessing, if the typist would promise to provide her with a new hat. Hats were scarce and expensive. Husbands, cheap and plentiful, were not much in exchange. Commenting on it the paper said, "The woman who got the hat, was in luck."

This episode and the newspaper article about it occurring many years later, there was nothing to suggest the idea to the first incumbent. Besides, being the daughter of a many[Pg 59]times millionaire, she was probably well supplied with hats.

At this time, Edgar Saltus was at the height of his fame. The newspapers reeked with the scandal. There were editions after editions in which his name appeared in large type. To protect the name of the alleged co-respondent Mr. Saltus fought tooth and nail. However much he had been at fault in his treatment of Helen Read, his intentions now were to be chivalrous in the extreme, to protect the girl who had been dragged into such a maelstrom.

Every witticism he had sent out was used against him. His amusing reply "God", spoken of previously, became a boomerang. Having once been asked what books had helped him most, he replied "My own." From that joke a colossus of conceit arose.

The history of that suit was so written up and down and then rewritten, as to be boring in the extreme. After a great deal of delay, of mud-throwing, and heart-breaking, the name of her one-time friend having been withdrawn,[Pg 60]and all suggestion of indiscretion retracted, a divorce was given to Helen Read. She was a free woman again,—free to forget, if she could, the hectic experience of marriage with a man fundamentally different from those who had entered her life.

After the divorce Mr. Saltus threw himself into his work. "Mme. Sapphira" was the immediate result. Aimed at his first wife, in an attempt to vindicate himself,—with a thin plot, and written as it was with a purpose, it not only failed to interest, but reacted rather unpleasantly upon himself. His object in writing it was too obvious.

It was his custom in those days to begin writing immediately after his coffee in the morning. That alone constituted his breakfast,—a pot of coffee and a large pitcher of milk, with a roll or two or a few thin slices of toast. Cream and sugar he detested. Accustomed to this breakfast during his life abroad, it was a habit he never changed. The same breakfast[Pg 61]in the same proportions, was served to him until his last day.

Writing continuously until about two p. m., he would stop for a bite, and then go at it again until four. Hating routine and regularity above all things, his copy alone was excepted. It was his habit to write a book in the rough, jotting down the main facts and the dialogue. The next writing put it into readable form, and on this second he always worked the hardest, transforming sentences into graceful transitions,—interjecting epigrams, witticisms and clever dialogue, and penetrating the whole with his personality. The third writing (and he never wrote a book less than three times) gave it its final coat of varnish. Burnishing the finished product with untiring skill, it scintillated at last.

Poetry came more easily to him than prose. He had to school himself at first to avoid falling into it. On his knees before the spirit of Flaubert, he pruned and polished his work.

At four, it was his custom to go for a walk[Pg 62]Never interested in sports,—walking only because he recognized the necessity for keeping himself in physical trim, it was Spartan for him to do something he disliked, and to keep on doing it. Pride kept him on the job. The "Pocket Apollo" could not let himself go the way of least resistance. Shortly before this time his brother Frank, who, at the last, had become a physical wreck, had passed on. Outwardly this appeared to affect Mr. Saltus but little. In reality it touched the vital center of his hidden self. A photograph of Frank Saltus on a Shetland pony, against which the child Edgar was leaning, hung in the latter's room forever after. The likeness between them is striking. It is the only picture extant of Frank as a child.

Not long after the divorce, and while he was still much in the limelight, Mr. Saltus met at a dinner party a married woman,—a Mrs. A——. Well known, wealthy, once divorced and the heroine of many romances, she took[Pg 63]one look at the "Pocket Apollo", and decided that she had met her fate.

During this time Mr. Saltus had become engaged to Miss Elsie Smith, a talented, charming and high-bred girl belonging to one of the oldest New York families, and expecting to marry her the following year, he was not seeking an affair. Seeking or not the affair followed him, and was the cause, indirect but unmistakable, of the wrecking of what might have been a happy life with his second wife. Quoting Mr. Saltus, it began in this way.

The day after the dinner, while serving tea in his rooms to his fiancée, a knock came at the door. That was unprecedented. No one was better barricaded against intrusion than he. Not only were lift men and bell boys well paid, but instructed in a law more drastic than that of the Medes and Persians. It was to the effect, that the people he wanted to see he would arrange to have reach him. Others who called,—no matter whom or what their errand—were to be told that he was in conference with[Pg 64]an Archbishop. If they still persisted, they were to be told that he was dead.

This fancy of his continued throughout life, as attendants in the Arizona Apartments must well remember. Nothing angered him more than infringement of these rules. Unless summoned, no servant—no matter what the occasion—dared to approach him.

By what guile, subterfuge or bribe Mrs. A—— had turned the trick, Mr. Saltus had forgotten. After repeated knocking he decided to go to the door, which he did, with hell-fire in his eyes, as his fiancée stepped behind a portiere.

Determined to throttle the intruder he flung open the door. Cool and fresh as a gardenia Mrs. A—— walked in. It was an awkward moment. In that instant he no doubt remembered some of the careless compliments of the night before. Going up to him, Mrs. A—— looked into his eyes and said:—

"I love you, and I have come to tell you of it. Dine with me tonight."[Pg 65]

That was more awkward still. Even his ingenuity was taxed. Kissing her hand, telling her that she had dragged him from the heroine of a novel so abruptly that he was not normal, and promising to dine with her that evening, he bowed her out. No one else could have managed it so cleverly.

The lady of the first part then reappearing he laughed. Telling her that his promise to Mrs. A—— was the only way of sending her off, he sat down at once and wrote her a letter, saying that it would be impossible for him to dine with her after all. This he gave to his fiancée, asking her to send it by a messenger on her way home.

It was well done. Knowing that his mail was bursting with letters from love-sick women,—knowing also that no scrap-book, however large, could hold the letters, locks of hair and photographs, that poured in on him daily, and accepting it as a part of a literary man's life,—she accepted this as well. They laughed over the episode and brushed it aside.[Pg 66]

As a matter of fact Mr. Saltus played fair. He did not go to dine, but as soon as he was alone, he sent another note less formal than the first, asking Mrs. A—— to return the former note unopened, and saying that though dinner was impossible, he would give himself the pleasure of calling afterward.

This he did, and it turned the scales of his life. Questioned next day by his fiancée as to whether or not he had changed his mind and gone to dinner, he denied it vigorously. After that both ladies were invited for tea, great care being taken, however, that they should never meet again.

The following summer Mrs. A—— with a party of friends went abroad. Mr. Saltus joined them, safe in the knowledge that his fiancée was away with her family, where, being decidedly persona non grata, he could not be expected to follow. The summer passed and again he joined Mrs. A—— and her friends in Cuba. Spring saw him in New York again.[Pg 67]A year had elapsed, during which he saw his fiancée occasionally and Mrs. A—— often.

From two letters written by Mrs. A——, which, used as book-marks, were found between the leaves of an old novel after Mr. Saltus' death, a love that counted no cost—passionate and paralyzing—oozes from the pages. "How could I live if you should cease to love me?" was asked again and again.

Cease he did, however. There are those so constituted that they can drift out of an affair so gradually that it is over without any perceptible transition. It was that way with Edgar Saltus. Mercurial to a degree, easily put off by something so slight no one else would have been susceptible to it, when he was done—he was done. As he himself expressed it, he could not "relight a burnt-out cigar."

That affair over, he remembered the ring he had given and the girl to whom he was engaged. In spite of living in a social world poles apart from Mrs. A——, and in spite of absence and travel, rumors of the affair had[Pg 68]filtered to his fiancée. Straightforward herself, scorning subterfuge as weakness, she asked him to tell her the truth. With righteous indignation Mr. Saltus denied it in toto, declaring it was an invention intended to discredit him in her eyes. It was in this that he made the mistake of his life.

Talking it over with me years afterward, he admitted that had he told her the truth, loving him as she did, she would probably in the end have forgiven him. It was the streak of fear—fear of a moment's unpleasantness, which he might have faced then and there and surmounted—which was his undoing. Taking the easiest way for the time being, he reiterated his denials.

In glancing over the scenario of Edgar Saltus' life, this act, at the pinnacle of his popularity and fame, may in the region behind effects have set in motion forces which tore the peplum of popularity from him, and in spite of his genius pushed him into semi-obscurity at the last.[Pg 69]

His denials accepted, and there being no reason for delay, he married Elsie Smith in Paris in 1895. It should have been a happy marriage, the two having sufficient in common and neither being in their first youth. Its rapid failure is therefore all the more pathetic.

Going from Paris to the south of France, the first mishap was that of breaking his ankle. Unable to stand pain, Mr. Saltus fainted three times while it was being set. That rather disgusted his wife. This accident led to their first misunderstanding, when, in answering a telegram from Mrs. Saltus Sr., news of the accident was excluded. Unwilling to hear anything of an unpleasant nature himself, Mr. Saltus was equally unwilling to tell any one he loved of a disagreeable episode. The memory of his early life and training was at the bottom of this, and from one aspect it was a most lovable quality.

Asked by Mr. Saltus why she had spoken of the accident, his wife replied that she had but told the truth. At this Mr. Saltus flew into[Pg 70]a rage, declaring, as he used to put in his copy, "Truth must be pleasant, or else withheld."

The incident was slight, but that which followed was not so. He being unable because of his ankle to get about freely, and wanting some cigarettes from a trunk, Mrs. Saltus volunteered to get them. She got the shock and surprise of her life as well. Carelessness over his personal effects was a characteristic of Mr. Saltus'. That carelessness was his undoing upon this occasion. Beside the cigarettes lay a letter from Mrs. A——. His wife read it. There and then she knew she had married him as the result of a fabrication. A scene followed. Furious at his detection, Mr. Saltus upbraided her for reading a letter not intended for her eyes. It was the beginning of the end.

In one of Mr. Saltus' note books is the copy of a letter sent to his wife shortly after the episode:

Elsie:—

To be quite candid with you I cannot be candid. I cannot write to you as I used to do.[Pg 71]I no longer know what you will keep to yourself, what you will repeat, nor yet how you will distort my words. The flow of confidence is checked. An artery has been severed.... If reading has given you any idea of what a battle is, you will remember that in the excitement of danger men may be shot and slashed and not notice their wounds until the fight is at an end.

Not until I got here did I realize what you had done in telling your mother you had married me under compulsion. Then I discovered that during the fight which I had entered single handed for your sake, I had been shot—shot from behind, shot by you.

There has been a great change in the weather, from being very hot it has become quite cool. I hope you are well and enjoying yourself.

As ever,

E. S.

The letter speaks for itself. In the same note book are entries made during the same time:[Pg 72]—

May 3rd, 1896.

Problem:—"Which is harder; for a woman to live under the same roof with a man whom she detests, or for a man to live under the same roof with a woman who detests him?"

"Every day she invents some new way of being disagreeable."

"Love should have but one punishment for the wrongdoer,—that is, forgiveness."

"Injuries are writ in iron,—kindnesses scrawled in sand."

Again November 13th.

"Elsie having told me:—

1. That I can ask nothing of her.

2. That her affairs are no concern of mine.

3. That hereafter she will give no orders for me:

We lead separate lives,—but into my life I open windows. Against her own she closes doors."

One cannot at this day know or judge the inner ethics of it all. Mr. Saltus' side only has been poured into my ears. One thing, however,[Pg 73]is certain. Mrs. Saltus, who suffered deeply at his hands, considered herself more than justified in all that she did.

The fool blames others for the tragedies of life. The sage blames no one. He knows that everything which happens is but the result of causes beyond his control. He learns from suffering and defeat. With Epictetus he says "We should wish things to be as they are."

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CHAPTER V

Returning to the United States with his wife, Edgar Saltus took an apartment in the Florence in East 18th street, where, on an upper floor, his mother had lived for some time. Though their relations were strained to the breaking point, a link held them. Mrs. Saltus expected to become a mother in the autumn of 1897.

It was at this juncture that Mr. Saltus thought of journalism. His popularity as a novelist as well as his exchequer had dwindled. This was directly due to his divorce, the fighting of which had been expensive both in coin and character. Journalism held out a hand. A literary man should, he believed, be able to tackle anything with his pen.

The New York Journal, as the American was then called, gave him his first assignment. It was to go to Sing Sing prison and, seeing a[Pg 75]murderer electrocuted, write it up from his unique angle. That, for a man who could not hear about a cut finger without shuddering! It might have been a knock-out the first day. All night he fought with himself. To refuse the first assignment meant having the door of journalism shut in his face. To go and faint at the sight, might mean worse.

With characteristic ingenuity he mapped out a plan. "Go to Sing Sing prison? With pleasure." Imagination being one of his greatest assets, he sat up all night picturing and then writing the scene, taking a new slant on it, peppering his copy with witticism and metaphors; and the work was done. One might suppose he had supped on electrocutions.

Stuffing the copy in his pocket he went,—went to the death house, and in spite of his trembling legs, went with the officials near the chair itself. Then he closed his eyes. Next morning his article appeared, the editor complimenting him; "Edgar Saltus only could have seen so much in so little," he said.[Pg 76]

Thereafter he was launched as a journalist, writing Sunday specials almost continuously. With this, and with Collier's Weekly, for which he edited a column called The Note Book, and a history which he was compiling for Collier's also, Mr. Saltus' working hours were ten out of the twenty-four, and his output greater than at any time since he had flowered into print.

Working continuously when indoors, taking his meals at the old Everett House, then on the upper corner of Union Square, he lived in a world of his own, accepting things as they were.

Writing of him at that time Town Topics said:—

"Time deals gently with Edgar Saltus. In spite of his arduous literary labours he is the same Edgar he was fifteen years ago. Slick, dark, jaunty. He has not taken on flesh and preserves the slim youthful shape of years ago. Tripping up the Avenue a day or two ago in his new straw hat and blue serge suit it was[Pg 77]hard to believe that he was not a summer man of this year's vintage. How does he do it? Concerning his work a pretty woman once said to him, 'Mr. Saltus, I never know what construction to put on your books.' 'Put the worst,' was the author's reply."

The following summers he spent with his mother at Narragansett Pier. Second only to Newport in that day, it was a most fashionable resort. Smartness and beauty vied with each other not only in Sherry's Casino but in the large hotels which no longer exist. The smart set absent from

Newport were to be found at the Pier. Bar Harbor excepted, there was no where else to go and swim—in the swim.

At this epoch, in addition to his fame as a novelist and journalist, Mr. Saltus added that of being a Don Juan and a Casanova rolled into one, with a bit thrown in for good measure. They paled beside the reputation enveloping him. A whisper followed his footsteps. It was to the effect that not only had his first wife been glad to escape with her life but that his[Pg 78]second was but waiting the psychological moment to follow suit.

Young girls were warned against being seen with him. Elder women had to be restrained from flinging themselves in his way. When he appeared in the Casino, he at once became the center of interest. This was understandable, for he was startlingly handsome. A few years over forty,—his thick black hair parted in the center,—his chiselled features emphasized by the tilt of his head,—his small moustache twisted to a hair,—he gazed upon the world through eyes of pansy purple, which, while contemptuous, were saddened by all that he had suppressed in silence. Slight, scrupulously turned out, a walking stick always in his hand, he stood in relief against the other men at the Pier—an Olympian in a world of mortals.

A connection of my family,—a childhood playmate of my cousins, and a companion in youth of my eldest half-brother, Mr. Saltus was hurled into my life by a huge wave. We were in bathing at the time.[Pg 79]

Spending that summer at Narragansett with my brother, happy in the vacation from school, where I misused the time for practicing music in scribbling, I imagined myself an embryonic Ouida. In the circumstances a Ouidaesque hero seemed worth bothering with.

"Here, Edgar,"—my brother caught Mr. Saltus by the arm—"disabuse this kid of the idea that she can learn to write."

Mr. Saltus turned, but a wave was quicker. It took him like a top, spinning him around and around, depositing him finally at my feet. He attempted to rise. The undertow thought otherwise. With his accustomed facetious flattery, he asked:

"What do I get for lying at the feet of a child?"

"A kick," was the reply, action following the words.

Our introduction was effected. Going up on the beach we sat down on the sand. It was a brilliant July morning.[Pg 80]

"So you think you would like to write, Bambina? Don't. Take fatherly advice. A woman's sole duty in life is to charm and do nothing. Only old scoundrels like myself should work. Behold the result."

"You were badly brought up," he was told.

"How would you have tackled the job?" he inquired.

"Taking you down would have suited me much better."

That amused him. He laughed.

"Of course. It is only from babes like you that age learns now-a-days. How is it that you are the one of your family I meet last?" He hesitated. "No—not last,—for I seem always to have remembered you. Long ago you closed a door and left me in darkness. Now you open it again and smile. You should never do anything but smile,—and yet you have—oh, I don't know what! You take me back to Rome—back and back through lives and lives—if such were true."

I hastened to reassure him.[Pg 81]

"Such things are true, surely. From the time I was able to think at all, I remembered many events from former lives. I have no recollection of knowing you, however."

"But you believe that you lived before? I'll tell you what I have never mentioned to any one. From an agnostic it would not ring true. If I have written anything which will live it is 'Imperial Purple.' The reason is simple. If there is anything in your theory at all, I lived in Rome. I was an eye-witness of the killing of Cæsar. The story of it ran off my pen. Text books were needless. I wrote as I remembered, and truth penetrates. Later I tried to write of Greece, and failed. It was mechanical. There was no subconscious memory to help me. A pretty theory,—that is all. When a bee dies it ceases to hum."

Joining my brother and myself Mr. Saltus lunched at the Casino. Later in the afternoon, overtaking us on the road with his bicycle, he joined us again. So satisfied and overbearing was his exterior, so arrogant his veneer, that it[Pg 82]was with difficulty one could penetrate it and see the over-indulged and pampered little boy, full of fun and longing to play,—sympathetic and full of sentiment, hiding the best beneath the worst,—fearful of being misunderstood,—of being his real self. Coming face to face with a little girl more pampered and self-willed even than himself gave him a shock.

That evening, a woman friend of my brother's making a fourth, we were Mr. Saltus' guests for dinner at the Casino. In those days Sherry's old Casino was a fairyland of fashion, beauty and smartness. It presented a brilliant scene at that moment.

In faultless evening clothes, his dark colouring emphasized by the expanse of shirt front, Mr. Saltus looked what he may have been,—an Oriental, trying to adapt himself to a foreign environment. He was, on the contrary, silhouetted against it.

Dinner over, my brother took his friend to watch the dancing. We were supposed to follow. At Mr. Saltus' suggestion, however, we turned[Pg 83]and went to the upper turret of the Casino. From there we stood and looked down upon the panorama below. It was an interesting sight. At tables shaded by immense coloured umbrellas made visible by multiple electric lights, the murmur of well turned out men, talking to beautiful women, rose like the hum of bees.

The orchestra, which was unusually fine, muted their violins with the plaintive strains of the Liebestod. Mr. Saltus could not tell one note from another, nor could he play on any musical instrument, but he had an ear as sensitive to the slightest discord as a composer's. The Liebestod spoke a language he understood. That language was mine also. It spoke even more clearly to me,—saturated as I had been with Wagner and the various motifs of his masterpieces since babyhood. Music moved me profoundly.

When he turned at last, it was to see tears in my eyes. He said nothing. There is that in silence which is more forceful than words.[Pg 84]That also was a language he understood. The orchestra ceased. The hum began again, but from a far distant ball-room there filtered the faint but unmistakable notes of "Love's Dream After the Ball." July twilights are long. Still silent, we watched a sky of coral and jade melt into a night spattered with stars.

A school girl, with little knowledge of men save that gleaned from Scott and Ouida, it was no wonder that at his first words I had the surprise of my life.

In true Ouidaesque style Mr. Saltus took a fold of my gown in his hand, dropped to his knees, and kissing it said:—

"All my life I have been a rudderless ship seeking harbour. Now I am home. I come a weary and sinful pilgrim to knock at the portals of paradise."

Indignant in the belief that I was considered too young to be treated as an equal,—regarding him, in spite of his extreme beauty, as too old to be thinking seriously about the future, I received his words with a blaze of[Pg 85]anger. A hasty and dignified exit was called for. That, however, was not easy to make. His back against the gate, Mr. Saltus went on talking. He said a great deal and he said it well.

Only that morning a woman sitting on the veranda of the hotel where we were stopping, had entertained the other old women who were knitting, with the recital of Mr. Saltus' life and his misdeeds. One remark constantly interjected had amused me:—

"He boasts that every novel he has written has been dug from a woman's heart."

This I threw at him like a bomb. He took it standing. He had to stand to control the gate which was the sole exit from the turret. Thereupon, and in spite of my efforts to go, he told me the story of his life in brief, pouring it out as rapidly as he could, admitting his mistakes and wrong doing,—confessing three-fold the iniquities which had been put to his discredit by the public. Carrying it up to date, he admitted that though he was under the same roof with his wife, he was not living with her,[Pg 86]and that he wanted to be free to start life over again.

"You are so young, I can almost bring you up," he said.

"Bring me up, indeed!" I exclaimed. "You will dig no experience out of my heart. The shadow of your personality shall never cloud my life." That seemed such a fine phrase at the time. Still indignant and fearful of being considered an ignorant child, I became silent. That was the way a Ouida heroine should act.

Disregarding both my silence and my resentment, Mr. Saltus went on talking:—

"I don't like your name. It means sorrow, and every Marie who has encountered the Saltus family has suffered from it. You shall be the exception. I will use the name you invented when as a baby you tried to pronounce it,—Mowgy. That is your name, and being such a pert little puss I will add that for good measure,—Mowgy-Puss. Now what animal will you attach to me?"

While speaking, Mr. Saltus had released his[Pg 87]hold on the gate. He was anxious to know what animal I would assign to him. Afterward he confessed that he had expected me to say a lion. That would have pleased him too well. Distracting his attention from the exit, I moved nearer to it. Answering "A skunk!" I emphasized it with a sudden bolt through the gate and rushed down stairs to the Casino.

An avalanche overwhelmed us there. Our absence having become prolonged, my brother, with Archibald Clavering Gunter, who warned him of my danger with every step, had searched not only the Casino but the sands. There was a heated scene. The friendship of years snapped like a wish-bone, and I was dragged back to the hotel.

There it might have ended,—would probably have ended, and the biography of Edgar Saltus have fallen into other hands than mine to write, but well-intentioned friends and relatives assisted things so super-abundantly, that what might have died a natural death took on new life and flourished.[Pg 88]

Forbidden to speak to Mr. Saltus under penalty of being sent home to my father, it became at once an interesting romance. The following morning there was not a dowager in the hotel unacquainted with my misdeed, and none omitted to add their warning and advice. Hearing of the adventure, and that I was taking a land-slide to perdition and was hell-bent, friends called to warn and save me. Dear old Gunter with genuine kindness of heart came also.

"I am a very busy man just now," he said, "but if you are determined to learn how to write, and will wait till I get this novel off my mind, I will take you in hand and see what I can make of you."

Everyone did their duty. The only one not offering advice was the hotel cat. Not permitted for a moment to leave my brother's side I seemed safe and secure. It was all in the seeming, for Mr. Saltus was a very ingenious man. The early afternoon papers from New York used to reach the Pier about three, boys taking them to all the hotels on the front. One stopped[Pg 89]at ours. We were sitting on the veranda at the time, my brother buying a paper as usual. With a knowing wink the newsboy shoved another into my hand. While every one else was reading I unfolded it. A note from Mr. Saltus fell out. It suggested that after I was supposed to be in bed that evening, I slip out, go down a back staircase and meet the writer at a place on the beach he designated. It was urgent. It was more. It suggested that if I did not appear he would drink himself into delirium, and then come to the hotel and have it out with my brother.

Youth is credulous. I met him at the place suggested. After that the newsboy served as a postman. Letters came and went. There was a thrill in doing it under their noses. It came out at last, however. I was returned to my father minus a character and the family warned to watch me very closely.

So fate went on weaving its web, and the karmic links of anterior lives reached out, binding our destiny.

[Pg 90]

CHAPTER VI

Autumn came, and the paw of the tiger that destiny is, reached out. It was a paw of velvet, however. I was called to the telephone one afternoon to speak to my violin teacher. Such a call was not unexpected. It had all been arranged beforehand, and it was Mr. Saltus saying "Hello!" None of the family had seen my violin teacher or heard his voice. All they knew was that I practiced many hours a day. The arrangement worked to perfection. If I went off for my lessons a little earlier than necessary, it was unnoticed. The bicycle was useful also, being considered a healthful and needed exercise. I was encouraged to ride every afternoon, and Mr. Saltus and I would meet on the Riverside for a chat.

Barring his little daughter, Elsie, of whom Mr. Saltus was exceedingly fond, he made no mention of his family life, nor did I. This was[Pg 91]in pre-flapper days. The world was very old-fashioned. Bachelor girls and the rights of the individual were not talked about, or even thought of. Strange as it may seem in this emancipated era, any friendship between a married man and a young girl was looked upon not only as disgraceful, but impossible.

We talked it over. Realizing that while he remained under the roof with his wife, he owed her more than he could ever pay, realizing too that any indiscretion of mine must react upon a greatly beloved father, I closed the episode—or thought I had.

Within a few days after this Mrs. Francis Henry Saltus, Mr. Saltus' mother, called and invited me to tea at her home. There, at least, one would be free from censure. Other invitations followed and were accepted.

If there was a being on earth whom Mr. Saltus truly loved it was his mother. His deference to her and his solicitude for her were beautiful. It would have been tragic otherwise, considering how her entire life had been[Pg 92]devoted to him. He was her little boy even then,—naughty, perhaps, but her idol. As a matter of fact his mother understood him as little as others did. Love, however, is somewhat psychic. She never took his atheism seriously. Many a time she would interrupt some of his remarks to say:—

"This is not the real Edgar. It may take time, but he will come out of it all at the last."

Mr. Saltus often referred to this when, as she predicted, he did "come out of it."

So frequently was I a guest in his mother's drawing-room that it was difficult for my family to debar Mr. Saltus from our home. His interest in my father's library being accepted as evidence of his fitness, he was permitted to call. Better, they thought, for me to receive him under their roof than meet in secret, where unpleasant construction might be put upon it.

Like the proverbial camel, his nose once safely in the tent of the enemy, the rest followed. He was accepted as a friend of the family.[Pg 93]

No one could enjoy a joke more readily than Mr. Saltus' mother. Quick-witted, clever at repartee, she was delighted when any one had the temerity to brave her son and give him back tit for tat. While I was having tea with them one afternoon Mr. Saltus outlined what he thought should be my study for the next few months, ending with the remark that a slip of a girl did not know what was good for her.

Unhesitatingly came the reply—"A slip will not be instructed by a snip."

Mr. Saltus was slightly undersized for a man. The remark rather hurt him, but his mother burst into a laugh. From that day until his death he was Snipps or Snippsy to me always. So fond did he become of the name that he used it almost entirely when writing or speaking of himself. Upon occasions, when annoyed at something he did I used the name of Edgar, he was hurt and indignant and could not be himself again until the other name was restored. Adopting from me a child language I always used with my pets he would say:[Pg 94]—

"I be a good Snipps! (imitating a dog begging); I'm old dog Tray—ever faithful."

"Associating with a child has put you back where you belong," his mother once said to him. "You are nothing but a bad little boy, grown up."

Strangely enough, it was not so much a romantic attachment as fundamental qualities in common, that made possible the bond between a young girl and a middle-aged man. In meeting a temperament like his own, but in exaggerated form, it meant not only a common language, but an uncommon thing on his part,—that of revealing to himself his high-strung nervous excitability and absent-mindedness in the mirror of those qualities in another. In attempting to soothe the nerves of another, he forgot his own. In remembering to pick up handkerchiefs, gloves and purses, dropped under chairs and tables and forgotten, he gradually began to look after and take care of another even more helpless in that respect than himself.

With a girl, never popular at school, because[Pg 95]of her desire for silence and solitude, having more interest in reading than in games, he felt himself to be absolutely at home. As I was looked upon as abnormal and unnatural even by my family, the understanding and sympathy of such a brilliant man, with a wealth of information on every subject under heaven at his finger-tips, turned him into my Alma Mater.

About this time an incident occurred which was not only characteristic of Mr. Saltus' weakest side, but so far-reaching in its effects that no biography would be complete without it.

Admiring letters from women were his daily diet. As a rule he ignored them. At one time I started to make a scrap-book of them for him, calling it The Dollymops Daily. When a week or so would go by without bringing in a fresh batch of them, Mr. Saltus was told that his stock was going down and that he should have a care to his moustache.

Among these letters was one from England, from a Dorothy S——. With it was the photograph of a high-bred and pretty girl. Her[Pg 96]letter was different from the average one. Mr. Saltus answered it, and a correspondence began between them. Knowing of him only through his stories and articles in the newspapers, in ignorance that he was not only a married man but a father as well, she assumed that he was neither, and she wrote him to the effect that she was sure he was her affinity, and all the rest of it.

That was the time to have eased off, but Mr. Saltus did not. Her letters interested him. She was too far away to cause him inconvenience, for the moment at least, and material for stories might result.

Answering again he brushed aside the possibility of future unpleasantness, and sent her an inexpensive ring. The girl took this very seriously. Replying to his vague compliments, she formally accepted him and sent him a ring in return, which he brought up to me as a joke.

Vainly was he blackjacked and scarified by me in her behalf. The affair amused him. Having let her assume that he was an unmarried[Pg 97]man, he would not face the momentary unpleasantness of writing her the truth and putting the matter straight, at the price of a little humiliation.

Horrified, however, at the way she had taken it, and fearing possible results, he wrote to her saying that he was en route to South America on an assignment for a newspaper, and hoped it would end there. Far from it. After several unanswered letters, the girl's mother, having ascertained in some way that he was still in New York, sent him a note by registered mail telling him that her daughter, always delicate, had gone utterly to pieces over his silence, and asking the reason of it.

The more involved it became the less inclined was Mr. Saltus to face it, confess the truth and admit that he had replied for amusement only. No amount of hammering at him could make him realize that he was playing with the affections of a human being who might suffer in consequence. It had been only a diversion to him. He could not see why it[Pg 98]should not be the same to her. Weeks passed. Another letter from the mother saying that the girl had gone into rapid tuberculosis and was in the south of France, again urged him to write her. This last appeal sent Mr. Saltus almost into a fit.

"For God's sake tell the truth and have it over with," he was urged again and again. It seemed to be beyond him. What he had begun only as an amusement, without a thought of harm, had developed into a monster waiting to devour him.

When he finally answered the letter it was to say that he was in the bankruptcy court, utterly penniless, and, in the circumstances, thought it best to drop out of her life.

"Now," he said, "they will not think me worth following up."

After that the letters ceased and he heard nothing more, and it was several years before the dénouement occurred.

On the heels of this episode came a crushing grief. Mrs. Francis Henry Saltus, Mr. Saltus'[Pg 99]mother, died, very suddenly. The shock stunned him. It took him into a realm hitherto unknown—even unthought of, and it was long before he could readjust himself to life.

Even in his grief his strong strain of indifference to values, custom or common-sense kept to the fore. From the pot-pourri of his deep love for his mother, lack of attachment to material things, united with oriental atavism—he insisted that the body of his mother be buried with all her large and valuable jewels upon it, as the Egyptians surrounded the Ka with all the trappings and trifles of life.

There is no danger in giving out this fact. The exact spot where Mrs. Saltus is buried (unmarked by a stone, for Mr. Saltus did not believe in such things) is known only to myself and to the cemetery authorities. It is some little distance from the cemetery in which the ashes of her son now rest. Unfortunate it is, that one he loved so deeply could not have been buried in the same plot.

From the shock of this death Mr. Saltus'[Pg 100]health went to pieces, and the following spring saw him off to Europe. I was abroad also that year, but in another part of the continent, and it was months before we met again.

On this trip, however, Mr. Saltus made one of the few acquaintances destined to last until the end of his life. Among those at the Captain's table, and seated next to him, was a Miss G——. Young, beautiful, and belonging to one of the best families from whom Ambassadors had been chosen, nimble of tongue and optimistic of spirit, she did much to drag him from the extreme depression into which he had been submerged by his mother's passing.

Spiritual, unselfish, always thinking and doing for others, she represented a type of woman never encountered by him before. She saw the best in him and ignored the worst. To penetrate the depths of his depression, finding an agnostic hard soil to saturate, she finally persuaded him to go and consult a medium. With the open mind which Mr. Saltus always had, he agreed to do so, and, upon his return[Pg 101]to New York in the autumn, he sought out and went to a Margaret Stewart, a woman celebrated in her day as a remarkable psychic.

What she told him was rather upsetting to the firm philosophy of his life. It suggested possibilities. Not only did he receive a curiously characteristic message, purporting to come from his mother, but certain things concerning his home life and his future were predicted. These predictions included myself, and were to the effect that Mr. Saltus would ultimately be enabled to marry me and have his happiest years late in life. He lost no time in rushing up to my home with this news.

Assuming at first to "pooh-pooh" spiritualism as moonshine, his interest nevertheless increased. On the lookout for frauds, yet hoping as well to get something concrete to tie to, he went from medium to medium and from séance to séance. Critical, curious and cautious, unwilling to accept the phenomena presented, he was yet more unwilling to give up the quest.

After months of experimenting along these[Pg 102]lines, his decision, based on what he had both seen and heard, was that though the major part of it was fraudulent,—and the identity of the entity giving the message open to question,—there was proof, to his mind at least, of the persistence of personality after death. That granted, a larger question presented itself. Accepting life to be continuous, the bee did not cease to hum as he had so long affirmed. On the contrary,—the belief in reincarnation became almost a necessity. The pros and cons of this subject with all its ramifications were thrashed out. Mr. Saltus hated arguments. He would agree with any one on any subject rather than expend the energy to controvert them. On this subject, however, he reversed himself.

Reminding him of what he had told me about Rome, we talked it over from every angle. It intrigued his imagination more than any subject on earth.

It was at this time that Mrs. Saltus and himself, having lived separate lives under one roof to little purpose, disagreed further. Mr. Saltus[Pg 103]wanted her to divorce him. Thinking perhaps that she had suffered sufficiently at his hands and having had enough of matrimony, she had no desire for the divorce or for further experiments. Besides, there was the little girl—Elsie.

Loving her devotedly, although children in general bored and annoyed him beyond expression, Mr. Saltus used to quote her childish prattle with pride. A pussie cat became a 'puff-tat' because of her, and it was her tiny hands which until then had held them together.

An incident aggravating the estrangement caused Mrs. Saltus to take the little girl, and leave the apartment. Incidentally, she left his life forever. Nothing can be said to put Mr. Saltus in the right in this affair.

That wrong was not deliberate, however. He would not have harmed a hair of her head on purpose. It was the result of the one weak link in his character. As a matter of fact Mrs. Saltus had been too indulgent and forgiving. These qualities, charming in themselves, gave a[Pg 104]temperament such as his, an exaggerated latitude to develop the domineering and irritable nature inherent in him.

The wonder is not that Mrs. Saltus left him. It is that she remained so long. They never lived under the same roof again. Deciding that the moment had come to press his desire for divorce, Mr. Saltus followed,—found her and asked for it. His wife saw in it nothing desirable for her, and refused. Possibly she did not need a new hat, or had not heard of the Denver woman's method of getting it. She had agreed to his many wishes for the last time.

Moving from the Florence, Mr. Saltus took what remained of the old Italian olive-wood furniture, belonging to his early home in Seventeenth Street, and his books, and took an apartment in the Park Madison, around the corner from the Manhattan Club. This club had been a semi-home to him for years,—a general headquarters both to write in and to receive letters, and it offered quiet and good food as well.[Pg 105]

Moving on short notice, his belongings were tossed into the apartment any which way, to be put into order later,—a later which never arrived. With a few books in book-cases and more piled in various corners of the living-room, the latter semi-covered by draperies which were never put to use again, and various pieces of clothing he did not need on top of this, he started in to create a new atmosphere in which to work.

The apartment was small and his furniture was massive. The vital essential was there however, for it faced the south and he had the sun all day. Permitting the maids only to make up his bed,—forbidding them under the most direful threats to attempt any cleaning or dusting of the place, lest some valuable paper or manuscript be lost or mislaid, he managed 'By the grace of God,' as he himself expressed it, to get on somehow.

Though only a step away from the Manhattan Club, few knew where he lived. In later years, with the same desire to conceal his residence,[Pg 106]lest some one invade his privacy, he gave the Park Madison, 25 Madison Avenue, as his address. The building had been torn down then, so he was safe in giving it, and no one but those he chose to tell had the faintest idea where he lived. Door-men and bell boys of the Park Madison were bribed and threatened as before, never to let any one into his apartment or even to admit that he lived there. No hermit could have enjoyed better seclusion.

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CHAPTER VII

The material for "Historia Amoris" having been put into shape for use, Mr. Saltus began to study along a new line. Puzzled and confused as to what he really believed, he agreed to study the sacred books of the East. None were omitted,—the Zend-Avesta, the Upanishads, the Vedas, the Mahabharata—with its jewel the Bhagavad-Gitâ,—the Egyptian Book of the Dead,—the Talmud and the Koran.

Between their leaves he found a new world. Thereafter he was forever digging for jewels,—which when found dazzled him with their beauty. With the enthusiasm Balboa may have felt at discovering an unknown ocean, Mr. Saltus went up the heights to the Garden of God, steeping himself in the perfume of occult and esoteric lore. Subconsciously, he had found food for his soul.

Rushing uptown to my home he would explain as soon as admitted:[Pg 108]

"I have unearthed a gem. Listen."

Then the ideas and ideals of beauty I had so often put before him were handed back to me. Seeing them in print had made them real and impersonal. The Gitâ, which hitherto he had but dimly and imperfectly understood, after that epitomized the double-distilled wisdom of the world to him.

One phrase from the Egyptian Book of the Dead moved him profoundly and made him think along a new line. It referred to the soul in the Court of Amenti, pleading for admission to the heaven world. "I have not talked abundantly. I have not been anxious. I have harmed no heart. No one have I made weep." The last phrase cut.

"Pre-suppose," he would say, "that your dream of reincarnation is true. My God! What a debt would confront me next life! I hope it is all a myth."

It was at this time that the effects of his careless letters to the English girl came home with a shock. Rushing up to my house one evening,[Pg 109]white and shaken with emotion, he said that a young man had called to see him at the Manhattan Club, just as he was finishing dinner. After introducing himself as a brother of Dorothy S——, he told Mr. Saltus that the girl had, after his last letter, gone into a decline and died. He himself was not only ill, but in want, with a wife to take care of. After exhausting every effort to get employment in the States, he had reluctantly turned to the man he considered an enemy with a debt to pay.

Mr. Saltus was horrified. Put on the rack by me in no uncertain fashion,—realizing at last that what had been play to him had been a tragedy to another, he found that phrase from the Book of the Dead repeating itself. Like an embodied thing it walked by his side during the day and sat on his pillow at night, whispering in his ear during the hours of darkness, "Behold me! I am your work."

Needless to say that the brother and wife were looked after not alone by him, but by my family as well. Scourged by the episode[Pg 110]Mr. Saltus suffered keenly. I suggested to him after a time, more or less with a view to lift his mind from depression, that I would assist him in selecting and condensing notes on the vital points of the sacred books of the East. Mr. Saltus decided that he could compress them into a single volume. "The Lords of the Ghostland" was created in the world of thought. The actual writing of it took a comparatively short time. The preparation and condensing of the material spread over years.

Among Mr. Saltus' peculiarities was an almost prenatal fear of dogs. His mother had been terrified at them, and his childhood had been spent not only without pets of any kind, but filled with fear of them. As he grew older he became rather fond of cats, but the dog complex remained. Cats could be patted, petted and put down. Dogs on the contrary growled, and had been known to bite,—it being somewhat uncertain whether they would do one or the other—or both.

When taking his walks Mr. Saltus would go[Pg 111]to the extreme edge of the sidewalk to avoid a dog, if happening to be alone he had no one to interpose between him and it. Argument on the subject was useless. There was but one way of reaching him effectively. This was to ignore his fears and act as though they did not exist.

Our house was never without pets, nor were they confined to any particular spot. Drawing-room chairs were theirs or not as they fancied, and wagging tails greeted the incoming guests. No exception was made of Mr. Saltus, and no pet put aside to make place for a pampered human. When he came, he had to take things as he found them, pets included.

When I was taking a dip into Eliphas Levi, the phrase "Libertines love cats" jumped from the page. The ammunition was too good to be lost. Every time his fear of dogs cropped out, this quotation was hurled at him like a bomb. It did its work most effectively. Timidly and reluctantly at first, Mr. Saltus began to make overtures. The dogs, with unerring instinct scenting his concealed antagonism, refused to[Pg 112]be friends. That hurt more than a little, but it helped. The substratum of his early training began to crumble as his interest in animals and occultism increased.

Taking a phrase from the Book of the Dead, Mr. Saltus decided on the euphonious title "Lords of the Ghostland." The writing of that volume marked his transition from materialism to the realization that there were higher realms of thought as yet unexplored by him. The new book was building up on the ruins.

At the time he began writing the book I went abroad.

Believing that upon his taking the initiative and seeking a divorce, Mrs. Saltus would strike back and secure it herself, Mr. Saltus brought a suit against her, asking at the same time for the custody of his little daughter. This act being looked upon with disapproval by my family, and his friendship as more dangerous than dynamite, the ocean was hailed as a splendid moat between a skilled sheik and a young girl. It meant another summer abroad for me.[Pg 113]

Mr. Saltus was in a state of collapse and despair. He could neither work nor sit still.

"The anchor of my life is being torn up," he exclaimed. "I cannot go on and live."

During the time which had elapsed since the summer in Narragansett Pier he had drifted away a great deal from his old friends. Barring Miss G——, with whom he dined every Sunday and saw frequently, Bob Davis, who was too busy to give him much time, and James Huneker were his only friends. The influence of Miss G—— had done much to make Mr. Saltus' viewpoint on life happier. She enjoyed the stimulus of his mind, and with unselfish kindness she introduced him to those who could further his interests and made her home a place where he could bring his mending and his difficulties. Her atmosphere was one of peace, and he sorely needed it.

That atmosphere was lacking in my home. Tolerated only because he was regarded as less dangerous within than without, he was offered neither meals nor mending. From me he[Pg 114]received not peace but the sword, and that sharpened and thrust into vulnerable places. His copy was criticised, his viewpoint scorned, and his personality put under a searchlight that left him seared and shaken.

In spite of all this the diet must have been full of vitamines, for he was loth to relinquish it. As he himself used to put it, "Many of the prisoners released from the Bastile returned there of their own free will, so wretched were they in a world to which they had become unaccustomed."

The fact that I was really going abroad staggered him. Imitating a cat I had at the time, he walked about the drawing-room exclaiming, "Miaw! Wow! Wow! Poor Snippsy goes crazy. Oh Wowsy wee! Wowsy wee!" To be wowsy was the last word of sadness in the vernacular of cats.

His suit for divorce failed. Mrs. Saltus, obviously aware of his motives, saw no reason to fall in with them, and the attempt was not calculated to reflect credit on himself. The newspapers[Pg 115]were none too kind. Any man who tries to divorce his wife is unpopular. Neither fish nor fowl, married nor free, his position was an ambiguous one, calculated to involve others in possible complications. Friends were not backward in throwing the worst light and the blackest possibilities upon the screen.

This was in 1903. In those old days children did not bring up their parents in the way they do now,—taking the center of the floor and holding forth on their right to go to the devil in the way which pleases them best. Young girls were supposed to skim lightly over the friendship of quasi-married men. Extraordinary as it may seem in these days, it was not considered proper at all. That prejudice was shared by my family.

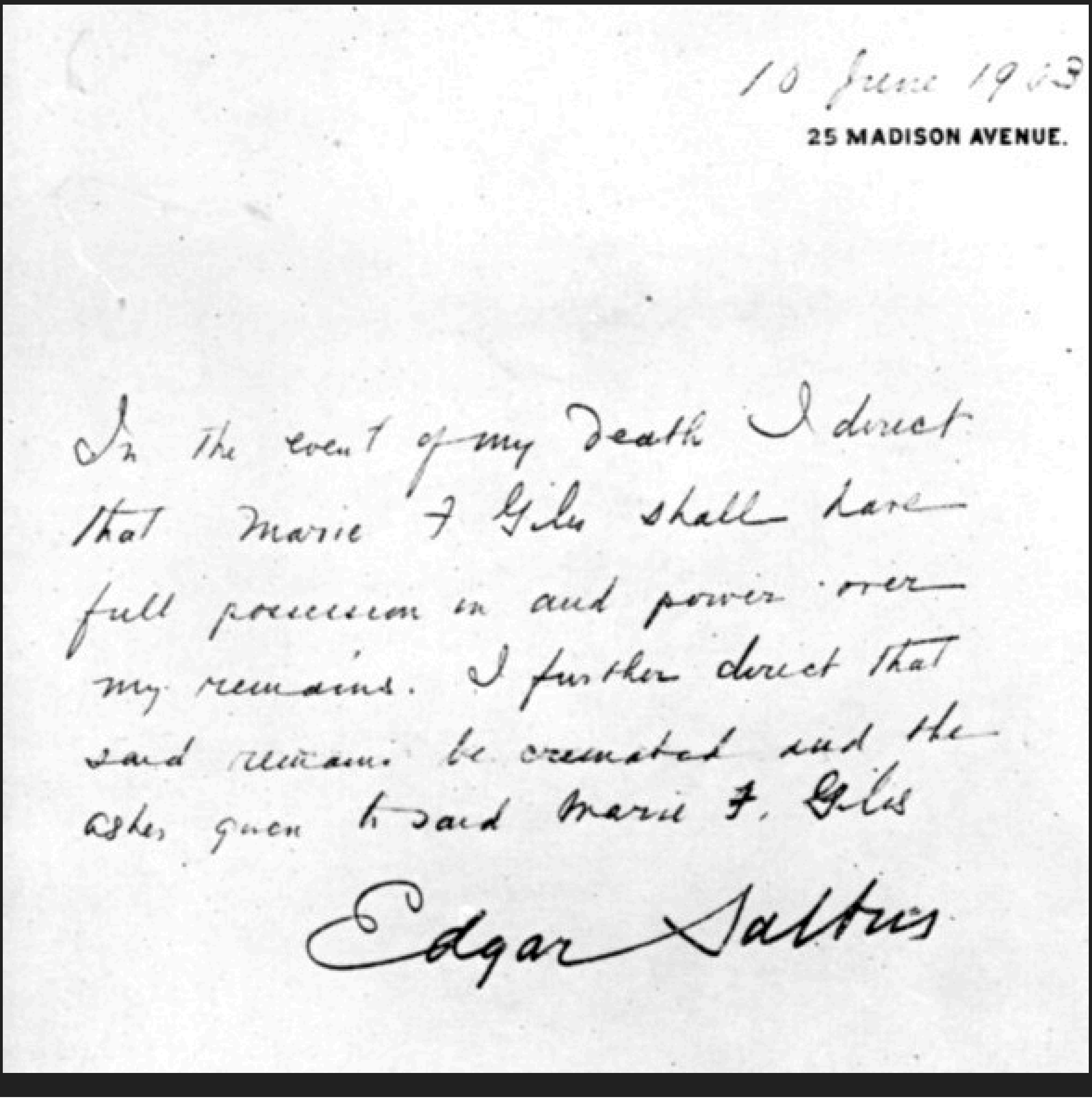
Coming to the house the evening before I sailed, so unnerved that he could not speak for tears, Mr. Saltus put a sheet of paper in my hands. So unusual was it that the original is reproduced on the next page. It read:[Pg 116]—

25 Madison Avenue.

In the event of my death I direct that Marie F. Giles shall have full possession in, and power over, my remains. I further direct that said remains be cremated, and the ashes given to the said Marie F. Giles.

(Signed) EDGAR SALTUS.

"There," he said, "I have written this in triplicate. One copy is in the Trust Company, and one in the hands of my attorney. It is like death—like dying rather, to have you where I cannot hear your voice. If I survive, it will be because I am convinced that nothing but death can separate us. If I die—swear that you will keep my ashes and have them buried with yours. Husbands may come and go—but I am an eternal part of you."



10 June 1913
25 MADISON AVENUE.

In the event of my death I direct
that Marie F Giles shall have
full possession in and power over
my remains. I further direct that
said remains be cremated and the
ashes given to said Marie F. Giles

Edgar Saltus.

Fac-simile of Document given to Marie Saltus

[Pg 117]

The paper, combined with what he said, touched me profoundly. It seemed such a hopeless muddle. Only the belief that sorrow and adversity are the soil in which the soul grows, offered consolation, and at the time even that seemed meager. No one reaches the Land of Promise save on feet weary and blistered by scorching sand—for always it is surrounded by desert. In that emptiness and silence the ego finds the strength, poise and power to endure. We are all taken into the desert at one time or another. That alone which matters is what we bring back.

The following day Mr. Saltus was among those who saw me off. That leave-taking brought him to a realization of the verities and the non-essentials, as nothing else could have done. Letters followed like sea-gulls. They punctuated the days and haunted the nights.

My darling child:—(Mr. Saltus wrote)

It was so dear of you to have left for me a letter. To have left two. I could have kissed the postman. You are the sweetest child in the world. That is it, you see. You have made me love you so that I am helpless and hopeless without you. I am trying to be brave and work, but no Puff-tat and all work is like death.... I do so hope that you are happy though missing your Snipps a little. You won't[Pg 118]forget me—Mowgy? It would do for me if you should. There have been days without number—nights without end—when I would give everything the world can offer for a touch of your blessed hand in mine and for the sound of your angel voice, my darling.

God bless and keep you, little girl. Always I am waiting and working for you. It must not be in vain.

All my love always. Your

EDGAR.

"Lords of the Ghostland" took on shape very slowly. Mr. Saltus seemed unable to focus his mind on anything. Well he knew that the relatives with whom I was stopping abroad had lined up a lot of eligibles,—many of whom I already knew. They ranged from an Italian Prince, with a time-worn title and a moth-eaten tumble-down palace, to an English millionaire of recent vintage. They were a job lot, accumulated to offset and counteract his influence. Anchored and handicapped by a wife and child[Pg 119]and a reputation none too immaculate, he saw his position with clarity, and he wrote:—

My own darling:—

There is no little Mowgy any more. No little Puff-tat to miaw and to say 'Quicksy' when you wanted anything. I say it now. For God's sake return quicksy or poor Snipps goes under. I do so hope you are happy, but don't drink champagne or dine alone with men. Remember that you are only a child,—my child, and should anything separate us it would be as if a bullet had been put through my head. Should anything happen to me you need blame yourself only for having made me love you so absolutely. Hell has no more horrors than those in which I am groping now. If I can only get the syndicate running properly and the divorce. I have said I will yield everything but alimony.

Then, dearest, we can go to London and take the little house in Brook Street you told me of. I am ill,—too ill to work any more. Don't let anything or anybody come between us unless[Pg 120]you want my death. Others can give you everything—everything but understanding. Trust the man to whom you are the center of the universe.

Eternamente,

EDGAR.

Careful and painstaking in the writing of letters to editors and friends, Mr. Saltus invariably wrote to me on a yellow copy pad and in pencil. In twenty years the writing against the tinted background has become indistinct, but, poor as it is, a fac-simile of one of his letters will be given. The sheets on these pads were large, and as a rule his letters covered ten or twelve of them. For the sake of brevity only the shortest are quoted, and these not in full.

These letters which poured in several at a time on every steamer, rose as a smoke between the eligibles and himself, as he expected them to do. He seemed to need me so badly. Above and beyond every other sentiment he inspired was the desire not only to protect him from the outside world—that was simple—but to protect[Pg 121]him against the greater danger: himself and his weaknesses.

Disregarding the wishes and plans of those with whom I was stopping, November saw me on the Celtic en route for New York.

The following spring found things in statu quo. "Lords of the Ghostland" was no nearer completion and Mr. Saltus as far from free as before. Another European trip was arranged for me. I was to sail on the Celtic early in May. Once again Mr. Saltus was disconsolate, and as before the "wows" and lamentations began. Toward the last however he appeared to accept it with a great deal of philosophy. Among the crowd of "well wishers" at the boat with arms full of fruit, flowers, pillows and sweets, was Mr. Saltus. He had said good-bye the night before with surprising calmness. The lessons of the Gitâ seemed to have been absorbed at last.

Before any of the others left the boat, he got up, made a gracious and formal farewell and went away. That was as it should be. Family and friends were delighted to see him go.[Pg 122]

Half an hour later, as the boat was making its way down the bay, from somewhere behind my deck-chair a faint but unmistakable 'miaw' pierced the vibration of the propeller. I turned. Cap in one hand and steamer rug in the other, there stood Mr. Saltus, smiling at my bewilderment.

"I am the cat who came back," he said laughing, "and I am going to sit at your side and purr for a whole blissful week, and the future can take care of itself."

Though it carried conflict and confusion into the party with me, one cannot be ejected from a ship for effrontery. The weather was perfect, the water like glass, and the sunshine uninterrupted. Mr. Saltus was so carefree and happy that he romped and played like a child. He would attempt to hide and then jump out from an unexpected place. He pretended to lose my books and find them in queer corners. He played hide-and-seek and would run up the companion-way like a boy, saying he was going to catch me by the ankles.[Pg 123]

Upon reaching London however he found himself de trop again. From the home of Lady C——, where I was stopping, to his hotel in Victoria Street one could walk without fatigue. A taxi could make it in five minutes. With the exception however of a few formal dinners Mr. Saltus was not urged to consider himself at home there. On the contrary, he was given to understand that his presence was a decided embarrassment and that free from his influence I would probably annex one of the eligibles, who, outclassing him, he was told, in name, money and position, were always pushed to the fore.

All this he knew, but what was more important, he knew me, and the others did not. Hunting up his old rooms in Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, he re-engaged the suite he had occupied years before while writing "Mary Magdalen." Announcing that he expected to remain all summer, he put in his mornings at the British Museum studying cuneiform.

What Mr. Saltus did with his mornings did[Pg 124]not concern Lady C—— in the least. She was determined however that the balance of his time should be as harmless. Months before we had planned to spend our summer in Germany that year. In order that he should not conflict with these arrangements, a fortnight later saw us all in Homburg. For reasons of finance Mr. Saltus was unable to follow. He could write however, and he could send wires, and he did both rather continuously. After one of the eligibles joined our party he frequently wrote twice a day.

It was in Paris during the end of August, that he crossed our orbit again. We were stopping at the Elysée Palace Hotel, and he at the St. James and Albany. I had advised him of our plans in time.

However unwelcome he had been before, it was hospitality compared to the hostility he encountered then, when members of the Diplomatic Corps, King's Messengers and the younger sons of the nobility were welcomed. The absence of money and the existence of a[Pg 125]wife combined to put him in the category of undesirable things. It was an unpleasant situation all around.

To thrash it out every day was too much of a fag. It was easier to say nothing and do as one pleased, and Paris is wonderfully adapted to teas and tête-à-'têtes.

The autumn found me in London with Lady C—— again, and Mr. Saltus in his old rooms in Margaret Street once more. Sitting at the table where he had written "Mary Magdalen" he tried to work as before, but the Muse had fled.

It was during this time that he first met Mr. G. F. Monkshood, who, under the name of Hatchard, embellished Piccadilly with a fascinating and unique bookshop. Monkshood it was who had brought out a small volume called "Wit and Wisdom of Edgar Saltus." In it were compiled epigrams, phrases and quotations from all of his earlier books. The subtle compliment pleased Mr. Saltus very much. He had encountered so little appreciation. Mr. Monkshood and himself were congenial[Pg 126]souls. In the funereal shelter of the Blenheim Club they drank and dined and devoured one another. Added to his other accomplishments, Mr. Monkshood was a poet. Verses written to "The Lady of the Opals" and signed by himself have smiled for years from a scrap-book of mine.

The knowledge that he must return almost immediately to the States stupefied Mr. Saltus. He was like a man who had been sand-bagged. He could not speak of it without breaking down, and yet he had not the means to live there in idleness. He used to refer to this time as his crucifixion. We have to suffer terribly before we can learn how not to suffer at all. That lesson from the Gitâ we could see the beauty of and the necessity for, but we had not acquired it then. On the fly-leaf of "The Light of Asia" Mr. Saltus had written, however, "The swiftest beast to bear you to perfection is suffering."

The week before leaving was the hardest for him. He did not want to talk. He could not,[Pg 127]in fact. Riding on the tops of 'busses to the extreme limits of London in all directions was his only diversion. Time and again we spent a whole afternoon on one in silence.

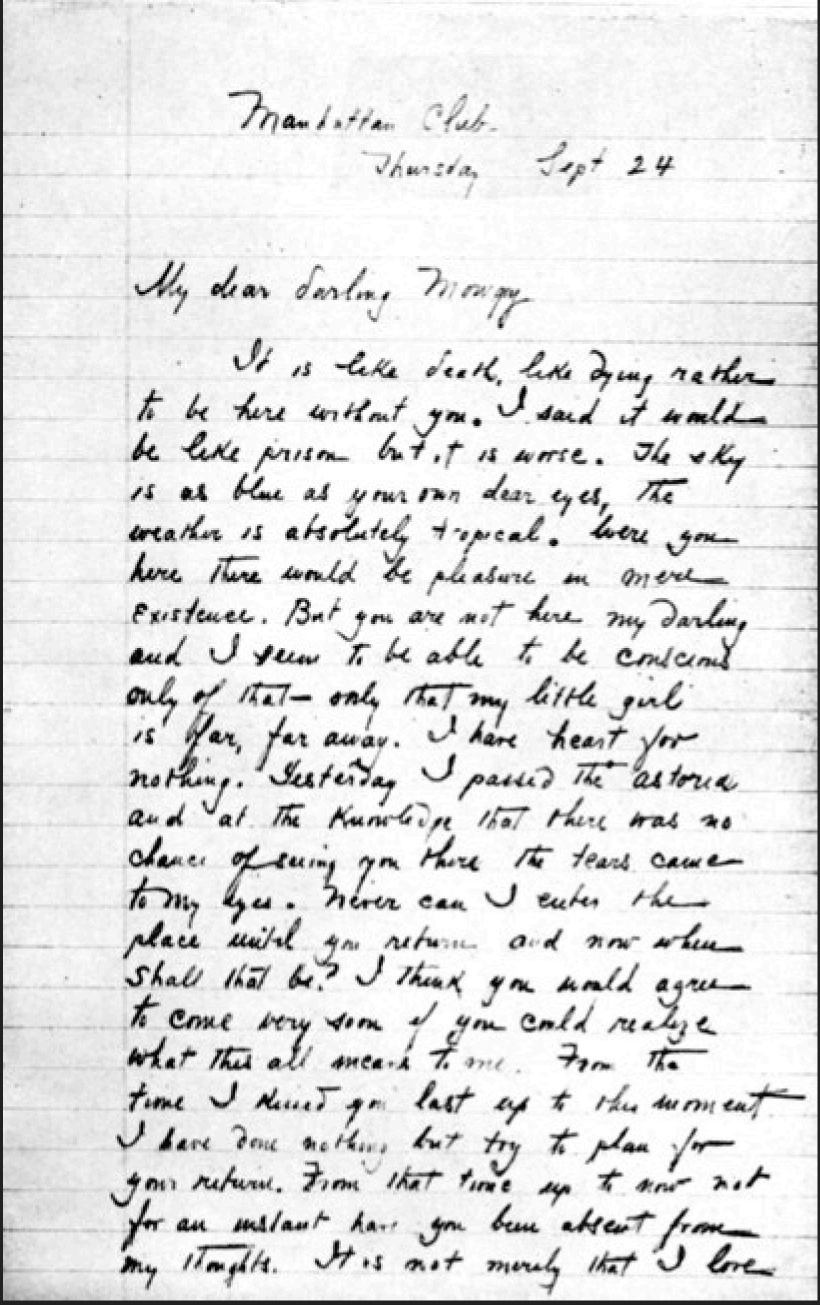
In the middle of September Mr. Saltus left for the States. When he finally got on the boat train for Southampton he was like a man starting for Siberia for life. One thing alone comforted him. I agreed to leave Lady C—— in a few weeks and take over his old rooms in Margaret Street. It seemed to him that some emanations of his personality persisted there, and he wanted to think of me in his old haunt.

Once more letters eight and ten pages long came on each steamer, and Mr. Saltus hated to write letters. Sometimes there were cables of over a hundred words. The hopelessness of it all was acute. From every angle it was going around in circles and getting nowhere. One always returned to where one left off. Disgrace—even destruction lurking on one side: on the other, the necessity for cutting him out of my life like a cancer.[Pg 128]

Upon his return he wrote:—
My dear darling Mowgy:

It is like death,—like dying, rather, to be here without you. I said it would be like prison, but it is worse. The sky is as blue as your own dear eyes. The weather is absolutely tropical. Were you here there would be pleasure in mere existence. But you are not here, my darling, and I seem to be able to be conscious only of that,—only that my little girl is far, far away. I have heart for nothing. Yesterday I passed the Astoria, and at the knowledge that there was no chance of seeing you there, tears came to my eyes. Never can I enter the place until you return, and now when will that be? I think you would agree to come very soon if you could realize what all this means to me. From the time I kissed you last up to this moment I have done nothing but plan for your return. From that time up to now, not for an instant have you been absent from my thoughts. It is not merely that I love you, dear; I cannot live without you. Do you[Pg 129]remember you asked me what I should do and how I should act were I to lose you? I told you I did not know. But, dear, I know now. It is not wholly for that reason that I want you back. It is first because I am so anxious and worried about you; second because I can do better for you here. Without you it will be as though I were dying by inches. But with you here I can work and I can win. I rather thought that I should have a line from your mother, but there was nothing. My father, by the way, who is here at the Murray Hill Hotel, will not outlive the winter, or it may be another month or two. Then, dear, in all the world I shall have not a relative,—not a tie. There will be only you. You alone, dear, whom I love alone in all the world. Come to me on the Oceanic,—cable me that you will and then not even death shall part us,

Your EDGAR.

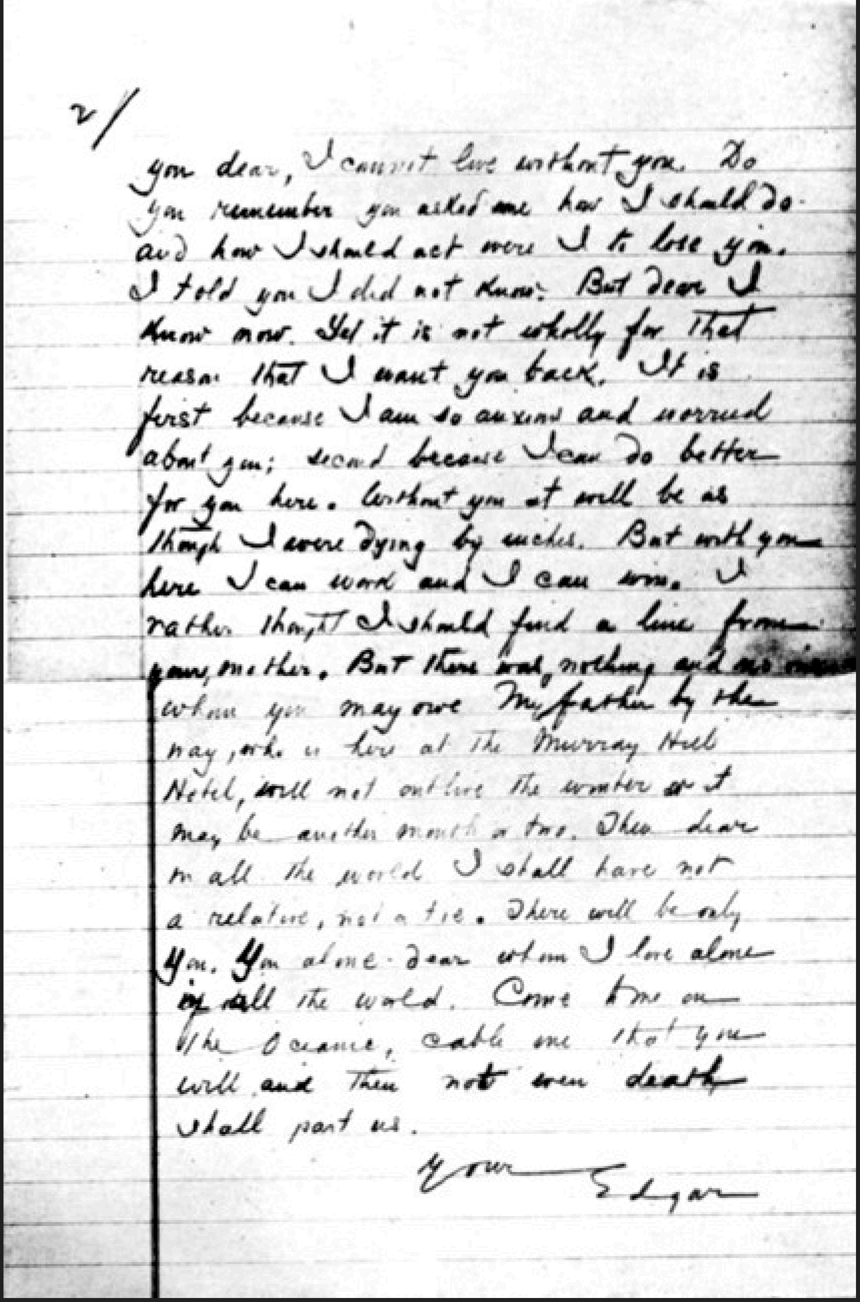


Manhattan Club.
Thursday Sept 24

My dear Darling Moungy

It is like death, like dying rather to be here without you. I said it would be like prison but it is worse. The sky is as blue as your own dear eyes, the weather is absolutely tropical. Were you here there would be pleasure in mere existence. But you are not here my darling and I seem to be able to be concerned only of that—only that my little girl is far, far away. I have heart for nothing. Yesterday I passed the Astoria and at the knowledge that there was no chance of seeing you there the tears came to my eyes. Never can I enter the place until you return and now when shall that be? I think you would agree to come very soon if you could realize what this all means to me. From the time I kissed you last up to this moment I have done nothing but try to plan for your return. From that time up to now not for an instant have you been absent from my thoughts. It is not merely that I love

Fac-simile of Letter sent to Marie Saltus



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you dear, I cannot live without you. Do
you remember you asked me how I should do
and how I should act were I to lose you.
I told you I did not know: But dear I
know now. Yet it is not wholly for that
reason that I want you back. It is
first because I am so anxious and worried
about you; second because I can do better
for you here. Without you it will be as
though I were dying by inches. But with you
here I can work and I can win. I
rather thought I should find a line from
your mother. But there was nothing and no [illegible]
when you may come. My father by the
way, who is here at the Murray Hill
Hotel, will not outlive the winter or it
may be another month or two. Then dear
in all the world I shall have not
a relative, not a tie. There will be only
you. You alone dear whom I love alone
in all the world. Come to me on
the Oceanic, cable me that you
will and then not even death
shall part us.

Your Edgar

Letters like this poured in by every steamer. One did not know what to do or how to act. His pathetic words swam before my eyes and[Pg 130]interposed between myself and the eligibles. In January Mr. Saltus fell ill—or said he was ill. His letters and cables became incoherent. Then they ceased. A note came to me from the physician who was attending him. In it he asked if I could tell him if Mr. Saltus had any relatives or friends who could be called upon. He painted a pathetic case. From his letter the delirium tremens looked up and leered.

The letter had its effect. Mr. Saltus followed it up with a cable saying that he expected to die. That was too much. Advising my family from Liverpool of my intentions, and cabling him at the same time, I sailed.

Mr. Saltus met me at the pier. He was looking pale and thin, but in no dying condition. It was the old story over again. There was no unpacking of trunks for me however. I was off again to Mexico City in a few weeks and he was alone as before, to continue going around in circles which ended where they began.

CHAPTER VIII

There is nothing more delightful than travel, but roaming the world like a Peer Gynt is not the same thing. Amusing at first, it finally gets on the nerves,—and living in trunks for years is highly disorganizing. The letters which followed me to Mexico City from Mr. Saltus said that his father was going downhill rapidly.

Never close to his younger son in any sense, during his last days, however, Francis Saltus turned to him more and more, relied on him and was comforted by his presence. While Mr. Saltus' letters threw out hints of coming to Mexico, where he hoped the New York Journal would find some work for him to do,—his father's unwillingness to have such a distance between them, and the real necessity for his presence within telephone distance, put an end to that. Letters of introduction were sent by him, however, to his old friend Eli Goddard,[Pg 132]who was then living in Cordova, and to his brother-in-law, Prince Poniatowski. Their visits to the home of my cousins were duly recorded and sent to him, but they failed to keep him in a cheerful mood.

However, the home,—the understanding, and the unselfish interest of Miss G—— did much to keep him from moods and melancholy. No woman Mr. Saltus knew up to that time was a more uplifting influence than she. Calm, dependable, her feet well on the earth, her emanations were sweet and soothing. The occasions on which Mr. Saltus saw his young daughter were holidays to him. To take her to the Plaza Hotel for tea and a chat was enough to brighten an entire week for him.

Of Bob Davis, Mr. Saltus saw quite a bit during this time. He is one of the few men whom Mr. Saltus really loved.

"Bob," he used to say, "is unique. There is no one like him. He stimulates me like champagne."

Many were the lunches and dinners they had[Pg 133]together. Mr. Davis was particularly fond of apple pancakes. Whenever he came to the Manhattan Club they were ordered for his especial benefit, and Mr. Saltus used to address him when writing to him as "Your Highness, The Duke of Apple-Pancake." He was lunching with Bob Davis when one of his peculiarities crept out. A number of letters and telegrams were brought to him. Never by any chance did Mr. Saltus open letters unless from the postmark or the handwriting he could be sure from whom they had been sent. That was not all,—he had to be equally convinced that they contained no unpleasant news. Letters in unknown handwriting were consigned unopened to the trash basket. If he happened to be in his rooms when sorting them, and one or more were in the doubtful class, they were tossed into a bureau drawer to be considered later. In this way he lost not only cheques but many interesting communications. People who wrote to him must have gone on wondering[Pg 134]why no reply was ever forthcoming. They will know now.

Letters from editors were unmistakable. They could be identified from their envelopes. My writing, and that of his closest friends, he could take in at a glance. Why take chances on the rest? What he did not know could not worry him. There was serenity in an unopened letter. Any unpleasantness in a note, however slight it might be, upset him to such an extent that he could not concentrate his mind or write a line of copy that day.

On the occasion of this luncheon with Bob Davis, Mr. Saltus took in his letters at a glance,—decided that there was nothing he cared to take a chance on, and picking them up unopened he tore the lot into fragments. In telling of it he said:—

"Bob always thought I was a bit queer. Now he must be certain that I am quite mad."

This habit, instead of decreasing, grew with the years. He had a horror of opening letters of any kind for some time before he died,—the[Pg 135]courage of youth having left him. After his death, his daughter and I spent two afternoons going through one of his old trunks and some bureau drawers. Hundreds of unopened letters, many with special delivery stamps on them, were opened, read and destroyed by us. Several of them contained cheques years old. It was incredible to his daughter that any one could have kept them unopened during so many years. It was a fancy to which I had become accustomed. He had not kept them because he was interested in them. He had been too much occupied and too indifferent to destroy them.

Spring came, and the summer followed. Quoting from a letter of his, Mr. Saltus wrote:

"There is green on the trees and the joy of springtime, but there is nothing in my heart but despair. When is this nightmare to end? When you were in Margaret Street I could picture you. I was a part of it all. Now it is chaos. Letters from Mexico City, from Orizaba and Cuernavaca, and the devil knows[Pg 136]where, tell me that you are surrounded by beauty,—the beauty of living things. Colour you say is the consciousness of nature. Only the consciousness of desolation and despair is mine."

The rainy season is the time to leave Mexico. Joining a party, among whom was a friend of Eli Goddard's, a very charming Spaniard, and still moving on like the Wandering Jew, I went north through Los Angeles and Santa Barbara to San Francisco. Spaniards are very gallant. In writing of this one I perhaps emphasized him overmuch. Telegrams of worry and warning followed. A fortnight after I reached the St. Francis Hotel a wire from Mr. Saltus read:—"My father died yesterday. Leaving for San Francisco next week. Eternamente.

SNIPPSY."

A small inheritance from his father making finances less of a pre-occupation, Mr. Saltus was free to go and come as he pleased. It was in June when he appeared at the St. Francis Hotel. Even there the shadow followed. He[Pg 137]was not welcomed by our little party. With an indifference and high-handedness almost amusing, Mr. Saltus turned not only the tables but the chairs upon them. He treated them like dirt, refusing to dine and finally even to speak to them. Between the lot I was like the Biblical baby with two mothers, minus a Solomon in the background.

An amusing and characteristic episode happened when he had been there but a short time. There was—and I believe is—a funny little restaurant in San Francisco called Coppa's. It looked like a spoonful of old England dropped there by mistake. Quaint mottoes, sketches and epigrams—the souvenirs of artistic and satisfied souls—decorated the walls. The Cheshire Cheese is something of a first cousin by comparison. Here, Jack London, Anna Strunsky, now Mrs. William English Walling, and other celebrities used to dine and linger. In that city of bohemian cafés this little place stood alone.

Mr. Saltus hated restaurants. For some[Pg 138]reason, the nearness of so many people perhaps, they got on his nerves. In any event, restaurants put him on edge to such an extent that he invariably quarrelled not only with the waiters, but with those who were with him, if they objected to his manner of carrying on. For this reason, it was something of a penance to go into a restaurant with him. To include him in a party going to Coppa's, one had first to proceed as follows:—

"If you go, will you be a good Snipps and not fight with the waiters?"

"I'll be a good Snipps. I'll take what you tell me and be thankful."

"Will you wear your muzzle and not jerk at the lead?"

"I'm old dog Tray—ever faithful."

"Old dog traitor—ever faithless you mean. I know your tricks, but come along then."

He came. Coppa's was almost full, but by some turn of the tables we found ourselves seated in the center of the room. That was enough to start Mr. Saltus off. Restaurants[Pg 139]were bad enough at best, even in a secluded corner. In the middle of a room of closely packed tables—? He began as usual.

"It's far too crowded. Mr. Me doesn't want to stay. Let's leave the others and go somewhere else."

The muzzle as well as the menu was ignored and forgotten. When Mr. Saltus began to growl it was preliminary only, but I knew the signs—knew, too, what might be expected to follow.

As he ceased speaking a sudden cramp took possession of my right foot, and my exclamation of surprise distracted his attention for the moment. It was my turn to growl. A low shoe was kicked off during the growling and the meal began. All at once a sympathetic cramp in the other foot compelled his attention to be directed to me again while the remaining shoe was removed. It may be mentioned in excuse that it was the fashion to wear ridiculously high and narrow shoes at the time.

We had gone as far as the soup, which Mr.[Pg 140]Saltus was sipping mechanically. As the meal progressed my difficulties did also. Try as I might, the offending shoes could not be forced on my feet again. Then the fun began. Distracted by it all, Mr. Saltus accepted chicken and salad unmurmuringly, in forgetfulness of his surroundings.

"You will have to sit here until every one goes or some one can fetch you a larger pair of ties." This remark was from one of our conservative friends, and it met with the approval of the others. Mr. Saltus was becoming restive again by this time.

"Not at all," I answered. "It's unfortunate to be sure, but get up and go I shall in my stocking feet. There is no law making shoes obligatory,—and besides, the people in this place are bohemians."

"All the more reason not to imitate them," was the reply.

That was enough to make the crowded little restaurant a most enchanting place to Mr. Saltus. Tables and people became non-existent to[Pg 141]him. I was going to defy the lot, and that delighted him to such an extent that good humour covered him like a garment. He even smiled at the waiters. Any show of independence on my part, provided it did not conflict with him, was a treat. Half rising in his seat he exclaimed:—

"Right you are, Mowgy. What the devil do you care for a pack of nincompoops?"

The anguish of the others in the party at being seen leaving a restaurant with a shoeless girl amused and delighted him. It could have been done quietly and unnoticed but for his love of a joke. Our friends were sufficiently horrified as it was, but for the dénouement they were quite unprepared. Realizing their discomfiture and revelling in it, Mr. Saltus made a dive under the table. That was not uncommon, for, knowing my habit of letting gloves, handkerchiefs and pocket-books fall from my lap unnoticed, he had trained himself to look. That was the old dog Tray, as he called himself. When he reappeared upon this[Pg 142]occasion it was with the offending shoes held before him as a votive offering, and leading the procession he carried them through the restaurant into the street. Queer people with odd fancies were no novelty at Coppa's. This however was an innovation. Some one started clapping, and with one accord the roomful of people took it up. I was laughing, but our friends were scarlet with rage. We hailed a passing taxi.

"What the devil do you care what people think?" Mr. Saltus exclaimed. "Sheep and swine follow, but you cannot make either of Mowgy,—thank God."

After that pleasurable and ingratiating episode he was not tormented by invitations from my friends. It was too bad that Anna Strunsky was not in the restaurant that evening, for she would have been amused. We had the pleasure of meeting her not long after this and were enchanted with her cleverness and charm.

Mr. Saltus' interest in spiritualism had flagged. Hearing that Miller, the materializing[Pg 143]medium, was holding séances in San Francisco, he determined to go. This we did. Bold in a restaurant, or when he was crushed in a crowd, where a blow from him frequently prefaced a word, he was a child when encountering phenomena of this kind. Sitting silent and almost sullen in a corner, he shrank within himself,—keen to see, hear and investigate, yet frightened as a baby in the dark. Miller seemed to affect him more than others had done.

"I'm frightened," he said. "If a spook should come and ask for me,—you answer it."

With clenched and clammy hands he sat and shivered, and when a form purporting to be that of his mother appeared and gave the name of Eliza Saltus, he whispered to me:—

"Speak."

"Speak yourself," I said. "I refuse to play the part of a phonograph all the time. It is for you, not me, that the spirit is here."

The shimmering form came closer. It almost brushed Mr. Saltus' knee. He shut his eyes and reiterated imploringly:[Pg 144]—

"Speak, Mowgy! For God's sake speak to it!"

The shadowy form had held together as long perhaps as it could. The ectoplasm may have given out or his condition of mind influenced it. In any event the form flickered. With his eyes still closed Mr. Saltus clutched me by the arm:—

"Has it gone?" he whispered.

As he spoke the form flickered again and went out. It was a long time before he wanted to go to a séance again.

During his stay in San Francisco he was guest of honour at the Bohemian Club, and he met there many interesting people. A brief visit to Carmel-by-the-Sea brought his Californian trip to a close. The State interested him. He liked the quiet,—the almost perpetual sunshine, and above all, the absence of convention and the freedom enjoyed by everyone. It was with regret that he left the sunshine and the silence to chafe under the vibrations and noise of New York.[Pg 145]

Once again pathetic letters raced across the continent. He had no home and no anchor. Mrs. Saltus and his daughter were living permanently abroad. His hours with the latter had been his oases in a desert of loneliness. Now, barring Miss G——, Dr. Kelley and occasionally Bob Davis, he had almost no friends. Upon reaching New York he finished a series of articles on Russia, for Munsey's Magazine which later formed the basis of his "Imperial Orgy."

In the late autumn the failing health of my father recalled me to New York. Mr. Saltus was finishing the last chapter of "Lords of the Ghostland." No other book he ever wrote was strung out over so long a time, or took so many hours of research. He brought the manuscript to my home, returning the next day for the praise and patting on the back he felt that he deserved.

"What do you think of it?" he asked. The small boy always appeared at such moments.

"The King of France and twice ten thousand[Pg 146]men,—rode up a hill and then went down again," was the reply.

"What do you mean? Is there no climax?"

"Just that. You take the reader from protoplasm to paradise,—you lead him through labyrinths, mazes and mysteries, and leave him just where you started. If you cannot give the reader a ladder give him a straw,—but give him something."

We are all tenacious with the children of our brain, Edgar Saltus especially so, but in this instance he took the criticism willingly. That last chapter he re-wrote four times, amplifying the idea of the continuity of life and the possibility of reincarnation, which he referred to as the "supreme Alhambra of dream." What he offered then was not his belief, but a theory and a suggestion. The last chapter curiously enough was the part of the book receiving the highest praise from the critics, who with one accord said that he had struck a new and exalted note. A few years later he was wringing his hands because he could not re-write[Pg 147]"Lords of the Ghostland" in the light of what he then knew. Over and over again he lamented this fact.

"If I had not been so pig-headed,—so dense. Having the chance to turn out a masterpiece,—a thing that would have lived,—I passed it by. I saw only in a restricted circle, when had I but looked up, a limitless horizon of wonder and wisdom stretched before me."

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CHAPTER IX

In the spring of 1907, the death of my father left me a nervous and physical wreck. Though never close friends, and knowing quite well of his disapproval, Mr. Saltus admired his splendid intellect and broad vision.

There are those who make tragedies out of trifles, and others to whom most events however important mean nothing at all. To the latter, when touched by an overwhelming grief, the world and everything in it become as shadows on glass.

Because of his sensitiveness and his super-susceptibility to suffering, Mr. Saltus was sympathetic to a degree. He had begun to see the beauty of service, and during that time he devoted himself to my family in every way that he knew how.

The autumn found me in California again,[Pg 149]a nervous wreck, and so ill with acute gastritis, that death seemed but hiding around the corner. With an elderly friend of the family I always addressed as Aunt, and whose interests made it necessary for her to live in California for a time, we went from place to place, settling for the winter in a bungalow at Coronado Beach. If one must die, why not peacefully and pleasantly in the sunshine?

November brought Mr. Saltus to the Coronado Hotel. He had been mapping out a plot for "Daughters of the Rich." San Diego and Coronado enchanted him.

"Mynext novelshall open here," he exclaimed.

So it did. The opening chapter of "The Monster" introduces the reader to the Hotel del Coronado and the bay.

The bungalow occupied by us was none too large for two women and a maid. It had however a large attic room. Mr. Saltus gave it one look, and, in his own words, "miawed at the door and begged." It looked the background[Pg 150]for a scribbler, with odd nooks and corners to hide manuscripts and curious old tables to write on. Once seen, nothing would do but he must have it. He declared that a djinn who lived there specialized in helping old scoundrels to scribble. I added that a horrible hourla lived there as well and that he made a practice of changing men into horned toads. (Horned toads are plentiful in Coronado.)

All this made him very insistent. California had always appealed to Mr. Saltus. It offered aspecial inducementthen, for under the laws of the State a divorce could be secured for abandonment. He thought that a man not worth changing for a hat was not worth keeping at all, and after a year's residence he could take the initiative in the matter,—hat or no hat. An attorney was consulted and retained. California was to be his home for a year at least.

In the circumstances Mr. Saltus was very anxious to settle down. He had wandered so much, and he was tired of it. A few trunks[Pg 151]in an apartment hotel cannot be called a home. His popularity as a novelist had waned. Public opinion was against him, not only because of the publicity incidental to so many divorce suits, but because there had grown up and around him the belief that he was a free-thinker and lover, irritable and erratic,—a man who had few friends and a multitude of enemies.

However little he let all this affect him on the surface, Mr. Saltus was too acutely sensitive not to feel it, and it cut deep. Like a wounded animal seeking shelter, his one desire was to get as far away as he could from a world which, knowing but little of his real self, criticised and condemned him. To come in contact only with the things of nature and of beauty,—to live in the sunshine far from the haunts of men and the sordid struggle of a great city, was to him the ideal.

In view of all this, and after much cajoling on his part, and his constant reiteration that for three females,—one old, one ill and one[Pg 152]negligible,—a handy man about the house was a necessity, he was accepted. The prospect of Mr. Saltus being handy with anything but a pen or a knife and fork was remote. None the less, the attic shortly became his habitat, the djinn and the hourla his familiar spirits, and the plot of "The Monster" began fermenting in his mind.

It was a new world to the man accustomed for years to the limelight of publicity, and the diversions of a metropolis, to live for months on a narrow strip of sand, ministering to the wants of an elderly widow and an invalid, who at best could walk only a short three minutes to the sands at the ocean front, and spent most of her time resting in a hammock.

It must be said of him however that he came to the scratch with flying colours. Unaccustomed as he had been in his youth to look upon anything other than "Will it please me or will it not?" he began to put in practice one of life's most difficult lessons,—unselfishness. In his desire to serve another and quite unconscious[Pg 153]of the result, he began to build up some of the qualities in which he had been deficient so long. Having constituted himself a handy man and old dog Tray, in a place where servants are scarce as rubies, he kept burning and replenished the fire in the living-room. He also, in spite of the hours spent in using his eyes to write, would read aloud to the invalid whenever he was requested.

Strangely enough he was extremely happy in doing these things. Although the Hotel del Coronado was only a five minutes' walk from the bungalow it offered no attraction to him. Barring a daily dip in the ocean and the occasional necessity for going over to San Diego, he could not be persuaded to leave the grounds.

Winter wore away, and with the approach of spring the invalid emerged from the shadow of death; and old dog Tray remained at his post. Among Mr. Saltus' most marked characteristics were two fears,—that of losing his luggage and getting some contagious disease. In neither case could any amount of reasoning[Pg 154]touch him. The luggage complex put him to no end of inconvenience at times. When trunks could not be taken in a taxi, he frequently insisted upon driving with the express-man to the railway station. Then fear put out tentacles. Would the luggage be put on the train? If it was, would it be carried past its destination? Every railroad journey found him wandering like an earthbound spirit between his seat and the luggage van. It was a form of obsession. Many a time he would greet me in the morning with the announcement:—

"I had a terrible nightmare last night. What do you suppose it was?"

"That you had lost your trunks," was the first and usually the correct reply.

"Yes, I had lost them. They dematerialized and I was wandering through the train and express vans till I went mad. Then I awoke. It was awful."

Toward the end of his life, when Theosophy had done its work for him, and he realized that all possessions are anchors and encumbrances,[Pg 155]this fear became modified,—but he never quite overcame it. It was the same with disease, or rather contagion. Having a horror of all forms of illness, he had the subconscious idea that if there was anything to be caught he would be in for it.

When in his last days he was so desperately ill with gastritis, he looked upon it as karma striking him in the face for shrinking as he had from others. Myself excepted, he rushed from people who were ill as from an earthquake.

This particular spring an epidemic of bubonic plague broke out in San Francisco. It was supposed to have been carried there by rats from China. As cats eat rats they also came under the ban of suspicion. The newspapers dripped with it. Mr. Saltus read them with horror. Ships from San Francisco might dock at San Diego. He had more nightmares. Behind him as he sought his lost luggage an army of rodents followed. There was no talking him out of it. The plague with all its attendant complications was hovering above us.[Pg 156]

Coronado has a large winter colony as well as permanent residents,—eastern people who come in for the season and take houses. Their departure often means a number of homeless and discarded cats. Mr. Saltus was shocked by the cruelty of this. One of the vagrants with particularly long whiskers and a piteous miaw I had nicknamed "Jean Valjean." Where he slept was his own secret, but where he ate was usually out of my hand. When not referring to him by his name, Mr. Saltus called him "the table boarder," and he concerned himself not a little over Jean's well being.

Rumours of the bubonic plague changed that in an instant, and Jean became overnight the dangerous carrier of the most deadly germs, unfit for the society of humans and to be driven from the door. It was too ridiculous for argument. To have yielded an inch to Mr. Saltus in such a thing would have forfeited my mental ascendency forever, an exceedingly bad thing for him in every way. Had he been yielded to less during his formative years it[Pg 157]would have been a blessing both to himself and to others, and would have made possible a little yielding to him in later life. As it was, it was hazardous to give in, even if he had a certain amount of right on his side. When he had none, it was suicidal.

Laughing at his fears, ridiculing the idea of poor Jean carrying the plague, and assuring him that demons and devils were particularly immune, I refused to accept his hallucination about the cat. He was told to attend to his work and his writing, and not interfere with the running of the house.

Diplomacy was one of Mr. Saltus' strong points. He appeared to agree with me. Coming around the corner of the piazza the following afternoon however, when supposed to be on the sands, I was in time to see him with the hose in his hand, the nozzle turned so as to send a straight and powerful stream of water. This he was playing on Jean, who, terrified at such unlooked-for hostility in place of his usual[Pg 158]plate of food, let out piteous howls and fled up a eucalyptus tree.

Hell has no fury like a woman defied. Dropping the hose when he saw me Mr. Saltus turned,—but he had no chance to escape or explain. Seizing the nozzle I let him have it full in the face, and as he ran I followed, soaking him through and through till he got out of range. It was a tense moment. Swearing and raging, he shook himself and fled to his attic room. When he emerged, an hour later, it was with suitcases in his hand.

"After treatment like this I am going to the Hotel del Coronado, and I will send for my trunks. Never in my life have I been subjected to such an indignity. Here I am,—growing grey in your service and less than a stray cat in your eyes."

"Good-bye and good luck," I answered. "If having led two unfortunate women a devil's dance hasn't taught you anything you are hopeless. Had one of them played a hose on you ages ago, I would not have been obliged[Pg 159]to now. Don't come back for your trunks. I will send them."

That took him off his feet entirely. He had in mind a scene in which, after repentance and apologies on my part, he would graciously consent to forgive me. Incidentally it would mean the banishment of Jean. Dismissed in that way, there was nothing for him to do but go. With a suitcase in either hand he started for the hotel. Years later he told me that he had put his suitcases on the sand, and sitting down on one of them, had taken stock of himself. For the good part of two hours he sat there, till the sun dropping behind Point Loma, and the chill which followed, reminded him of the passing of time. A man can do a great deal of thinking in two hours.

Meanwhile, from the tiptop of the highest of trees poor Jean sent out frantic appeals for help and rescue. However easy it is for cats to climb trees, getting down is different. They have been known to starve to death in one. When dishes of dainties and fish failed[Pg 160]to dislodge him more than a limb or two lower, we realized that it was impossible for him to get down, and the maid announced that the sun was setting and the rapidly vanishing twilight called for speed. The highest kind of an extension ladder was borrowed and opened to its utmost capacity. It barely reached the limb below the one to which the frightened cat clung. The slender ladder, swaying somewhat more than was comfortable as one ascended, the tall tree and the dark combined, were not tempting. Several small boys started up very bravely but came down less so. Not one of them got half-way to the top, although I kept raising the price for valour till it reached five dollars, and the terrified Jean increased his appeals for help. There seemed to be no alternative. Putting on my riding breeches I was starting up the ladder when a voice as pitiful as Jean's cracked the silence.

"My God, Mowgy, come off that ladder!"

Mr. Saltus pushed me aside and started up. He had never been on a ladder before. With[Pg 161]his teeth set and three women doing their best to steady it, he finally got to the top, and by stretching his arm to the utmost caught Jean by the tail, and dropped him—not, as he intended, into my arms, but on the top of my head.

The episode was closed. The cat was saved, and by the following morning the bubonic scaretransformeditself into a comedy. Descending from the djinn and the hourla of the attic, Mr. Saltus greeted me with the following limerick:—

On the sands where a blonde girl was stopping

To the rescue of Jean she came hopping,
Waved the hose in the air—
And said "I don't care,
If I do get my Snippsikins sopping."

"There," he said, "is an example of an anapæst. If a sprinkling can produce this, next time I will turn out an entire poem. There's nothing like water, and plenty of it, to make genius grow. Give Jean a saucer of cream.[Pg 162]No skimmed milk for this." Mr. Saltus laughed and resumed, "You are the first feminine thing to face me and put me to rout—My hat's off to you."

I laughed at this, it seemed so ridiculous.

"Let me tell you a story," he went on. "There was before your day a prize-fighter,—a powerful fellow,—six feet of brawn. He could knock anyone into a cocked hat in the first round. Even his friends were rather afraid of him. One day a delegation of them went to his house to suggest a new fight. His wife was opposed to this. She wanted him to accompany her on a vacation. It was she who met the friends at the door, and told them definitely that her husband was going to take a rest and would not consider their offers. They turned away, but one of the party,—a Peeping Tom sort of a chap, crept back, and looked in through a crack in the shutters. What he saw was a revelation. The prize-fighter was emerging from under the bed. The frail scrap of a wife was standing in the center[Pg 163]of the room, with one slender finger upraised. Shaking this she said, 'Stay where you are till they are a safe distance off. I'll kill you if you come out before.'"

This story, whether he made it up or not, amused Mr. Saltus enormously, and when thereafter, entering into the spirit of it, I would put up a finger, it never failed to make him laugh like a boy. The playfulness which had been inhibited so long had full fling now, and he adored to have me pretend I was going to chastise him for something, declaring, as he afterward put in his copy, "When a woman ceases to quarrel with a man she ceases to love him." With his almost uncanny intuition he got the motive underlying every act.

It was during this spring that the framework on which Mr. Saltus afterward built "The Gardens of Aphrodite" grew. Much of it was written when sitting in the rose garden under a palm tree, the offending Jean purring at his feet. Notes on which he constructed "Oscar Wilde,—An Idler's Impression," were gathered[Pg 164]together as well, and reminiscences used in "Parnassians Personally Encountered" were jotted down and put into shape to use.

There was something soothing and yet stimulating in the song of the surf on the sands, reaching him as it did through the branches of acacia trees. In "the enchanted garden," as he called the small green handkerchief-like patch of grass, Mr. Saltus evolved, co-ordinated and put in shape the material from which he drew largely ever after.

A few weeks later he was en route for New York, to break up such home as he had there and return to the coast with his things, having decided to make California his home indefinitely. A ranch in the middle part of the State welcomed me. It was a heavenly spot,—no neighbors within miles, and plenty of animals and flowers for company.

From that ranch came two little creatures,—one particularly, destined to have a larger place and a greater influence in Mr. Saltus' life than most of the humans he encountered.[Pg 165]Taken from their respective mothers at an age when their eyes were just open, so young that they had to learn to lap by nibbling my fingers dipped in milk, Fifi the kitten and Toto the shepherd dog puppy were annexed from a neighbor, and given to one ready to shield them with her life.

In the late summer these little ones with Auntie and myself were settled again. This time it was in a large house in Los Angeles with a delightful garden, situated in what was then the extreme upper limit of the city. Beyond it were vacant fields. Hollywood was in the distance. It was taken with a view to giving Mr. Saltus a bed-room with study adjoining in a wing of the house, off by itself, and shortly after we moved in, he joined us.

Mr. Saltus was not an easy, if an interesting man to keep house with. Ringing of the telephone sent him almost into hysterics. Trades people and servants talking under his windows incited him to murder.

The sound of a vacuum cleaner was the last[Pg 166]straw. Waving his arms like a dervish he would appear in working attire,—hair on end, light blue flannel shirt open at the neck, and make what I called a few "cursery remarks." Late in the afternoon only, when he left the house for his walk—he did not care what transpired during his absence—could the maid get in to make up his rooms. Even then he accepted it because he was compelled to submit. His study was as closely guarded as a Bluebeard's den. No one entered it—and no one wanted to, for cigar butts and ashes were the rose-leaves scenting his sanctum.

When working on a novel Mr. Saltus was living in another world. He knew where his things were, but no other, unless possessed of second sight, could have hazarded a guess. Under cigar butts, half burned cigarettes, piles of manuscripts, note-books and pencils, which were scattered all over the floor, anything might be hidden, and often was. Until he had finished a novel or other prolonged work, any attempt at clearing up would have[Pg 167]been fatal, not only to himself but to the sanity of the one who did the cleaning. With the knowledge that most literary men were "litterers" the room was divested of anything which could be injured before it was turned over to him.

Unfitted for housekeeping both by temperament and inclination, and having none of the responsibility of it, I could look on and laugh. In later years the laugh was not quite as spontaneous.

In spite of the extreme untidiness of his study, Mr. Saltus was scrupulously particular about his person, changing his linen several times a day after a tub and a shower. In fussing over his linen he was almost as fearful as over losing his luggage or getting a disease. Whenever the laundryman was late in arriving he was sure that it was lost forever. His worry was not so much over replacing the things, as over the fact that to do so he must go into a shop. Linen and luggage fears arose from the same cause.[Pg 168]

The laundry terror persisted also until the end of his life. All these peculiarities must have been trying to normal women. He recognized it himself fully, and used to say:—

"I'm a panicky pup, and I know it; and only a pampered puss could put up with me. If she should turn me out I'd go 'round and 'round in circles like a mad dog till some one took me to the pound and dropped me in the lethal chamber."

[Pg 169]

CHAPTER X

Deprived of pets as he had been during his childhood, Mr. Saltus responded to his new playmates in a surprising way, taking over their education, as he called it, from the first. Fifi was taken into the inner recesses of his study to serve as a paperweight. Rigging up a tight-rope in the garden, he taught her to walk on it, to stand on her hind legs, play ball and jump through a hoop.

When his eyes became tired with writing he amused himself hour after hour playing with his new toys. With his fancy for alliterations Fifi became "Pasy's pride and pleasure Puss." In the album of snapshots are many of "E—— and his angels," as I called them.

Then a sad thing happened. From eating some poisoned meat put out for gophers by a neighbor, both little creatures became violently ill, and in spite of the best doctors and care, Fifi[Pg 170]died. I did not mourn alone. Mr. Saltus wept like a baby and could not write a word for days. Until the end of his life he kept referring to her, imitating the inflection of her miaws when deprived of sardines, of which she was inordinately fond.

After this the puppy came in for all the attention. During her recovery from the poison she was brought up to sleep on the foot of my bed,—a habit she saw fit never to change, for she slept there for the rest of her life.

With a patience little expected from him, Mr. Saltus taught her to run a yard or two in front of him so that he could watch her, and taught her to walk on her hind legs and various other accomplishments. With the training and understanding of her, the fear of dogs left him. He began to pat strange animals on their heads and take an interest in work in their behalf. The puppy, Toto, went with him for walks as soon as she was able to toddle on before him, but she usually returned in his arms.[Pg 171]

The reason for entering so fully into his habits and association with this little being is because, like a thread of pure gold, she was woven into the fabric of his existence from the first, becoming at the last one of the most vital considerations of his life.

During a brief stay in Pasadena the year before, I had made the acquaintance of a Mr. and Mrs. Colville. The former was an exceptional character, combining the enthusiasm of a scholar and the erudition of a sage. He was a critic, a philosopher and a Theosophist. His wife was, and is, one of the noblest and most selfless beings on earth.

This acquaintance was passed on to Mr. Saltus. From the moment he saw them they exercised a profound influence on his life. Inclined as he was to take the tempo of his likes and dislikes from me, his immediate admiration for these two was exceptional. The occultism to which he had hitherto listened with rather indifferent ears took on new interest. He bought "The Ancient Wisdom," by[Pg 172]Annie Besant, the "Secret Doctrine," and a number of other Theosophical books. What was more, he studied them.

The little bungalow of the Colvilles in Pasadena became a kind of magnetic pole. To discuss higher metaphysics and occultism with the husband, and observe its practical application by his wife, constituted a treat. Mrs. Colville could tear Mr. Saltus to pieces. She could put her finger on the weak links in his character, suggesting methods by which they might be strengthened with unerring intuition. He not only accepted it with the simplicity of a child, but he thanked her for it. Never in his life had he met a woman of her kind before, and he loved her for her selflessness and the poise she radiated. His confidence and trust in her were such that on the day preceding his death he urged me to write to her and ask her to take him into her meditations. With all that may be said against Mr. Saltus by his critics, the fact of his not only recognizing, but immediately responding to spiritual greatness[Pg 173]justified the confidence put in him by myself when a child. It proved beyond question, that with a different early environment and training, he would have developed the splendid qualities latent until the end of his life.

Work upon "The Monster" was under way at this time, and over his books Mr. Saltus was very much like a mother with her child. He might suggest that a novel of his own was full of flaws,—but woe to the outsider who ventured to criticise so much as a comma in its construction. It gave him perhaps the shock of his literary life, when, after a discussion, Mrs. Colville said to him:—

"You are a brilliant man,—an artist and a stylist. You are a poet, an historian and an essayist; but a novelist—never. Your psychology of humans is oblique, your plots improbable when not impossible, and your characters ink."

In moments of wrath I had flung the same words in his face and been told, "Ignorance, when it speaks, speaks loudly."[Pg 174]

Instead of the explosion I expected, it took Mr. Saltus off his feet. He sat down. His affection and admiration for the Colvilles could not be called in question after that, and he began at once to take stock of himself seriously.

The lease of the house we were occupying having expired, another one on Grand View Street off Westlake Park was taken. The beauty of this little park, and the pleasure of sitting out under the palm trees, book in hand, Toto lying at his feet, soothed and relaxed Mr. Saltus amazingly. The idea of rewriting "The Monster" and weaving Theosophy into it suggested itself. Mrs. Besant spoke in Los Angeles at this time and we attended a private lecture. He heard her speak many times again in London in the Queen's Hall, but from that first glance he declared her to be in his estimation the most wonderful woman incarnate on earth to-day. "The Monster" was put aside in order that he might have more leisure to study Theosophy.

Mr. Saltus was now in his fifty-fifth year, and[Pg 175]for the first time he began to show symptoms of breaking. Extreme irritability with attacks of giddiness were followed by periods of depression. His Theosophical studies helped him to keep his poise. The physician who was consulted gave no cause for alarm. He said that Mr. Saltus was undergoing certain physiological changes and that he must abstain from prolonged mental work. A rough draft of "The Monster," including a certain amount of Theosophy, was in hand, so he said he would do no more creative work for a time.

That time was a long one. Mr. Saltus never did any entirely original work again. His creative faculty became semi-detached from his work in a desire to study. He wrote several novels after the lapse of years, but each of them was elaborated and improved from central situations he had used before either in novels or in short stories. In many of these, as in "Lords of the Ghostland," Mr. Saltus felt that he had not made the most of his material, and the desire to re-write, amplify and do justice[Pg 176]to the subject in a new and big way was tucked away in a corner of his mind. During the last years of his life, when the necessity for finding forgetfulness of the physical was paramount, the opportunity to use this material presented itself.

At the end of that summer we went on to Warner's Hot Springs. Mr. Saltus was left at loose ends, and he went to a hotel, hoping to join us again when we decided on a house for the winter.

While we were at the Hot Springs Mr. Saltus met a young girl, Miss S——. So weird, wild and fantastic are the stories which have been circulated about her, so malicious and untrue, that in justice to all, a plain statement of the facts is called for. It was during this stay at Warner's Hot Springs that a letter from Mr. Saltus referred to meeting a young girl. So seldom did he meet anyone sufficiently worth mentioning that I was interested. In the letter he said that he had been introduced to a girl, Miss S——, who reminded him very much[Pg 177]of myself. This was, he explained, not only because of her features but her nature, which was highly emotional, and that she adored animals to such a degree that I would find in her a kindred soul. I was much interested and wrote him that I would like to meet her.

Mr. Saltus' next letter was from San Francisco, where, at the request of the Examiner, he had gone to write up the Portola Festival. His next letter, however, was from Los Angeles again, giving the news that the Los Angeles Examiner had retained him to write a series of editorials to boom Southern California. Urging us to return, he said that he could not work without a background and was like a man without arms or legs. Telegrams and long distance telephone messages followed.

Soon afterward we took a house in Los Angeles again, centrally located in what was then a fashionable location in Pico Heights, and Mr. Saltus got to work at once. It was neither sustained nor creative like that of writing a novel. It consisted in compiling information[Pg 178]and statistics and presenting them in entertaining and acceptable form. The final draft of "The Monster" was done and ready for the typist. The compiling of material for two-page editorials each week kept him so occupied that his usual afternoon walks with Toto were shortened or neglected altogether. All his life he had walked a great deal. It was his way of keeping fit. With the physiological change in his constitution his desire to walk decreased, and the beginning of the breakdown began without either of us suspecting it. An inveterate smoker always, he then consumed almost twice as many cigarettes a day as before,—strong Cuban ones of the most insidious kind. This, too, was paving the way for the obscure and deadly disease which later gripped him like a vise.

Up to the time of going to California to live, Mr. Saltus' life had, in spite of its colourfulness, been more or less sad. There was a wistfulness in his eyes,—a reaching-out for something stronger than human ties to build on.[Pg 179]The note-book to which I have previously referred, and which he compiled for writing "The Philosophy of Disenchantment" and "The Anatomy of Negation," was filled with quotations from the Gitâ. This meant something deeper than copy to him. Upon meeting Mr. and Mrs. Colville, the inner yearning which had been inhibited so long became suddenly objective, taking on the concrete form of study along esoteric lines.

All this time he was studying "The Secret Doctrine," going over each stanza slowly, thoughtfully, weighing each word and its meaning—searching for gold.

He burst into my room one day without knocking,—a thing he never omitted to do. I realized that only an internal earthquake could have caused such forgetfulness. Throwing a book into my lap, he sank into a chair and exclaimed:—

"Blind,—blind and conceited ass that I have been! All my life I have been searching for[Pg 180]truth. Now I have found it. Life's problems are over."

Taking the book from my hand he said:—

"Listen to this. 'Said the Flame to the spark, thou art myself,—my image and my shadow. I have clothed myself in thee,—and thou art my vahan, until the day be with us, when thou shalt re-become myself,—and others thyself,—and me.'"

He read the stanza three times very slowly, his emotion so intense that tears stood in his eyes. At that moment he touched the highest pinnacle of his life. It was his Mount of Transfiguration. As soon as he was sufficiently master of himself to speak, he said:—

"Let me send your name and my own this very day to Adyar to join the Theosophical Society?"

I had never been affiliated with organizations or cults,—my understanding of the occult having been more or less born with me and intuitive rather than academic; but, delighted at the[Pg 181]unfolding of his higher nature, I agreed at once to his suggestion.

He saturated himself with Theosophy as one might with a disinfectant after long exposure to infection. From that hour he was another being; his perception of values and his attitude toward life became readjusted. The polarity of his angle on everything shifted, and the axis of his being, responding to the change, swung back to its real home. It was like melting the ice of Spitzbergen and restoring to it the tropical beauty and verdure it once enjoyed. In this way Mr. Saltus became imbued with the magnitude of his discovery—or rather his recovery of it.

It has been said by his critics, that, in becoming a Theosophist, Mr. Saltus stepped down from the Olympian heights, became mundane, and did not, as I have suggested, ascend the Mount of Transfiguration. Constructive criticism of any description is helpful, but it is open to question whether or not this touches the crux of the matter. The fact that his imaginative[Pg 182]faculty became somewhat transmuted into channels not wholly literary, gives critics this chance.

It has been said that I persuaded him to become a Theosophist. Nothing is further from the truth, for, while I believed much that is called Theosophy, I had scarcely dipped into a book on it, and our chats on these lines had been more or less personal, one saying to the other, "Perhaps we were brother and sister or twins in our last life," suggesting various amusing combinations of relationship.

I never tried to persuade him to accept anything. It would have been not only foolish and futile, but would have defeated its purpose.

Though his acceptance of it came suddenly, it was the culmination of remote causes, too deep for either his critics or his friends to see.

It has been said also of Tolstoi that when he turned to religion he turned from greatness. This may be true in a sense. It resolves itself into the question "What is greatness?" That Mr. Saltus' keen interest in occultism over-shadowed[Pg 183]and coloured every act and thought of his life thereafter, is undeniably true; but what it took from him in one sense it gave to him in another. It gave him what he had been unconsciously seeking,—the ability to build up a series of sequences in his mind, and in the acceptance of them to find peace. Peace and progress were his pole stars. Who can say how little or how great are such objectives? If any change took place in his creative potentialities, it was because he deliberately allowed it.

From that hour a new world opened before his eyes, a world of endless vistas,—of delightful study and research,—of new thinking, reconstruction and regeneration, Mr. Saltus' one lament being:—

"Why has it taken me so long?"

Destroying the finished copy of "The Monster," he set about rewriting it entirely from his new viewpoint, and thereafter until the day of his death he wrote nothing untinged by the philosophy that had become an essential part of his consciousness.[Pg 184]

This new and complete distraction was a godsend, for Mr. Saltus was far from well and he was inclined to be terrified over the least symptom of anything out of the common. Abstract reading and study took him out of himself and bridged many an hour with pleasure and profit.

Coming in the house one day Mr. Saltus said:—

"When I was down-town I charged a box of sweets on your bill."

"Did you?" I replied. "Since when have you developed the taste?" Puddings and candies of any kind he had always avoided.

"They were not for myself but for the young girl, Miss S——, I wrote you about. She is now connected with the Library and I see quite a little of her, for I go there often to get books and collect data for my articles. Having been educated abroad she speaks French like a native, and being unusually intelligent she has helped me a great deal."

Occupied as I was at the time with organizing[Pg 185]a theatrical entertainment for the benefit of The Los Angeles Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals,—having to see and secure all the talent, I put off an invitation to bring her to the house for tea or to dine until the affair was over. Unfortunate omission! More unfortunate yet was my remark:—

"Remember Dorothy S——."

That was an episode Mr. Saltus wanted least of all to be reminded of. It sealed his lips more effectually than cement. When a few weeks later I inquired about his friend, he said that she had moved and that he had no idea what had become of her. Moved she had, but only a block or two. Once again his inability to face anything holding the remotest possibility of unpleasantness tangled him in an unnecessary deception.

During the holidays a telegram announcing the death of Mrs. Saltus in Paris reached him. This was only a few days before the preliminary papers in the divorce were to be issued.

In all justice to Mr. Saltus it must be said[Pg 186]that he sincerely regretted the final separation came this way. It hit him between the eyes. From his new angle on life,—his belief that, reincarnation being a necessity, he must meet every ego he had in any way wronged and pay his debt to each, appalled him. However much he had attempted to justify himself in the past he did so no longer. The sudden passing over of one so closely connected with his early life—to whom he realized that he had never been all that he should—struck home. He went about the house softly and silently, passages of the Gitâ penetrating him like flame and steel.

His first impulse was to go East to meet his young daughter upon her return from abroad. The memory of her had become a beautiful dream to him. From that dream he was most anxious to awake and enjoy the reality. Her mother's wishes had been very explicit in the matter. She left the little girl to the guardianship of an aunt, with provisions in her will calculated to curtail the young girl's best interests[Pg 187]in case her father took her. Over and over we thrashed the matter out between us. He had the law of the land on his side.

Persuaded at last that the only restitution he could make the mother for anything she had endured because of him, was through the child, he wrote his daughter asking her desire in the matter. Upon her replying that she wanted to carry out her mother's wishes, much against his will, Mr. Saltus yielded.

There was another thing he yielded also. Against my firm refusal to go to the altar or the courthouse until a proper time elapsed, he talked in vain.

"Contending with you is like biting into granite," he said with annoyance, "and my poor teeth are being worn away."

"It is harder to be the granite," I told him. "I would be so much happier transformed into pliable putty."

"Why not try it for a pleasant change?" he inquired.

"Because, for your sake, I cannot. You are[Pg 188]not granite to me,—you are a piece of marble out of which I am trying with chisel in my hand to release the something concealed there."

"Your chisel is sharp and the process is a painful one."

"So it is," I admitted, "and I do not know to which of us it is the more so. Shall I put it down and rest?"

Mr. Saltus smiled.

"No, little Puss. You are the instrument of karma. Keep on chiseling. You believe in me, and if you think there is something worth while, awaiting release—do not falter. Only the one who sees it can set it free."

[Pg 189]

CHAPTER XI

Made irritable by the state of his health, accentuated by the delay in his plans, Mr. Saltus was in a mood to fly off at a fleabite. One does not realize the underlying cause of things at the time they occur. It takes perspective to throw them into relief.

Los Angeles, which never does anything by halves or in a small way, was undergoing one of its periodical hydrophobia scares. As a matter of fact, this disease is almost non-existent in the State of California. No matter about that. Some poor half-starved, beaten and abused animal driven to extremity had turned in self-protection upon a tormentor, and the cry went up that a mad dog had bitten a child. That was enough. The papers, always on the lookout for a sensation, took it up, piling on the agony, till in twenty-four hours they had created a monster out of a myth. [Pg 190]

Results showed how slight after all has been man's evolution from ignorance and brutality. All unmuzzled dogs were ordered to be shot in the streets on sight. Civilised England would believe such a thing possible in equatorial Africa only. Protests were powerless. The people having been worked into a frenzy of fear, it was not easily allayed. What followed is too harrowing to be told. Had a few fanatical humans, and the owners of the unmuzzled dogs been put painlessly and permanently out of the way, real justice would have been served. Our Toto, guarded every moment night and day, was the exception. The incinerators were kept working all the time disposing of the innocent and helpless victims of madmen.

Because of these conditions several stray dogs were given temporary shelter under my roof, and kept on a veranda giving off of my bed-room, situated on the second floor. A passing policeman could not reach up to them and they could wag their tails in safety.

How it happened, if ever known, I have forgotten,—but[Pg 191]it happened. One of the dogs, a bull-terrier, managing to slip from the veranda and through my bed-room to the hall, went down stairs on an exploring expedition. Coming in that evening with his latch-key Mr. Saltus met the dog at the front door. The animal, grateful for food and protection, came forward to take a sniff of the intruder and ask his intentions. Had Mr. Saltus spoken to him and gone on naturally, as one belonging there should have done, there would have been no trouble. His old fear of dogs gaining momentary ascendency, combined unfortunately with his annoyance at having so much attention diverted from himself. Without a word he gave the dog a kick. According to canine philosophy a man having the right to be there would not have done such a thing. That act settled his status. The terrier caught him by the leg and made his protest felt, in his desire to protect the one who had rescued him.

There was no uncertainty of Mr. Saltus'[Pg 192]intentions then. Screaming and cursing, he tore up to my sitting-room.

"One of your damned dogs has taken a slice out of my leg."

The story of the dog and his deviltry was told between vituperations. He was done for. Hydrophobia was sure to develop before morning. The dog must be sent to the pound at once. As I have said before, there could be no half way in dealing with Mr. Saltus. Had he been sympathized with in the least, it would have been fatal. It was a nerve-racking affair. Useless was the attempt to put it to him from any angle other than his own. Not only had he been badly lacerated, but outrageously treated by me in that his demands were not immediately acted upon. Refusal to see in him a martyr, piled faggots on the flame of his wrath, and vowing that either the dog or himself should leave the house that night, he threw the challenge in my face.

There was no need to repeat it. A telephone was on the table near my hand. I called[Pg 193]a taxi, telling them to be at the house in half an hour. After that inferno was let loose. Nothing more outrageous was included in the annals of crime.

"Here I am,—growing grey in your service,—turned into the street. I am an IT,—a THING,—my individuality has been submerged. You have grafted all your ideas upon me, moulding me into your likeness. I am not allowed to think."

"If you are moulded in my image it's a devilish botch I have made of it. Had you been moulded into something human a little earlier in life, you could not have wrecked existence for the two women rash enough to take your name. I have escaped with my sanity,—thank God. Now go."

Storming and swearing at the way he was abused, Mr. Saltus disappeared, returning after fifteen minutes with a suitcase in either hand. The dogs sat in a row to watch him go.

"I'll come back for my trunks and my books[Pg 194]to-morrow," he told me, "and I would like to know your plans for the future."

"Inasmuch as they no longer include yourself they cannot interest you," I said. "When you leave this house you leave my life forever."

It was hard to say that to one who, however inflammable and vituperative on the surface, was at heart only a very much spoiled and frightened little boy, long accustomed to giving orders and carrying things with a high hand. A reversal of the order took him out of his bearings. Only a profound understanding of his nature made the success of the experiment possible.

Slamming the door behind him he left the sitting room and went down stairs. The taxi was waiting. Reaching the garden he turned to look back at the house, only to see the shades drawn down, the lights in my sitting room go out, and hear my voice through the French windows saying:—

"Come, my lambs! Come, Toto! You are all that I have in this wicked world."[Pg 195]

After that there was silence. Then came a hum of voices from outside and the taxi drove off. With a fair certainty of what the dénouement would be, I kept on a wrapper and lay down on the sofa to rest. Nearly an hour passed. Then the dogs on the veranda began to bark. This said volumes. It said in dog language that some one was entering the house. Soon after there was a creaking noise in the hall. Then silence again. Sniffing a friend, Toto, who slept in my room, went to the door and whined.

"Come back," I called; "there must be a burglar in the house. I will telephone to the police."

After that announcement there came a gentle tap on the door, and a voice whispered:—

"Please let me in for a moment. I want to speak to you once more."

Switching on the lights I opened the door, and Mr. Saltus came in.

"Forgive me, little girl," he said. "I'm a devil. I'm all you say I am, but I have not[Pg 196]wrecked your life, Mowgy. If I am less to you than a dog you never saw till yesterday I have failed,—totally failed. All the same I have never wanted anything but to see you smile. Try me again."

By that time there were two of us weeping, with Toto jumping up upon us licking our hands; taking on, as she did, our vibrations as might a delicately constructed instrument.

The following day I went to Mr. Saltus and said:—

"I'm dreadfully sorry over what occurred last night, and while there is no possible danger I want you to have your wound attended to."

"Don't worry over that," he said. "I had it cauterized this morning. Anyway, it did its work. That poor dog was trying to protect the house. He and I are on the same job and we will make friends."

They made up, and to such an extent that when after a few days a home was found for[Pg 197]the stray, Mr. Saltus had to be persuaded to let him go.

Neither Mr. Saltus nor those nearest to him realized that his nervous system was undergoing a change. Had this been recognized, the episode which followed would in all probability never have occurred. Mention of it is made because a great deal was said about it at the time, it being given out that Mr. Saltus had tried to kill me. This episode, unpleasant as it is, marked the last time that he ever lost control of himself.

It began in the dining-room after dinner while Mr. Saltus was enjoying his usual cigar. Some chance remark,—a hasty answer, more fuel, and the fuse was fired. Once again he was an It,—a Thing,—a submergedentity, deprived of his child and acting as a nursemaid to dogs. The more I tried to soothe him the more vehement he became. Distressed beyond words Auntie left the room and went upstairs, declaring that she would pack her things and leave the house the next morning, and that we[Pg 198]could fight it out and find each other out,—she was done. Repeated efforts to calm him had only the contrary effect. To leave him alone for a time seemed the only solution. Picking up the leash to fasten it to Toto's collar, with the idea of going for a walk while Mr. Saltus cooled down, was misunderstood by him. Seizing a carving knife from the serving table, and pulling the leash suddenly out of my hands, he dragged Toto behind him into the butler's pantry and locked the door. It was the cook's evening off. From his place of security he announced that he was going to cut Toto's throat and then his own. Turning on a faucet so that the water would trickle ever so slightly and suggest the dripping of blood, he became silent.

Had I argued or pleaded with him one cannot know what the result would have been. Silence on my part,—silence absolute and unbroken,—was the only course. A more horrible half-hour than that, Dante and Goya together could not have imagined. At the end[Pg 199]of that time the door opened and Mr. Saltus, with Toto wagging her tail behind him, reappeared. Relief at knowing that a tragedy was averted was such that I could only sink into a seat. Thereupon, possibly because I had said nothing, Mr. Saltus picked up tumblers and decanters from the sideboard and smashed them against the walls like so many eggshells, still vowing that he was going to kill himself. While in the pantry he had, instead of cutting his throat, consumed a whole bottle of gin. That strengthened his arm and his courage.

To leave him in such a condition would have been brutal. To remain was hazardous, for he brandished the knife and went on screaming. The night wore on, and the effects of the gin began to change their character. Deciding the time had come for a determined stand, I went up to him, and took the knife out of his hand. In his amazement at my effrontery he offered little resistance, although he still screamed of his wrongs. It was no time to argue. Neighbours hearing the racket telephoned[Pg 200]to the police that a lunatic was in the house and was trying to kill some one. An officer was sent to the door to inquire. That had a sobering effect. Kicking the broken glass out of his way Mr. Saltus finally decided to go to his room. By this time the sun was rising (not setting) upon his wrath.

At noon I went to consult our friend Dr. Hazeldine, a metaphysician as well as a physician, and he returned with me to the house. Mr. Saltus, he said, was in a very critical condition. Unable to eat, thrashing about in his bed like a spirit in torture, he presented a tragic picture, and the doctor decided to remain at the house until he could bring him around. This he did; but when the bringing was accomplished, bag, baggage and dog, I left the house, and saying "Good-bye forever," went down to San Diego.

That was more effectual than the visit of the police had been, knowing as he did that threats were not in my line. Letters and telegrams followed like shadows of sin. They were[Pg 201]answered, but in no way to offer encouragement. Clearly and firmly he was told that his conduct justified much that had been said against him, and though two women had escaped with their lives and sanity a third would be walking into a padded cell and taking on a life sentence voluntarily.

The reaction on Mr. Saltus was serious. He became really ill and his letters frantic. A novice still in Theosophy, accepting its theory of life, but ignoring its personal application, this lapse of his acted like an auger. It cut its way into the center of his consciousness, and in the realization of his failure, there was stimulated the dormant aspiration to re-create himself. A page from one of his letters is indicative of this:

"....De profundis clamavi.Don't make me die insane. In writing to you I have said everything that a human being can. If there was an assurance unexpressed it was through no fault of mine. Your answer was that your faith in me is shattered. I once said that if you[Pg 202]had a child by a negro I would forgive you and console you too. Yet your faith in me is shattered. Child——child,

—you are not to blame. If after all my love and care of you, you could write me that, it is because I have in the past betrayed the faith of other people. No,—you are not to blame. You are my own hands striking me in the face. As I measured it to others it is meted now to me. I may be your cross but you are crucified to me, and death alone can tear the nails from your hands. Even then it will leave the stigmata."

It was a difficult situation to cope with, for what he said was quite true. The ties which bind one to another are spun out of threads like cobwebs,—so gossamer in texture, so frail and unsubstantial, that they seem a thing one can brush aside with a touch. They are so fine,—they appear to have emerged from nothing,—a memory, an incident, a sorrow shared and forgotten,—but they persist. Delicate as they are, they are spun from the center of one's being. Turned, twisted and plaited[Pg 203]by the hand of fate, they become cables of steel. Reason may tell one they can be broken, but the soul knows better. Nothing in life can tear them completely asunder.

It was one of these frail threads which held now. Stronger ones by far, fashioned during the years, were there, but they fell apart. It was the frailest one which persisted. On the walls of memory was a picture. It was that of a man sitting on the top of a 'bus, sad and silent at the thought of returning to the States in a few days. It was early evening and we were going out to the extreme end of London,—Muswell Hill,—to compel distraction from the thoughts which pressed upon him from all sides. The 'bus was crowded, and we could not get a seat together. Mr. Saltus' however was directly behind my own, so we could talk to one another. Going up the hill toward Islington the 'bus swayed a bit, and I found myself swinging from side to side. In so doing a slight pull seemed to come from behind. Looking down I saw that Mr. Saltus was leaning forward[Pg 204]and holding a piece of my frock in his hands. He was unaware that I noticed it, nor did we ever refer to it later. It was such a little thing. Nothing worth speaking about, but it was his hand on the fold of my frock that held,—had held during the years, and held now.

When he wired that he was following to San Diego I was silent and let him come. It was then he realized how totally alone he was in the world, and how dependent also. My home was broken up and we were both wanderers. Though we were living at different hotels and I refused to discuss the matter with him, Mr. Saltus' conversation was directed to me through Toto.

"Come here, Toto," he said. "I didn't really hurt you, did I? I'm not always a devil. I have intervals of goodness. Go 'woof, woof' to Mummy and tell her I will go and die if she throws me into the ashcan."

This was followed by a series of "wows" and the remark:

"Don't give Snippsy up to the dog-catchers.[Pg 205]Snippsy likes to be a subordinate entity. He isn't happy otherwise."

He was miserable and sincere, but self-preservation is a difficult thing to fight. The upshot of it was that Mr. Saltus agreed to go East for a month or two, leaving me in California to get my nerves in shape again. He was on probation, or, as he expressed it, "saved from the pound."

It was horrible to see him go, and yet we both needed perspective, being too excited to act or even think sanely, as the episode over Toto had made clear. Two highly temperamental people, no matter how devoted to one another, act and react at times to their mutual disadvantage.

Standing beside the Los Angeles Limited, which was to take him back via Chicago, Mr. Saltus slipped an envelope in my hand. Upon opening it a letter enclosing a poem fell out. That poem, under the title of "My Hand in Yours," was published later.

As Mr. Saltus discovered on the train, our[Pg 206]minds had been working along similar lines, for I had slipped letters in various pockets in his coats and others in satchels, to cheer him at intervals on the return trip.

[Pg 207]

CHAPTER XII

To New York Mr. Saltus went, returning to San Diego in less than three months. He was still thin and nervous and had done no writing at all. In the interval, the penetrating influence of his philosophy had done its work, and he was taking the matter of his own evolution seriously. Allusions to Jean or the incident of the broken glass, were like burning raw flesh.

It was mid-winter when he returned, but no one would have suspected it from the June-like sunshine and roses. Taking long walks with Toto, with whom he loved to play hide-and-seek, he would go off for hours, resting in Balboa Park on the return trip.

In speaking of this afterward to Miss G——, she said that Mr. Saltus had looked so ill upon his return to New York that she thought he was in for a nervous breakdown. In the circumstances, the peace and quiet of San Diego were very restful to him.[Pg 208]

Then the question of the future presented itself again, and he asked:—

"When are you going to absorb me?" That was the way he jestingly put it. And then he asked:—

"Where shall we live?"

"California or London," I told him. "If one could combine the attractions of the two,—the climate of the former and the culture and comfort of the latter, heaven would not seem so vague a place. Take your choice, but New York—jamais!"

Mr. Saltus hated New York also,—hated clubs, although one had been more or less his headquarters for years. The old members of it were all dead, and he was not a man to make new friends. Barring the convenience of a club it was a horror to him. It was then agreed that he should return to the East, arrange his affairs and meet me in Montreal, where we would take the leap into matrimony and sail to England direct.

An incident occurred toward the end of[Pg 209]March, shortly before Mr. Saltus left for New York, which indicated, more than anything else, how radical had been the change in him. We were invited for tea at the home of a friend, Mrs. Butler. As her home was at a distance from the center of the city it was decided that I should take a trolley, while for the benefit of the exercise, Mr. Saltus would walk with Toto. Before separating however, he accompanied me to the fifth floor of a shop, where I made a few purchases. Reaching the street I left him with the assurance that he would rejoin me again in twenty minutes at Mrs. Butler's house. Toto, as usual, was a few feet in front of us, and, as it afterward developed, was unaware of the exact spot where we divided forces. It was over in a minute. I jumped into a trolley and disappeared.

Mrs. Butler's was reached. The twenty minutes doubled and redoubled, yet look as one might no sign of man or dog could be seen. That something had happened,—to the dog most likely,—seemed probable. It was a tense[Pg 210]waiting. The rapid twilight of the south was closing like a fan, when, silhouetted against the distant skyline, a pygmy, preceded by an animated dot, developed into a man and a dog.

It was a tale with no wag that he poured into my ears.

"When you left and jumped into the trolley," he said, "I became suddenly aware that I was alone. Toto had vanished. Inquiries were futile and fruitless. No one had seen her. She appeared to have dematerialized in a flash. I went to both the hotels and to all the places where we were in the habit of stopping. The result was the same."

"And what then?"

"I stood in the middle of the street and wowed. I was sure that Totesy Babe had been killed or stolen. It was horrible. I could not face you alive."

It would have taken courage without a doubt.

"What did you decide to do,—run away?"

"No,—I thought of that, but to run, meant[Pg 211]out of your life. To return without Toto would amount to the same thing. It was a case of 'Which way I fly is hell.... Infinite wrath and infinite despair.' There was no alternative but the Bay for me. Living, even if I remained in your life, Toto would have stood forever between us. Dead, you would think kindly of me and mourn for me also. It was the lesser evil."

"And then?"

"It seemed too bad to be true. A last hope remained. Returning to Marston's where we had separated, I questioned the door man. Yes, he had seen a black and white dog going in alone over an hour ago. The elevator man came next. He had let a dog off at the fifth floor, supposing she accompanied a customer. The mystery became less opaque. Toto was sitting under the counter where she had seen you last. The shop was closing and the assistants were puzzled what to do, as she refused to move and bared her teeth when any one came near her."[Pg 212]

There was no faking his seriousness. Mr. Saltus was in a state of collapse. The way he reacted to this episode made whole the broken glass, and put a sponge over the incident forever.

In a week or so, arrangements being made for us to meet and be married in Montreal, he returned to the East. The Montreal idea had merits. As we had decided to live under British laws it was as well to be married under them. Mr. Saltus' former matrimonial knots had been tied in New York and Paris. He wanted to try a new place for luck. Owing to his divorce from Helen Read he could not be married in New York State in any event. Besides, he wanted to avoid a thing which loomed like a menacing monster in his path,—publicity. The newspapers had been none too lenient over his first offense. With the attempt to secure a divorce from his second wife, all the past had been resurrected and flung in his face in none too complimentary a way. His imagination visualized the headlines over a[Pg 213]third marriage. "Saltus Lures Third Victim to the Altar." "Bluebeard Put to Blush." "At the Close of a Misspent Life Saltus Takes Third Wife to Nurse Him in His Declining and Reclining Years."

Spring merged into summer. Letters from Mr. Saltus, then in New York, inquiring when we should meet in Montreal, suggested also that we should sail from there direct to England.

An incident occurring at this time was so vital and far-reaching in my estimation that an indefinite postponement of our marriage seemed the only solution. I wrote him to that effect,—wrote also that I contemplated a trip to China and the far East. This was not done on impulse or in anger, and knowing that I was not given to threats, and that my reasons were substantial, Mr. Saltus took it like a death-blow. Four days journey apart, he was powerless to get to me before I could carry it into effect.

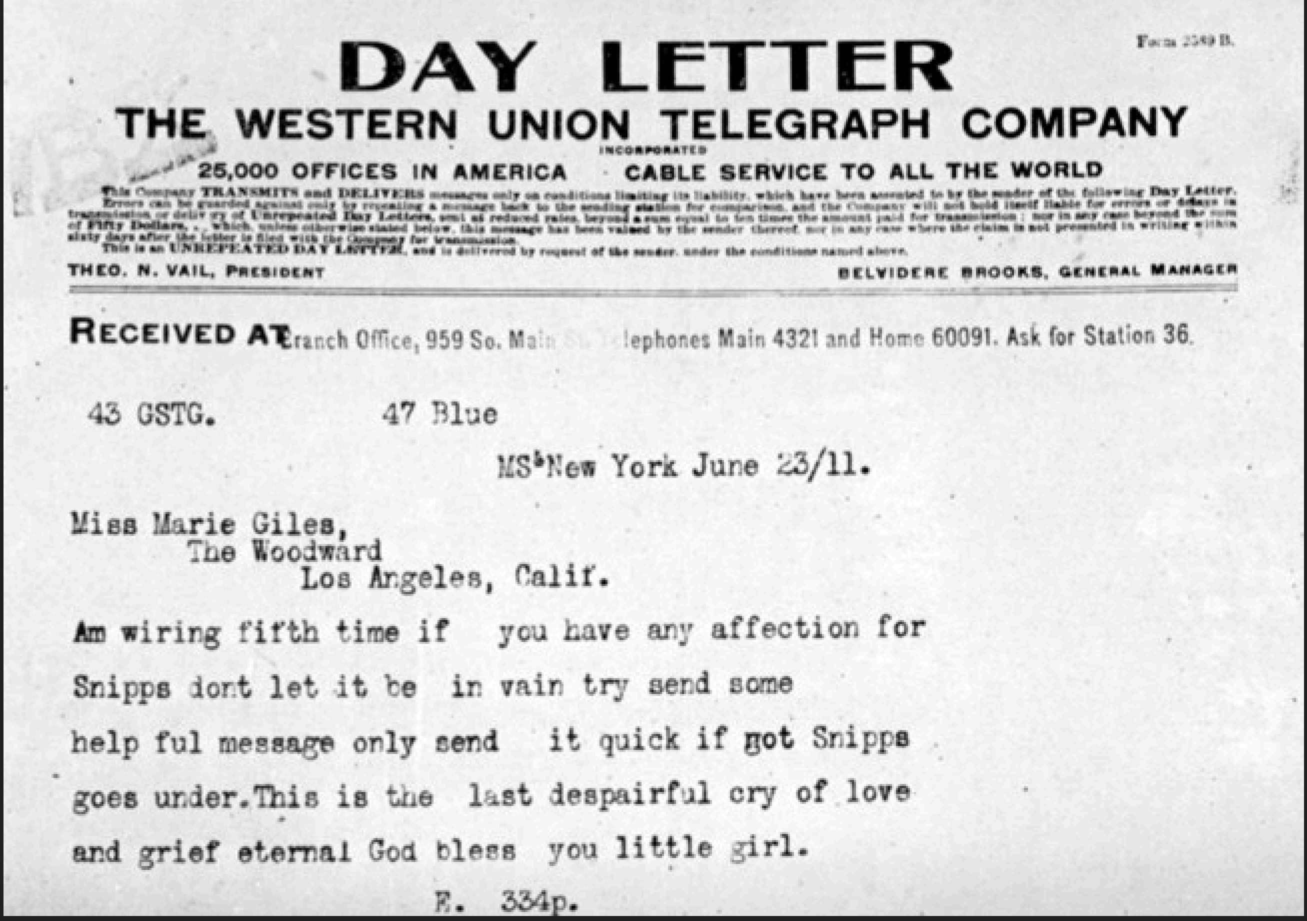
Telegrams stormed in. Though upsetting[Pg 214]in the extreme, they were unanswered. Self-preservation lifting its head again, suggested retreat. It was a mirage however. A preservation excluding him would have been momentary only, for wherever I might hide I knew he would find me if he spent his life in the search. The hand holding the fold of my frock held it still. His last telegram, so characteristic that it is given here, broke down my resistance:—

Miss Marie Giles,
The Woodward, Los Angeles,

California.

Am wiring fifth time. If you have any affection for Snipps don't let it be in vain. Try send some helpful message, only send it quick. If not Snipps goes under. This is the last despairful cry of love and grief eternal. God bless you little girl.

E.



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Los Angeles, Calif.

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E. 334p.

Fac-simile of Telegram sent to Marie Saltus

[Pg 215]

That broke me up entirely. A wire that I would start for Montreal at a certain date, was followed by my arrival there. Mr. Saltus was at the station. He was still thin but looking better. With a foresight scarcely to be expected he had arranged everything for our accommodation at the Windsor Hotel, dog included, and an application had been sent to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to take Toto into England. Over the details of our marriage however he had struck a snag. It was our desire to have the ceremony performed in the Roman Catholic Church, a form in which I had been educated. The ritual of the Church appealed very strongly to Mr. Saltus, as he believed it contained not only all the beauty and mysticism of the ancient mysteries but to his mind all the beauty and truth of Christianity as well. Owing to technicalities over his first marriage, and some uncertainty regarding baptism, this was found to be impossible. It was a severe disappointment to us both. A civil marriage was then decided upon. That, too, was out of the question. The Province of Quebec being under ecclesiastical law,[Pg 216]we appeared to have struck an impasse, and a trip to Toronto seemed inevitable.

It was the middle of August and the heat was frightful. I told Mr. Saltus to make any arrangements he pleased provided I did not have to run around myself.

The following day he came up to me in Dominion Square, where I was sitting for a breath of air, reading a detective story, with Toto lying at my feet.

"Come along,—we are going to get married," he said, "and we have only time to walk to the church comfortably."

Mr. Saltus was never behindhand when he had decided to go anywhere. When starting to catch a train one could be sure that an hour at least would be spent at the station, while he walked restlessly to and fro fuming at the slowness of the clock.

"Let me go to the hotel to change my frock, and get rid of this detective story," I said.

"Change nothing. Come along as you are. You can put on all the frills after you cremate[Pg 217]me,—if you have the courage to try it again."

He began pulling on my arm. It was nothing if not casual. After all, Toto was not concerned over our looks, and there was no one else but the clergyman, to whom we were complete strangers. Up Dorchester Street we sauntered. We were half an hour ahead of time as it was. Mr. Saltus fumbled in his pocket and brought out a ring. That was the most amusing and least expected part of it all. Time and again he had expressed himself on the subject of wedding rings with scorn. To him they appeared to be symbols of eternity between people for whom an eternity of misunderstanding was at that moment beginning. His views were my own. No symbol of servitude would, I had often remarked, weigh down a finger of mine. He handed it to me in silence, and in silence I looked at it, an unobtrusively thin band of gold with our initials, and the date and the word "Eternamente" inside. Smiling, I returned it and said nothing.[Pg 218]

"It's going to hurt me cruelly if you won't wear it," he said at last. "I know I have made fun of such things, but this is my last wedding, and this is different. It means something more than I supposed a marriage could." He broke off and inquired, "By the way, what are you going to do with Babe when we get to the church?"

Toto was trotting along a few feet in front of us.

"Take her to the wedding, of course. She can sit between us."

"However lightly you may be taking this, it's a serious affair to me," he said, "and much as I love her I don't think it the thing to take a dog into a church."

"What isn't the thing for her isn't the thing for me, either," he was told. "You can have both of us, or neither. Speak up."

We walked on a bit, and then looking at each other we began to laugh.

"I'll put on your symbol of servitude and[Pg 219]Babe goes to our wedding,—what do you say?"

"Right-O," Mr. Saltus agreed with a laugh. "It's the usual thing,—a mother accepting life-long punishment for the sake of her child."

We were at the door of the church then. Dr. Scott, who was substituting that summer at the American Presbyterian Church, met us with his witnesses, and giving the dog even a more cordial welcome than ourselves, performed a brief ceremony. Only when it was over did we realize that the detective story was still in my hand. It is to be hoped that Dr. Scott believed it a prayer book.

Unexpected events rearranged our plans. We did not sail from Montreal, but six weeks later I went from New York, and Mr. Saltus joined me in London in January. Thereafter during the next two years Mr. Saltus crossed and recrossed the ocean as if it were a ferry, living in an apartment hotel when in New York and when in London wherever I happened to be stopping.[Pg 220]

It was in the spring of 1914 when upon returning from a winter in Algeria and joining Mr. Saltus on the return route, I agreed to try the experiment of housekeeping. A maisonette in Nevile Street, Onslow Gardens, was the result of our search. For two such absent-minded and non-observing people, impatient of petty details, to attempt anything practical was braver than wise. English servants do not venture suggestions unasked. There were meals when I remembered to order them. Sometimes there was too much, and more often nothing at all. On these occasions it was convenient to live between the Brompton and Fulham Roads. I was always apologetic and distressed when we had to go out for a meal, but Mr. Saltus' remarks were invariably the same:—

"I hate practical women. Any fool can feed my body. I never expected you to develop into a housekeeper and I would hate you if you did. Smile and be yourself."

There are not many men who would say[Pg 221]that—on an empty stomach. A cook-housekeeper came to our rescue at last. Mr. Saltus was writing a series of articles for Harper's Bazaar at the time,—ultra-feminist articles. They were called "The Reflections of Floraline Schopenhauer." The writing of them amused and interested him very much. It was not creative work. It was a new figure on which to drape the ideas, witticisms and epigrams he had stored up in a note-book; and they were amazingly clever. In discussing them and women in general, I remembered his friend of the Los Angeles days and said:

"Did you never hear what became of that clever girl? It's queer that you lost all track of her."

"No," he said, "I believe she went to France to live."

The subject dropped there. With his obsessing fear of the possibility of unpleasantness, added to the memory that he had denied all knowledge of her when in San Diego, he would not, or could not, face the fact—simple[Pg 222]enough if he had not complicated it for himself—that the friendship had continued. He might have told me that he had seen her again in New York and coached her a bit in writing, where, with her clever pen and unusual ability, she had forged ahead into a position of great responsibility.

Having once more the comfortable background of a home, Mr. Saltus took up his studies in occultism, spending hours in the Theosophical Library in Tavistock Square poring over the "Pistis Sophia." That again opened up vistas and visions of a far-reaching character. From the Theosophical Headquarters it was but a step to the British Museum, and the holy of holies where rare books are loaned to responsible students within the enclosure. This spot was always the Mecca toward which Mr. Saltus gravitated.

Leaving our apartment about eleven o'clock each morning, he would take a 'bus to Piccadilly Circus, and walk the rest of the way to Museum Street. On the return trip he walked[Pg 223]all the way, trying to get in better physical trim through exercise.

Coming home one day he made the first allusion to the twinges in his legs which increased rapidly in both inconvenience and pain.

"I'm getting to be a good-for-nothing old scoundrel," he announced at dinner one night. "I, who used to walk from Los Angeles to Hollywood with ease, am in for something. I cannot understand what causes the pain and discomfort in my legs. I'm ready for the ashcan. You will never get a hat for me."

"Don't you believe it. If you have any fears concerning your value I will get up a sale and auction you off."

"I don't want to be auctioned off. Men are scarce in England and a fat woman might bid me in. Even if you want to get rid of me, Babe wants me."

"Neither you nor Babe need distress yourselves. Your absence will not be prolonged. The fat woman will drop you back on the[Pg 224]door-step as damaged goods and I can auction you off all over again. It will be an endless procedure."

Joking with me was a diversion that Mr. Saltus loved. We were always living with imaginary people concerning whom he would ask hypothetical questions. One was as follows:—

"What would you do if a fat woman came in with a bag in her hand, and tried to put me in it and take me away?"

"'Madame,' I would say, 'if you are trying to steal my little Snippsy, let me assure you, that though men may be scarce, hats are more so. A smart autumn model in exchange is my price.'"

At that Mr. Saltus would exclaim:—

"I would not go. I would scream and bite her, and she would be glad to let me drop."

"Not at all," I always replied, "for I would tell her that you have been expecting hydrophobia all these years and it has at last shown[Pg 225]itself. Then she would carry you off to the lethal chamber with all speed."

That remark always called forth a series of "Wows" in various keys. This story with variations was gone over and over, and as a rule was followed by one from me. Mr. Saltus was disappointed when it was not.

"What would you do," I asked, "if, upon going into your study you found a giant elemental sitting at your desk tampering with your copy?"

Woe to the typist who had the temerity to change even a comma in Mr. Saltus' work. It was enough to incite him to murder.

"I would go mad,—seize the elemental and my vibrations alone would tear him to atoms."

"But suppose he was an all-powerful elemental,—a black magician, and he said that he was going to edit everything you wrote in the future?"

"Then," Mr. Saltus always said, "I would rush to the window, open it and jump out into the fourth dimension in the akasha."[Pg 226]

The episode of the elemental ended there till the next telling. So much of Mr. Saltus' life had been sad and unsatisfying that the desire to dip for a time into make-believe was soothing and diverting to him. It was a region in which we spent many an hour.

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CHAPTER XIII

During his stay in London, a year before, Mr. Saltus had made the acquaintance of a friend of mine,—a very remarkable woman, Mrs. M——, a lady of foreign birth and high social position, married to a Britisher. Unique as a mother, untiring in the service of humanity, and possessing extraordinary supernormal powers, she gave him, firsthand and from personal investigation, information and understanding of so unusual a character, that Mr. Saltus regarded the privilege of knowing her as an unmerited blessing. She gave him also a curious old talisman—a tiny Rosicrucian cross that had once belonged to a world-renowned occultist. So frail and worn had it become by centuries of use, that twice it had been backed with gold to hold it together. It was the last earthly possession his hand relinquished in death.[Pg 228]

Figuratively and literally, Mr. Saltus sat at Mrs. M——'s feet and absorbed what she gave him. Her influence on his life was more vital and far-reaching than that of any other human he ever met.

"Triple ass that I was," he said over and over again after he met her. "I sent out 'Lords of the Ghostland' when I knew nothing. Had I but waited till now I could have written a masterpiece. Instead of that I turned out a skeleton,—no meat, no truth, no insides."

This fretted him constantly.

"If I live long enough," he said, "I will undo 'The Philosophy of Disenchantment' and 'The Anatomy of Negation,' as well as 'Lords of the Ghostland,' and epitomize all I have digested into a single volume and call it 'The History of God.' Then I will sing myNunc dimittis, go to Adyar and put my pen at the service of Mrs. Besant."

It was a far step for the man who had once written, "There is no help here or anywhere." Years of study, reinforced by the chastening[Pg 229]effect of thinking for another less practical and more highly strung than himself, had done much for him, but the increasing application of Theosophy to his daily life had done more. As far as he could, he made himself over—recognizing and combatting his weaknesses with heroic courage. Though the remnants of his fundamental fears remained and cropped up at unexpected times and places, they were modified to a remarkable degree. One could not anticipate them however, and occasionally they led to rather amusing results.

It was after a prolonged period of insomnia and a nervous breakdown, super-induced by circumstances entirely unconnected with Mr. Saltus, and after I had been in bed for weeks, that one of these lapses occurred. He was an angel during this trying time, rushing up to Covent Garden daily to get me peaches (a luxury in England) and taking his meals on a tray at my bedside, after which he read aloud to me as long as I cared to have him do so. It was after a peaceful evening passed in this[Pg 230]way, that one of his fears reappeared for a moment, and in such a way that one with less understanding of his psychology would have been very angry.

Mr. Saltus' bed-room opened off my own, and it was our custom to leave the door ajar in case I should need something during the night. He was asleep and I was resting when a low "woof" came from the foot of my bed. Another "woof!" and then a growl followed. Toto was trained to be quiet and did not "woof" without cause. I sat up and listened. Light footsteps were audible from the drawing-room down stairs. I waited a moment or two to make sure, and then, speaking quite naturally but loudly enough to waken him, I said:—

"Get up, Snippsy. I think there are burglars down-stairs."

What followed was enough to frighten even the most hardened criminal. With a blood-curdling shriek, Mr. Saltus sprang from his bed, and slamming the door between our rooms locked it,—locking as well the other[Pg 231]door giving on to the hallway. So unexpected was it, and so sudden, that it took me a moment to realize that instead of going to the rescue, he was, as he afterward admitted, curled up in bed, with the covering pulled over his head.

Somebody had to do something. Getting out of the bed I had not left for weeks, with Toto leading the way, I turned on the drawing-room lights from a switch, and tottered down stairs. The intruder was quite harmless,—a man who occupied a tiny pied-à-terre on the ground floor. He had mislaid his matches, and being on a friendly footing with us had, as he thought, come up noiselessly to help himself from our smoking-stand.

When with shaking legs I managed to get up the stairs again, Mr. Saltus met me on the landing. He had gained control of his nerves and was coming down to look after me. It was my hand which locked the door between our rooms that time, after calling him a "spineless jellyfish," an epithet which he had heard many[Pg 232]times before and which always called forth the same reply:—

"Were our spines of the same rigidity we would have killed one another years ago."

None the less Mr. Saltus was none too keen for me to ask those of our friends who dropped in for tea, if they wanted to hear how he routed the burglar. How ever the telling of this affair sounds, it was not the result of fear in the accepted sense of the word. It was a condition of Mr. Saltus' nerves only.

A day or so later, a specialist having been called in to see me, he suggested that pernicious anæmia might be aggravating my illness, and that transfusion of blood might be necessary. Mr. Saltus bared his arm in an instant, insisting that no time be lost and that his blood and no other be taken. It was however found to be a wrong diagnosis. Brave he always was, when there was no sudden impact on his nervous system.

Mr. Saltus loved London, the city, the life and the people. He loved even the greyness of[Pg 233]it,—loved the British Museum and the parks, but most of his old friends had passed on. One interesting figure silhouetted against the background of England,—one whom Mr. Saltus had known until then only through correspondence,—was T. P. O'Connor, M.P. Having seen quite a bit of him, and most pleasurably, the previous winter in Algeria, our first outing after I was able to be about, was to have tea on the Terrace at the House of Commons with him.

"I've read everything you have written," he told Mr. Saltus with a handshake.

"That you have survived it is the more amazing," Mr. Saltus answered.

Tea and time were consumed and forgotten. They were at home with each other in a moment, and Mr. Saltus was enchanted by "Tay Pay's" wit and charm. They laughed and chatted like two boys in a tuck-shop.

It was upon returning from the House that afternoon that Mr. Saltus complained again of the pain in his legs.[Pg 234]

"I walk less and less easily each day," he said. "What can be coming over me? Am I going to be paralyzed?"

A physician was consulted the following day, and a liniment prescribed, but the pain went on increasing. A few days after, and while Mr. Saltus was much depressed over his condition, we were invited to a dinner, which he accepted. Barring myself, the guests were all celebrities of various kinds,—playwrights, authors, actors, musicians and lecturers, with Mr. Saltus the visiting comet. It was not until the taxi was at the door to take us that he announced:—

"Mr. Me, won't go."

There were no extenuating circumstances to excuse him, nor did he attempt to find or fake them. Past experience had shown him how transparent they were to me.

"I'm not up to the mark. I'm incapable of being a rapid-firing battery of wit, wisdom and epigrams," he announced.

"You should have realized your limitations[Pg 235]sooner," I said, "for you cannot evade a dinner at the twelfth hour, when you are the guest of dishonour as well. We are already late. It's outrageous."

"Outrageous or not, I'm not going. You never do anything that is expected of you. Why should I? The less people see of me the better they will think of me. You must go and get me out of it as well as you can. Take a leaf out of my book and invent something."

That was too much.

"I won't have to invent, to tell them you are a lunatic resting from a lucid interval. No wonder there is no stampede for your work. You wrap yourself in impenetrability and expect the world to be clairvoyant. It won't do. I will be Balaam's ass no longer. You must bray for yourself."

His braying was the usual "Wow! Wow! Please extract poor Snippsy. He'll take Totesy Babe for a walk in Kensington Gardens every day and be such a good boy ever after. Why[Pg 236]do you care how I treat others? I'm always old dog Tray to you."

What could one do with such a man? He had to be taken "as is," the way they label goods on bargain counters, or not at all. I could have insisted, and taken him willing or not, for more than he disliked being dragged out against his will did he hate to have me seriously provoked with him. But what would have been the use? He would have gone had I insisted, but acquitted himself in such a way that his absence would have been preferable.

This was not the first time that such a thing had occurred.

When I was living in California he had refused to come to the dining-table in my own house, and gone to bed while the guests were arriving. Fate was against him, however, in that instance. I invented a fairy tale to cover his absence and all would have been well, but while the maid was passing coffee in the drawing-room Mr. Saltus remembered a bottle of gin in the pantry. No one answering his[Pg 237]ring, he slipped down the back stairway to secure it, and tripping, fell down the entire length, with such a thud that guests as well as servants were in doubt if a burglar or an earthquake was responsible. With one accord they rushed in the direction of the sound and discovered him in extreme negligée, to his even more extreme embarrassment. This was an episode he did not like referred to, but upon this second offense it was dragged out again in all its details!

"No white woman should have married you," I exploded, "and I have only myself to blame with two sad examples to warn me. Good-night."

It was no rare treat to appear at a dinner of celebrities after the guests were seated, minus the star who was my sole reason for being included, and take it as if I were lapping up cream. To be casual was no joke. I entered with the remark, that, being an assemblage of egos answering to the classification genius, they alone could appreciate the temperamental[Pg 238]spells of unknown origin afflicting the species—and be tolerant to a fellow in crime. To sit down and pretend to enjoy it topped the treat.

A fortnight later saw us at the Granville Hotel, Ramsgate, for the week end. As he had been there less frequently than myself, and knew fewer people, some one referred to Mr. Saltus as "Mrs. Saltus' husband." That amused him enormously.

"They have me in my proper place here," he exclaimed. "They know I am a subordinate entity."

A greater surprise was, however, awaiting him when a child on the sand called out:—

"Look,—there is Toto's Papa!"

That sent Mr. Saltus into a fit of laughter. He always enjoyed a joke on himself so much. The sea air which is supposed to induce sleep was our reason for going to Ramsgate, but even sea air handicapped by the noise of slamming doors and loud talking in the halls, seemed useless. I complained of this before[Pg 239]going to my room, and Mr. Saltus said that he would speak to the manager of the hotel and see what could be done about it.

The following morning, upon going out with the dog, I almost fell over Mr. Saltus. He had sat on a chair with his back against my door all night in order to urge those who passed to be quiet. That offset the incident of the burglar and the dinner with interest, yet he did not feel that he had done anything exceptional. He was himself,—that was all. The latent sweetness and unselfishness in his character developed along lines uniquely his own. He was an entity who could not be taken apart and analyzed. He had to be accepted as a whole or not at all. He had his weaknesses,—they were near the surface and but imperfectly concealed. He had also a nobility, a fineness and a greatness of soul I have never seen equalled by any human, at any time, anywhere.

A day or two later the world was shaken by the wordWAR. Rumours of it had[Pg 240]been in the air for some time,—not a world war to be sure, but a civil one in Ireland. Leading Home Rule members of Parliament had been in nightly conference with the Prime Minister, and from what our friend "Tay Pay" had let drop, we anticipated anything but what eventuated. No one in unprepared England dreamed of war. The idea was too bizarre, too theatrical to be true. Everyone was talking about it, but no one really believed it possible, except perhaps those few who, having an extension of consciousness, could penetrate the veil of the seeming of things.

Mr. Saltus with myself was in a cinema, when, during an interval between pictures, there was flashed upon the screen the message, "Great Britain sends ultimatum to Germany." The audience, spell-bound at first and silent, let out an enthusiastic "Hurrah!" Mr. Saltus gripped me by the arm and whispered:—

"If this is true it means not only a world war but the breaking up of our home here, and my return to the States, for it may last for years,[Pg 241]and no one knows how the stock market may jump and whether ruin camps on the door-step." (What little Mr. Saltus had was in stocks and bonds.)

British as he was in sympathy and inclination—wishing, as he had said many times, that karma would bring him back next life as an English country gentleman,—Mr. Saltus threw himself into the spirit of what followed, in a way that no one could have foreseen. Countermanding the orders given the maid never go to his room unless the house was on fire, he told her to bring the morning papers at whatever hour they were delivered, which was usually before seven, and thereafter during the day to take up all the extras she could secure. "Floraline Schopenhauer" was put aside, and a sonnet, "Caligula Germanicus," was the immediate result.

The summer advanced, and so did the march toward Paris. Then, in common with all Americans in England, he began to rage against the United States and its apparent[Pg 242]apathy. His inability to do anything was irksome. To stand on the balcony giving off of our drawing-room and watch the first raw recruits march past, made it difficult for him to restrain himself. With a Union Jack fastened to Toto's collar he would go out for his usual walk in Kensington Gardens, and come back raging at his uselessness. Backed by a wife proud of her British ancestry and growing more and more indignant each day at the United States Government, Mr. Saltus finally decided to become a naturalized British subject. Incidentally, this was what Henry James did a little later on. That he did not take out these papers (which, had it been done, would have saved me a series of unpleasant incidents) was owing to the fact that such small possessions as he had were in the United States, and that, writing for the magazines and newspapers published in New York, he was dependent on the good-will of the American public. It was taking a chance to swap countries during a[Pg 243]war. A blacklisting of his work was within the possibilities.

At the beginning of the war people were seen in restaurants and theatres a great deal. The slogan "Business as usual" meant the keeping alive of their morale. That phase of it passed Mr. Saltus unnoticed. Not half a dozen times during his life in London did he go out of an evening. They were all alike, prefaced by a short walk to give our dog some exercise, followed by an hour or two of studying the Quabala. Such a life would have been not only deadly to the normal woman, but would have sent her rushing to Reno. So seldom was Mr. Saltus asked by me to go anywhere, and so certain was he that if asked it would be worth while, that he never questioned where I was taking him. Like the little boy who when he was good was very good indeed and when he was bad was horrid, Mr. Saltus took the hurdle from one to the other at intervals. It was about seven to five, the balance, however, being in his favour.[Pg 244]

Among his mental twists was a very pronounced one. Willing enough to entertain now and again provided the people were interesting, he was unalterably opposed to having anyone, no matter who, sleep under our roof for even a single night. Strangers irritated him, and friends if they remained too long did so as well. One incident shows how embarrassing it could become at times.

Among my friends was a beautiful and talented girl, Miss H——, who lived in the country, and for whom Mr. Saltus had expressed much admiration. She came up to London one afternoon. It was in the early days of the war, when hotels and boarding-houses were packed with Americans waiting to sail for home. In these circumstances she could find no place to stop; and, knowing we had a maisonette of some size, she called me on the telephone and asked if I could put her up for the night, suggesting very considerately that she would occupy the chesterfield in the drawing-room on the floor below our sleeping rooms.[Pg 245]Well acquainted with Mr. Saltus' peculiarities, I would have invented an excuse, but his admiration for her had been so often expressed that I believed she would prove the exception, so, deciding to chance it, I told her to come. Upon his return from a walk I told him what had occurred. The clouds gathered. Didn't I know that no one, princess or queen, would be welcome to stay over a night? His house was his castle. To everyone else he had to be Edgar Saltus, the author. With me only could he be Snippsy and take his comfort. Argument sent him into a rage. Told at last that she positively must come, he ran upstairs and packed his suitcases.

"If she comes I go to a hotel."

"That is impossible," I told him. "She would have gone to one herself if she could have secured a room anywhere. The poor girl only asks to sleep down stairs in the drawing-room."

"If I can't get a room I'll sleep on a park bench or the ground. It's summer and it won't[Pg 246]kill me. The men at the front have much worse."

There was no bluff about it.

"Call her up," he urged, "and tell her I am a lunatic whose worst mania is killing people in their sleep."

"It's likely that she would believe a tale that wagged like that, and she would hate you forever afterward."

"What the devil do I care?" he screamed. "Let her hate all she likes provided she stays away."

"Call her yourself," I said, "and tell her so. It's your funeral, not mine."

Straight to the telephone he went and did so, not in the language he had used to me. It was apologetic and diplomatic in the extreme, but it let her know very definitely that she could not come. She did not come, and she never darkened our door again; and there is very little doubt in my mind but that she regarded me as the culprit and Mr. Saltus as the scapegoat forced to do an unpardonable[Pg 247]act. She probably concluded upon thinking it over that I looked upon her as more dangerous than the woman with the sack she had heard us joke about, and that I was afraid she might carry him off more effectually.

I had let Mr. Saltus turn himself out of the house when we were in Los Angeles because a principle was involved and the life of a defenceless animal jeopardized. There was no question of that in this case, for humans speak or shriek their need; besides, Miss H—— was a very charming girl and had other acquaintances in London.

So Mr. Saltus slept in peace under his own roof and the chapter was closed.

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CHAPTER XIV

On the heels of this episode was one of another character. Among Mr. Saltus' many charming qualities was an especially endearing one. With persons he loved, the passing of years seemed to leave no trace whatever, and he could see no difference in their personal appearance. In his eyes, until the hour of his death, I remained the fragile and impertinent child to whom he had stretched out his hand on the sands of Narragansett Pier,—a helpless and impractical creature in a world of scheming scoundrels.

In his eyes I had not a fault. It was not that he was in ignorance of my limitations and undesirable qualities; these he saw with clarity, but he believed that every virtue had its negative aspect as well,—the defects of its qualities, as he expressed it,—and to divert or eliminate these was to impair the desirable attributes[Pg 249]behind them. In consequence any shortcomings of mine were regarded as indications only of the most superlative virtues, and not to be tampered with. No woman could ask more of a man than to accept her limitations and incapacities as evidences of her extraordinary worth. This hallucination was a pleasing one, but it had its negative side as well. Nothing could convince Mr. Saltus that every male creature was not laying plans to entice me away from him. The fact that for long periods at a time I was not only ill, but looked too frail to attract anything more than sympathy, counted for nothing. The fact that the majority of men could not run fast enough from a woman possessing my defects was unconvincing to him. Over and over he was told that the qualities which attracted him would antagonize the average man from the start. He was still convinced that I was a fragile and unsuspecting child in a world of vultures and demons. It must be said, however, that Mr. Saltus was too much of a philosopher ever to ask me to[Pg 250]do or to omit anything. My freedom of action was limitless and his trust absolute, and he never questioned any of my actions except as a joke.

Among our acquaintances was a Turkish diplomat, T—— Bey. Occasionally, as is the custom in England, I had tea with him or he with us, and now and again I went with him for a walk in the Gardens. The fact that he looked enough like Mr. Saltus to be a twin brother had first called him to my attention. He was perhaps ten years younger, but they looked about of an age.

Besides the fat woman and the elemental, there was another joke we had rehearsed for years. It was as follows, and leads directly to the incident concerning T—— Bey.

"If you had not been such a black devil I would not have fancied you," I used to tell him.

"I'm not a black devil. I'm a good little slavey."

"No,—you're a little dark E" (making a pun[Pg 251]on his name), "and your complexion is your stock in trade."

"I thought it was my wheedling ways?"

"No, indeed! And if I ever disappear, look about for a man a shade or two darker than yourself and miaw around the neighborhood."

"Any man darker than I will have a touch of the tar brush."

"Perhaps you have a bit yourself. Remember, an ancestress of yours came from Port Royal, Jamaica. I have often suspected the worst."

This joking always amused him so much that when en route to Africa the year before I had written him saying that it was with delightful anticipations I neared the home of his ancestors. That letter brought the query, "Which, monkeys or blacks?" To which I replied that they would be "high monkey-monks of some kind."

Much as he enjoyed this chaffing with me, T—— Bey stuck somewhat in his throat when I joked about him. Accustomed to his[Pg 252]habit of non-interference—for, as he remarked, "Dogs can be trained, but cats have to have their own way in everything"—I was amazed when he said:—

"If you don't mind, and can see your way to it, I would rather you did not go alone to restaurants with T—— Bey."

"Of course not if you prefer," was my immediate reply. It was a trivial matter, too unimportant for discussion. An hour later, however, when going into the Ritz for tea with some friends from the country, I found T—— Bey was included. That was quite all right. What was not so was the fact, that while tea was being served an urgent telephone call made it necessary for my friends to leave at once. T—— Bey and I were left alone having our tea together. To get up and go, no matter what the excuse, would have been an insult. There was nothing to do but to remain and explain the circumstances afterward to Mr. Saltus. That explanation was never given or asked. As we were finishing our tea Mr. Saltus[Pg 253]walked into the room, saw us, and coming forward smiling with outstretched hand asked if he might join us. This he did, chatting all the time as delightfully as he could. Being asked by T—— Bey if he knew I was in the Ritz, he answered lightly, but with an underlying meaning:—

"Myintuitionsabout Mrs. Saltus are uncanny. If she has as much as a headache I know it. If she is perplexed I feel it, and if she is vexed with me without giving a sign of it, her vibrations tear me to pieces and I cannot endure it."

On the way home I started to tell him how it had all come about, but he stopped me short.

"Leave explanations to strangers,—love understands. That you were there after what you said this morning, is in itself proof that it was accidental."

He would not listen to a word and the subject dropped then and there. It was perhaps because of his laxity in this respect that my regard for truth was adamant. It was in consequence[Pg 254]characteristic of Mr. Saltus to avoid any discussion with me in which I might be forced to ask:—

"Do you want to hear the unvarnished truth?"

"No—no, varnish it,—varnish it, if it will hurt, which truth is more than likely to do. I would rather hear pleasing lies, even if I cannot believe them."

That was Mr. Saltus in the raw. He could not face truth, if either to hear it or to tell it was likely to cause pain or unpleasantness. Running parallel to this peculiarity was another, oriental in its courtesy, unusual in its application,—his attitude of deference toward me. Asked by T. P. O'Connor to express his views on a subject he had not considered until that moment he said:—

"Have you asked Mrs. Saltus what she thinks?"

"No," said T. P., "I'm asking you. It's your angle and opinion I want."

"My opinion is a zero. I haven't considered[Pg 255]the subject at all. Ask Mrs. Saltus for hers. After this we will be sure to discuss it, and whatever I may say off hand, I am sure to accept her views in a week or two anyway. Ask her now, it will save time."

Not only was his attitude highly deferential but most embarrassing at times. Upon one occasion I was asked by a foreign diplomat how it felt to live with a genius. Before I could reply Mr. Saltus took us both off our feet by cutting in:—

"Don't ask the poor girl something she does not know, and cannot answer. If you want to know about living with a genius, ask me."

The diplomat's understanding of English was imperfect, and this was too much for him. He may be still trying to decipher the reply.

During the years Mr. Saltus had become an adept with animals. Through his affection for Toto he had absorbed their psychology. It was he now who rushed into the street to pick up a horse's feed-bag and restore it to its place. Seeing an injured cat near Museum Street, and[Pg 256]being unable to get any one to help him, he discarded an armful of books and, calling a taxi, carried the victim in his arms to the Cat Shelter at Camden Town.

With autumn came the query, What and where? The war had been gaining momentum. Obviously it was unwise to remain too long away from the base of supplies. Certain also it was that if we tore up our home, taking everything back to the States, it would mean remaining there. With one of us remaining in England a home might be resurrected. It was in consequence decided that Mr. Saltus should return to New York, and rejoin me after things looked a bit clearer. The pain in his legs increased so that he walked less and less each day, but when he saw how it worried me he pretended that he was getting better and had never been as well in his life. In his anxiety to spare me and his desire to avoid telling disagreeable things he made a frightful mistake. Had I known the truth, never would I have let him return alone.[Pg 257]

Leaving England was always a tug at his heart-strings. He was reluctant to put an ocean between us and reluctant to turn his back on possible service. Little did either of us dream, however, that he was leaving his beloved British Museum for the last time. In Waterloo Station once more, the station in which he had said so many "good-byes," we said au revoir again.

Upon his return to New York Mr. Saltus took rooms near the Manhattan Club and began to write a few articles on the origin of the war. Since "The Monster," he had attempted nothing of a sustained or exhausting character. It was not long before his letters became filled with anxiety over the distance between us, and he began to write—jestingly, to be sure—of acute indigestion, which, gripping him suddenly and sharply, had dropped like a vulture out of the air. As he expressed it, "Karma has me, not by the heels, at last, but by the solar plexus first." Added to the distress in his legs, which he finally admitted, were[Pg 258]these attacks, so sharp and severe that after the slightest exertion he had to sit down faint from the pain. Had the war been over he was in no condition to take a journey. Miss G——afterward told me that he had greatly minimized the seriousness of his condition in writing me of it. Still his hope of returning to England persisted. The letters which followed me to Scotland, Ireland and back to England again were full of it.

Barring the little apartment in Washington Heights where Miss S—— made him welcome, offering such assistance and comfort as she could, and Miss G——, who suggested physicians and did all she could for his benefit, he went nowhere and saw no one. Had I known of the kindness and assistance so freely given by Miss S——, it would have relieved my mind concerning him. Unfortunately it was only after his death that I was able to thank her for all this.

By 1916 Mr. Saltus realized his condition better, and reading between the lines of his[Pg 259]letters I offered to return. Passage was taken, but because of the unrestricted submarining the boat was at the last moment withdrawn. Owing to the censor, cables as well as letters were delayed. The worry of it all made Mr. Saltus go down hill rapidly. In connection with this an incident occurred which affected Mr. Saltus horribly, and through no fault of either his or mine. It is so touching, so indicative of his finest sweetness and most endearing qualities, that it is not out of place here.

During the summer of 1913 we had met a very interesting Hindu of exalted position. A mutual interest in occultism drew us together, and thereafter he became one of our play persons, Mr. Saltus teasing me with the remark:—

"When you elope with I——, it will give me an excuse for following you to India, and India is the Mecca of my dreams."

"If it comes to the worst and you can see it no other way, I will do my best to accommodate you," was the usual reply.

One can joke over a matter face to face, but[Pg 260]war and distance give it another complexion. In a letter of mine, solely to amuse him, I mentioned that I had been out for tea with I——, and ended with the remark, "So don't give up your hope of India."

It was Mr. Saltus' custom as well as my own to write in the upper left-hand corner of our letters, "via Mauretania," or via this or that fast boat, in order that our letters would go the speediest way. Owing to the censor they were delayed at best, and then arrived five or six at a time. After this letter with the joke concerning I——, I wrote again almost at once, with "via Mauretania" in the corner as usual. Repairs being necessary, this particular boat was withdrawn for a fortnight, and my letter stupidly held over till its next crossing. All of this neither of us knew. What Mr. Saltus did know was that ten days went by without a line from me: a thing so unprecedented that it bowled him over completely. During this time I went down to Brighton for a week, which delayed my next letter, and caused the[Pg 261]cables which came from him to be opened, delayed, and reopened, before reaching me, for resorts on the sea were under special scrutiny. Hearing nothing from his cables, Mr. Saltus sent others to two friends, neither of which were delivered, as the friends happened to be in France at the time. When these finally reached me in a bundle I was both horrified and overcome. Rushing to the cable office I sent the following: "No one but Snipps. Written constantly. At Brighton for the weekend. Eternamente. Mowgy." This I believed would set his mind at rest. Worse was to follow. After being held for some time the cable was not only returned to me, but it was discovered that I had omitted to register as a foreigner, and I was regarded with a certain amount of suspicion. Snipps, Mowgy, and Eternamente, were not English words, and I was required to explain them. It was a terrible mess. In the meantime a letter came from Mr. Saltus. So extraordinary is it,—so unlike the letter of the average male,—that its words are[Pg 262]burned into my heart. That letter alone lifted him beyond and above the majority of his sex. After telling of his anxiety and the absence of letters it reads as follows:—

"... Do not think I am scolding you—and don't let me worry you either. I am not physically ill. I have only had a shock, and that prevents me from working. A few days ago I wrote you that I supposed I had not heard because the ships were delayed by storm and fog. Well, I waited hopefully. The storm passed, the fogs lifted and the ships came in. No letter. That was the shock, and was horrible. I cabled to the Brunswick, cabled also to the American Express and to Miss F——, and received no reply. My eyes look dreadfully, all blurred and red. I am not ill, but I might just as well be. I don't know when I will have the courage to look in my letter box. You will never know how horrible it is to look in and find it empty. It is as though I had a crack over the head, and a blow in the stomach. But there, little kit-cat, provided you[Pg 263]are not hurt or ill no matter about me. Anyway, God willing and God grant it, I will get an answer to this. In cabling say only, "Well, and safe, Mowgy." Don't send it deferred rates, for every hour of waiting is agony. It ought to reach me on the second by noon. If it doesn't? Well, Mowgy, then in that case remember this.

Always, whatever you do or omit, I shall love you just the same. Always whatever you do I will forgive it. You are my little world and will be until the end. And just this, my darling: try and write that you forgive me for anything I have done or said which I ought not to. Remember that you are my all and that you can always return to me without thought of censure on my part. My little girl—if I could only stop crying. E."

This incident upset me frightfully. It proved that Mr. Saltus must be in a critical condition mentally, to be imagining such wild and impossible things, and that he needed care. There was still no sign of the war coming to an end, and whether or not a home in England would[Pg 264]be advisable under the changed conditions was open to question, for we were suffering acutely, not only for food, but for light, heat and other necessities.

Risking the submarines and the unforeseen, I sailed for the States. Mr. Saltus met me at the dock. Lack of exercise had made him too stout by far, he looked puffy, and every few feet he had to stop, for between the pain in his legs and the flatulence he was in bad shape.

He took me to the Hotel Broztel in East 27th Street, not only because it was only around the corner from his rooms, but because he had ascertained that our dog would be welcome there.

Mr. Saltus' usual method of assuring Toto's reception was an amusing one. Going to the office of the hotel, wherever we happened to be, he would say to the room clerk:—

"I want to know if there is any objection to children?"

He was of course assured that there was none.[Pg 265]

"But my child is not like other children," he would say. "She has a fancy for running about in the organism of a dog. That is all there is of dog about her,—the rest is far more human than yourself."

At that stage in the conversation the man at the desk would begin looking around to see if there was a keeper with him, and if help could be obtained quickly. When this uneasiness became apparent, I would stroll up with Toto, who, putting her paws on the desk, woofing and going through her paces, would so intrigue the room clerk that he would forget Mr. Saltus and decide that the crazy owners of such a clever creature could be accommodated.

In connection with hotels and Toto, Mr. Saltus had an original way of putting our names on the register. It savoured of sarcasm and a slap at me in the bargain, but he always insisted that it was neither, and insisted upon the following:—

Mrs. Edgar Saltus and Dog New York City
Edgar Saltus New York City
[Pg 266]

CHAPTER XV

It was during my stay at the Hotel Broztel that an incident occurred, small in itself, but so characteristic of Mr. Saltus that it is included in order to show his many-sidedness. As I have said before, Mr. Saltus and I when by ourselves never chatted in rational English. From the early days of our acquaintance, when for the first time he was brought in contact with pets, he adopted as his own, and never relinquished, the baby language in which I always addressed them, and it became ours. He not only delighted in using it, but the vocabulary increased after he took it over. This is easily accounted for when one realizes the muted days of his early life, so filled with dread and discord, when he was afraid to play like other children, afraid to say anything, and with no outlet in the way of pets, on which he could expend his natural playfulness and lavish his love.
[Pg 267]

In writing of our various conversations, the language which we invariably used when alone has been omitted, for the reason that it would be difficult to understand, and that the deciphering of it would confuse and delay the meaning. In my estimation it added to Mr. Saltus' charm and was a key to the simplicity of his real nature, but to the public it would appear trivial, if not absurd. One incident, however, is amusing.

Coming into my rooms one day, Mr. Saltus exclaimed:—

"What drivelling fools some men make of themselves! Here I have been for ten minutes at the Manhattan, trying to get you on the telephone. The wires were crossed, and I had to listen to drivel of the most nauseous kind between a man and a woman. He, anyway, should be shot. A woman may be forgiven for twaddle—but a man never."

"What did they say?" I asked.

"Oh—the man kept calling her honey-bunch, cutikins, and lollypop. It was rot of[Pg 268]the worst kind. Then she replied, calling him sugar plum and tootsy wootsy and tiddley-winks. Lord, what fools some people make of themselves!"

He went out on some business after a while. Later in the day my telephone rang. It was Mr. Saltus on the wire. Here is the conversation which followed:—

"Miaw, Miaw, little Puss."
"Miaw."

"Little fur smoothed down and little taily waving in the air?" (I was always supposed to be a Persian kitten.)

"Miaw."

"Wants to lap up keemy and nibbst fish at the Prince George for your din-din?"

"Miaw!"

"Baby Totesikins love her Pasy and want din-din also? Lift her up to answer."

(Toto lifted in my arms to the telephone, long practice having made her adept.)

"Baby wants nice bickies?"
"Woof! Woof!"[Pg 269]
"Loves, Pasy?"
"Woof." (Toto put down.)

"There, little Puffikins, Snippsy orders nice din for both. Says he good old dog Tray. Says he satisfactory scoundrel."

Laughter.

"What are you laughing at?"

"At drivel of the most nauseous kind between a man and a woman. He at least ought to be shot."

Laughter from the other end.

Never until that moment had Mr. Saltus realized what our conversation must sound like to an outsider and an uninitiate. It brought us both up with a jerk. Thereafter Mr. Saltus wrote "tolerance," and, underlining the word, added it to a list he had made.

During the time Mr. Saltus had been alone in New York, one of his greatest distractions and relaxations was taking his daughter Elsie, a débutante, for tea or for luncheon. Tall, graceful, oriental in colouring like himself, he not only admired her for her beauty but enjoyed[Pg 270]her new and refreshing angle on life. Chatting with her was both restful and stimulating to him. In one sense she was a complete stranger to him, having lived apart for so many years. In another, she was so close that everything concerning her, no matter how slight, was of profound importance. As he had no near relatives and saw nothing whatever of his many cousins, she represented the only tie of blood in the world.

The circumstances were unfortunate. Living with a sister of her mother's, who, obviously, could not be expected to welcome him with outstretched arms, she met her father as a rule in restaurants. That was formal and less conducive to intimacy than seeing a parent in moments of rest and relaxation. Accepting this as the inevitable result of things, Mr. Saltus looked forward to the time when in a home of her own he would feel free to visit his daughter early, often and informally, and reach the bedrock of her very charming self. This seemed about to be realized, when, soon after her début, she became engaged to one of the finest, most dependable and altogether delightful of men,—J. Theus Munds,—and a date for the wedding was set.

Mrs. J. THEUS MUNDS
The Daughter of
EDGAR SALTUS
And Her Little Son
[Pg 271]

Any idea of going to the wedding reception was beyond Mr. Saltus' wildest dreams. Added to his abhorrence of crowds and festivities he was too ill for such an affair. A look into the church was the most he was capable of. Had father and daughter understood one another better, what followed need never have happened. Invitations were sent to us—but for the church only. Cards to the reception were omitted. A whip lash across his face would have hurt Mr. Saltus less. It bowled him over. Nothing would have induced him to go in any event, but the knowledge that he, her father, was purposely omitted was a knife in the back. Appreciating why his presence would have been not only unwelcome but an embarrassment, he expected others to have understood that he would have looked upon the invitation as an act of courtesy only.[Pg 272]

Vainly I tried to put it before him as I saw it, explaining and extenuating the omission. It failed to have the desired effect. Mr. Saltus took it that I, too, was turning against him. It was a hopeless muddle. Had his daughter been older at the time, and more experienced, and had she known him better, it could have been avoided so easily. Had she gone to him explaining the situation, he would not only have urged her to omit him but entered sympathetically into her viewpoint. The invitations were not sent out by her, and she could not, without directly offending her aunt, have given one over her head. Acting as many another has when in doubt, she did nothing and was silent, believing that in the years to come it would be explained and made right between them. Mr. Saltus never overlooked it. Not until he lay in his coffin and that closed forever, did she come under the same roof with him again.

The following winter Mr. Saltus just escaped pneumonia, and was weakened by its effects, so[Pg 273]we decided to try housekeeping again. It was a brave venture. He wanted his meals when he wanted them. A set time for anything irritated him beyond endurance. Handicapped by a wife who frequently forgot that the ordering depended upon herself, and who was lost in abstract space when she should have found her way to the grocers or even to the telephone in time, it was beginning under difficulties.

Having a fancy for the atmosphere of Columbia University, which was his Alma Mater, we took an apartment in The Arizona, 508 West 114th Street, directly opposite the oval. It savoured of the country out there, adding the convenience of being between Riverside Drive and Morningside Park, where, his increasing lameness permitting, Mr. Saltus was able to go and rest. With the realization of his age and infirmities his desire to get away from the world increased by leaps and bounds, for not only did he wish to avoid people, but he even disliked to have them know where he lived. Long accustomed to being taken for my[Pg 274]father, that did not trouble him. But walking painfully with a stick, and stopping at intervals to take peppermint for the acute indigestion, which attacked him when in motion, humiliated him intensely. The sympathy in the faces of those who passed him, a sympathy sometimes expressed in words, was more agonizing even than the pain. In order to keep his home a secret retreat, where, like a wounded animal, he could hide in silence, he continued giving the Manhattan Club as his address.

While formerly Mr. Saltus had enjoyed having me take a walk with him, he now avoided it. Toto only was permitted to accompany him.

"My God," he would exclaim when questioned, "I may be a cripple, but I am not blind. I can see what people are thinking—'That poor girl tied to an old derelict!'"

Ridiculous as this was, Mr. Saltus could not be persuaded out of it. For the same reason he refused to get into a street car with me.[Pg 275]To sit, and let me stand beside him, as might happen if the car were crowded, was a chance he did not mean to take.

Specialists diagnosed his trouble as Reynous disease, an affliction most unusual in this part of the world,—of slow growth, but leading inevitably to a wheeled chair. The prospect appalled him. My father had been confined to one for many years, and Mr. Saltus knew what it meant.

"Karma has taken my legs from under me," he exclaimed again and again.

I invented cases of cure for him, but in my absence one day he consulted a physician, who had not been coached in the matter, and he told him the truth. The blow was terrific. Realizing that he must keep his mind occupied or go under, he started to write "The Paliser Case." The plot was not new. It was "The Perfume of Eros" in a new frock. He was not writing so much to create as to fight the constant pain in his legs. His condition was an embarrassing one to his pride. When the pain[Pg 276]attacked him, he had to sit down there and then, or fall down. To be compelled to rest on copings, doorsteps or curbstones, as the case might be, was tragic, and yet it was more tragic to remain a prisoner in the house. My mother gave him a small camp chair, and this upon occasions he took with him in case of emergencies.

One specialist after another was called, for between the indigestion and his legs, he was in perpetual torture. Rebellious at first, at what seemed a tragic and trivial end to his eventful life, Mr. Saltus brought his philosophy into concrete use, realizing that the lesson of patience was what he needed most, and was now in a position to acquire. With the acceptance of his afflictions as karma, and adjusting his mind to the idea of the wheeled chair, it lost its power to hurt him. Removing from my bureau a card I had stuck in the glass, he put it in his. It was a quotation from the Gitâ, which read:—"Taking as equal pleasure and pain, gain or loss, victory or defeat, thou shalt[Pg 277]not incur sin." From that hour he complained no longer, although complications and sorrow piled on in rapid succession.

Before telling of them, another incident should be given in its proper sequence. In giving some of Mr. Saltus' clothes to a tailor for pressing, a letter fell out of one of the pockets. It was a note from his Los Angeles friend Miss S——, of whom he had told me that he had lost all trace. Sent from abroad, it was directed to the Manhattan Club. It was not the simple note or the friendship which angered me at the moment, but his stupid and needless denials regarding it. Although I knew, better than anyone else could have done, how impossible it was for him to face momentary unpleasantness, this was too much. I went to him and said, "Well, Snipps, you are a clever prevaricator, but in this you have been a plain ass. A spineless jellyfish must give place to it. Judas and Ananias combined could take lessons from you with profit. Here you are ready to cross the[Pg 278]river Styx and take the remnants of a misspent life into Avitchi." (The lower astral plane. Its lessons and condition were a subject which tormented Mr. Saltus more than a little. Darkness always appalled him, and he dreaded detention there.)

It was a cruel thrust on my part, said on the impulse of the moment. Mr. Saltus went white to the lips.

"That you can say such a thing over nothing!" he gasped. "I could not risk the reminders of Dorothy S——, which you would have treated me to had I told you."

His usual comeback about the "subordinate entity" and the "submerged It," failed him then. The lower astral plane with all its horrors, then uppermost in his mind, was recalled by my chance remark. He went off into hysterics, of so serious a nature that it ended by his going to bed. Complicating his other disabilities was heart trouble, and he was taking nitroglycerine at the time. There was[Pg 279]nothing to do but put a sponge over the incident and make light of it.

This I did, so convincingly that a few days later he began to call:—

"Little Anny feels ill," or "Little Anny wants to come in and sit down beside you,"—"Anny" being his abbreviation for Ananias.

It is a pity that Mr. Saltus was never frank with me over this friendship. Knowing my faults and limitations as no one else could, he knew also that smallness was not one of them, and that bigness and fineness on his part always engendered in me the desire to meet it in kind.

Had he but told me how greatly Miss S——had ministered to his comfort during my absence in England, when he was ill and alone,—how she had overseen his mending, and, studying the needs of a dyspeptic, had prepared meals for him in her little apartment many a time, I would have been sympathetic.

Miss S—— came into Mr. Saltus' life shortly after his illness in Los Angeles, to which I have[Pg 280]referred, and at the moment when he was turning from the material to the spiritual. The understanding of occultism, which came to him in a blinding flash, was such that he could think and talk of little else. Miss S——, whose unusual personality and fluid mind rendered her susceptible to new impacts, was very much interested in what he told her along these lines. As she has put it to me since Mr. Saltus' death, "He came into my life like a Buddha, bringing enlightenment."

With thirty-five years' difference in their ages, and meeting him only when he was past middle life, she saw in him a great teacher—and he saw in her a rarely sensitive soul full of possibilities.

These potentialities were developed after Miss S—— went to New York, and soon placed her in a position of importance and responsibility.

She could not see in Mr. Saltus, as I did, a being who step by step had mounted a ladder of light on the rungs of his dead selves.[Pg 281]She saw only the finished product, for the process of refinement, by which his greater qualities had been separated from the lesser, covered a long period of years.

Some of those who read this biography will say that Mr. Saltus may have been glad to escape at times from a home where animals were given so much attention. This remark has in fact been made to me by those who can judge only from the surface of things. The fabric of this criticism is, however, less substantial than moonlight. During the latter years of Mr. Saltus' life much of Miss S——'s time was spent abroad. When Mr. Saltus saw her, as he did frequently during her intermissions in New York, he but left his home environment to go into a similar one. High-strung, nervous and temperamental, Miss S—— had the animal complex as strongly as I. Her apartment was never without one or two pets whose comfort, well being and happiness were her constant pre-occupation. Had he found these conditions under his own roof unpleasant,[Pg 282]he would not have gone out of his way to duplicate them elsewhere.

Not long after Mr. Saltus' death, Miss S——and myself visited the Bide-a-Wee Home for Animals, of which I was a director. On our return home we noticed a poor lost cat trying to cross the street through densely congested traffic. With one accord we stood still, holding our breath, our hands clenched in agony, till the cat reached the further side in safety. Our reactions were not only immediate, but identical.

I make no attempt to go into the whys and wherefores of it all, nor do I offer an explanation. The facts are as I have stated. An elucidation of them is work for a psychiatrist.

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CHAPTER XVI

Toward the end of 1918, and after a short and unexpected illness, our Toto, who had walked beside us for over ten years, passed over. To write of it even now is acute pain. The loss was like that of an only and uniquely beloved child. We were stunned, and in spite of my philosophy I went to pieces as I had never done in my life. It was over this heart-breaking event that Mr. Saltus displayed his extraordinary qualities.

"I wish you would have little Totesy's body cremated and her ashes kept and mingled with mine," he said.

Astonishment brought the reply,

"I never realized that you loved her so deeply."

"Nor did I until now, but it is not only that. Husbands may come and go, but there can[Pg 284]never be but one Toto," he said. "With whom do you wish to be buried?"

I was silent.

"There, you have answered me," he said after a pause. "I am sure you are planning to be buried in the Dogs' Cemetery in Hartsdale. Do as I ask. Let Toto's ashes and mine be mingled,—then, no matter where you go or what you do in the future, yours too will rest with mine at the last."

His wishes were carried out, and the ashes of the little being we loved so deeply are mixed with his own. Under a modest head-stone on which is engraved his name and the word "Eternamente," but a few feet from the monument covering the remains of his brother Frank, their ashes rest waiting to include my own.

This death cast a profound sadness over us. From comparative health, I went into a state of collapse and prolapsis such as I had never suffered before. Too ill and too indifferent even to speak, unless absolutely necessary, our[Pg 285]apartment became a place of silence. It was the most awful winter of our lives, but to his credit it must be said that Mr. Saltus not only never uttered a complaint but pretended all the time that his legs were rapidly getting better.

An unfortunate lease chained us to the depressing surroundings. It scourged Mr. Saltus' very soul to see me in such a condition and be powerless to help, for all he ever asked of me was to smile. When I could not do that, his world became night. He would sit beside my bed, the foot of which was elevated to an uncomfortable degree, and chat at length and delightfully on the interesting mysteries of antiquity in his effort to divert my mind.

It was then he started on "The Imperial Orgy." Taking some articles he had written for Munsey's Magazine years before as a base, he undertook, with the aid of some up-to-date books and notes he had gathered together during the years, to make a volume. Writing was not as easy as it had once been. It required an effort he had never before experienced.[Pg 286]Added to this, he took on a new job. For a man of letters it was an extraordinary thing. Unacquainted with any detail of housekeeping, hating the petty, uninteresting trifles necessary to it, it was a far step for him to undertake ordering the meals and going to market. Upon occasions when for one cause or another the maid failed to appear of a morning, he even made my tea and toast and brought them to my bedside.

All the time he pretended to have a fancy for this. The shops on Amsterdam Avenue in the immediate vicinity of our apartment got to know him well. Now and again he would come in and say:—

"I went into a shop around the corner and a young lady jumped into my arms, licked my nose and tickled my ear with her tail. Don't tell me I am not a winner with the women."

I had to smile at that. The "young lady" was an Angora cat who embellished a shop in the neighborhood. To the amusement of her owner and the customers, she would jump on[Pg 287]Mr. Saltus' shoulders as soon as he appeared, and, wrapping herself about his neck like a scarf, would purr loudly. That cat pleased him enormously, and he was never tired of telling me about her. It was her purr which made him a constant patron of the shop.

Mr. Saltus had a profound interest in the enigmas of the past, and knowing I was keen also, he would sit on the foot of my bed and chat for hours concerning the Gates of Babylon, the astrological orientation of the Pyramids, Tyre, Carthage and the Incas. He was at his best during these times,—profound, epigrammatic and cynical by turns. The pity of it is that he had no audience but myself. He could have held any assemblage spell-bound for any length of time.

It was at this sad time, and during my breakdown which followed, that Mr. Saltus gave fullest expression to the understanding, sympathetic and tender side of his nature. These qualities he always possessed in a superlative degree, and they were the leaven which made[Pg 288]him unique among men. So certain was I always of his attitude toward me, that it was my habit to run to him with a cut finger or an obsolete word. Whatever the case, my needs were answered immediately.

When I turned to him as usual, but with a breaking heart, he comforted me as he alone could. Night after night, when sleep dissolved into a mirage, he sat by my bed and read aloud to me. Algernon Blackwood was a great favorite with both of us. Some novel of his was always on Mr. Saltus' desk. I could not count the times he read the short stories in "Dr. Silence" aloud to me, and after reading discussed the various themes on which they were constructed. Talbot Mundy is another for whom Mr. Saltus had a great admiration, and his books were substituted when we began to know "Dr. Silence" by heart. He never asked me if I would like to have him read to me, or what particular books I fancied. He always knew, and brought the volume suited to my mood of the moment. Swinburne sang and[Pg 289]scintillated through him many and many an evening, and no one could give the lights and shades, the flow and flavour of his verse, as Mr. Saltus did. He adored Swinburne. At other times Keats' "Nightingale" trilled in the twilight.

This was when I could be read to and diverted, but there were times when I was too ill and miserable to listen. Then Mr. Saltus would take me on his lap and rock me as one would a child, singing little songs he made up as he rocked. He had done this often during the years, but never with such tenderness as at this time.

A friend of mine to whom I gave a rough draft of this biography to read, said:

"Did you never do anything but quarrel with Mr. Saltus?"

That remark surprised me into reading it over in a new light. Then I saw what she meant. So much of our life together was quiet, uneventful and peaceful, that to bring out Mr. Saltus' many-sidedness, I have given prominence[Pg 290]to incidents of various kinds—exceptional happenings, rather than our everyday life. As a matter of fact our life together was exceptionally harmonious.

It has been said by my critics, and with a great deal of truth, that I am the last woman on earth Mr. Saltus should have married. No one appreciates this fact better than I do—and this in spite of our similar tastes and temperament. A genius should never marry. There is that in his nature which not only unfits him for the limitations of conventional existence, but diverts and distracts his imaginative faculty and creative ability. If a genius marries at all, it should be to find not only a pillow for his moods, eccentricities and weariness, but a being who, merging her personality in his, supplements, and that unconsciously, such qualities as he may need in his work. The wife of a genius should lead his life alone—be able to anticipate his needs and supply them, so unobtrusively that he accepts her services without knowing it.[Pg 291]

Although anxious to do this, I could not. It was temperamentally impossible, however much I tried to bring it about. Many factors were at the base of this inability,—my frailty as a child and the continuous care given to me in consequence; added to this was the disparity in our ages, which tinged Mr. Saltus' attitude toward me with that of a father. His former unhappy marriages had left their mark, and made him desire to be father, mother, husband and protector to me.

Coming into my life at the age and in the way he did, he was Edgar Saltus the man, never the author, to me, his work being lost in his personality. This was what he wanted, and, as he frequently expressed it:—

"To the world I am Edgar Saltus the author, but thank God, I can be merely Mr. Me to you."

Times without number I tried to make myself over into the kind of wife a literary man should have, but with the same results. However[Pg 292]much I tried to conceal these efforts, Mr. Saltus would see them and say:—

"Do stop trying to be somebody else, and be my little girl again. You think you know the kind of a woman I should have married. Perhaps you do, but I would have killed her ages and ages ago. Do be yourself. I wouldn't have you changed by a hair."

However much he was deluded, it was by himself, for I always told him that I was the last woman in the world he should have selected.

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CHAPTER XVII

During this winter the distress in Mr. Saltus' legs increased to such a degree that it took him ten minutes to walk from the Arizona to the corner of Amsterdam Avenue, a distance of only a few yards. Most of the time he went in a taxi, but even getting out of one and walking the length of the hall to the elevator, was so tiresome and so painful that he had to sit in the lobby for fifteen minutes or more before coming upstairs.

Speaking of elevators, brings back Mr. Saltus' chronic objection to meeting people. It had increased with the years so as to become almost an obsession. He would wait any length of time in the lobby of the Arizona, rather than get in an elevator if there was anyone else in it. He was afraid someone might speak to him. When I had visitors (which, owing to my illness and his aversion, was infrequent)[Pg 294]he would shoot past the living-room and down the hall to his study, forcing his tortured legs to such activity that it often took him hours to recover from the effects of it.

A year passed after the death of our beloved Toto,—a year so like inferno, that even to think of it makes me shudder. With Mr. Saltus' helplessness it was a toss-up which of us was in the worse condition. I looked up one day to find him weeping. When questioned he said:—

"I wish we could die together, before you lose your reason entirely. While I live I can take care of you no matter what happens, but after——? It's killing me to watch you open bureau drawers and stand there striving to think why you opened them: to see you grasp the top of your head trying to remember. All these years you have surmounted everything. Now only, you cannot make the grade, poor child. Death should be meaningless to one who understands it as you do. Cannot you make your philosophy concrete?"[Pg 295]

It was hard, but it made me take notice. A strait-jacket and a padded cell sprang into the perspective with his words, and the selfishness of sorrow stared me in the face. For the first time I realized what, in my indifference to everything, I had become, and it stunned me. While this was sinking in he spoke again:—

"I will be with little Toto so soon, and we will wait together until you come over. You know as well as I do that your tears are vitriol on her spirit, retarding her evolution. For God's sake never agonize over me, unless you want to keep me earthbound and in prison."

Not one man in a million would have lived under the conditions he accepted in silence for over a year. The average good husband would have left and asked for a divorce. Mr. Saltus not only never complained, but was concerned only for me. From that hour I decided to pull myself together.

By the time "The Imperial Orgy" was finished, Mr. Saltus was in such bad shape that it[Pg 296]was hazardous for him to leave the house alone. Twice he dropped in the street with heart attacks. The "flu" epidemic coming on, his infection-complex swam into evidence again. He ceased going in public conveyances, and took a taxi whenever he thought it necessary to go out. A handkerchief saturated with camphor held to his nose, he took the chance now and again. Although he carried a card with his name and address in his pocket, it was always with dread that I saw him leave the apartment. A flask of whisky was in another pocket, a bottle of peppermint and tablets of nitroglycerin were in a third, and yet he was really in no shape to go at all.

It was after a sudden heart attack in the street, that I decided he must remain indoors till physicians could tell more definitely about his condition. The "flu" epidemic offered the chance I had been looking for. Had I come into the open and told him I was fearful he might be brought home in an ambulance, he would have died there and then at my feet.[Pg 297]The impossibility of telling him anything unpleasant was a handicap. I was obliged to keep up the pleasing fiction that he was getting better every day, and to say that the increasing lameness and pain were but results of the treatment he was undergoing to effect a permanent cure. Any over-anxiety on my part would have been disastrous. Knowing his reactions, I said quite casually one day:—

"You must have to wait longer to pick up taxis these days."

"Why?" he asked in surprise.

"Because in default of enough ambulances, they are in such demand taking patients to the hospitals."

The implication was successful—Jean, the tree and the bubonic plague became as trifles compared to an infectious taxi.

"Great Heavens! I never thought of that," he exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"I know only what I read and hear, but it may not be true," I said.

That was enough. It was weeks and weeks[Pg 298]before Mr. Saltus could be persuaded to leave the apartment. Meanwhile, the plot of "The Ghost Girl" was occupying his mind. Though the central situation was one he had used before, in a short story called "A Bouquet of Illusions," he hoped to justify his use of it again by his amplification of it.

When the plot was mapped out, he announced that he was ready to start work, and "the kennel" could be cleaned up. "The kennel" referred to his study, which I have described elsewhere, and which at that time resembled a cross between a junk-shop and an ash-heap. It was cleaned only between novels, the débris of one being removed to make a place for another.

During this time Mr. Saltus was undergoing treatments of various kinds with no apparent improvement. Day after day we went from one specialist to another, seeking and hoping. It was tragic, and he was very brave about it, smiling and joking about his condition, worrying because it worried me.[Pg 299]

When the weather was inviting we would walk the short block to Morningside Park and sit there an entire afternoon, enjoying the green. Trees interested Mr. Saltus,—old trees especially. When we sat down our seat became the magic carpet, and we alighted among the druids in an enchanted wood. We followed their festivals, picked out their occult symbols and searched for the mistletoe. We found ourselves surrounded by the spirits of the trees, and became a part of an evolution other than human. Nature spirits, gnomes and fairies peeped in and out of the shrubs, as Mr. Saltus' imagination soared on delightfully. There was no pain in this world,—no mundane muddle to mess it up. Living more or less in a subjective universe, our rambles in thought were better tonics than medicine to him. Pan lived again, while nymphs and satyrs chased through the brush at our feet.

Day after day we sat there on the same seat and in a dream world, till the sun beginning to sink, and the chill in the air which followed,[Pg 300]recalled Mr. Saltus to aching legs and a man-made world.

Realizing as I did then that his condition was critical, it seemed the moment to effect a reconciliation with his daughter. The long hours he had to spend shut in an apartment would have been brightened by her presence. During this time we had written one another at intervals, and she knew that I would do my best to bring it about. Photographs of her in various places in our rooms, although not referred to by Mr. Saltus, helped to keep her in mind. One day, while we were on the subject of parents and children, I thought the psychological moment had arrived, and, reversing the role a stepmother is supposed to take, I led up to the subject, suggesting that I ask Mrs. Munds and her husband up to see him. Ill as he was, Mr. Saltus flamed.

"Thou too, Brutus!" he exclaimed. "You, too, are going to fail me at last? That I have lived to this!"

It was the one subject on which he could[Pg 301]not talk rationally. From his reaction I could see how much he loved her, for only a great affection can be hurt so deeply.

"If you want to kill me, send for her. I will know then that my case is hopeless, and between you it most certainly will be."

It was futile to persist. I could not make him see that she had not put him out of her life deliberately. That was his view of it. Having been put out, he refused to go back. In his condition arguments reacted badly upon his heart.

There was a time when the papers meant much to Mr. Saltus. For an hour, at least, every morning he would absorb them with his coffee and rolls. They meant not only material for articles, but links with the world from which he was shut off. With his increasing disability his interest in the papers waned, and he would scan the headlines only and read a few book reviews. There was one reviewer who especially interested him. Frequently of a Sunday morning he would call out:[Pg 302]—

"Anything worth while in the paper to-day?"

This meant one thing. If there was a book review or an article by Benjamin de Cassères it was worth while, and that part of the paper was taken in to him. If not, it could wait until he had an idle moment during the day. Mr. Saltus admired de Cassères' work very much. He used to chuckle over it, and say:—

"That man was born a hundred years too soon."

The pity was that, admiring each other as they did, they never met. The hermit habit had so encroached with the years, that it had become impossible for Mr. Saltus even to think of meeting people in the flesh, however much he admired them in the spirit. His world becoming subjective more and more each day as he internalized, objective existence became shadowy and unsatisfying. With entire unselfishness he concerned himself more and more for me, always a frail and fragile being in his eyes, one possessing little physical[Pg 303]strength to fight her way alone in a sordid and selfish world. The fear of it haunted him.

"I'm a pretty ill man, am I not, Mowgy?" he asked me one day. "It will not kill me to die, but I should be prepared."

"Indisposed for the moment," I told him. "Now that you can eat and grow young again, I may have to take out an insurance at Lloyd's against someone stealing you."

This remark, no matter how often I made it, pleased him. He hated the idea of being old in my eyes, almost as much as hearing disagreeable things. The pleasing lies he loved were tonics, and I had to be very diplomatic with him.

"Yes, I am on the mend a bit,—but you never know."

Subconsciously he knew that he could not live long at best, but objectively he was always talking of getting better and planning for the future. On this occasion, however, he kept repeating "You never know" several times, following it with the remark:[Pg 304]—

"I've been an incident to you,—a big one, but only an incident after all."

It was not like him to repeat himself, and I asked what he meant by it. What follows I have put in and taken out of this biography several times. There is too much concerning myself in it to be of interest to the public, and yet the unusual nature and quality of Mr. Saltus' mind are nowhere more forcefully exemplified.

"You might be my child. You may marry again some day?" he said.

"I might be struck by a comet or tumble on the third rail, with more probability. Jamais! Having broken you in has taken me to the door of the asylum. No more experiments. My arm is tired from wielding a cat-o'-nine-tails."

"Quite so, but all literary men are not 'litterers,' and all men are not literary. You might select more wisely next time."

"Disabuse your mind of that," I told him. "Such small wisdom as I have acquired has been[Pg 305]paid for too dearly. Besides, there is only one Snipps, and no one else would understand me."

"That's it," he said. "I was awake half of last night thinking about it. It's an awful thing to leave a helpless little girl all alone in a world of demons and vultures. The possibility haunts me."

"Then take your medicine like a good boy and stay here to look after me," he was told. "If it comes to a wheeled chair, I will wheel it, and we will go to California and live under blue skies and rose bushes, or to India, and sit at Mrs. Besant's feet."

This comforted him. Although he spoke constantly of dying, and quite as a matter of course, it was to be contradicted. He knew it was possible, but never did he admit that it was probable. The next day opened with a surprise. On my breakfast tray was the following, carefully written in Mr. Saltus' best copper-plate hand:[Pg 306]—

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR MY SUCCESSOR.

Read, mark, learn and inwardly reject.

1.—Thou shalt have no other God before or behind Mowgy. She will be supreme or nothing. Safety first.

2.—Few people will ever understand Mowgy. You will get the key quickly or never. If you haven't it,—run.

3.—Mowgy must have her own way entirely and in all things. It makes her ill to be contended with. Besides, her way is usually the best in the end. Save trouble and take it first.

4.—Mowgy can never be questioned. The slightest interrogation irritates her beyond expression. Let her alone. She is too frank for comfort. She will tell you everything sooner or later, and you will wish she hadn't.

5.—Mowgy never remembers anything you ask her to do, unless it is vital or concerns animals. Don't expect it. On the plane[Pg 307]where she lives, trifles do not exist. She forgets her own requirements. How can she remember yours?

6.—Mowgy is no housekeeper. Her intentions, not the results, are excellent. If she remembers to order meals be thankful. If she doesn't, be thankful that she is as she is. Keep accounts at the nearest restaurants and shut up.

7.—Mowgy is truthful. Don't ask her a question unless you want the unvarnished truth. It is better to take it varnished.

8.—Mowgy never picks up anything. Absent-mindedness only. Look carefully under chairs and tables before leaving a place. Gold bags, money, jewelry or important papers may be on the floor. She will drop you if you are not on the alert to avoid it.

9.—Mowgy does not live on this plane. Understand that clearly. She cannot be made to conform to the image and likeness[Pg 308]of others. Don't try. You would not like her if you could make her over. Let well enough alone.

10.—The foregoing are Mowgy's limitations from the normal viewpoint. You must be abnormal or this will not apply to you. If she takes you it will be to make you over. The process is crucifying but curative. You will wonder how you ever managed to live without her. She has a world of her own, and it is the best world I know of to live in. If you have a chance to get there, make a fight for it. She is the only one of her kind on earth. My blessing, E. S.

Such a document! Though written in jest, there was an undercurrent of seriousness about it. One could not read it unmoved. From that paper alone a psychologist could rebuild Edgar Saltus as he was. To me it is the most characteristic bit of writing he left behind him.

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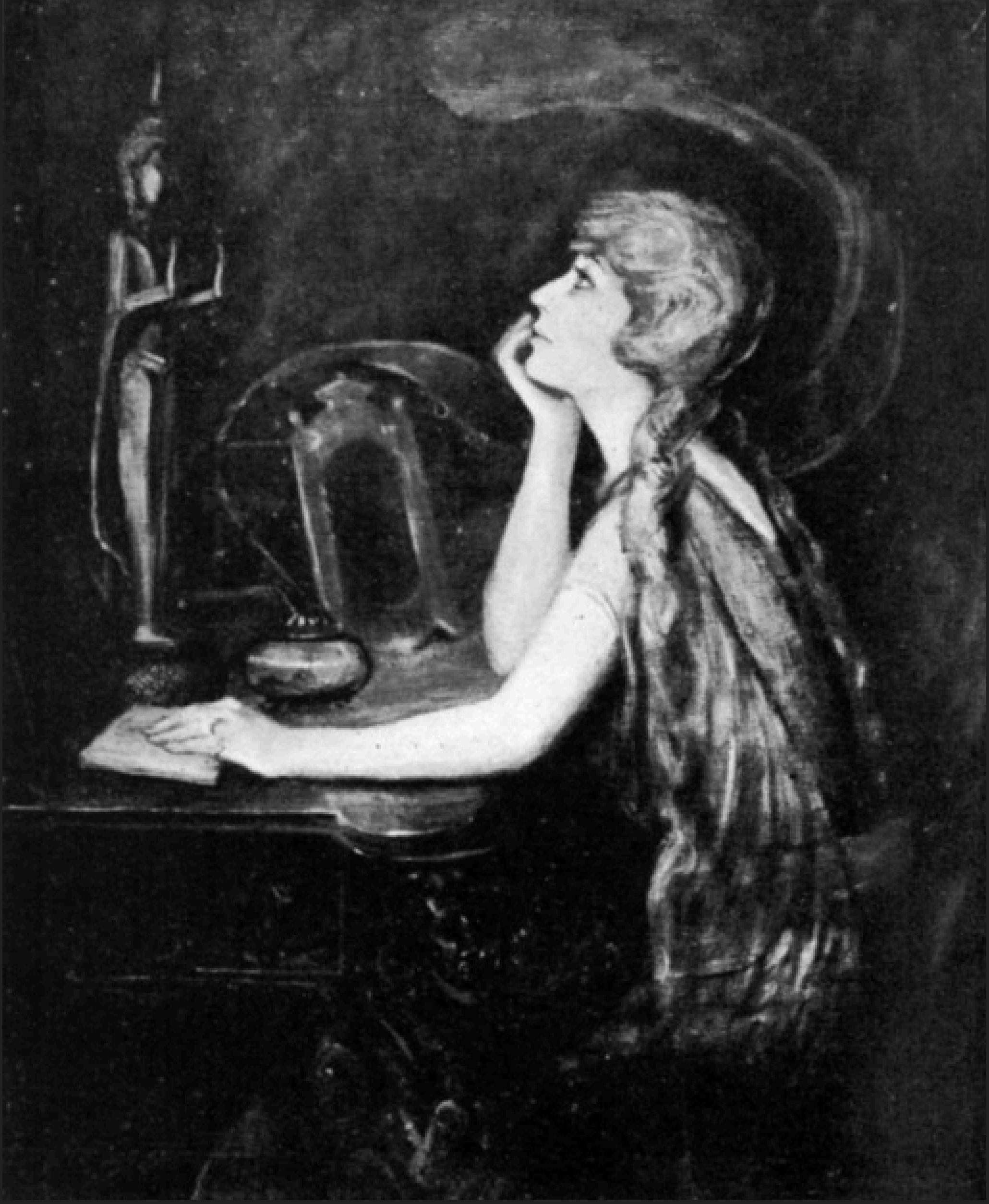
CHAPTER XVIII

The manuscript of "The Ghost Girl" finished, one might have supposed Mr. Saltus would take a rest, particularly as his heart became worse so rapidly that nitroglycerin was necessary most of the time. Carl Van Vechten had written of him so charmingly in The Merry-Go-Round, and with so much insight, that Mr. Saltus was encouraged to keep on working, as it was the only way in which he could lose himself for the time.

Sending the manuscript of "The Ghost Girl" to a typist at Columbia, he suffered another periodical cleaning of his "kennel" and started in on the outline of another novel. That also was an enlarged and amplified rendering of an earlier book, torn to pieces and baked en casserole with an occult sauce, to its enormous and entire benefit. He was not reminded of the fact that the central situation had been[Pg 310]used before. He was borrowing from himself, to be sure, and it was quite permissible, but in other circumstances I would have urged him to let his original creation stand. As it was I was glad to see him begin it as soon as "The Ghost Girl" was off his hands, realizing that he must have mental food and constant distraction.

The lease on our apartment bothered Mr. Saltus. During the years "things" had become relative to both of us. They had not only lost all value but they had become transformed into fetters. To get rid of the encumbrance of "things," and be free to pack a suitcase and go at will, was an intriguing idea to him. In discussing it, and the process of elimination necessary to reach the desired results, we agreed to get rid of all but two articles,—the carved olive-wood table at which he had written most of his books, and the arm-chair in which our little Toto had died. Mr. Saltus did not live to see it, but "things"—all the things we wanted to get rid of and forget,—are scattered now to the winds in every direction,—all but the table and the chair.



MARIE SALTUS

Sitting at the Table on which her Husband wrote his Books, burning Incense before a Siamese Buddha and meditating on a Stanza from the Bhagavad Gitâ.

From a Painting by Hope Bryson, 1925.

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That chair, were it endowed with speech, could tell volumes. The same insight which expressed itself throughout so understandingly in regard to my devotion to Toto did so again, and in so touching a way, that it is the most vivid and enduring memory I have of Mr. Saltus.

The attacks of heart irregularity increasing, it became necessary for me to feel his pulse at intervals and give him the tablets of nitroglycerin. As soon as he felt one coming on he struggled through the hall into my room, to sink into that arm-chair and put his hand out.

"Quick,—quick,—Mowgy.Feelmy pulse," he said, many and many a time. "I think I'm sinking. Shall I take my medsy?" as he always called his medicine.

It was a serious responsibility for a novice. Night or day, whenever he felt an attack coming on, he went over the same route, and sank into the same chair. It seemed such a waste of[Pg 312]effort, when with a word he could have called me to him. When I suggested as much he smiled, but continued the slow and painful journey through the hall to my room. Upon one occasion the effort to get there was such, that his hands were like ice and his lips blue when he reached me. Sinking into the chair he looked at me, but the hand he extended was not for me to feel his pulse, but to take in mine. There was no need for words to tell me that he thought he was dying, having used, as he believed, his last ounce of strength to reach his goal. With the touch of his hand came the consciousness, clear as clairvoyance, that it was his intention to die in that particular chair—if he could; and the significance of it brought the tears to my eyes. He was determined that the poignant memories of Toto, associated with the chair, should be so interwoven with his own, that her chair as well as her ashes should become indissolubly a part of himself. No touching act of his whole life so stretched out and reached the inner recesses of my being[Pg 313]as that one. It wiped out a multitude of lesser things as the sun obliterates candle light. With unerring intuition, he knew how this would penetrate more and more with the years, till it would become indelibly stamped on my heart.

This, and one other incident, small in itself yet colossal in its significance, and showing the sweet and sympathetic side of his nature, stand in relief against his subsidiary weaknesses. Shortly before his death, my father had, at Mr. Saltus' request, given him a small canvas, a daub of daisies painted by me at the age of seven, and, crude as it was, retained by an unusually devoted parent. Mr. Saltus was particularly attached to it, and it hung in the room beside his bed. Over and over I begged him to let me destroy the hideous thing, but he was up in arms at the suggestion, replying every time:—

"After a while you can, for no one but Snipps shall have those daisies. When I die I[Pg 314]want you to put them in my hands and have them cremated with me."

The day before his passing he referred to it again, exacting a promise that I would do so,—and it was carried out. Though the subject of death was constantly on his tongue, and he outlined the details he wanted carried out for his funeral, it was more in the way of precaution than anything else, that being a marked characteristic of his.

Sitting in the arm-chair by the window in my bed-room the month before his passing, he looked out into the splendid immensity of the June sky and chatted freely and happily about the Great

Adventure.

"What a lot I must make good next life!" he exclaimed again and again. "I did not realize the verities for so long. The light came late, but I cannot lose it now, and I will build better next time."

His tortured body had become a prison to him.

"I'm tired of these old clothes," he told me[Pg 315]over and over again. "I want a new deal, to begin as a little boy once more. But in the interval of freedom on the other side, I want to roam at will through the Halls of Learning, to feed my soul with the food of the mental plane." That was his prayer.

The cynic, the satirist, the jester with life, as the world believed him to be,—false faces all—dissolved, and the real ego emerged, to play hide-and-seek no longer. The timidity, the humility, to conceal which he had assumed so much that he was not, spoke now:—

"Don't let a curious public come here to gaze at me after I am out of my body. Let me be forgotten. I have done nothing worth while. It will be my mistakes by which I will be remembered, if at all. Since I began to take myself seriously in hand, I have lived in semi-obscurity. Let me go in the same way. Don't put our address in the newspapers for a curious crowd to come here. Have a simple Theosophical service over my old clothes,—and[Pg 316]for God's sake no black anywhere,—on yourself or about the place."

Assured by me that I would do so, he went on:—

"You have suffered so much that you are numb and immune. Let the sunshine in and let the canary sing. Help my departing spirit by your poise and power. Keep everyone away, and bury my ashes with your own hands."

Though talking of his transition almost constantly, Mr. Saltus was very much like the woman who, being asked if she believed in ghosts, said, "No, but I'm dreadfully afraid of them." Every hour or two he would refer to what we would do when he regained his health. Rosy pictures of a rose garden in California were painted, and delightful dreams of sitting under a banyan tree at Mrs. Besant's feet took shape from the smoke of his cigarettes.

Meanwhile the manuscript of Mr. Saltus' last novel, "The Golden Flood," was sketched[Pg 317]in the rough up to the middle of chapter twelve. The words did not drop from his pen as they had once done. Weariness and effort crept in. Though work to him was still a song, death was the refrain. Midsummer came. Mr. Saltus, too ill by far to be taken into the country, seemed nevertheless a little better.

He took a fancy for sitting on the roof of our apartment house. Taking up camp chairs and pillows I arranged to make it comfortable for him, and he sat there for hours, reading or chatting with me.

Toward the middle of July unusually hot weather made this lofty sitting room doubly acceptable to him, for our apartment, being on the top of the house, was painfully hot all night, though electric fans were kept running at high speed in his bed-room and study. In these circumstances the cool air of the roof offered freshness and relief.

Evening after evening we sat there looking down upon the city below, where multiple electric lights and illuminated signs fought for[Pg 318]supremacy, and above to where the stars pierced the softness of evening. The height, the silence, and the stars particularly, took us back more than twenty years to the turret of the old Narragansett Casino, from which we had first looked at them together, and we returned there many times in our chats.

"How much we have had to learn since those days," Mr. Saltus remarked the last time we sat there. "It's taken bludgeoning blows, but, after all, we have absorbed something, don't you think?" He sighed.

"Yes," I said. "Our personalities thought they wanted so many things, but our egos knew we wanted only to grow, and so gave us the chance."

The mysteries and beauties of Infinity seemed to fall from the stars like blessings. Sometimes we sat there till midnight chatting over the splendors of space, cause and cosmos, kalpas of time, and creations yet to be cradled. However far we wandered in dimensional[Pg 319]space, greater and vaster became the vistas beyond.

It is possible that these intimate talks on the abstract gave Mr. Saltus the interior poise to greet the liberating angel who even then was knocking at our door.

The end came suddenly and unexpectedly, and from a cause long supposed to be dormant. It began with a severe chill. Anything can begin that way, and I was not alarmed. Neither was the physician, who, in the absence of Dr. Darlington, was called in. Other chills, however, of greater intensity, followed in rapid succession. They were frightful, each one seeming as if it would be the last. Septic poisoning, super-induced by an internal abscess, developed into acute Bright's disease. Unable at any time to stand intense pain, he found this agony. Opiates were given, but owing to his absorption being so slow they failed to make it endurable. A hospital was the place to have taken Mr. Saltus, and St. Luke's was at the corner of our street. He could have been moved without[Pg 320]much distress and I could have been near him. Though he fought to his utmost against crying out under his pain, at the suggestion of a hospital he shrieked:—

"I won't go to St. Luke's, and if you bring a nurse in my room I will kill her. When Toto died and you were almost out of your mind, I kept you beside me and nursed you. You cannot force me to go."

Much as it would have added to his comfort, and necessary as it was in his case to have specific care, the idea of a hospital had to be abandoned. It was hysteria, but in his condition he had to be humored. Had I brought in a nurse against his will, he, she, or both, would have been found dashed to pieces on the pavement outside; and our apartment being on the top floor, the risk was too great.

Mr. Saltus was not an easy man to take care of, for from no other hand than mine would he take food or medicine, nor would he let me leave his side for a moment. The responsibility of turning into a nurse one with such limited[Pg 321]knowledge was not the best thing for him, but it was impossible to do otherwise. To keep his chart, give his medicine and hypodermics, and try to make him believe that he was getting better every moment, was difficult.

Though Mr. Saltus spoke of death as if he were playing hide-and-seek with it, it was offset by his lament:—

"Poor child, poor child! I am killing you, but I cannot help it, for you are the only one I can let touch me. When Snippsy gets well he will be so good that you will not like him. I'm paying a frightful karma. The Masters of Wisdom must be hastening my evolution."

Though he spoke of recovery, it was only while I sat beside him. Upon an occasion when, anxious to be sure of an important prescription being filled accurately, I suggested going to the chemist's at the corner and leaving him with my mother, with whom Mr. Saltus was perfectly at home, he screamed so loudly that people in a neighboring apartment rushed in to offer assistance.[Pg 322]

"Don't leave me! Don't leave me! I might die while you are away," he called out.

His illness lasted but eight days. On July 30th at three in the afternoon I saw death in his face, although neither the physician nor my mother expected it so soon. To keep him cheered and comforted was all that could be done. His horror of disagreeable things was such that, although he asked me many times a day if I thought he might die, I persistently told him that he was getting better.

It was my desire to send for Mr. Saltus' daughter, that she might see him again before the end, but fearing his reaction I did not.

At nine that night he was a little easier. The morphine was then for the first time able to deaden his agony.

"For God's sake lie down on the sofa and rest," he urged, looking at my haggard face.

Long accustomed to insomnia, I was able, as one can under great excitement, to go without sleep and almost without food for a week, but[Pg 323]it was beginning to tell, and my hands and lips quivered.

"Do lie down. You look as if you were going to die, poor child," he urged again.

Shaking my head, for speech was beyond me, I sat still. The clock, set in the middle of bottles, pills and restoratives which had to be given at intervals during the night, ticked on.

"What of the morphine?" Mr. Saltus asked. "I am easier now; but for the morning? Have you enough?"

Again I smiled and nodded. That he could speak of a morrow was tragic.

The end came at three a. m., July 31st, while it was still dark, and was quite painless. Conscious until the last, it is doubtful if until then Mr. Saltus realized that he was passing out of the body. Efforts to give him nitroglycerin were futile.

Grasping the tiny Rosicrucian cross he always wore about his neck, which symbolized all that he aspired to, he put his other hand in mine.[Pg 324]

"Mowgy!" He could say no more. It was his last word, as, casting off the fetters of the flesh, he passed onward into the larger life, where "even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea."

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